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OF THE
SECOND GENERAL COUNCIL
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN ALLIANCE,

CONVENED AT PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER, 1880.

PRINTED BY DIRECTION OF THE COUNCIL.

EDITED BY
JOHN B. DALES, D.D., AND R. M. PATTERSON, D.D.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

This volume is published under the following resolutions of the Council:

The General Committee of Arrangements reported, and the report was approved: "The Committee on Publication have made arrangements to secure a full and accurate stenographic report of the debates and doings of the Council. They have also accepted an offer, subject to approval by the Council, on the part of a responsible publishing firm [*The Presbyterian Journal Company*, of Philadelphia] to publish in an attractive volume such of the proceedings as may be sanctioned by an editing committee to be appointed by the body, and to place this volume at an early day before the public at a very reasonable price, and without expense to the Council. This Committee, therefore, respectfully suggest the appointment of the Rev. J. B. Dales, D. D., of the United Presbyterian Church, of this city, and the Rev. R. M. Patterson, D. D., of the Presbyterian Church, of this city, as a Committee to revise and edit the Proceedings of the Council."

The following resolutions were also adopted:

1. That under the provisional arrangement made by the Business Committee, the opening sermon, the essays and documents prepared by invitation of the Programme Committee, and a *résumé* of the discussion on the topics of the programme, together with an introductory sketch of the Council and a full list of members, be published under the direction of the Editorial Committee.
2. That a complimentary copy of the Proceedings be sent to every Programme speaker who has prepared a paper, and to every theological seminary in Europe, America and Africa, in connection with the Presbyterian Church, at the expense of the Council.
3. That the following be the understanding as to the papers submitted to this Council: 1. That the papers prepared for the Council be regarded as the property of their authors. 2. That the original manuscript be handed to the editors of the volume, and be retained as a memorial of the Council. 3. That the Council permit the separate publication of any paper for wider circulation in the interests of the Church, on condition that the friends arranging for such publication undertake the entire charge, and that every such reprint bear on it that it is extracted from the authorized report of the proceedings by arrangement with its publishers.
4. That the editors of the volume of the Proceedings of the Council be instructed formally to state in its preface that the Council does not make itself responsible for the opinions expressed in the papers submitted for consideration.

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Presbyterian Churches controlling the treatment of this doctrine? If what has been said above is true; if the juridical view of Christ's vicarious sacrifice is the catholic doctrine of the historical Christian Churches of all time; if it is the doctrine emphasized in each Reformed Confession without exception; and if it is essential and fundamental to the entire theological system held by those Churches; if these things be true, it is evident that no legitimate development of thought can ever change the fundamental principle. It is still emphasized in our prayers and hymns; it is still preached by all those preachers who remain faithful to their ordination vows; it still sounds the key-note of all revivals, of all the mission work, and really vital action of the Churches. As far as really living, the Churches hold this historical doctrine as of old. To change it would involve the revolution of the Church—not its development into a higher form, but the substitution of a different institution in its place. All tendencies of this sort are illegitimate, and should be corrected by adequate controversy, and prevented by the surgical knife of discipline.

The legitimate tendency at present, therefore, while loyally conserving the old juridical view, as essential and central, is to recognize more fully than before the real truth and importance of all the partial and subsidiary side views and aspects, which heretics have perverted by isolating and exalting out of their due secondary and relative position. The orthodox doctrine is more and more seen not only to be essential and radical, but also catholic and comprehensive, affording the necessary basis for all the side lights and secondary aspects of the great scriptural truth, which individuals have often seen disconnectedly, and have often unduly isolated and emphasized. The statement of this great truth at the hands of orthodox theologians is becoming less mechanical, less logically squared, and more after the manner of the word and works of God, where truth lies in broad surfaces and not in narrow lines, where it has breadth as well as length, and where the glory of the parts melts into the greater glory of the whole.

The REV. T. D. WITHERSPOON, D. D., of Petersburg, Va., next read the following paper on

THE DURATION OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

In approaching the subject of future retribution we find ourselves confronted with certain facts which seem worthy of a moment's preliminary consideration.

