

The New Thought of Immortality

BY

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READ AND PRESENT TO YOUR NEIGHBOR.

"He hath brought life and immortality to light."

II Tim. ii., 10.

These words do not mean, as our fathers interpreted them, that Jesus brought the fact of immortality to light—that he for the first time made it clear to men. Our later knowledge of ancient religion makes it indisputable that the fact of immortality was discerned, more or less clearly, ages before Jesus, among all peoples. It never has been brought more clearly into light than in ancient Egypt. What Jesus did was to bring the fact of immortality into a clearer light than that which Israel knew, in its later belief borrowed from Persia, or than that which Greece knew, in the theorizings of Plato, or than that which rose above most peoples, through his return from the spirit-sphere; to give the one historic attestation of life beyond the grave which has sufficed men for these centuries, as the foundation of their faith; and then to bring the nature of immortality into fuller light. He brought the fact of intercommunion between the seen and the unseen worlds out into a light such as had never risen upon this truth before.

From the time of Jesus to our own day, there has been little or no development in men's faith concerning immortality. The fact of immortality has not grown any more luminous, neither has its nature grown any more intelligible. It is a curious fact, this, that for wellnigh eighteen centuries there has been practically no development in the doctrine of the hereafter. The fact is indisputable. Down to the beginning of our own century, men thought concerning immortality just as their fathers had thought, in each preceding century, up to the age of Jesus. You have but to analyze the hymns, the sermons, the theological and religious treatises of Christendom, in the first half of the nineteenth century, to find that they

repeated the ideas that were current in every earlier age of Christianity. For nearly eighteen centuries there had been no progress whatever in the thought of immortality.

The first really new conception of the character of immortality given to the world for eighteen centuries came through the great savant and philosopher and theologian of Sweden—Emanuel Swedenborg, who died in 1772. Whatever the nature of the source of his thoughts, its character was revolutionary. He reconstructed the whole idea of the hereafter. For the first time in eighteen centuries—one might almost say for the first time in the history of humanity—it took on sane and sensible forms, and became rational and conceivable, natural and necessary.

Swedenborg's thought has been slowly leavening the great churches of Christianity in the Western world; and, under its influence, the traditional conception of immortality has been unconsciously changing. A veritable new growth is spreading before our eyes to-day—a growth entirely unparalleled in the history of Christianity.

This new thought of immortality has been fed by the remarkable movement of the latter part of our century known as Spiritualism. Whatever our judgment of the nature of the sources of the ideas that are current in Spiritualism, those ideas themselves are remarkable. There is a certain underlying unity among all spiritualistic communications concerning the hereafter. This general body of thought strangely parallels the thought of Swedenborg. Whether drawn unconsciously from him, or whether it be, as its followers believe, the result of actual communications from the unseen world—the fact remains that the nature and character of

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the hereafter, as outlined through mediums, strangely confirm the visions of immortality that came through Swedenborg.

Under this double influence, the traditional conception of the hereafter is fading out of men's minds, and a new vision is rising upon their souls.

I.

Let us refresh our memory, for a moment, concerning the traditional conception of immortality. According to the traditional idea, death is really a sleep. The spirit passes into unconsciousness at the touch of death. It remains in slumber until the resurrection morning. On the resurrection day the soul, which has passed from the body at death and remained asleep, re-enters the body and awakens to consciousness. Body and soul then, together, rise and pass into the true life of the hereafter. The veritable body laid away in the grave rises from the grave, as the habitation of the soul in the hereafter. In the quaint old village of Easthampton, where I summer, the earliest pastor of the village lies buried at the eastern end of the old burying-ground, facing toward the east—that on the morning of the resurrection day, at the sound of the arch angels' trumpet, he may be the first to rise from the grave and lead his flock in triumphant ascension to the skies. A touchingly pathetic illustration of the traditional belief! The Moors of Morocco, have a grotesque form of this widespread belief. When their heads are shaved, one lock of hair is carefully left, in order that, on the resurrection morning, an angel may seize each man by this lock of hair and raise him from the grave.

