THE CONCLUDING

ESSAY AND PREFACE

to

THE SECOND EDITION

of

MR. MAURICE'S

THEOLOGICAL ESSAYS.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The Preface to the Second Edition of my Theological Essays, and the Essay on Eternal Life and Death, which has been entirely re-written, are published separately for the convenience of those who have purchased the First Edition. I have added the Note on the Athanasian Creed, not because I have altered the substance of it, but because I have introduced it by some remarks on our Prayers and on the Creeds generally, and have connected it more closely than before, with the Controversy respecting the meaning of the word Eternal, and the punishment of the wicked.

Dec. 11, 1853.
PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

A critic of these Essays in the November number of the Prospective Review, observes that I have "not the art of convincing" him; but then, "that it is startling to think how few writers ever do radically overturn any mature system of belief." I certainly never suspected myself of possessing this 'art.' I do not know whether there is such an 'art.' If there is, and if I had it, I am not certain that I should wish to exercise it. To overturn "radically a mature system of belief" is the very last object of my ambition. There are some Unitarians, and some Trinitarians also, who are not very mature in their convictions, not very settled in their belief, who have tried systems, and are not content with them. To such I addressed myself. By some of these I have been understood. They have responded to my words with more sympathy than I had any right to expect. For they have perceived that I have not wished to unsettle them in their opinions, or to bring them to mine, but to
show that God has laid a foundation for them and for me upon which we may stand together.

I should wish these weary and earnest seekers to read the Article to which I have referred, and to ask themselves whether they find there what they are looking for. The Review is written with much gracefulness and eloquence. It contains the latest message of the new Unitarian school. It undertakes to expose the feebleness of my analysis, and the unsatisfactoriness of my logic. Very likely it may have succeeded. But the question at issue between us is not that at all, not whether they are good reasoners and I am a bad one, but what Gospel they have to bring to mankind, what light they have to throw on all the questionings and yearnings of the human spirit, what they can show has been done for the deliverance of our race and of its members, what hope they can give us of that which shall yet be done. On that issue I am willing to put their creed and mine. That which is true in itself, that which the God of Truth declares to His creatures, can, I am sure, bear the test. What proceeds from man will never satisfy man.

I have no cause to complain of the Writer of this Article for want of courtesy to me personally. On
the contrary, he has paid me compliments to which I am not entitled, and which I am bound to disclaim. He thinks that I have some good and genial qualities of my own; that I should probably prefer truth to a lie, if I had not set myself to defend certain Articles of Faith. That necessity leads me into "miserable juggling," and makes me an object of the Reviewer's deepest compassion. It is very agreeable thus to get all honours for oneself, and to have all one's crimes attributed to an unfortunate position. I feel the temptation to accept a distinction which sets the conscience so much at ease, and gives one's vanity such a pleasant stimulus. But I cannot do so without proving myself not to be what the Reviewer is kind enough to say that I am, but the very opposite of it,—without being guilty of a conscious and inward falsehood. I know that the Creed which leads me, as the Reviewer thinks, to contradict my better nature, gives me an interest in my fellows, a sympathy with mankind, which I have not naturally, and which I find it exceedingly hard to maintain. I know that that Creed has led me to desire truth in my inward parts, and to resist those tendencies to 'juggling' and trickery into which the Reviewer supposes that it tempts me.
I know, moreover, that the belief in fixed Articles respecting the relations and acts of God has enabled me, and does enable me, to believe that the world is progressive, and not stationary; just as the belief in the fixed article respecting gravitation has given an impulse to all the inquiries of natural students. If, after nearly 6,000 years of man's existence, we assume that nothing is known respecting the questions which men have felt to concern them most, we shall not expect that anything will be known. I contend that articles do not crush inquiry, but awaken it; that they do not hinder education, but show how we may avoid superstitions which have hindered it most effectually; that they do not oblige us to be harsh or repulsive to any men of any sect, but qualify us to understand them, to sympathise with them, to justify their opposing thoughts, to reconcile them.

These doctrines I maintained in the first book which I wrote after I took orders.* The experience of nineteen very eventful years in English Ecclesiastical history has led me to change some of the opinions which I expressed in that book.

* Subscription no Bondage; or, the Thirty-nine Articles guides in Academic Education. Oxford. 1835.
I would not impose our Articles upon the students in our Universities, because I see that by doing so we tempt them to dishonesty, and lead them to dislike a document which I believe they ought to love. But the other convictions which I maintained then, instead of being shaken, have been confirmed by all I have seen, heard, thought, and regretted since. I am more than ever persuaded that they whose zeal for progress leads them to preach that the Bible is a collection of obsolete Hebrew stories, are seeking to defraud the world of the treasure to which it has owed its past and will owe its future progress;—that those who tell us that we may not express the facts and principles of the Bible in popular Creeds and teach them to our children, leave us at the mercy of coteries, where men and women prostrate themselves before some newspaper oracle which allows them no freedom whatever;—that those who would take from us our intellectual formularies, under pretence that if we cast them off we shall do greater justice to the earnest convictions of those who dissent from us, are not just to these convictions themselves, but very intolerant of them; and that, on the contrary, we are bound by those forms, in spite of our own
natural narrowsness, sectarianism, and dogmatism, to recognise and honour the strivings after truth of every man whatsoever, even of the man who scorns us and hates us most.

In connexion with this subject, I shall allude to an event of which it would be affectation to suppose that the readers of this book are altogether ignorant. Most of them will have heard that the publication of it has led to my expulsion from a College connected with the Church of England. The inference has been readily drawn, that I shall now feel the position which I have taken up as a defender of the Church and its formularies to be untenable, that I must have learnt in myself how galling that yoke is which I have wished that other men should endure.

I do not know whether I shall be suspected by some of a base motive for what I am going to say; but I know that there are those who will believe that I am speaking solemnly, deliberately, as in the presence of God. I affirm, then, that during the thirteen years which I passed in that College, I never was restrained from uttering one word which I thought it would be good or right to utter before my Class, by the obligation under which I had laid
myself to teach according to the formularies of the Church of England; that I should have suppressed, in obedience to what have been called my "sectarian timidities," many words which I did utter, if those formularies had not given me boldness, had not raised me to a higher point of view than my own, had not warned me against the peril and guilt of accepting the opinions of the age as my guides. I declare that if I have ever been able to see any method in history, civil or ecclesiastical, or to make my pupils see it, the Bible and these formularies have shown me that method. I declare further, that if I have been able to teach my pupils,—and I have tried diligently to teach them,—that they are to reverence the convictions of all men of all sects and schools, and to show them sympathy, I have done what I should not have been encouraged to do, or have thought it safe to do, if I had not taken these Articles as my own teachers and helpers, and if I had not considered that it was my duty, as far as I could, to impregnate those who would afterward be ministers in the Church with their spirit.

Once more, the fact that I had accepted these Articles and had bound myself to teach according to them, made me comparatively indifferent about
the question, whether my view of the right method of education was the same with that of my superior for the time being. I had announced over and over again in various forms of language, that I did not look upon our Articles as marking out a close and narrow line between two opposite schools, and as authorizing us to denounce both; but as announcements of a higher truth, which should lead us to deal fairly with the strongest assertions of both. I could not lecture on Church History without telling my pupils that Creeds and Articles do not and cannot stifle opinions, seeing that the decrees of the Nicene Council were the beginning, not the end, of the Arian controversy, and that the proclamation of James I. against discussions upon Election and Predestination, was the signal for the most furious war between Calvinists and Arminians ever waged. The Principal of King's College had, I believe, declared himself the conservator of a *via media*; he probably expects results from Articles which I should consider most undesirable, even if they were not unattainable. But if, in the face of my statements, he could accept me as a fellow-worker, even invite me to become one, my conscience was clear. I could teach with
perfect freedom, knowing that I was trying to obey the laws which we both confessed, not feeling that I was more tied to the habits of his mind, than he was to mine. It might be reasonable to expect that such a connexion would at some time or other terminate. But it would have terminated much sooner,—it would have been immeasurably less satisfactory while it lasted,—if there had been no common rule to which all the members of the College did homage. In that case, the fear of saying something which a superior would disapprove if he knew it, must be continually tormenting the mind of a teacher. He works in that most fretting of all chains, the sense of some unexpressed, implicit obligation to abstain from acts which his duty to his pupils, to the Church, and to God, would urge him to perform.

I cannot pretend that any recent experience of mine, either in a College or in the Church, has in the least changed my opinion, that our formularies are the best protection we have, against the exclusiveness and cruelty of private judgments. If our Catechism did not bear a continual witness to our children that Christ has redeemed them and all mankind, how could we resist the dictation of writers who
pronounce it a heresy to say that our race is redeemed at all, that it is not lying under God's curse? If our Articles did not put forth the doctrine of Christ's Godhead and Manhood as the ground of Theology, before they speak of the Fall and the depravity of man, how could we withstand the popular theory, so plausible, so gratifying to all the selfish instincts of religious men, that the Gospel is only a scheme for saving them from the ruin which God decreed for the universe when Adam sinned? If the Articles had not refused to dogmatise on the meaning of the word Eternal, and on the endlessness of evil, what could prevent the doctrine, that an immense majority of our fellow-beings are in an utterly hopeless condition, from being regarded as the characteristic doctrine of Christian Divinity? I am sure that it has been so regarded by multitudes of our lay brethren, and that therefore the consciences and hearts to which we ought to present our message are closed against it. They understand us to say that God has sent His Son into the world, not to save it, but to condemn it.