1st. In favor of what is commonly known as the orthodox doctrine, which postulates the absolute endlessness of the state of the lost, stands the almost unbroken testimony of the Church of God for eighteen centuries—a testimony borne with singular unanimity by this witnessing Church, which is “the pillar and ground of the truth,” through

all its successive stages—apostolic, primitive, catholic and reformed—a testimony expressed through official symbols, through versions of the Sacred Scriptures both ancient and modern, through commentaries, homilies and didactic treatises; in a word through the whole current of literature, exegetical, dogmatic, homiletic and devotional—a testimony at once so voluminous and so explicit, that, if it were now proposed to abandon the orthodox view, and give unambiguous expression to any other that has been suggested, every creed of Christendom would need to be altered, every version of the Scriptures amended, every commentary and treatise in theology in part rewritten; every lexicon, which treats of the original words under which the doctrine of future punishment is inculcated, would require to be revised, and the great mass of Christian poetry, oratory, history and philosophy expurgated. A new system of ideas and of words must be introduced, and the current phraseology of the Church for eighteen centuries be rendered obsolete.

2d. While such has been the attitude of Christ's witnessing Church in the past towards this doctrine, it is evident that at present a strong popular current is setting against it. Not only does this opposition appear in the pulpit, in the professor's chair, and in the stately columns of the theological review, but the secular literature of the day is largely tinged with it. The orthodox doctrine is caricatured in prose and travestied in verse. Its advocates are stigmatized as "pharisees," "dogmatists," "friends of everlasting punishment," etc. The entire basis of the doctrine is declared to be "fiendish vengeance."* It is characterized as "what fear and superstition and ignorance and inveterate hate, and slavish letter-worship have taught and dreamed of hell."† The effort is strenuously made to represent the opposition as a healthful reaction of Christian sentiment from the "coarse terrorism of the Puritan," and of a sounder exegesis of Scripture, dispelling the "baleful meteors of anathematizing orthodoxy." And yet the very violence of declamation to which the opponents of the orthodox doctrine resort, their substitution in such large measure of mere invective for argument, and of passionate appeals to human sympathy for critical and patient inquiry, leave it at least questionable if their opposition be not the offspring of passion rather than of reason, the outgrowth of a sentiment, rather than of a conviction based upon exhaustive and impartial research.

3d. The moral weight of this opposition is greatly lessened by certain facts which cannot be disguised, namely, that the few authorities in the early Church to which it appeals, including Origen and some of his disciples, were not only unsound upon many other points of Christian dogma, but were confessedly Neo-Platonists, seduced into a renunciation of the Christian doctrine of final retribution by the charms of the pagan doctrine of metempsychosis—that the present leaders of the opposition are almost without exception latitudinarian

* Maudsley's "Phys.," p. 415.

† Farrar's "Eternal Hope," p. 201.

in doctrine, lax in their views of inspiration, and rationalistic in their theories of interpretation, and that the influence their writings have exerted has been due in great measure to their appeal to the mandarin sentimentalism of the day, which revolts at the thought of capital punishment, and in great measure at penal suffering of every kind; which looks upon sin rather as a misfortune to be pitied, or at worst a disease to be healed, than as a crime to be visited with such condign punishment as shall be at once an expression of the divine holiness and a safeguard for righteousness throughout the universe of God.

4th. The broken and discordant nature of the opposition also deserves a moment's notice. Suppose we abandon the orthodox view, dispossess the word *eternal* of the sense of *endlessness*, and engraft upon the word *forever* the idea of an end: what have we then? What well-defined system can these declaimers against orthodoxy present? Between the conflicting schools of universalism, and annihilationism, and restorationism, and that latest and most popular of all—shall I call it æonism?—which holds that “to affirm the ending of punishment is to fall short of Scripture, and to affirm its endlessness is to go beyond Scripture,”* whose chief tenet in other words is to hold that it does not know what to hold, since the author of Scripture has left the whole matter in hopeless ambiguity between all these conflicting schools—I say where is the Church of God to find solid ground upon which to rest the sole of her foot?

5th. The only basis on which this whole question can be safely rested is the direct testimony of the word of God. There is no subject in which it is more perilous to draw conclusions from what are called “intuitions of the Christian consciousness,” and “arguments upon moral grounds.” We cannot view the problems of sin and retribution in all their relations and with all their conditions, as these are present to the mind of God; and even if we could, our own personal interests are too deeply involved. There is too much play for the sympathies which the anticipation of suffering evokes, and too much stupefaction of the moral sense by reason of indwelling sin, to render it possible for us to give an impartial decision. As well might a criminal in one of our courts be expected to fix impartially the term of his own imprisonment. Our appeal must be simply to the word of God. We must first ascertain what term it fixes, and then bring our own convictions as to the demerit of sin and the ends of justice up to this standard, so that our views of sin and penalty shall strictly conform to the doctrine of God's word.