Death fixes the doom of a man forever. As he dies, so will he live—saved or lost eternally. Life is a probation. Character does not change after death. The touch of death stereotypes character forever. The good pass directly to heaven; the bad pass directly to hell. The good never fall from heaven—the bad never rise from hell. Fate is fixed irrevocably at the moment of death.

That fate, however, is not finally declared until the judgment day. On that great morning, before the great white throne, the books are open and the doom of destiny is read for each individual soul. The dividing line is drawn, and those on the right of the throne pass into their eternal heaven, while those upon the left are driven to their eternal hell. Endless happiness for the saved—endless suffering for the lost!

Neither in heaven nor in hell are there any natural relationships. The relationships of Nature are rudely broken at the touch of death, never to be formed again. In each family, one is taken and another

is left. Heaven knows no perfectly united family—hell misses some of the home circle.

The whole adjustments of life in the beyond lack any natural orderings. There are no natural occupations. The saved need nothing but the joy of their salvation—the damned can have no joy whatever. The powers of earth, which find upon the earth their natural employ, find no provision for such activities in the beyond. The atmosphere of the celestial city is desiccated, and in its dry vacuum the pale and ghost-like forms of the blessed moved across the scenes, bloodless and colorless. The hosts of the redeemed are grouped, as in pre-Raphaelite pictures, in endless concentric circles round the great white throne of the Eternal, harps in hand, forever hymning praises of the Most High. The old Scotchwoman described the traditional heaven when she said that "we shall sit upon stules and sing psalms all the day long." A dear old child in our Easthampton pulpit, years ago, described the joys of heaven in the conclusive statement into which was condensed several years of tire in the daily chores had made him long for: "And there, my brethren, we shall have nothing whatever to do! Think of it! A whole eternity in Heaven, and nothing whatever to do!"

This traditional conception of the hereafter is passing wholly out of the mind of our generation: so rapidly that it is difficult to realize now that men only a few years ago actually thought thus—or thought that they thus thought—of the hereafter. The language of this traditional conception still draws in our hymns, still drones from our pulpits, still whines in our prayers. Alas, that we conservative Churchmen, holding our venerable prayer-book in our hands, in the last sacred offices of the dead should ever fancy ourselves obliged to repeat language that is archaic, obsolete and untrue—words ringing false upon our consciousness, offending our judgment, and belying our faith!

II.

Let us turn now to consider the new thought of immortality that is dawning upon our century.

Whatever the new thought of immortality may be, it must be one that will fit into the universe as we know it. The highest generalization concerning our universe, thus far reached by man, is that expressed in the word *evolution*. Immortality, then, must be conceived in accordance with the doctrine of evolution. It must be read in terms of evolution. Evolution simply means that the Infinite and Eternal Life is moving in an orderly unfolding of itself through the organic

ascent of life. The immortal life, therefore, must be itself a part of this general evolution.

Under this general conception of evolution, there are two or three laws of life that have come to be generally accepted, and that we must apply in re-reading the ancient thought of immortality.

The unity of life is a fundamental conception in our modern world. There are no wholly dissimilar worlds in the universe known to us. All the stars that spin through space are built out of the same materials. The same elements, the same forces, the same laws are found in Neptune and Uranus and upon our earth. An astronomer from our globe, landing upon Mars, would find the outlook in space familiar to him. An earthly geologist examining Venus would find similar stratifications to those which he knew upon earth. The life that is beyond is one and the same life that is here. There are not two lives, a present and a future; there are not two worlds, seen and unseen; there are not two states, a here and a hereafter—there is one life, one world, one state.

Another law of life revealed to us, under the general doctrine of evolution, is the continuity of all existence. There are different stages in the development of life—but they are only different stages in one and the same life. From the lowest to the highest reach in the organic ascent of life, so far as revealed to us, we can trace the unfolding of one and the same existence. In the orderly evolution of life there are no wholly dissimilar stages. The newest variations grow out of old forms of life. The most violent breaks in the continuity of development gather up the best of the preceding eras and carry that best onward. The strangest flowerings have their rootings in the far past. Man links by inseparable stages with the structureless specks of gelatinous matter that constitute the lowest forms of existence. Whatever the next life may be it will be no wholly new being. It will prove simply a development of our present life. It will be this life carried on higher; not another life at all, but one and the same life in nobler unfolding. The eternal life is here and now. There is no other eternal life to be found in the universe than that which is to be found here.