I count it the highest blessing of my life that I have been permitted to become a witness,
that the Church of England gives not the faintest encouragement to so horrible a contradiction of God's word. I receive the cordial and generous sympathy which has been shown to me by persons from whom I had no right to expect it, who would naturally have regarded me with prejudice and suspicion, not as rendered as to me, but as a proof how much affection towards the Church there is still in the hearts of our countrymen, how glad they are to believe that she is not what her sons sometimes represent her to be. And though opinions, which, merely as such, are a thousand times weightier than mine, are in favour of forcing our Church to say what as yet she does not say, I believe they will not succeed in putting a new yoke upon our necks. I believe the English clergy will assert the freedom which God has given them,—the freedom of being silent where He has not spoken, being well assured that if they do not, they will soon be compelled to keep silence when He has spoken, nay, to deny that He wishes that all men should be saved, though He has declared that He does.

In the present Edition of these Essays, I have altered some passages which were said to be obscure, and have erased some which have caused
unnecessary offence. In the Essay on the Atonement, besides some changes in my own language, I have made one omission with very great reluctance. I had quoted the beautiful Collect for the Sunday before Easter. I quoted it simply to show, by the most living instance, that the Church referred the Sacrifice of Christ to the 'tender love of God to mankind.' I never even alluded to the clause which speaks of our 'following the example of his great humility,' not because I did not prize it, or believe that it stood in the closest connexion with the rest of the prayer, but because it did not concern the special truth of which I was speaking. Yet I read with my own eyes, in one of our religious newspapers, the charge that I had appealed to this Collect because I regarded Christ's death not as a sacrifice, but simply as an example: and because I wished to fix that opinion upon the Church! As the Church believes, and as I believe, in Christ's Sacrifice, not in a narrower or more 'attenuated' sense than that in which this religious newspaper believes it, but in an infinitely wider and deeper sense,—as I believe it to be a real sacrifice made by the Son, of His whole spirit, soul, and body, to the Father,—as I believe it is a sacri-
The Church does not maintain in one prayer, but in all its prayers, that the love of God is the only root and ground of Christ's Atonement, and that the perfect submission of the Son to the will of the Father constitutes the deepest meaning of the Sacrifice. These principles belong to the essence of our faith. In life, in death, I hope I may never abandon them or shrink from confessing them, and from repudiating any notion which sets them at nought or weakens them. I have perceived that the fact of the Atonement, which is the fact of the Gospel, is lost to numbers of people who are very earnest and who desire to be thoroughly Christian, through the restless efforts which their understandings make to apprehend the cause of it. They do not believe the Atonement, but an explanation of the Atonement which they have received from others or devised for themselves. And so they do not ac-
tually feed upon the Sacrifice which is given for
the life of the world, but on some dry notions about
the Sacrifice, which cannot give life to any human
being. But this is not all. These explanations,
being exceedingly plausible, seeming wonderfully
to conspire with the experiences of a sin-sick soul,
being such as a Heathen would use to defend the
Sacrifices which he offers to a malignant power,
come into the most frightful collision with those
which the Scripture gives for the Sacrifice where-
with God is well pleased. There may be myriads
of aspects of this cardinal doctrine which I have
perceived very imperfectly, and into which I shall
rejoice to enter more deeply. But they must be
such aspects as do not interfere with and invert
the very nature and meaning of the Sacrifice. The
more unspeakably precious we consider it to each
man and to all mankind, the more vehement shall
we be in protesting against misrepresentations of
it, which are leading more than we know or can
count, to cast it out of their thoughts altogether.

I would make a similar remark in reference to
the Essays on the Resurrection and the Judgment
Day, which I have altered very slightly. It has
been affirmed that I have sought to explain away
the doctrines of the Resurrection of the Body, and of Christ’s final Judgment; or at least, to throw an atmosphere of doubt over them. I affirm that I have endeavoured to bring forth these doctrines, which I hold to be most vital and necessary, out of the atmosphere of doubt, which popular theories, as it seems to me, have thrown over them. I do not say in any case who does or does not hold these theories, or any modification of them. But I find that they have darkened and are darkening the faith of multitudes in the articles of the Creed, and are destroying their practical effect on many more. Therefore I have spoken. Unitarians are probably less pleased with my words on these subjects than any other persons. I did not write to please them, or anybody, but to maintain what I think is the truth. And I ask any serious person whether those who say that the doctrines of the Atonement, of the Resurrection, and of the Judgment, can only be received in connexion with certain metaphysical, legal, or commercial explanations,—or I who say that they may be received simply as good news from Heaven, which suffering people on earth have need of, most deserve to be accused of Rationalism?

I have rewritten the Essay on Eternal Life and
Eternal Death, and greatly enlarged it. It has been supposed that I have argued for some mitigated notion of future punishment, as more consistent with the mercy of God than the ordinary one. To me the ordinary doctrine seems full of the most miserable mitigations and indulgences for evil. I plead for the Love of God, which resists sin, and triumphs over it, not for a mercy which relaxes the penalties of it. With continual effort, —only by the help of that revelation of God which is made in the Gospel of Christ,—I am able to believe that there is a might of Good which has overcome Evil, and does overcome it. To maintain this conviction, to believe in the Love of God, in spite of the appearances which the world presents and the reluctance of my own nature, I find to be the great fight of life; one in which we are continually baffled, but in which we must hold on, if we are not to become haters of each other, as we are always prone to be. I admire unspeakably those who can believe in the Love of God and can love their brethren, in spite of the opinion which they seem to cherish, that He has doomed them to destruction. I am sure that their faith is as much purer and stronger than mine, as it is than their
own system. But if that system does prevent me from believing that which God's word, the Gospel of Christ, the witness of my own conscience, the miseries and necessities of the universe, compel me to believe, I must throw it off. I do not call upon them to deny anything they have been wont to hold; but I call upon them to join us in acknowledging God's Love and His redemption first of all, and then to consider earnestly what is or is not compatible with that acknowledgment. As it is, we are desired to believe the popular tenet respecting the future condition of the world absolutely, and God's love to mankind in a sense. I appeal to every devout man, to every preacher of the Gospel especially, dares he adopt this order in his convictions? Must he not confess that he has no good news for mankind if he does?

I have expanded the Theological part of the Essay on Regeneration, and have added to that on the Trinity some observations respecting the Unitarian notions of Prayer. I have also added some passages at the end of the Essay on Inspiration, the purpose of which has been perhaps more misunderstood than that of any in the book. It is against the very low notion of the worth of the Bible and of the nature of Inspiration which seems to prevail in the religious
world, that I have there protested. I hold the Bible to be the Book of Life; I see it turned into a Book of Death. It is treated in a way in which no other book is treated. The divine method of it is despised; it is reduced into a collection of broken sentences; these are used in the most reckless irreverent manner by any one who has a notion of his own to defend, or a notion of an adversary to attack. The posture of students and learners towards it is abandoned by those who yet profess to accept it as their only guide and authority. There must be something very wrong in our belief, when this is our habitual practice. Have we not lost the faith in Inspiration, while we have been talking about it and inventing theories about it? Have we not lost our faith in the Inspirer? I trust to show shortly, in a book which I have been writing for several years on the Gospels and on the Epistles of St. Paul, that I do not receive the words of the Bible less literally, or regard it less as a whole, or submit to it less as an authority, than those who have complained of me because I cannot bear to see their sons driven into hopeless infidelity by their hard and cruel attempts to substitute a tenet concerning Inspiration for the Divine Word.

I ought not to conclude this Preface without
referring to the kindness and generosity of the new Bishop of Natal, who chose a moment when he knew that my character was in disgrace with the religious public, and when any acknowledgment of me might be perilous to him, for dedicating to me a volume of admirable Sermons. The very great delight which I felt at receiving such a testimony from such a man, would have been no compensation for my sorrow, that he should have risked his own reputation for the sake of a friend, from many of whose opinions he had expressed his dissent, if I had not seen in this act a pledge of his possessing those qualities of courage and indifference to self, which are so especially needed in a Chief Pastor of the flock, and which have very remarkably characterized our Colonial Bishops. For the events which followed this Dedication I cannot feel anything but thankfulness. Though Dr. Colenso had proved by his Sermons that he believed in the endlessness of future punishments, he had asserted most broadly and distinctly his conviction, that we are living in a world which God loves, and which Christ has redeemed, and had affirmed that this was the message which he was called to bear to the natives,
as well as to the colonists, of South Africa. Those who think that the world is not redeemed, that God's love is limited to a few, felt that a golden opportunity was afforded them of obtaining from the authorities of the English Church, a practical contradiction of the doctrines which they abhor. The attempt was made, and it failed. Bishop Colenso is permitted to carry to the English and the Zoolus, the same Gospel, which St. Paul was denounced by his countrymen as a heretic and blasphemer, for carrying to Jews and Gentiles, in Greece and Asia Minor. May the message be as mighty and effectual in the nineteenth century as it was in the first!