6th. In this appeal to Scripture the issue must rest in great measure upon the interpretation of a few crucial texts, and the interpretation of these upon the signification of a few pivotal words. Nothing, therefore, can be more unreasonable than the outcry of our opponents against what they are pleased to call “the ignorant tyranny of isolated

* Clemence's “Fut. Pun.” p. 80.

texts."* The doctrine for which we contend does not rest upon isolated texts, but, even if it did, one single text of Scripture, whose authenticity is beyond question, and whose teaching is unambiguous, is enough upon which to found a doctrine, constituting as it does a part of the everliving witness of Him who is the truth, whose "yea is yea," and whose "word cannot be broken."

In coming before you to-day I have no purpose to attempt a compass of the whole range of this controversy. Time would not permit. I take my stand upon a single point in the line of defense—one that seems to me to be the key to the whole position. I shall ask your attention to a review, in the light of recent scholarship, of the signification of a single word—a commonplace word, I know, but one upon which the whole controversy is made to hinge. I refer to the word αἰών. Of the original signification of this word no better expression can be given than that found in the celebrated passage of Aristotle, in which he represents αἰών as being "the complete period either of each particular life or of all existence."† We do not here insist upon the etymology of αἰών given by Aristotle, who makes it to be a compound of αἰ, *forever*, and ὤν, *existing*, so that it carries in its very structure the idea of eternity. Classical scholars all agree that it comes from that root whose simplest formation, and therefore the one most colorless, is the adverb αἰ, *forever*. They all agree that this same root, passing into other languages of the Indo-European stock, appears in the German *ewig* and the English *aye* and *ever*; that it lies at the basis of the Latin *eternus*, *eternitas*, and the English *eternal* and *eternity*. But that which we claim as of importance is the testimony of Aristotle as to the usage of the word to signify the complete period of existence. Taking this idea of the complete period, the *all of existence*, as our clue, it is easy to trace the whole classic usage of the word; for evidently the first measure of completed existence which suggested itself to the mind was a human life. It was the man's *all* of existence to the eye of sense. Hence, in the earliest Greek literature a man's life is his αἰών. And so, viewed by these same standards of sense, the nation has its αἰών—its *all of existence* from its rise to its fall. The material world, in so far as it is viewed as temporal, has its αἰών—its *all of duration*. But as the mind advances in thought beyond the temporal and finite, there comes into view, first dimly shadowed forth, then more clearly revealed to cognition, a past in which there must have been existence of some kind that never began, a future in which there must be existence of some kind that shall never end. And thus αἰών comes to signify the complete period of all existence, past and future,—eternity in its strictest sense—that unmeasured and measureless duration in which all conceivable time is but a brief parenthesis, a ripple upon the surface of an ocean without bottom and without shore.

* Farrar's "Eternal Hope," p. 75.

† Aristotle, "De Cælo," i. 9, 15, Liddell & Scott, 6th Eng. ed., sub.-verb αἰών.

That this is uniformly the sense of αἰών, as used by the ethical writers of Greece, can hardly be a matter of doubt. Indeed, the very difference of its usage by Plato and Aristotle in reference to the material heavens is a conclusive proof. Plato, who believed the heavens (οὐρανός) to have been created, and therefore not eternal, contrasts them with αἰών, saying that they, long enduring as they are, are the measures of time; but αἰών, eternity, is without measure, movement, or change.* Aristotle, who believed the heavens to be eternal, in the strict sense of without beginning or end, made them to be the measure of eternity, and αἰών to be the full period which includes the existence of the heavens, as it also includes infinite time and infinity, or the infinite itself. Not only do the philosophers and ethical writers claim this as the only proper sense of the word αἰών, but even in more popular usage, where reference is to existence beyond the present sphere, this is the invariable sense of the word. Even in the Greek poets, where αἰών is so frequently used for the measure of human life, etc., whenever you rise to that which is beyond this present life, αἰών assumes the full sweep of its philosophic sense. Thus Jove is ὁ αἰών, "the eternal one;"† not, indeed, eternal *a parte ante*, for he is immediately called χρόνου πάς, but eternal *a parte post*, ὁ αἰών being used as the equivalent of ὁ ἀθάνατος, as the gods are called οἱ αἰεὶ ὄντες interchangeably with οἱ ἀθάνατοι. And so, in the more popular class of prose writers, such as orators, rhetoricians, etc., whilst we find unquestionably the earlier and freer usage of the word in reference to the material and perishable about us, yet we find in reference to the future, the invisible, the spiritual, that the word is used in its strictest sense, ἀπ' αἰῶνα signifying from the period that is without beginning, εἰς αἰῶνα to the period that is without end. When we come, therefore, to the Scriptures, we are prepared to expect that when αἰών and its derivative αἰώνιος are used of anything pertaining to a future and invisible state, they will signify a period absolutely without end. What then do we actually find?