Another general law of life involved in the doctrine of evolution is that there is a correspondence between its different stages. Each stage in the organic ascent of life shadows the next and higher stage. Each form of life types a higher form. The new is but the old in fresh and higher development. This law we trace through the whole process of evolution; so that we can read prophecies of the coming man through all the upward-struggling forms of life upon our earth.

Whatever, then, the future life may be—if we have eyes to see, we can discern it in the present life. What we are now shadows what we are to be. Immortality will prove the reality of the present earthly life in finer forms. All the characteristics of the celestial life can be traced in the earthly life. Rightly to read the essential elements of our life here and now would be to prophesy the hereafter.

III.

Applying these principles, which are involved in the general law of evolution, we can affirm, confidently, certain things concerning immortality.

Death is no real break in life. It is a conjunction, not a disjunction, in the story of being. It is a stepping-stone from one stage of existence to another. It is the link that binds the lower with the higher form of life. It is a birth into the hereafter. It is an episode in the story of man—only this and nothing more. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Death is the door opening from one room into another in our Father's house—the universe.

Death is not a divorce between the soul and the body, needing to be annulled by the soul's reunion with the body. Nature knows no such backward process. She is not so poor that she has to stoop to pick up discarded clothes. "They all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture they shall be changed; but thou remainest." As the Infinite and Eternal Spirit is forever changing the living garment wrapt around his true Self—that garment which we call Nature—so the child of the Infinite and eternal Spirit casts aside his worn out garment and needs not to reclothe himself with it. The belief in the resurrection of the physical body, as a necessity for the clothing of the spirit, is a pagan superstition that has lingered too long in Christianity. It is in no respect a Christian thought. If anything, it is distinctly an Egyptian speculation.

Death, however, is not a mere unclothing of the soul, but a clothing again of the immortal spirit. No life known to us exists disembodied. When life sheds one body it is but to grow another. The body always grows around the life. Each cell is an embodiment of mind, and is grown by that mind. The intelligence that grew it can grow it again in a higher form. The soul of man, which first clothed itself with the visible body, need not draw from the precipitate of matter that we call our earth to fashion for itself a new and resplendent garment.* The elements out of

*Tesla, in a remarkable article in the June "Century," says: "We can conceive of organized beings living without nourishment, and deriving all the energy they need for the performance of their life-functions from the ambient medium."

which our body is composed exist in the air about us, in finer and subtler forms. From that surrounding atmosphere there can be drawn the materials to reclothe the spirit at its will. When orchids, hanging from the tree boughs, suck from the air the materials that build their beautiful forms, cannot the spirit of man do as much?

Death, in reality, frees the real body. Within this outer form we call the body, there must be an inner formative something that holds these coarser elements in abiding identity of form. The materials that compose our bodies are streaming in and out of us continually. Every seven years we re-form our body completely; so that no particle of the matter that made your body seven years ago is in it now. What is this inner form that seizes these fluent particles of matter, stamps them with its own impress, and rebuilds ever on the same lines the body in which we are identified by our friends? Paul gives the clue to this mystery, when he says, "there is a physical body and there is," even now, and here within us, "a psychical body." It is this psychical body, within the physical body, which is the true principle of form. The touch of death frees this psychical body, and man, passing from the habitation of the flesh, finds himself not unclothed, but clothed upon.

Death, then, is the true resurrection. No other resurrection is conceivable. The body that we dwell in on the earth decomposes, and its materials pass into other structures innumerable. There is no law of *habeas corpus* which can reclaim these bodies of ours, after they have been appropriated by other lives. The archangel's trump, at the sound of which we are all to be changed in a moment—that is the splendid imagery of the apostle. The real trump of the archangel is a still, small voice, heard by no mortal. At that sound we all are changed, as in a moment. The day of resurrection is the day of death.

The traditional thought clings to our ancient and sacred offices for the dead, in language archaic and obsolete: "For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God, in his wise providence, to take out of this world the soul of our departed brother, we, therefore, commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; looking for the general resurrection in the last day and life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose second coming, in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead, and the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed and made like unto his own glorious body." Even the splendor of this language cannot disguise from us the fact that it no longer rings real to our consciousness.