London, December 9th, 1853.
CONCLUDING ESSAY.

ETERNAL LIFE AND ETERNAL DEATH.

Here I might stop; for the Trinity is, as I believe, the ground on which the Church stands and on which Humanity stands; Prayer and Sacrifice are, I believe, the means whereby the Trinity is made known to us: in the Trinity I find the Love for which I have been seeking; in Prayer and Sacrifice I hold that we may become partakers of it. But here I cannot stop, for the Unitarians and multitudes who are not Unitarians, declare that all I have said is futile, for that there is another doctrine which contradicts the principle of my whole book, and yet which is as much an article of my faith as the Trinity itself. 'Your Church,' they say, 'maintains the notion of everlasting punishment after death. Consider what is included in that notion. You cannot thrust it into a corner as you might naturally wish to do. You cannot mention it as something by the way. If it is anything, it is fundamental. Theologians and popular preachers treat it as such. They start from it; they put it forth as the ground of their exhortations,
The world, according to them, lies under a sentence of condemnation. An immense—an incalculable—majority of all that have been born into it, must, if their statements mean anything, if they are not merely idle frivolous rhetoric, be hopelessly doomed. Their object is to point out how a few, a very few, may be saved from the sentence. All their doctrines therefore have this centre. Let them speak of Atonement, Justification, Regeneration;—these are only different names to denote the methods by which certain men may have the comfort of feeling that they are not sharers in the condition to which God has consigned our race.

What is most appalling, the objector continues, to a person who takes the words of Scripture literally, is that the passages from which the proofs of this doctrine are derived, are found in the New Testament, in the discourses of Christ himself. Dr. John Owen especially draws the attention of his readers to the fact, that here, and not in the Old Testament, which is supposed to contain the severer and sterner religion of the Law, the sentences concerning eternal perdition occur. There can be no doubt, that his observation is true, whatever reason may be given for it. Our fathers used to think that they could explain away such passages by giving a different force to the word Eternal, when it is connected with blessedness, and when it is connected with punishment. But such
'philological tricks will not answer in our day. We feel the necessity of giving up the passages, of supposing that they were not spoken by Him to whom they are attributed, or that He was mistaken. But you dare not take that course.'

'It is a discouraging circumstance also,' they say, that in respect of this tenet, theology has not gained by the Reformation, but has lost considerably. The belief in hopeless punishment belongs, no doubt, as much to Romanism as to Protestantism. But how much are its extreme horrors mitigated by the admission of a Purgatory for a great multitude of human souls! To whatever abuses that notion may have been subjected by superstition or cupidity, it is surely milder and more humane than the decree which goes forth from so many pulpits in our land; Understand, sinners, whatever be your offences, whatever your temptations, the same irremediable anguish is prepared for you all. Even in the Inferno of the Florentine poet, though all hope was to forsake those who entered it, what traces there are of recollection and affection, what hints of a moral improvement through suffering! With us, there is only one dark abyss of torment and sin for all who, in the course of threescore years and ten, have not been brought to believe things which they could not believe or have never learnt, who have not abstained from acts which they have been taught from their youth up to commit.'
'Once more;' they proceed, 'experience, which is said ' to teach individuals a little—nations almost nothing— ' has taught theologians, it seems, to be more outrageous, ' more contemptuous to human sympathies and con- ' science, than they used to be when all men bowed ' the neck to their yoke. This tenet must be accepted ' with greater precision now than in the days gone by. ' The Evangelical Alliance, longing to embrace all ' Protestant schools and parties, makes it one of its nine ' articles of faith, one of those first principles which are ' involved in the very nature of a comprehensive Christi- ' anity. It is clear, that they are not solitary in their ' wish to give the doctrine of everlasting punishment ' this character. Your orthodox English Churchmen, ' though they may dissent from some of their opinions ' as too wide, will join heart and soul with them, whenever they are narrow and exclusive. They may suffer ' doubts and modifications in some points; on this, be ' sure, they will demand simple unqualified acquiescence.'

These statements may be heard in all circles, from young and old, from men and women, from persons longing to believe, from those who are settled down into indifference. Those who know, say that they are producing infidelity in the highest classes;—hard-working clergymen in the Metropolis can bear witness that they supply the most staple arguments to those who are preaching infidelity among the lowest. How impossible it is that I can pass them by, every one must
CONCESSIONS TO THE OBJECTOR.

perceive. They affect not one, but each of the principles which I have been discussing. If all these assertions are true, all that I have written is false. I am bound, therefore, to examine which of them have a foundation and which have not. For no one can doubt that there is a truth in some of them which cannot be gainsaid.

I. I admit, without the slightest hesitation, that there is very much more about Eternity and eternal punishment in the Gospel than in the Law, in the words of Christ than in the books of Moses and the Prophets. Let that point be well recollected and carefully reflected upon, in connexion with the opinion which all in some way or other entertain, in some language or other express, that the New Testament is more completely a revelation of the Love of God than the Old is. The two assertions must be reconciled. We cannot go on repeating them both, dwelling upon them both, drawing arguments from them both, while yet we feel them to be incompatible or contradictory. Let it be further conceded at once, that we cannot honestly get rid of this contradiction by attaching two different meanings to the word ἀιῶνος in different applications. The subjects which it qualifies cannot affect the sense we put upon it. If we turn it the least awry to meet our convenience, we deal unfaithfully with the book which we profess to take as our guide.

Starting from these premises, let us consider why it is
that the New Testament has more to do with Eternity than the Old. I think no Christian will differ very widely from me when I answer, 'it is because the living ' and eternal God is more fully and perfectly revealed in ' the one than in the other.' In both He is discovering Himself to men; in both He is piercing through the mists which conceal Him from them. But in the one He is making Himself known chiefly in His relations to the visible economy of the world; in the other He is exhibiting His own inward nature, and is declaring Himself as He is in Him who is the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person. Whenever the word 'Eternal' is used, then, in the New Testament, it ought first, by all rules of reason, to be considered in reference to God. Its use when it is applied to Him, must determine all its other uses. There must be no shrinking from this rule, no efforts to evade the force of it; for this is what we agreed to condemn in the Unitarians and Universalists of the last age, that they changed the force of the adjective at their pleasure, so that it might not mean the same in reference to punishment as to life. How can we carry out this rule? Shall we say that 'Eternal means, in reference to God, 'without beginning or end'? How then can we affix that meaning to 'Eternal, when we are speaking of man's bliss or misery? Is that without beginning as well as without end? 'Oh 'no! you must leave out the beginning. That of course 'has nothing to do with this case.' Who told you so?
How dare you play thus fast and loose with God's word? How dare you fix the standard by which the signification of a word is to be judged, and reject that very standard a moment after?

But are there no better reasons why we should not affix this meaning, 'without beginning and end,' to the word *aiōnios* when it is applied in the New Testament to God? I quite agree that such a meaning might have seemed very natural to an ordinary Greek. The word might have been used in that sense by a classical author, or in colloquial language, without the least impropriety. But just the lesson which God had been teaching men by the revelation of Himself was, that mere negatives are utterly unfit to express His being, His substance. From the very first, He had taught His chosen people to look upon Him as the righteous Being, to believe that all their righteousness was grounded on His. He had promised them a more complete knowledge of His righteousness. Every true Israelite had looked to this knowledge as His reward, as the deliverance from his enemies, as the satisfaction of his inmost longings, as the great blessing to his nation and to mankind, as well as to himself. His Righteousness, His Truth, His Love, the Jew came more and more to perceive, were the substantial and eternal things, by seeking which he was delivered from the worship of Gods of Time and Sense, as well as from the more miserable philosophical abstraction of a God who is
merely a negative of time; without beginning and without end. Therefore, when the Son was revealed, this is the language in which the beloved disciple speaks, 'The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and we declare unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and which has been manifested unto us.' This is but a specimen of his uniform language. Yes, and I will be bold to say that his language interprets all the language of the New Testament. The eternal life is the righteousness, and truth, and love of God which are manifested in Christ Jesus; manifested to men that they may be partakers of them, that they may have fellowship with the Father and with the Son. This is held out as the eternal blessedness of those who seek God and love Him. This it is, of which our Lord must have spoken in His last prayer, if he who reports that prayer did not misinterpret His meaning.