1. When the Septuagint writers are to translate passages in the Hebrew Scriptures which conveyed, and were intended to convey, with the utmost emphasis, the idea of a period without beginning and without end, expressions connected with the being of God, his kingdom, glory, mercy, etc., where the aim of the inspired writer was unquestionably to give distinct, unambiguous, emphatic expression to the absolute eternity of that of which he affirmed, these Septuagint translators invariably used the words αἰών and αἰώνιος. I say nothing now of those cases in which עולם is used of a period less than eternal. I shall come to them directly. I speak now of the passages in which the whole power is lost unless this idea of eternity is conveyed. And I say that the fact that these words are used in these passages indicates that they were, in the minds of the translators, the strongest and least ambiguous words that could be found. If there had been terms to

* Tim. 37, 38.

† "Eurip. Herac.," 900.

express more strongly and unambiguously the idea of eternity, they would certainly have been employed.

2. Whilst we find the words αἰών and αἰώνιος used in the Septuagint version to translate עוֹלָם, where it refers to a period less than eternal, as of the Jewish dispensation, the world-period preceding the coming of Christ, etc., yet in every such case the limitation arises out of the nature of the subject, as connected with the present material and tangible state; nor is there, in all the twelve* instances in which there is no such necessary dependence, a single one in which the words do not involve the idea of beginningless, if of the past, and endless, if of the future, unless the single exception be found in that one passage which refers to future punishment (Dan. xii. 2), and there the same word, αἰώνιος, which is used of the duration of the punishment, is used in the same verse to express the duration of the life of the blessed, which is confessedly eternal. The testimony of the Seventy is therefore overwhelmingly for the endlessness of the period expressed by αἰών, and it will not, I think, be regarded as unsafe if we take as our authority for the meaning of αἰών and αἰώνιος the Seventy rather than the interpreters of the modern "Æonian" school.

3. When we come to the New Testament usage, the same principles appear and the same conclusions inevitably follow. There are twenty-five instances of the use of αἰών to signify periods of duration which are not strictly eternal,† but in every case in which it is so used the subject is one that admits of only a limited duration, and the word αἰών retains its original force, as expressing the totality of duration of that to which it refers.‡ In six instances it is used to contrast the present visible αἰών with the future invisible one, in none of which is there anything to intimate that this future complete period is anything less than absolutely endless.§ Then we have a few cases in which αἰών is used of the past in connection with ἀπὸ and ἐξ.||

Bearing in mind the characteristic difference between ἀπὸ and ἐκ in time relations, the former signifying from the hither margin of, and the latter from out of the bosom of, there is no difficulty in understanding the word αἰών in its strict sense of eternity *a parte ante*, in

* Deut. xxxiii. 40; Isa. lvii. 15; Isa. liv. 8; Ps. xc. 2; Ps. cxlv. 13; Mic. v. 2, Ps. cxv. 13; Dan. iv. 3; Dan. ii. 44; Isa. xl. 28; Isa. ix. 20; Ps. cx. 4.

† Matt. xii. 32; xiii. 22, 39, 40, 49; xxiv. 3; xxviii. 20; Mark iv. 19; Luke xvi. 8; xx. 34; Rom. xii. 2; 1 Cor. i. 20; ii. 6, 8; iii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Gal. i. 4; Eph. i. 21; ii. 2; vi. 12; 1 Tim. vi. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 10; Tit. ii. 12; Heb. i. 2; xi. 3 (the two last by metonymy for the world itself).

‡ An apparent exception to this rule is found in Heb. ix. 26, where ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων appears, and is translated "in the end of the world." But there is no reason why the τῶν αἰώνων should not have its strict significance of eternity *a parte ante*, for our Lord's "putting away of sin by the sacrifice of himself" is certainly the consummation (συντελεία) of those eternal ages when the covenant was betwixt them both, and the delights of the adorable Son of God were with the sons of men.