God has given us to see a higher thought. Will our Church be faithful to the Spirit of Truth, who is guiding us into all truth? Or will she still expect her ministers to repeat words that are no longer true? "Why seek the living among the dead? He is not here; He is risen."

Death is no literal sleep. To the outward eye it seems like a profound sleep, and thus we call it. Thus the Master himself called it; but, if I rightly read his mind, not as meaning thereby that the departed fell into a long state of unconsciousness, but simply that he had not really died—that it was only the seeming of death. Sleep, to our modern, scientific study, proves to be a figure of the fancy. The senses fall asleep. The body slumbers. The mind never sleeps. It is always wide awake, thinking actively. Only it is in another state of consciousness, which we cannot well link in with the consciousness that we call wakefulness.

All testimony from the unseen world—if there is any such testimony whatever to be trusted—confirms the conviction that he who passes through death, so far from finding himself in a state of unconscious slumber, finds himself wide awake, instantly. The dead have found it hard to realize that they have died. Again and again, if any such testimony is to be trusted, those who have, as we say, died, only became conscious of the change that has passed over them in their inability to communicate with the forms around them, so well known and loved. They speak, and no one hears them. They touch familiar forms, and there is no responsive thrill. Thus they come to know the change that has passed over them. "I am he that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore!"

He who dies awakens into consciousness—the same being as of old. He is conscious of his continued personal identity. He knows himself to be himself. The threads of the old existence are not cut at the touch of death. They spin on and on into the new being, weaving the old framework of memory and association and habit—of all that constitutes personal identity. Every touch in those beautiful stories of the after life of Jesus reveals the continued identity of the Man of Nazareth. He was one and the same in the glorious form that he was upon the earth.

The dead are, therefore, recognizable by one another and by the living, if ever communication is established. This follows, inevitably, from the continuation of personal identity. The question of our recognition of friends in heaven is not one that should ever be raised by a thoughtful man. Despite the changes that take place in our visible bodies, as

they renew themselves altogether every seven years, the personal identity continuing, we are recognizable one by the other through all disguises. Voice and look will betray the friend whom we have not seen for decades, however changed the form may be. As it is here, so is it there. "Jesus said unto her, Mary! And she said, Rabboni [Master]!"

Death ushers us into no foreign world. We will be at home in the hereafter, as we are at home here. All that is essential to human life here will be found there. The activities of our being on earth will be the activities of our being in heaven. They are the continually abiding activities of our nature. They cannot change. We must find room for them in any conceivable form of existence. Life's finest joys and highest ecstasies would be stolen from us in a heaven where there are no play for these powers. The occupations of earth must, therefore, shadow and type the occupations of heaven. In higher and nobler forms, we must go on doing there what we are doing here. There must be ample room for these occupations in the universe revealed to us nowadays, the outer vestibule alone of which we enter in this earthly life.

If homes are necessary here, homes are necessary there—the centers of family life, without which the truest "bands of a man" would be broken. Those truest "bands of a man," apparently broken on earth, must be reknit in heaven. The associations that group themselves naturally here must, in higher and nobler forms, group themselves in the hereafter. Life without association is death. In Milton's swelling phrase, there must be there "noble troops and sweet societies." The institutions of society, evolved with so much painful effort on earth, must blossom into higher and nobler forms beyond. There must, there, be the reality of the State as of the Church. In the heavenly State there must be the functions of the earthly State, as in the heavenly Church the functions of the earthly Church, and thus every noblest power of man find full employ. There will be there hosts of undeveloped lives to be governed and ruled, to be taught and inspired.

Death makes no break in the continuity of character. It works no miracle. A man is the same here and hereafter. He is the same, intellectually, before and after death. The thoughtful, studious man upon earth, will be the thoughtful, studious man in the heavens. He that is silly and superficial here, will be silly and superficial as he starts in life there. The wise man before death will be wise after death. There are fools over there, as here.

The physical transition that we call death can make no essential difference whatever in the spiritual reality that we call character.