Is it inconsistent, then, with the general object and character of the New Testament, as the manifestation of His love, that Eternity in all its aspects should come before us there as it does nowhere else, that there we should be taught what it means? Is it inconsistent with its scope and object that there, too, we should be taught what the horror and awfulness is, of being without this love, of setting ourselves in opposition to it? Those who would not own Christ in His brethren, who did not visit Him when they were sick and in prison, go away, He said, into eternal or everlasting punishment. Are
we affixing a new meaning to these words, or the very meaning which the context demands, the only meaning which is consistent with the force that is given to the adjective by our Lord and His apostles elsewhere, if we say that the eternal punishment is the punishment of being without the knowledge of God, who is love, and of Jesus Christ who has manifested it; even as eternal life is declared to be the having the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ? If it is right, if it is a duty, to say that Eternity in relation to God has nothing to do with time or duration, are we not bound to say that also in reference to life or to punishment, it has nothing to do with time or duration?

II. What I have said respecting the New Testament will explain some phenomena, which have puzzled observers, in the opinions of the early Church upon this subject. Uniformity is not to be looked for. If any one expects to find that, he will be woefully disappointed. He will probably discover in all the Fathers a very strange, almost overwhelming, feeling that Christ had revealed eternity, the eternal world, the eternal God, as they had never been revealed before, that a quite new blessedness had been disclosed to men, that there was a tremendous disclosure of evil correspondent to that. But as in every case the wisest teachers of these centuries were but trying to catch the meaning of our Lord and His Apostles, some seeing it on one side, some on another;—some through the refracting medium of a
heathen education, some through the Jewish Scriptures, some through their own conflicts and the conflicts of their time; — so was it here. One caught at this aspect of eternity, one at that. Here was an eloquent preacher who drew pictures of miseries to come, and mixed together material images with spiritual ideas. There was a Universalist who dwelt on the possibility of men being restored after ages of suffering to the favour of God. There was one who dreamed of alternations of misery and blessedness. There were those who learnt in the dreadful strife with Manicheism the real distinction of time and eternity, of life and death. There were those who, troubling themselves less with questions respecting the future state of men, dwelt on the eternity of the Father and the co-eternity of the Son, and showed how needful it was that no notions of time or duration should intrude themselves into such mysteries. The influence of these last men upon the Church was great; so far as fixing the language of her formularies in questions respecting the distinction of temporal and eternal things, it was paramount. Even their anathemas against opponents, however reckless, as they pointed to a disbelief which concerned the knowledge of God, kept up the feeling in the Church that that knowledge constitutes Eternal Life, and that the loss of it is Eternal Death. But the practical teachers naturally gave the form to the popular divinity. It is only wonderful that that divinity should have
preserved so spiritual a tone as it did; that a preacher like Chrysostom, for instance, should have spoken of the second death as the death of Sin, the loss of the moral being, when he must have been continually tempted to think that the coarse reprobates of Antioch and Constantinople needed only, and could only understand, threats of material brimstone. But God did not suffer the champion whom He had educated to be the opposer of courts and empresses, habitually to adopt the low policy which is so suitable to them, so shameful in the minister of Truth.

Very different was the behaviour of the bishops in the city which he ruled so righteously, a century and a half after his death. Yielding to the intrigues of a successor of Eudoxia,—in comparison with whom she was an angel,—a woman who had the greatest interest, one would have thought, in believing that the love of God might convert even the lowest victims of lust and hatred into His servants and children,—these reverend Fathers consigned Origen to endless perdition because he had held the opinion that his fellow-beings were not intended for it. This example how far morality was interested in such decrees,—how much of grovelling submission on the part of ecclesiastics to civil rulers was the cause of them,—might have led the Western Church, which had other reasons for not esteeming very highly the orthodoxy of Justinian and Theodora, to pause before they advanced in the same course. But barbarians were
crowding into the fold of Christ, who brought with them all the dreams of a Walhalla. To govern was the function of the Latin Church; theology was to be used as an instrument of government. Distinctions, once established, were to be carefully defended and enforced. But where none existed, the Church was to prove its capacity of embracing the nations, by adapting herself, with wonderful facility, to the superstitions which she found among them, by incorporating them into her own body of doctrine, by stooping to material influences and artifices, for the sake of moving those who were supposed to have little or nothing in them which could respond to a spiritual message. To a superficial and yet an honest observer, the whole course of Papal history looks merely like a series of these politic appeals to the appetites of the lower nature, for the sake of bribing them not to instigate crimes, or of enlisting them in the service of the Church,—nothing but a series of testimonies what crimes must be the result of such bribery, what a service that must be which secures the aid of such mercenaries. The efforts to materialize the terrors of the future world, and to make those terrors the great motives to obedience,—with the obedience which was actually produced by them,—at once suggest themselves as the most startling and decisive points in the evidence. The vision of a purgatory from which men might be delivered by prayers or by money, coming so much more near to the conscience, suggesting so much more
practical methods of proceeding than the mere distant background of hopeless torment, offers itself as the natural product of a scheme, devised to act upon the fears and hopes of man, not drawn from the word of God. But a more careful student is not satisfied with this statement of the case, though he is forced to confess that it is true. He perceives that there were words belonging to the popular language of the Latins, not derived from the Greek, which showed that the doctrine of the New Testament respecting eternal life and death, had still a hold upon the conscience of the Western Church.

What is Perdition but a loss? What is eternal damnation, but the loss of a good which God had revealed to His creatures, of which He had put them in possession? What a witness there lay in these words, even when thrown about by the most random rhetorician, against the notion of a mere future prize to be won by men who could purchase it by sacrifices, of a future misery which God had designed for His creatures! And the witness was not inoperative. The noblest Doctors of the Middle Ages did believe this to be the meaning of all which they dreaded for themselves and for mankind. They did believe that Love was at the root of all things, and that to lose Love, was to lose all things. This was the ground of their most passionate exhortations, whatever forms they might take. Whatever were the crudities of their intellects, this was the undoubting
testimony of their hearts. It was this inward conviction which made them tolerant of the idea of Purgatory—which allowed them to wink with a dangerous 'œconomy' at what they must have known were the abominations connected with it. They were afraid to limit the love which they felt had been so mighty for them and for the world. They did not dare to measure the sacrifice of Christ and His intercession by their notions. The deep conviction which they had of Evil as opposed to the nature of God, made them shudder as they looked down into that abyss. They would rather think of material punishments which might, elsewhere as here, be God's instruments of acting upon the spirit to awaken it out of death. The great poem of the Florentine brings out this deeper theology of the Middle Ages, in connexion with all the forms in which it was hidden. The loss of intellectual life, of the vision of God, is with him the infinite horror of hell. Men are in eternal misery, because they are still covetous, proud, loveless. The evil priest or pope is in the worst circle of all, because he has been brought most closely into contact with spiritual and eternal things. Even here, there are all varieties of evil, approximations to penitence and good. The purgatory is the ascent, not out of material torments, but out of moral evil, into a higher moral state. The Paradise is the consummation of that state in the vision of perfect truth and love. Those who dwell there, are ever looking down upon the poor wanderers below.
PERIOD BEFORE THE REFORMATION.

aware of their strifes, choosing guides for them,—it may be some poet of the old world,—who shall be helpers in their perplexity, who shall enable them to have a clearer vision of the order which lies beneath the confusions of the world, of the divine government to which all human governments must submit, and by which they must be judged. There may be all material accidents about the poem, derived from the age in which it was written; but that this is its theological substance, I do not think any considerate reader has ever doubted.

But whatever right we have to detect that theology, through its external coverings, in the writings of divines or of patriots, the two were inextricably blended in the popular as well as the scholastical teaching, and the darkness was endeavouring more and more to draw down the light into itself. In the period between Dante and the Reformation, there were many in Germany, in England, in France,—one noble Dominican at least in his own Florence,—who were labouring to disentangle the threads, and to teach Christendom that moral evil is the eternal misery from which they need to be delivered, the righteousness of God the good which they have to attain. But dilettantipopes, who believed nothing and therefore were desirous that the world which they ruled should believe everything, who promoted letters by denying all knowledge to the people, who built churches to him who they said was the rock of the Church, by the help of missionaries who proved that it stood
upon no rock but money,—these popes were consummating all the confusions that had been in the theology of the Church before; were establishing, once for all, the doctrine that the thing men have to dread is punishment and not sin, and that: the greatest reward which the highest power in the Church can hold out is deliverance from punishment, not deliverance from sin. Let us understand it well; it was against this doctrine that Luther protested in his theses at Wittenberg. Everything in these theses, everything in his subsequent career, turns upon the assertion that a man requires and desires punishment, not indulgence, when he has done evil; that, if you cannot free him from evil you do him no service; that Tetzel had therefore not only been robbing people of their money, had not only been uttering wild and blasphemous words about his own powers and the powers of those who sent him, but that he had been promising that which it is not good for a man to have, which a man should most earnestly pray not to have, but to escape from, if it could be given him for nothing. That which we call the great proclamation of the Reformation, that a man is justified by faith alone, becomes intelligible through this principle, and is not intelligible without it. Luther declared that what man wants is freedom from sin and not freedom from punishment, that righteousness is the reward we crave for. And then he said, 'This freedom, which no pope can ' give you, this reward which you can acquire by no
efforts and labours of yours, God has given you freely in Christ. Believing in Christ, the righteous One, you rise out of your own sins, you become righteous men, you are able to do righteous acts.' And this doctrine, which we are told in our days is so fine and abstract, that no men can listen to it or care for it, except some people of delicate and tender consciences, went through the length and breadth of Europe, spoke to the hearts of the commonest handicraftsmen and labourers, was recognised by them as the message which they were waiting to hear, because it enabled them to obtain a moral standing-ground and a moral life, which threats of future punishments and hopes of outward rewards had never won for them.