§ Matt. xii. 32; Mark x. 30; Luke xviii. 30; xx. 35; Eph. i. 21; Heb. vi. 5.

|| Luke i. 70; John ix. 32; Acts iii. 21; xv. 18; Eph. iii. 9.

all of these. A single instance with *πρὸ* (1 Cor. ii. 7) will be reserved for consideration further on. With this one apparent exception, which as we will see is not a real one, the use of *αἰών* in reference to the past is univocal and in strict accord with its original signification. When we turn to the use of *αἰών* as to the future with *εἰς*, that with which we are more nearly concerned, we find over fifty examples, in no one of which is the period to which it refers conceived as having an end. It is true that in a few cases there is a manifest hyperbole in the ascription of eternity to that which is not eternal in its nature,* but even in these cases the possibility of an end is purposely and definitely excluded by the form of the negation, and we are brought to the conclusion that there is not a single instance in which *εἰς* is used with *αἰών* in the New Testament, where the idea of endlessness was not distinctly intended to be conveyed, unless the passages which define the duration of future punishment are to be excepted. That which we have thus seen to be true of *αἰών* is equally true of *αἰώνιος*. Leaving out of view for the present the five cases in which it is used of the future state of the wicked,† there are sixty-six passages in which it occurs, having reference to the existence of God, the eternity of His kingdom and glory, the eternal life of the believer, etc., and in all these, with two apparent exceptions‡ in which the phrase *πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων* is used, there is not one in which the meaning is not strictly eternal, *a parte ante* if of the past, and *a parte post* if of the future. These two phrases, together with the one above, *πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων*, are the ones upon which Canon Farrar has lent his support in his work, "Eternal Hope," to men who ridicule the idea of times that are beginningless and yet were preceded by the ordinances, purposes, and promises of God. Now, it is one of the results of recent critical study of the Greek language—can it be possible that Canon Farrar is ignorant of it?—that there is distinctly traced in the post-classic Greek a usage of *πρὸ* with the genitive in temporal clauses, analogous to the use of *ante* with the ablative in Latin, so that just as we have in Latin *paucis ante diebus*, signifying *a few days before*, so we have in Greek such phrases as *πρὸ πέντε ἡμερῶν*, signifying *five days before*; and, having the very best authority to sustain me as to this usage, I do not hesitate to say that to translate *πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων*, *before Æonian times*, as the "Æonist" does, instead of eternally before, would be like translating *πρὸ πέντε ἡμερῶν*, *before five days*, instead of *five days before*.§

This difficulty out of the way, there is only one more deserving of consideration. Canon Farrar and others ask if *αἰών* signifies eternity in its strict sense, what are we to do with such passages as *εἰς αἰῶνα*, *εἰς αἰῶνα αἰώνων*, *εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας* *τῶν αἰώνων*, etc., where we have *αἰών* added to *αἰών* multiplied by *αἰών*, etc. How can this be if the word

* Matt. xxi. 19; Mark xi. 14; John viii. 35; xiii. 8; 1 Cor. viii. 13.

† Matt. xviii. 8; xxv. 41, 46; Mark iii. 29; 2 Thess. i. 9.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 9; Tit. i. 2.

§ Liddell & Scott, 6th Eng. ed., sub-verb *πρὸ* ii. 2.

αἰών signifies eternity? The answer is so simple that it seems marvellous that one should be needed. So long as the idea of eternity is held simply as a logical concept *εἰς αἰῶνα* gives full expression to it. But when we come to analyze the concept and see what it contains, to bring before the mind some metaphysical conception of eternity, then through the impotence of the finite to grasp the infinite, a new process must go forward. The mind, stretching itself to embrace the utmost conceivable period of duration, makes that the unit in a system of additions and multiplications, that by these as stepping-stones it may pass on and on in its nearest possible approximation in consciousness to the infinite period embraced in its logical concept. But so far from the idea in these expressions being less than strictly eternal, the very purpose of their formation is to give the most emphatic expression possible to this idea, and for Canon Farrar and others to plead these passages as a proof that *αἰών* does not mean *endless* is about as rational as it would be to plead that because we use in English such phrases as *forever and ever*, and *eternity of eternities*, therefore our English words *forever* and *eternity* imply a period that may have an end. We have alluded to the exact parallelism in the expressions which define the duration, on one hand, of the punishment of the wicked, and on the other, of the blessedness of the righteous. As this point has been disputed by our opponents, it may be well to notice it for a moment. A recent writer of the *Æonistic* school,* after speaking of the "ample Scriptures" that assure us by stronger statement of the endlessness of the bliss of the righteous, produces in support four passages,† of which only one can be regarded as an explicit statement upon the subject, and that one (Eph. iii. 21) is a statement not of the endlessness of the life of the righteous, but of the endlessness of the glory accruing to God through their redemption. After an impartial examination of all the passages alleged, it may be safely affirmed that no stronger phrases are found, or can be found in Greek to express duration than those which the sacred writers have used in reference to future punishment. Others have been suggested, but there is not one of them the classic usage of which is more uniformly in the sense of eternal and everlasting—not one of them which could any better withstand the destructive criticism that has been brought to bear upon *αἰών* and *αἰώνιος*.