This may, perhaps, give the clue to that ordinarily perplexing problem—the twaddle of the seance. Assuming that there are human spirits at the other end of the telephone connecting the world seen with the world unseen, why should we expect that there will be no frivolous messages, no clatter of silly voices heard from beyond? Society, as one finds it here, does not consist altogether of the wise and reticent. Social intercourse is by no means a feast of reason, even in Fifth Avenue palaces. I have observed that it is not always those qualified to speak intelligently who prate most garulously over the dinner table. Why, then, should we wonder if, on our first establishing communication between the two spheres, it should be found that those who rush to the other end of the telephone are not those whom we most desire to call up?

A man's moral qualities are unaffected by the process of passage from one stage of existence to another. The man that is tender and affectionate here will be loving there. The selfish man before death will remain the same selfish man after death. The materially-minded on earth will remain the materially-minded in emerging from earth upon some other sphere. There is no such thing as living in soul sin up to the day of death—wallowing in wantonness, stifling the spirit in sensuality, clutching at gold and murdering the bodies and souls of one's brothers to get it—and then, by "experiencing religion," or by receiving extreme unction at the last hour go straight into a heaven of holiness. The fingers that have been busy handling the croupier of our American Monte Carlo, which faces Trinity Church, cannot turn at an hour's notice to playing harps in the new Jerusalem. You will start in the other life just as you have made yourself in this life. You carry over with you, into your life beyond, the capital that you have accumulated in your soul here. To lay up treasures in Heaven you must lay up treasures in the heaven within you. Only thus can you take a letter of credit to the celestial city. There is a profound truth in the Eastern doctrine of Karma. It is the truth seen by the writer of the Book of Revelation of Saint John the Divine, when he said: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

There must be rewards and punishments in the life beyond, if it is a real life. There are rewards and punish-

ments here, because this is a real life. Generally speaking, virtue brings on earth its own reward, and vice insures here its own punishment. In the long run the good man succeeds, and the bad man fails. Even where this law does not seem to hold, it does, none the less, hold unescapably. When the good man fails, he succeeds. He succeeds in the true and only success of life—the maintenance of his integrity, the preservation of his character. He keeps his soul alive. He preserves the image of God within him. Even when the bad man succeeds, he fails. His is the true and only failure of earth—the collapse of character, the bankruptcy of spirit, the loss of life, which is but another name for soul. God needs no vindication of his government, even on earth. "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." They have what they go after—these smug, sleek, successful hypocrites. "And, verily, I say unto you"—thus the Master might have added—"they have their own punishment."

As it is here on earth, so will it be in the life beyond. But the rewards and punishments of earth are not artificially disposed or imposed, not arbitrarily given or inflicted—they are the natural issues of character. In rewards and punishments alike, the man is his own destiny. He crowns himself among the blessed or damns himself among the cursed. As it is on earth, so will it be in the heavens and the hells. A man carries his heaven with him through death into the hereafter. He lays its foundation here, and rears its superstructure there. A man carries his own hell with him, through death, into the hereafter. He imprisons himself within his sins here, and those prison walls grow round him, seen perhaps and realized, for the first time, in the hereafter. That was a fine Persian vision which depicted the soul, on entering the next life, confronted by a beautiful being, who said: "I am thy good deeds;" and then shadowed by an evil being, who declared: "I am thy evil deeds." God does not reward man nor punish him. Man rewards and punishes himself. The school-boy is making his own life, for success or for failure, in his school hours. He enters upon the destiny which he himself has prepared when he goes forth into life. A man, therefore, cannot miss his heaven if he has been heavenly-minded on earth. A man cannot skip his hell if he has been hellish in spirit in this world. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The judgment day is, therefore, not a page of history, but a drama of the soul. It is not a fact of prose; it is a symbol of the imagination. It is not a day to be fixed by any celestial chronology—it

is every day, in every man's life. Each day you and I are judging ourselves—approving or condemning ourselves in the light of God; and thus preparing for ourselves the rewards of a heaven or the punishments of a hell. But this there may be of a judgment day to come—the sudden awakening of a man's soul, in the blinding light of the unseen world, to realize what a fool he has made of himself, and really to know himself for the first time.