The consequence of this doctrine where it was believed, was unquestionably to bring out the contrast between the good and evil state so distinctly and sharply, that the notion of any intermediate state between these, was vehemently rejected. Hell as the state of unrighteousness, Heaven as the state of righteousness, Earth as the battle-field between the two, filled and possessed the mind. Even if purgatory had not been so connected with the system of indulgences, it could scarcely have found its place among the thoughts which were then driving all others before them. In the great Jesuit reaction of the sixteenth century, it recovered its hold upon numbers who had been dispossessed of it, because the social feelings and sympathies of men, and
their sense of an intimate connexion between the visible and the invisible world, for which the Middle Age theology, amidst all its confusions, had borne witness, had met with a very inadequate recognition in the different schools of the Reformation. But though this was the case, it is not true that Protestantism has pronounced more positively than Romanism did upon the future condition of men. So far as our own Church is concerned, the assertion is not only wide of the truth, but is directly in opposition to it.

In the first draft of our Articles, in the reign of Edward VI., one was introduced, the forty-second, which contained a decree upon this subject. It was expressed in the most moderate terms. It merely declared that 'They also are worthy of condemnation who endeavour at this time to restore the 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 God's justice.'

After what I have said of the character of the Reformation, it cannot be wonderful that those who had entered most into the spirit of it, should be most anxious to show that pain did not make amends for sin, and that the misery of sin does not consist in an arbitrary penalty affixed to it by God, who has sent His Son to make men righteous. On these grounds the Divines of Edward VI.'s reign might easily have excused themselves to their contemporaries, and even to their successors, for
adopting an Article which had already been sanctioned at Augsburg. Nevertheless it has been contended, with great reasonableness, from the expression 'at this time,' and from two other Articles which are found in the same draft, that this sentence was devised to meet a special emergency. The Anabaptists, among a number of other tenets, all of which had taken a sensual and a revolutionary form, had propounded some theory like that which the Reformers here denounced. Every one knows how eager Lutherans, Calvinists, and English Reformers were to disclaim sympathy with those who had done so much to make the new doctrines odious in the eyes of Europe. It was very likely indeed that this eagerness should be exhibited in any careful digest of their own doctrines. But the dread of the danger had subsided in the time of Queen Elizabeth. It had not, indeed, so subsided that the framers of the Articles in that reign thought it safe to omit a special denunciation of the doctrine of community of goods. But they could venture, and they seized the privilege, to strike out the forty-second Article.

This statement is not mine. It is the justification which is offered for the compilers of our Articles, by those who would have wished them to dogmatize most peremptorily on the subject. Taking their explanation, the evidence that the members of the Church of England have perfect freedom on this subject, is irresistible. It is scarcely possible to invent a case in one's
mind, which would be equally strong. Mere silence might be accounted for. But here is omission, careful considerate omission, in a document for future times, of that which had been too hastily admitted, to meet an emergency of that time. The omission was made by persons who probably were strong in the belief that the punishment of wicked men is endless, but who did not dare to enforce that opinion upon others; above all, who did not dare to say that the words Eternal and Everlasting, which they knew had such a profound and sacred meaning in reference to God Himself, and to the revelation of His Son, could be shrivelled and contracted into this signification.

III. I have answered two of the objections at some length. I have considered how it is that the New Testament speaks more of eternal life and of eternal punishment than the Old; how the usage of the words in the New Testament explains that fact, and is explained by it; how, instead of interfering with the assertion of St. Paul, that it is the will of God, that all men should be saved, and of St. John, that God is love; without these words, the others would be inexplicable. Next, the charge that there has been a tendency throughout the history of the Church to determine the limits of God’s love to men, and to speak of all but a few as hopelessly lost, but that this tendency has been much more marked and strong in Protestants than in Romanists, so that we are much more
bound by the opinion than they were,—I have met by a sketch of the history of opinion upon this subject, which, however slight, I believe is accurate, and will bear examination. And I have come to the conclusion, that the deepest and most essential part of the theology previous to the Reformation, bore witness to the fact that eternal life is the knowledge of God who is Love, and eternal death the loss of that knowledge; that it was the superficial theology,—that which belonged to the Papal system as such,—which interfered with this belief; that it was the great effort of the Reformation to sweep away that superficial theology, in order that Righteousness and Evil, Love and Hatred, might stand out as the two eternal opposites; the one as the eternal life which God presents to men, the other as the eternal death which they choose for themselves, and which consists in being at war with His love. I have now to consider the third statement, that, whatever may have been the case at the time of the Reformation, theologians have in our age become entirely positive and dogmatic upon this subject; that upon it they can brook no doubt or diversity of opinion; that in fact, they hold that a man is as much bound to say 'I believe in the endless punishment of the greater portion of mankind' as 'I believe in God the Father, in God the Son, and in God the Holy Ghost.'

I wish that I felt as able to controvert these propositions as the others. But I am bound to admit that the
evidence for them is very strong. Perhaps I may be permitted to trace some of the causes which have led to this state of feeling. They will account, I think, for the existence of it, at least under certain modifications, in very good men. They will explain what are likely to be the issues of it if it is not counteracted. They may help to show English Churchmen, and especially English Clergymen, what their standing-ground is, and what their obligations are, if they are really stewards of the everlasting Gospel.

1. Every one must be aware how much the philosophical teaching under which we have grown up, unconsciously modifies our thoughts and opinions on a multitude of subjects which we suppose to be beyond its range. Luther's first battles, as his letters show us, were with Aristotle: he found how much the habits of thought learnt from him, and consecrated in the schools, interfered with the understanding of St. Paul. He wanted his pupils to look directly at the sense of Scripture; they came with certain preconceived notions which they imputed to the Sacred writers; any one who construed them without reference to these notions was supposed to depart from their natural, simple meaning. It was not that Aristotle might not be an exceedingly useful teacher for certain purposes; but what Bacon discovered to be true of him in the investigation of Nature, Luther discovered to be true in the investigation of Scripture. His logical determinations
and arrangements, even his accurate observations, hindered the student, who was not to bring wisdom but to seek it.

What Aristotle was to the German in the sixteenth century, John Locke is to an Englishman in the nineteenth. His dogmas have become part of our habitual faith; they are accepted without study, as a tradition. In this respect he resembles his predecessor. Proscribed at first by divines for the Essay on the Understanding more than for his politics or his interpretations of Scripture, just as Aristotle was proscribed by popes in the twelfth century,—divines now assume that Essay to be the rule and measure of thought and language, even as in the thirteenth century the Stagirite Metaphysics became the rule and measure of thought and language to all orthodox schoolmen. But there is this difference. Aristotle belongs merely to the schools; Locke connects the schools with the world. He found a number of mystifications which doctors were canonising. He courageously applied himself to the removal of them. The conscience of ordinary men recognised him as their champion. He spoke to the love of the simple and practical, in which lies the strength of the English character. He asked men who were using phrases which they had inherited, and to which they attached no meaning, to give an account of them, and if they could not, to surrender them. It was evident that he had an immense advantage over his
opponents, because he understood himself, and because he had determined to be faithful to his own convictions. He succeeded in persuading those who believed very little, not to pretend to believe more than they did. Who can doubt that this was a good and great service to mankind? But it involved this consequence. If men should chance hereafter to discover that some of the principles held by their ancestors, had a substance and meaning in them, however little that substance and meaning might be represented in the dialect of the day, there would be considerable difficulty in recovering the possession. It would be supposed that the good sense of a great man had settled the question for ever, and those who knew little how it had been settled or what there was to settle, would be just as zealous in discountenancing and ridiculing any further investigation, as if they were bowing to a dictator, not accepting help from one who had protested against dictation.

When any one ventures to say to an English audience, that Eternity is not a mere negation of time, that it denotes something real, substantial, before all time, he is told at once that he is departing from the simple intelligible meaning of words; that he is introducing novelties; that he is talking abstractions. This language is perfectly honest in the mouths of those who use it. But they do not know where they learnt it. They did not get it from peasants, or women, or children. They did not get it from the Bible. They got it from Locke.
And if I find that I cannot interpret the language and thoughts of peasants, and women, and children, and that I cannot interpret the plainest passages of the Bible or the whole context of it, while I look through the Locke spectacles,—I must cast them aside. I am sure Locke would wish me to do so, for I believe he was a thoroughly honest man, and one who desired nothing less in the world, than that he should become an oppressor to the spirits which he supposed he was setting free.