Did time permit, it would be easy to show from the writings of the Christian fathers who were familiar with the Greek tongue, the sense in which they understood these words. They employ them in contrast with words which express temporary duration;‡ they use them with explanatory or exegetical clauses, which show that the writers meant them in the sense of eternal;§ they use synonyms which con-

* Clemanse Fut. Pun., p. 64.

† John xiv. 19; xvii. 24; vi. 39; Eph. iii. 21.

‡ Polycarp—Address at martyrdom—Justin Martyr, Ap. i. 8. Iren. Adv. Haer. iv. 28, 1 and 2. Athanasius, 4th Fest. Ep.

§ Iren. Contr. Haeres. 4, 28, 2. Tertull. De Praescr. adv. Haeret. Ch. XIII. Tertullian De Jüd. Dom. Ch. IX. Cypr. Lib. ad Demetr. Cap. XXIV. Chrest. Ep. V. ad Theod. Laps. August ad Laurent. Cap. CXIII. De Civ. Dei. C. p. XXII., etc.

vey the idea of endlessness* beyond doubt. But into this field we cannot enter. It is enough to say that in the light of the latest Greek criticism, it still remains true that "if the idea of duration without end is not expressed in the words αἰών and αἰώνιος, it cannot be expressed by any words in the Greek language,"† and that the words of Moses Stuart, written a half century ago, stand as impregnable to-day, notwithstanding all the assaults that have been made upon them, as when they were first uttered. "If the Scriptures have not asserted the endless punishment of the wicked, neither have they asserted the endless happiness of the righteous, nor the endless glory and existence of the Godhead."‡

And now if the conclusions to which we are thus brought are just, then we are upon a proper vantage ground from which to consider the duty of the Church of God in reference to the doctrine of endless punishment.

It is charged upon the ministry of the present day that it has in great measure changed front in reference to this important doctrine of Scripture; that our pulpits no longer resound with the words "hell" and "damnation;" that the day of frightful imagery of gnawing worms and gnashing teeth and enshrouding flames is forever gone. If this change in the tone of our preaching—the fact of which we do not deny—means only that whilst we still hold fast and firmly by the doctrine, and are ready on all proper occasions to bear testimony to it as a segment of the great circle of inspired truth, we are not accustomed to rack the imaginations of our hearers with pictures of the abodes of the lost, painted by the gloomy fancies of Dante and Milton, the change is one which we have every reason to commend; but if this change has come from any wavering of conviction as to the truth of the doctrine itself, then it becomes a subject for gravest and most thoughtful consideration. There are many aspects of it in which such a loosening of conviction would be a matter most profoundly to be deplored.

1. For, first of all, it would be the renunciation of that great principle to which reference has already been made; namely, that all formulation of doctrine must base itself first, last, always, upon the simple testimony of God's word. It makes an incalculable difference in our attitude towards the word of God, whether we hold in abeyance all our *a priori* convictions, our preconceived opinions, and the promptings of our moral sense, until we have first ascertained what is the plain teaching of the word of God; or whether we first listen to the voices within us that whisper of what ought or ought not to be, what is accordant with or repugnant to our moral sense, and then go to God's word with the hope, if not the fixed purpose, that it shall bear us out in these conclusions from our own imagined intuitions.

* Justin Martyr, Trypho, XLV. Exn. Fid. Orth. B. II. Ch. I., etc. Andreas on Apoc., 14. 11. John Damascen.

† Tyler Fut. Pun., p. 25.