Heaven and hell are not, however, located in space—they are located in mind. No latitude or longitude will determine for you the site of either heaven or hell. You will not find either by voyaging through the archipelagoes of space. Satan sighs: "Me miserable, which way shall I fly? Myself am hell." An angel sighs: "Me, blessed, which way shall I fly? Myself am heaven."

Heaven and hell are not shut off from each other, as we traditionally conceive of them. Heaven and hell commingle upon earth. Men living in each, jostle one another along Fifth Avenue, and crowd one another on Broadway. You pass from heaven to hell as you pass from one block to another. You leave heaven behind you in one home, whose door closes upon you, and you find hell back of the next door through which you enter. Heaven is upon your right hand and hell is upon your left hand, as between two friends you take your afternoon walk. There is no more heaven to be found in the world of space than you will find in your own New York: men and women filled with the divine life, homes radiant with the divine love, the activities of the factory and the studio in which there is the forth-putting of divine energies. You will find nowhere in the worlds about you more hellish hells than you can find here in your own New York: men and women filled with impurity and hatred and every evil passion, homes rent with discord, and spheres of action turbulent with the anarchy of selfishness. Yet these heavens and hells adjoin one another closely, commingling freely.

There are, indeed, spiritual classifications on earth. How should there not be? Men group themselves here according to their moral affiliations. The good seek the society of the good, and the evil seek the company of the evil. Nay, goodness establishes its own territorial zone, and evil haunts its own dens. You know in what part of the city to go, if you desire the company of intelligence and culture and character. You need not ask the policeman where to go if you want to find the gambling hell and the bagnio.

"He went into his own place." This was the doom of Judas. He could go nowhere else. By every law of natural affiliation, he must seek out his own. By

every law of natural gravitation, he must descend to his own level. But Jesus, also, went to his own place, beautiful and blessed. Every man tends to find his own place on earth, and he will go to his own place when he leaves earth with swifter, surer steps.

But there are no fixed groupings for these spiritual classifications on earth, and there will be none in the hereafter—for one class, at least. On earth these spiritual groupings are fluent. The classes are not castes. Goodness trips and falls, and then drops out of its own true place for a time and tumbles into a temporary place, out of which it must rise again. The bank cashier succumbs to temptation—he appropriates the funds of the bank; and then the sequel inevitably follows: the place that knew him knows him no more, as he “skips to Canada” and finds his own place in company with other self exiled scamps and scoundrels. The jail-bird reforms and his old surroundings become abhorrent to him. He is no longer found in the group in the groggery, among the wild-eyed watchers over the gambling table. His “pals” miss him in his wonted resorts. They can find him, if they know how; but it will be in other sorts of places. Thus the soul in its stages of progress, readjusts its environment to its own condition, and changes its states.

And all this strange sorting of souls, this strange placing of spirits, goes on in one superficially indistinguishable mass of human life; the good and the evil jostling against each other; the spheres of heaven and hell impinging on each other, sliding forever into each other. Why, then, should we wonder that it should be so hereafter? How could there be any helpfulness for those whom we call “the lost”—how could the good reach out their hands to succor their brothers, who have not won character—were it not for this continued contiguity of souls throughout the universe, whereby all sorts and conditions of spirits commingle freely?

Character itself—is it ever fixed and final on earth? Up to the last hour of life the good man may trip and fall. “Come quickly, O Death,” sighed the great Marcus, on his imperial throne, “lest I forget myself!” Even up to the last hour of life the bad man may reform. “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!” cries the dying thief. Saint and sinner may change places even in the shadow of death.

Why, then, may it not be so hereafter? Certainly death itself, the mere physical process, cannot fix character. There is no such spiritual fixative in a physical process. If Lucifer and his fellow-angels fell from heaven, other Lucifers may fall again. Sweet-souled Robbie Burns had

the prophetic gift when he thought that “auld Neckie Ben” “might tak’ a thought and mend.” This is the infinite possibility which life holds within itself forever and forever; so that the saints in the innermost circles around the great white throne must forever put up the prayer, “Lest we forget, lest we forget;” and the sinners in the deepest bowels of hell may wing their cries to God for the help that “bringeth salvation.” It is the sheerest audacity of dogmatism that undertakes to deny the endless possibilities of change in character.