Here then is one cause of our present state of feeling respecting the question which I am now considering; here is a proof how much that state of feeling must affect a multitude of subjects, besides that of everlasting punishment. 'When the Scriptures speak of Eternity they must mean endlessness; they can mean nothing else. To be sure they do mean something else, when they speak of God's eternity; but we have only to put in also "without beginning" to that, and all is right.' The divines who use such language, are supported by those who most object to the conclusion which they deduce from it. The old Unitarian cannot give up Locke. The orthodox Dissenters have always supposed that he must be right, because Churchmen disliked him for his notions of government and toleration. Practical men suspect that some German mysticism must be near, when his decrees are disputed. And those who have no dread of this mysticism, and who know that
the explorers of other nations have passed beyond the Hercules pillars, within which our navigators confine themselves, and have even affirmed the existence of islands and continents where Locke supposed there was nothing but ocean, yet ask 'what that has to do with ' old Hebrews like Paul or John? of course they knew 'nothing about these islands and continents. The 'coarsest, most material view of things is most suitable to them.' Nearly all people therefore in this country, who speak on such matters, are agreed that the words of the Gospel, if they were taken strictly and fairly, must have the hardest (I do not say the most awful, for I believe the sense I contend for is much more awful) meaning which has ever been given them. Only the tens and hundreds of thousands who cannot speak, dissent from that decision.

2. However hard and exclusive the Romish Church may have been,—though the great complaint we make of her is, that she excommunicates those who are members of the body of Christ as much as she is,—it is impossible not to see that she takes up a position which looks, at least, much more comprehensive than that of the Protestant bodies. She assumes the Church to represent mankind. The day before Good Friday, the Pope blesses the universe. The sacrifice which she presents day by day, is declared to be that sacrifice which was made for the sins of the whole world. We believe that the strongest witness we have to bear is, that the sacrifice
was made once for all; that our acts do not complete it, but are only possible because it is complete, that they are grounded upon our right to present that continually to the Father, with which He has declared Himself well pleased. We ought, therefore, to assert the redemption of mankind more distinctly than they do. But it is clear that in practice we do not seem to the world to do so, nor seem to ourselves to do so. The distinctiveness, the individuality, of Protestantism is its strength, as I have maintained before in these Essays. But close to that strength is its greatest weakness, that which we all feel,—which all, in some sort, confess,—which is the root of our sectarianism—which is continually kept alive by it; and yet, which is destroying the very bodies that it has created. What is the consequence to theology? The religious men, the saved men, are looked upon as the exceptions to a rule; the world is fallen, outcast, ruined; a few Christians, about the signs and tokens of whose Christianity each sect differs, have been rescued from the ruin. I have had to speak in almost every page of this book, respecting the habit of mind to which this opinion appertains; and to show how it is at war with all the articles of the Christian faith. I only wish to point out here, how it bears upon the subject of everlasting salvation and damnation. Damnation does not mean what its etymology would lead us to suppose that it means, what it certainly did mean to the Church in former days, amidst all its per-
plexities and confusions. It is not the loss of a mighty
gift which has been bestowed upon the race. Men are
not regarded as rejecting the counsel of God against them-
selves. God is represented as the destroyer. Nay,
Divines go the length of asserting—even of taking it
for granted,—that our Lord Himself taught this lesson
to His disciples when He said, And I say unto you my
friends, Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and
after that, have no more that they can do; but I will fore-
warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which, after he
hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto
you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two
farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God.
But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.
Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many
sparrows. We are come to such a pass, as actually to
suppose that Christ tells those whom He calls His
friends, not to be afraid of the poor and feeble enemies
who can only kill the body, but of that greater enemy
who can destroy their very selves, and that this enemy is
—not the devil, not the spirit who is going about seeking
whom he may devour, not him who was a murderer
from the beginning,—but that God who cares for the
sparrows! They are to be afraid lest He who num-
bers the hairs of their head should be plotting their
ruin! Does not this interpretation, which has become so
familiar that one hears it without even a hint that there
is another, show us on the edge of what an abyss we are
standing, how likely we are to confound the Father of lights with the Spirit of darkness?

While this temper of mind continues, it is absolutely inevitable that we should not merely look upon the immense majority of our fellow-creatures as doomed to perdition, but that we should regard the Gospel as itself pronouncing their doom. The message which, according to this view of the case, Christ brings from Heaven to earth is, 'Your Father has created multitudes whom He means to perish for ever and ever. By my agony and bloody sweat, by my cross and passion, I have induced Him in the case of an inconceivably small minority to forego that design.' Dare we state that proposition to ourselves, dare we get up into a pulpit and preach it? But if we dare not, seeing it is a matter of life and death, and there must be no trifling or equivocation about it, let us distinctly tell ourselves what we do mean, and if we find that a blasphemous thought has mingled with our belief hitherto, let us confess that thought to God, and ask Him to deliver us from it.

3. I cannot wonder that Divines, even those who would shrink with horror from such a view of God's character and His Gospel as this, should crave for some more distinct apprehensions, nay even statements respecting eternal punishment, than might perhaps be needful in former days. It is quite clear, that the words which go forth from our pulpits on the subject, have no effect at all upon cultivated men of any class, except the effect of
making them regard our other utterances with indifference and disbelief. They do not think that we put faith in our own denunciations. They ask, how it is possible for us to go about and enjoy life if we do; how, if we do, we can look out upon the world that is around us and the world that has been, without cursing the day on which we were born? They say that we pronounce a general sentence, and then explain it away in each particular case; they say, that we believe that God condemns the world generally, but that under cover of certain phrases which may mean anything or nothing, we can prove that, on the whole, He rather intends it good than ill. They say, that we call upon them to praise Him and give Him thanks, and that what we mean is, that they are to testify emotions towards Him which they do not feel, and which His character, as we represent it, cannot inspire, in order to avert His wrath from them. Cultivated men, I say, repeat these things to one another. If we do not commonly hear them, it is because they count it rude ever to tell us what they think. Poor men say these same things in their own assemblies with more breadth and honesty, not wishing us to be ignorant of their opinions respecting us. And though these considerations, so far as they concern ourselves, may not move us, how can we help being moved by their effect on those who utter them? If we believe that the words Eternal Damnation or Death have a very terrible significance, such as the Bible tells us they have, is it nothing that
they should be losing all their significance for our countrymen? Is it nothing that they should seem to them mere idle nursery-words that frighten children, but with which men have nothing to do? Is it nothing, that a vague dream of bliss hereafter into which righteousness and goodness do not enter, which has no relation to God, should float before the minds of numbers, but that it should have just as little power to awaken them to any higher or better life, as the dread of the future has to keep them from any evil?

The members of the Evangelical Alliance perceive, more or less clearly, that this is the state of things which has increased and is increasing, among us. They hear of a vague Universalism being preached from some pulpits in America and on the Continent. They think that notion must encourage sinners to suppose that a certain amount of punishment will be enough to clear off their scores, and to procure them ultimate bliss. 'You are relaxing the strictness of your statements,' they say, 'just when they need to be more stringent, because all moral obligations are becoming laxer, because people are evidently casting off their fear, without obtaining anything better in the place of it.' Therefore they conclude that such freedom must be checked. It cannot answer, they think, now, however it may have answered heretofore, to leave any loop-hole for doubt about the endless punishment of the wicked.

I have stated the arguments which I think may have
inclined worthy and excellent men to arrive at this conclusion; though I believe a more fatal one, one more certain to undermine the truth which is in their hearts, and which they are seeking to defend, cannot be imagined. We do, it seems to me, need to have a more distinct and awful idea of eternal death and eternal punishment than we have. I use both words, Death and Punishment, that I may not appear to shrink from the sense which is contained in either. Punishment, I believe, seems to most men less dreadful than death, because they cannot separate it from a punisher, because they believe, however faintly, that He who is punishing them is a Father. The thought of His ceasing to punish them, of His letting them alone, of His leaving them to themselves, is the real, the unutterable horror. A man may be living without God in the world, he may be trembling at His Name, sometimes wishing that He did not exist; and yet if you told him that he was going where there would be no God, no one to watch over him, no one to care for him, the news would be almost intolerable. We do shrink from this; all men, whatever they may fancy, are more appalled at the thoughts of being friendless, homeless, fatherless, than at any outward terrors you can threaten them with. I know well how the conscience confuses this anticipation with that of meeting God, with being brought face to face with Him. The mixture of feelings adds infinitely to the horror of them. There is a sense of wrath abiding on
the spirit which has refused the yoke of love. This is one part of the misery. There is a sense of loneliness and atheism. This is another. And surely this, this is the bottomless pit which men see before them, and to which they feel that they are hurrying, when they have led selfish lives, and are growing harder, and colder, and darker, every hour. Can we not tell them that it is even so, that this is the abyss of death, that second death, of which all material images offer only the faintest picture? Will not that show them more clearly what life is, the risen life, the eternal life, that which was with the Father and has been manifested to us? Will it not enable us to say, 'This life is that for which God has created man, for which He has redeemed man in His Son, which He is sending His Spirit to work out in man?' Will it not enable us to say, 'This eternal death is that from which God sent His Son to deliver men, from which He has delivered them? If they fall into it, it is because they choose it, because they embrace it, because they resist a power which is always at work to save them from it.' By delivering such a message as this to men, should we not be doing more to make them aware how the revelation of God's righteousness for the redemption of sinners is at the same time the revelation of the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness? Would not such a message show that a Gospel of eternal love must bring out more clearly than any mere law can, that state which is the resistance to it
and the contradiction of it? But would not such a message at the same time present itself to the conscience of men not as an outrage on their experience, but as the faithful interpreter of it, not as disproving everything that they have dreamed of the willingness of God to save them, but as proving that He is willing and able to save them to the very uttermost?