‡ Stuart Fut. Pun., Ed. of 1830, p. 57.

And yet it is just in this way that all the difficulties in the acceptance of this doctrine have sprung. The *prima facie* evidence of Scripture is so manifestly in its favor, that had it not been repugnant to the instincts of our fallen nature, no question would ever have been raised concerning it. I say, then, that however painful it may be to us to hold this view of the sufferings of our fellow-creatures—to yield to a pressure which is brought to bear against a doctrine from this direction, is to surrender that great citadel of the supremacy and sufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule of faith upon which the very stability and safety of the Church of God depend; it is to sanction a spirit of investigation that is irreverent towards the Author of revelation, unscientific in its critical methods, and utterly subversive in the end of all soundness of doctrine and unity of faith.

2d. To falter in the maintenance of the doctrine of endless punishment is to admit that in reference to one of the most supremely important doctrines of the Christian system, the Scriptures have failed to give us any definite information, not by reason of their silence, but by reason of their ambiguity. That the Author of revelation should keep silent upon any point of doctrine which he should choose to conceal we can understand; but that he should make a revelation of a doctrine, and yet make it in such ambiguous terms that no intelligent meaning could be gotten from his words; this is—I speak it reverently—to charge the Infinite One with folly. He has not kept silent on the subject of the duration of future punishment. He has spoken over and over again and in varied form, and we challenge for that revelation a clearness like the shining of his noonday sun.

3. To shrink from an explicit testimony to the endlessness of future punishment is to imperil the souls of our fellow-men. If men can be persuaded, nay, if they are even encouraged to a faint hope, that the period of probation does not end with death, that further offers of salvation will be made them in that after world, they will adventure all upon that hope and postpone to a future life the interests and claims of religion. In vain will we tell them of the long indefinite period of suffering through which they must pass. Let these “æons” be as long as they may, yet if they are ever to end at all, they are at the most but as a moment compared with eternity. Beyond, lie the ages upon ages of celestial glory, and sure of heaven at last, men will indulge in sin to their hearts’ content. A solemn responsibility therefore rests upon the Church of God. As a witness-bearer for the truth she must bear testimony to this doctrine. Unpopular it may be, painful it must be, but she must, through her creeds and symbols, through her pulpits and ministry, bear her testimony faithfully to the truth. She cannot allow liberty upon this point. She may be accused of bigotry, of dogmatism, of illiberality if she requires her authorized teachers to hold and teach so unpopular a doctrine. But there is no other course for her to pursue. The principles involved are too fundamental. The interests of perishing souls involved are too great. Her trumpets must give forth no uncertain sound.

For myself, fathers and brethren, impressed by the momentousness of this issue, I could ask no higher honor than that these feeble words of mine, falling like a faint keynote upon the ears of this great convocation, should cause it to arise like a giant in his might, and send forth from out this bannered hall one bugle blast that, echoing from shore to shore, shall tell to all the world that one great division at least of the army of Christ holds, and by God's help means to hold, the same redoubts of truth that have been pressed by the feet of God's veterans in all the history of the Church.

The Council then proceeded to five minute discussions on

CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS.

The REV. PROF. J. R. W. SLOANE, D. D., of Allegheny, Pa.—
We have had indeed this morning a feast of fat things and of wines on the lees, well refined. The paper of Dr. Van Zandt, which was read to us yesterday morning, so far as I was able to hear it, gave me perhaps as great personal satisfaction as did any other of the papers that have been read before this Council.

Creeeds always have been a necessity of the Christian Church. They were formulated, first, for the benefit of those who were within the pale of the Church; and, secondly, as a bulwark against errors that were outside, or that were coming in. They were as great a necessity as were the great Ecumenical Councils in which they originated. The Council of Nice was no more a necessity than was the decree which was then promulgated, and which afterwards found its final and full expression in the so-called Athanasian creed. Against that creed with its statements and counter-statements, with its singular phraseology and with its damnatory clauses, have all the waves of error in regard to the Trinity and the person of Christ broken for more than fourteen hundred years, only to be dashed to pieces.

Moreover, these creeds afford the finest of all illustrations of the fulfilment of the gracious promise of our ascended Lord to the Church. That promise was that he would give to her the Holy Spirit, to lead her into all truth. And not even in our systematic theologies, nor even in our holy songs, have we so fine an illustration of the fulfilment of that promise as we have in the great creeds of the Church.