

UNIVERSALISM

“THERE is a great deal said in this age upon the universal restoration of all demons and wicked men to the eternal happiness of saints and angels....Some, indeed, speak with as much certainty upon this subject as if they had just finished and gone through this purgatorial chastisement, and visited our world fraught with intelligence from Hades.”

THERE is a great deal said in this age upon the universal restoration of all demons and wicked men to the eternal happiness of saints and angels. It is true that the demons are yet in purgatory, and that those that die in their sins are to go through a purgatorial punishment proportioned to the number and magnitude of their sins at the allowance of ----- years for each transgression according to some systems; and according to others on the ratio of ----- hundreds of years. Satan and his colleagues have been out of the presence of God now for six thousand years, and how far they have got through this purgatorial punishment is not yet settled. We have had, for the last year, so many questions proposed to us from correspondents on this system, that a little volume would be requisite to give them suitable answers. We are not at leisure, nor have we so much energy of mind, or body, as would be sufficient to give, them even a respectful answer. We can only, in a summary way, acknowledge the receipt of them. Some, indeed, speak with as much certainty upon this subject as if they had just finished and gone through this purgatorial chastisement, and visited our world fraught with intelligence from Hades. They have discovered that all the caveats and threats in the New Testament are like the bugbears, and stories of ghosts and witches, which nurses tell to their peevish children when they would scare them to sleep. They tell lies; but it is with a good intention. They know there are no ghosts nor witches to disturb the children; but it would not be safe to tell them so. It is necessary to lie. Just so, when the apostles and the Saviour spoke of *aionion* or everlasting punishment, and of *aionion* or everlasting destruction, they knew there was no such thing; but they found that men could not be governed or managed without those bugbears, and were under the necessity of doing as the nurses aforesaid. They were under the necessity of telling lies from a good intention. They used such words and phrases to representing the duration of the punishment of the wicked, as they used in representing the continuance of the happiness of the righteous; yet they knew that the one was to terminate some fifty thousand years hence, while the other would never end. I have sometimes thought that it was exceedingly ungrateful in those knowing ones to disclose the secret. For if God was so kind to them as to afford them a special revelation for their own comfort, while he evidently holds out tremendous prospects to the wicked *in terrorem*, it is

unkind on their part, to blab out the secret, and thus divest the governor of the world, of the most puissant means of keeping it safe for the righteous to live in it. They seem to act the part of an intruder into the family of a matron who was succeeding pretty well in managing her restive children, by the terrors of ghosts and wizards, but the intruder tells them their mother is deceiving them; and thus the little pests scream out afresh, and bid defiance to all the ghosts and demons in the nation.--I say there is such a similarity in the cases, that we cannot avoid associating them in our mind, and we think it not unreasonable to inscribe them on paper.

I know the mighty war of words that can be paraded on any subject. Since Peter De Alva wrote forty volumes on the nativity of the Messiah, I am afraid to enter the list with those worthy champions, if it were only on one of Horn Tooke's *ifs*. The Universalists have a pretty theme too--the benevolence of God, and the ultimate felicity of every creature, and thousands will hear them gladly.* When a few weeks ago I visited the Baltimore penitentiary, and saw more than three hundred and fifty convicts suffering for their evil deeds, it struck me what a fine popular topic it would have been there to have announced to the suffering miscreants, that while the lawyers, judges, and their keepers, made them believe that the governor and the laws of the state required their continuance there for life, it was all craft and policy; that neither the moral character of the governor, nor the just exposition of the laws, would authorize any such long and cruel treatment. No, no. His character and his promulgations require that if you only feel sorry for what you have done and promise to do better, you will be set at liberty in a few days or hours. I say, something like this would have been a popular topic in such a place, and I am sure if I could have harangued them thus, under specious circumstances, I would have had many to hear me gladly, and to wish that it were true.

I do not, however, think that the Universalists are sinners above all others, in that they have run to one extreme, because some sectaries have run into the opposite. When I hear one man talk about his elect and reprobate infants, and little ones in hell not a span long; and hear another describing the flight of the demons from Stygian darkness, and representing the Devil and his messengers ascending to that heaven whence they were once excluded; I view them both alike--each mounted on his winged horse, and attempting to soar beyond the regions of revelation. Because A disapproves the theory of B on any subject, I am not convinced that A's theory is correct. It is a bad way to correct one extreme by running into another. One may as well be wrecked on Scylla as on Charybdis. But, to change my voice, I would earnestly request those preachers of universal deliverance from hell, to stop and think how far the drift and scope of their efforts correspond with the obvious drift and scope of the preachings found in the New Testament. As Mr. Kneeland will have it, *aionion* life, and *aionion* death, or *aionion destruction*, are the mighty and majestic sanctions of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. Now without saying a word upon his translation, if such it may be called, (and I have it now on the table before me, and Griesbach lying under it) it must be admitted that the bible always holds out something terrible to the wicked, to them who disbelieve and disobey Jesus the King, at his coming to judge the world. This, I say, must be, and, I believe, is, admitted, by all Universalists. Now, if it be admitted, as it must be, and as it most generally is, that the wicked shall be cast off from the presence of God and his holy messengers, into inconceivable and inexpressible anguish and misery, in the judgment; it is all idle to talk and contend about the termination of it. There is neither days, weeks, nor months, in that state. There is no standard conceivable, nor revealed, by which the length or continuance can be measured. If they are damned or condemned at all, it is in vain, on

rational principles, to attempt to date it in a world where there is no calendar; and we are very sure that all the Universalists on earth cannot produce one sentence in all the revelation of God that says any thing about the termination of the punishment of the wicked. The bible often tells us of its commencement; but not once of its end. It is wise for us not to live upon conjectures, nor to build systems upon dreams and visions, which may cover us and our children in the ruins, and one day cause us to exclaim--It would have been better for us that we had never been born.-- I am content to be assured that whosoever hears the gospel and believes and obeys it, *shall be saved*, and that whosoever hears it and disbelieves it, *shall be damned*.--I know no gospel in proclaiming *to sinners on earth* that after they are damned in judgment, they may, by a long series of awful punishment, be brought to repentance, and be delivered from hell. This I am sure is no gospel in this world, and what it might be if announced in Hades or Gehenna, or by whom it could be preached there, I will not, I dare not, conjecture.--But of one thing we are assured, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; and an awful experiment to attempt to relax or weaken the glorious and tremendous sanctions of the gospel of his grace.

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*And yet the benevolence of God, on which Universalists so often talk, is a lame benevolence on their own principles.--They are much concerned for the character of the Divine benevolence, and the standard by which they adjust it condemns their own system. They must, and they ought, to banish from this world and from the next, any such an idea of God, as that of vengeance, and teach that neither vengeance nor punishment belong to the Lord.-- For so long as they teach a purgatorial punishment of ten or fifty thousand years continuance after death, so long they destroy their own arguments drawn from the Divine benevolence. For if God can, on their own theory, be so benevolent in making men unhappy so long, it will be difficult to show why he cannot be benevolent in lengthening it out for another age, or for ages of ages, *ad infinitum*. In short, while they talk so much about the cruelty of other systems, they ought to divest their own system of so much of it, and deny future punishment altogether; and even then their system will be imperfect: for, to be consistent, they must show that all the pains, afflictions, and miseries of this world, constitute perfect happiness: and that will be a hard task--for the testimony of our senses will come in their way. But until they reconcile present evils to their system of Divine benevolence, it is in vain to object against them who say that God will punish the wicked, and bless the righteous, hereafter