

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 8—October, 1891.

I.

ETERNAL RETRIBUTION.

THE question of the future and eternal destiny of man will not rest from discussion. One does not wonder at this. The thought that a single man, still more that multitudes of men, because of their deeds in this short life, should be lost eternally, is one which is so awful to contemplate, that it is not strange that not merely rationalistic expositors of Scripture, but also not a few truly devout and spiritual men, have ever protested that it is impossible that this should be the real teaching of Scripture. Accordingly, such have eagerly laid hold of every word here and there which might of itself seem to warrant a larger hope, and have earnestly sought to show that the passages which, to the ordinary reader, seem to declare the doctrine of the eternal doom of many are susceptible of a different interpretation.

By those who contend for the belief in the final universal restoration of all rational beings to holiness and happiness, it is assumed that this is a necessary logical corollary from our affirmation of the infinite perfection of God. For it is insisted that if we believe in a God who is infinite in knowledge and wisdom, power, love and righteousness, then we must logically admit that it is impossible that He should have allowed any creature to come into being, by whom He foreknew that the gift of life would be so abused as to issue in endless sin and misery. Whatever force there may be in this presumption considered in itself, it will be observed, in the first place, that it wholly overlooks the powerful counter-presumption which is furnished by the fact of the uniformly hardening power of habit. For character, to all appearance, tends to fixedness

we leap.—*Reason and Authority in Religion.* By J. Macbride Sterrett, D.D., Professor in Ethics and Apologetics in Seabury Divinity School. 12mo, pp. xiii, 184. (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1891.) Two essays in which Dr. Sterrett, like a good Hegelian, seeks to rest our certitude in religion proximately on the communal Christian consciousness and ultimately on God as the immanent reason in the Church. "The Church is objective, authoritative reason for every Christian. . . . Submission to its authority is the rational submergence of immediate subjective undeveloped individualism in the whole historic life of the great brotherhood of a common Lawgiver and Father" (p. 176). Dr. Sterrett avoids the narrow ecclesiasticism commonly the outgrowth of this theory by a more inclusive definition of the Church as comprehensive of "the whole of the faithful in every form of instituted Christianity" (p. 100). But he does not avoid the depreciation of the Scriptures inherent in the theory. He consistently regards them as the product of the Church: "The Bible, like the Creeds, is the product of the Church" (p. 88); "the Bible is the Church's record of the historical revelation upon which it is founded" (p. 59); the Church "is the author of the Creed and the Bible" (p. 24). It is characteristic of this point of view to speak of belief embracing "the Bible *and* the Creeds," as if they were coördinate, and of the "Christian community *producing* the Faith" (p. 158). We will have no creeds, however, which are additional to the Bible, but only such as are, and only so far as they are, drawn from the Bible. And we will have no Faith which the Christian community "produces." Nor will this drive us into the crass individualism of Dr. Martineau, so ably criticised by Dr. Sterrett. Nor is the alternative a divine absence or a Hegelian development (p. 161). But the nature of the development of doctrine out of the Biblical revelation, through a divine guidance of the Church, cannot be stated and argued in this brief notice. We certainly believe in the divine immanence (we prefer to say the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost), and in the logic of Christian history, and that "the human spirit through eighteen centuries has no more been abandoned by God than has nature" (p. 161); but we do not believe that, therefore, "the real at any time is the rational for that time," or that, therefore, "might makes right" (p. 170). We believe in the inspiration of Paul, but not in that of Hegel (p. 168).—*The Bible Verified.* By the Rev. Andrew W. Archibald. With an Introductory Note by Prof. Ransom B. Welch, D.D., LL.D., of Auburn Theological Seminary. 16mo, pp. 215. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-school Work, 1890.) Mr. Archibald must be an exceedingly interesting preacher. His little book, made up, as he tells us, of sermons preached in the ordinary course of his pastorate, does great credit to his scholarship, force of thought and expression, and helpfulness in teaching. It is apologetic in conception and constitutes a very valuable popular treatise on the evidences of the trustworthiness of the Bible. Nevertheless, we have some things against it. Historical exactness is not always preserved in details; *e. g.*, in chapters ii and iii, on the Bible in manuscript and in English, a number of petty corrections could be made. We may note, merely by way of samples: p. 26, the cost of a book in ancient times is very much exaggerated—probably books "in print," as we would say, cost little or nothing more *a volume* in Rome in Augustus' day than in London now; p. 29, fragments of Homer exist many centuries older than the sixth century; p. 36, the remark as to the Sinaitic manuscript is hardly just to Tischendorf; p. 40, the remark as to "Grecian supremacy" is liable to misunderstanding, and it is hardly true that *all* translations have been "violently opposed at first;" p. 42, the date of Tyndale's New Testament is 1525. The apologetical attitude has now and then betrayed the author into undesirable concessions, as, *e. g.*, in the