Suppose instead of taking this method of asserting the truth of all God's words, the most blessed and the most tremendous, we reject the wisdom of our forefathers and enact an article declaring that all are heretics and deniers of the truth, who do not hold that Eternal means endless, and that there cannot be a deliverance from eternal punishment. What is the consequence? Simply this, I believe: the whole Gospel of God is set aside. The state of eternal life and eternal death is not one we can refer only to the future, or that we can in any wise identify with the future. Every man who knows what it is to have been in a state of sin, knows what it is to have been in a state of death. He cannot connect that death with time; he must say that Christ has brought him out of the bonds of eternal death. Throw that idea into the future and you deprive it of all its reality, of all its power. I know what it means all too well while you let me connect it with my present and personal being, with the pangs of conscience which I suffer now. It becomes a mere vague dream and shadow to me, when you project it into a distant world.
And if you take from me the belief that God is always righteous, always maintaining a fight with evil, always seeking to bring His creatures out of it, you take everything from me, all hope now, all hope in the world to come. Atonement, Redemption, Satisfaction, Regeneration, become mere words to which there is no counterpart in reality.

I ask no one to pronounce, for I dare not pronounce myself, what are the possibilities of resistance in a human will to the loving will of God. There are times when they seem to me—thinking of myself more than of others—almost infinite. But I know that there is something which must be infinite. I am obliged to believe in an abyss of love which is deeper than the abyss of death: I dare not lose faith in that love. I sink into death, eternal death, if I do. I must feel that this love is compassing the universe. More about it I cannot know. But God knows. I leave myself and all to Him.

It is of this faith that some are seeking to rob us. Have we made up our minds to surrender it? Have we resolved that the belief in Endless Punishment shall be not a tenet which any one is at liberty to hold,—as any one is at liberty to hold the notion that the elements are changed in the Lord's Supper, provided he does not force the notion upon me, and will come with me to eat of a feast which is beyond all notions,—but the tenet of the Church to which every other is subordinate; just as
Transubstantiation has become in the Romish Church since it has been declared essential to all who partake of the Eucharist? Let us consider, not chiefly what we are accepting, but what we are rejecting, before we tamely submit to this new imposition.

There is one other consideration which I would impress very earnestly upon my brethren—especially upon the Clergy, before I conclude. The doctrine of endless punishment is avowedly put forward as necessary for the reprobates of the world, the publicans and harlots, though perhaps religious men might dispense with it. Now, I find in our Lord's discourses, that when He used such words as these, 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?' He was speaking to religious men, to doctors of the law; but that when He went among publicans and sinners, it was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Does not this difference show that our minds are very strangely at variance with His mind? Ought not the discovery to make us think and to make us tremble? I am certain that we who are in continual contact with eternal things do require to remind ourselves what danger we are in of losing these things. Spiritual pride is the essential nature of the Devil. To be in that, is to be in the deepest hell. Oh! how little are all outward sensual abominations in comparison of this! And surely to those who are sunk in those abominations, no message will avail but that which He who knew
what was in man delivered. Freedom to the captives, opening of sight to them that are blind, a power near them which is mightier than the power of the Devil, a Father and a Son and a Spirit who are willing and able to bring them out of darkness and the shadow of death—this was the news which turned the circumcised and the uncircumcised, the children of God's covenant, those who were afar off, the corrupt men and women of the most corrupt period in history, into saints and martyrs. We deliberately proclaim that this method will not avail for us! What is this but saying that we have not faith in that which the Apostle declares to be the power of God unto salvation; that we have substituted for it an earthly and Tartarean machinery of our own? May God preserve us from such apostasy! May He teach us again by mighty evidence that when we preach the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we invade the realm of Death and Eternal Night, and open the kingdom of Heaven!
NOTE ON THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

There are those who will say, 'Your explanation of the word Eternal in the New Testament may be the true one. It certainly accords with what we have been wont to think its peculiar characteristics, better than the one which is given in popular sermons. It even seems to throw a light on a phrase which is very common in those sermons, the loss of the soul, which ought to have a spiritual sense, one would suppose, and which continually receives a very carnal and material one. And it is at least possible, that if Eternal punishment denotes in Scripture, Spiritual punishment, portions of its language which seem to contain threatenings of outward sufferings may, without losing their literal force, receive a new character by being referred to this leading principle. We can understand this; we may be glad at least to try your method, and see whether the words of Apostles and Evangelists will bear the application of it. But can you accept it honestly? Are you not tied by formularies which bind you to another maxim? Must not these be thrown aside before you can freely and fairly give a force to the words Eternal or Everlasting Punishment, Fire, Death, or Damnation, which they do not convey to the ears and eyes of ordinary hearers and readers?'

It will be perceived that I have already given a partial answer to this question. To the Articles one naturally turns for definitions of words, for assertions of doctrines. In the Articles we find no definition of the word Eternal or Everlasting. They are not merely silent on the doctrine of everlasting punishment. The framers of them have refused to pronounce upon it. But the Articles are only one part of our formularies. We have Prayers which we are expected to use
THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

daily; we have Creeds which have descended to us from the early ages—the ages of anathemas. What do these say?

First as to the Prayers. It is assumed that I am teaching a meaning of the word Eternal, which the ordinary person, the peasant or woman cannot take in, which can only be understood by the most learned theologian or metaphysician. I utterly deny the charge. I say that I have been forced into the belief of an Eternal world or kingdom, which is about us, in which we are living, which has nothing to do with time, by prayers. These common prayers which I offer up with peasants, and women, and children, have taught me that there is an Eternal Life which is emphatically a present life, (not according to a doctrine which I have listened to lately with astonishment, alike for its logic and theology—a future life begun in the present;) and that this Eternal Life consists in the knowledge of God; and that the loss of the knowledge of God is the loss of it. And I say that simple people do believe in this life, do grow in the perception of it as they pray, do cast aside, as they pray, that other notion which is so plausible to the senses and the carnal understandings, and which doctors find it so hard to escape. Negatively then, the Prayers define nothing about Eternity, for definition is not the office of prayer. Positively, they are the great means of leading thousands into a practical apprehension of that meaning of Eternity, which I have deduced from the New Testament. But these prayers carry us further still. We have no prayers, thank God! for the dead as such; how can we, when Christ says that all live to God? We have no masses for the dead. How can we? The sacrifice is complete; we cannot make it more perfect than it is. But prayer does break down the barriers between the visible and invisible world, and in prayer we cannot set it up again, however in our theories we may. Christ's sacrifice compasses the whole universe; we cannot limit the extent of its operation by measures of space or time.
When we pray for 'all men,' how dare we limit the Spirit who is teaching us to pray, and affirm that we will not pray for any but those who are in certain conditions with which we are acquainted! When we meet to hold communion with Him who has given Himself for the world, how dare we declare for whom He shall or shall not present His all-embracing sacrifice! Are we wiser or more loving than He is? Do we wish better things for mankind than He does, from whom all our good and loving thoughts proceed?

Next as to the Creeds. The negative evidence for the Apostles' and the Nicene—our daily popular Creeds—is decisive. They speak of a Judgment of quick and dead. They speak of Eternal Life. They contain no sentence about future Punishment. But the positive evidence, from their effect on those who utter them, is stronger still. They are expressions of Trust; Trust in a Father, a Son, and a Spirit. Augustine taught them to the Heathens in Africa, as witnesses that there is a God of Infinite Charity, utterly unlike the gods whom they worshipped. Our missionaries, I hope, use them for the same purpose. All who say them with their hearts feel that they are flying to God from their enemies—Death, Hell, the Devil.

But the Athanasian Creed? Does not that settle the question? I think it does. There, indeed, we find no more definition of Eternity than we do in the other Creeds. But we do find sentences about Punishment to which there is nothing corresponding elsewhere. They are such sentences as I affirm could not have been introduced and could not be repeated by any honest or Christian man, if the idea of Eternal Life, as consisting in the knowledge of God, and of Eternal Death, as consisting in the absence of that knowledge, were not practically the idea of the old time as well as of our own; however in our formal writings we may deny it.