For the saints we need not fear too sorely. Character gathers impetus by movement, strength and solidity by action. There comes a day when, to all intents and purposes, it must be true that a man “cannot sin, because he is born of God.” But this thought may give us infinite comfort concerning those who so mightily need a change. What moral miracles changed conditions work upon weak and undeveloped characters here on earth! Nay even those whom we call, distinctively and essentially, the bad, change, under new conditions—under wiser and truer treatment. The kindergarten remakes the waif of the street. The reformatory makes over again the youthful criminal. Modern penology, the true science of punishment in our great nineteenth-century prisons, is accomplishing the supreme moral miracle of life—turning sinners into saints, convicts into men of character. Most men are badly handicapped in their conditions on earth. Between heredity and environment there is a poor chance for most of us.

What, then, the miraculous effects of such a change of conditions as becomes possible in passing from earth into the life beyond! The material conditions, which now make so mightily for evil, fall away from the soul. The temptation that here thrusts itself upon one at every hand slips into the background. Increasing powers of helpfulness, in the increasing development of life among the good, make the reforms of earth seem child’s play in comparison with those miracles then to be accomplished. Wiser treatment from those who have grown luminous in the higher life will revolutionize man’s work for his fellows.

Hell, then, is no finality in the worlds beyond our earthly hells, any more than in the world here and now. There are, alas! too many instances of men becoming, as it seems even here, hopelessly degraded and imbruted in sin. Evil seems to be with us, at times, incurable. But the wisdom that is coming to us teaches us to believe that the fault lies, not in the intrinsic incurability of the evil, but in the limitations of the healer. Our methods are defective. Our powers are

inadequate. We have not yet learned to deal with sin. But we are beginning to learn. No more beautiful development of our century is to be found than in the science of penology, or prison punishment. Up to our own day, there was no other thought in the discipline of prison life than that of punishment as a deterrent of others from wrong and as a restraint upon the criminal himself. The idea of reclaiming the criminal had scarcely entered men's minds. If one wants to know horrors, let him read a description of the prisons of our own country and of England, in the beginning of our century. We have but begun to apply this new science of penology. Yet already we have gone far enough to assure ourselves that under right conditions and by right methods, the great bulk of our criminal population can be reclaimed. Those noble men who have achieved the most brilliant success in prison discipline thoroughly believe that, eventually, success will be measured by the restoration of the criminal. Repentance, reformation, rehabilitation—these are the stages of recovery of lost souls in our earthly hells.

When man can do this, with his limited powers and his imperfect conditions, what cannot God do? If earth can open the prison doors, shall they remain closed in the hereafter? The baleful words that Dante saw over the door of hell already begin to fade out—"Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here." The significance of the great Catholic doctrine of purgatory is beginning to be discerned. Not as in the Catholic purgatory, limited, but without limit, so far as we can see, the pains of prison punishment are purifying. The sufferings of the hells in the beyond, as here, are remedial.

The work of all true society, whether in the world seen or in the world unseen, is to carry on this redeeming, restoring, renewing work of God in man. For this end are all the institutions of our social life on earth. For this end are all the

institutions of social life in the hereafter—there, however, mightily re-enforced by the developed powers, mental and moral, of good men. That great prophetic vision of the early Christian ages is coming to be seen in its true light. We would not now care to erase from our creed the words: "He descended into hell." Even in the most literal interpretation of them, we can believe them now, as our fathers dared not to believe them; seeing the work of the Christ and of all his followers in the beyond, not in the selfish enjoyment of a heaven of happiness, but in the unselfish ministry to those in the hells of suffering: that they, too, may be brought into the light of God and led up into the life of the All Father.

The outcome of all life is in that great word of the seer, in the Book of Revelation of Saint John the Divine: "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." The lake of fire that burns to consume all evil, all sin, and all suffering—into this lake, at the last, death itself shall be cast, and with it hell. There shall be no extinction of being, and there shall be no continuation of being in suffering and in sin.

This is the final vision of the Kingdom of God, whether in our world or in other worlds:

"I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.' And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither Light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."