Eleven years ago I expressed what were then my opinions on this
subject, in a book not addressed to Unitarians. I said that I could not agree with Mr. Coleridge in thinking that this Creed contradicted the Nicene, on the subject of the subordination of the Son to the Father; that, if it forced me to pronounce judgment on any person, I would not have laid myself under the obligation of reading it,—whatever Church might adopt it,—because I should be violating an express command of Christ; that I never had felt myself encouraged or tempted by it to pass sentence on those who differed with me most on the subject of the Trinity; that, on the contrary, I had felt it was passing sentence on my own tendencies 'to confound the Persons, and to divide the Substance;' that these tendencies in me, I knew, had nothing to do with intellectual formulas, but with moral corruptions, from which many who are called heretics may be freer than I am; that I doubted whether we should gain in Truth or Charity by casting away this Creed, because I looked upon it as a witness, that eternal life is the knowledge of God, and that eternal death is Atheism, the being without Him.* I have not seen any cause to alter these opinions. I feel, indeed, that every year of fresh experience, as it should ground us more in principles, should make us more diffident of our own judgment on questions of expediency. Though the Creed, instead of tempting us to condemn others, has, I think, often overcome our inclination to condemn them—(for the more tremendous its language, the less we can dare to bring any individual within the scope of it), though some sentences of it, those especially concerning 'the taking of the Manhood into God, the reasonable soul and flesh, the persons, and substance,' have thrown a clear broad light into dark passages of my mind, and I doubt not, have taught my brethren more; yet if it does cause any of those for whom Christ died to stumble, if it hinders any from enter-

* 'Kingdom of Christ, or Hints to a Quaker,' vol. ii. p. 548.
ing into the mystery of God's love, I hope He will not suffer us to retain it. For that which is meant as a witness of Him, must be given up, like the brazen serpent, if it ceases to be so, or is made an instrument of turning men's eyes from Him. Still I cannot help thinking that the reasons generally urged for abandoning it are not charitable, and that submission to them will not conduce to charity. I find persons objecting, first, that the basis of our fellowship should not be laid in Theology, in principles concerning the nature of God. Secondly, that Eternal Punishment or Death may be denounced against those who hold certain opinions on certain subjects,—probably on the subject of the Trinity,—but should not be denounced against those who do not think 'thus' or 'thus' concerning it.

On the first proposition I have spoken much in these Essays, and have endeavoured to show that any basis of fellowship, but a Theological one,—any basis of human consciousness, or of mere materialism,—must be narrow and exclusive, one on which an edifice of superstition will certainly be reared, one which must be protected by persecution. On the second point I would observe, that if the Creed had meant that the not holding certain intellectual notions concerning the Trinity involved the penalty of everlasting death, it would consign to destruction, not heretics,—extreme or moderate,—but every peasant, every child, nearly every woman in every congregation in which it is read, seeing that these (thank God !) have formed no such intellectual conceptions, that the majority are not capable of forming them. And the few persons it would count worthy of eternal life, are a set of schoolmen, the best of whom pray every day and hour that they may become as little children, and have the faith which those have, who do not look upon the subject from a logical point of view at all. Lastly, it would directly contradict its own most solemn assertions. If we could compre-
hend this truth in an intellectual statement, the Father would not be incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. But since there is no alternative between this utterly monstrous imagination, and that which supposes the Creed to affirm the knowledge of God and eternal life to be the same; and therefore the denial,—not in the letter, but in the spirit,—not intellectually and outwardly, but morally and inwardly,—of the Father, Son, and Spirit, to be eternal death,—I cannot help thinking that, with all its fierce language, it has a gentler heart than some of those who get themselves credit for Toleration, by wishing the Church well rid of it. They leave us free to judge occasionally, to assume a portion of God's authority, only protesting against any excessive intrusion into it. The Creed obliges us to give such a meaning to eternal life,—or rather to adhere so closely to our Lord's explanation of it,—that we have no power of saying, in any case, who has lost it, or incurred the state which is opposite to it.

If I am asked whether the writer did not suppose that he had this power, I answer; When you tell me who the writer was, I may possibly, though probably not even then, be able to make some guess whether he supposed it or not. At present, I am quite in the dark about him and his motives. If I adopt the theory, which is as reasonable as any other, that he lived in the time of the Vandal persecution, I think it is very likely, that along with a much deepened conviction of the worth of the principle for which he was suffering, he had also a mixture of earthly passion and fierceness, and that he was tempted to show his opponents, or those who were apostatising, that there were more terrible penalties than those of scourging the back or cutting out the tongue. In that case, I should say I was giving up that part of his *animus* which he would wish me to give up; that part
which was not of God, and could not be meant to abide; and was clinging to that which made his other words true and consistent with themselves, when I interpreted his Creed in conformity with our Lord's sentence. I should not be imitating the treatment which Mr. Ward (in his Ideal of the Church) applied to our Articles, (I have no doubt he is one of those on whom Romanism has conferred a benefit by making him at least respectful to the formularies by which he is bound,) when he maintained that a non-natural sense might be put on them, because the compilers of them meant to cheat Catholics, and Catholics might pay them in their own coin. I should apply just the opposite rule. If I found a general scope of meaning which was important and precious, and which belonged to all times, I should not sacrifice that for the sake of a portion which belonged to the circumstances and feelings of a particular time or a particular man. To use Mr. Canning's celebrated simile, I should not follow the example of those worshippers of the Sun, who chose the moment of an eclipse to come forth with their hymns and their symbols.

This rule is necessary, I suspect, that we may do justice to the Church of the Fathers generally, and prove our reverence for it. I cannot honour that age too much, for its earnestness in asserting and defending theological principles. I believe no other age has had precisely the same task committed to it. Of course, I have most sympathy with those (like him to whom this Creed is erroneously attributed) who fought at fearful odds for that which was dear to them, who exposed themselves to imperial, episcopal, and popular indignation, for the sake of it. It is not only more pleasant to contemplate them than the prosperous men,—and them in their adversity than when they were threatening and excommunicating others; but their weak time was certainly the time in which all their chief work was done. Nevertheless,
I cannot say that their anathemas were indications of a cruel spirit, that these did not show, like their endurance of persecution, how much they were in earnest, and how precious the truths which they had realized were to them; or that the distinctions which were the excuses for them were not very valuable for Theology and for Humanity. There, I believe, they were wiser than we are, unless we are willing to profit by their wisdom. But there are points on which I know we ought to be wiser than they were. They could not foresee how God would govern His world, what methods He would see fit to use for bringing His truth to light. We ought to see that doubts, questions, partial apprehensions, denials of one principle for the sake of affirming another, have been, through His gracious discipline, means of elucidating that which would otherwise have been dark. Would the sentence of the Nicene Council have sufficed to illustrate the faith of Athanasius? Was not a century of strife in the Empire,—three centuries of Arianism among the Barbarians,—needful for that purpose? And if I find this to be so, and find also much horrible sin among the orthodox mixed with their excellences, many virtues among the heretics mixed with their denials and contradictions, I am bound to believe God was using both. I dare not deny History any more than the Theological truth, which, I believe, History has expounded. That truth will suffer if I do. How was the noble heart of Dante crushed by the thought that his dear master, and all the men whom he reverenced in the old world, were outcasts, for not believing in the Trinity! That thought evidently shook his faith in the Trinity. And it would shake mine, because it would lead me to suppose, that Truth only became true when Christ appeared, instead of being revealed by Him for all ages past and to come; so that, whoever walked in the light then, whoever walks in it now, seeking glory and immortality, desirous to be true, has glimpses of it, and will have the fruition of it, which is Life Eternal.
I have spoken of the possible animus of the writer of this Creed; but I must repeat that I know nothing of him, and therefore my guesses are good for very little. The animus imponentis concerns us, as all casuists admit, much more; and of that we have no right to pretend ignorance. Our Church has given us great helps for understanding what her meaning is, and what spirit she wishes us to be of. So long as I am commanded to repeat her prayers, no one shall compel me to put a construction upon this formulary which contradicts them, and makes me consciously false in the use of them. And I will add once for all in reference to those who wish to bind us by the current and floating opinions of this age, on the topics I have discussed in these Essays; I hold to that which I have confessed already; I hold to the prayers in which I find that confession made living and effectual for me and for all my brethren. If you say my faith is not distinct enough, bring forth your substitute for it. Do not talk about a perfect Atonement, or a divine Satisfaction, or an Eternal Death; these I believe in as much as you can do. Put forth distinctly before your own consciences, and before the conscience of England, the meaning which you attach to these words. See whether what you intend is not either that assertion of God's infinite Charity, which is contained in St. John's express words, in the whole Bible, in our forms, or something so flagrantly in contradiction with that, as to make the duty of rejecting it, and protesting against it, one from which no Churchman and no man ought to shrink.

THE END.