

# “CATHOLIC ESCHATOLOGY”

EXAMINED 5

A REPLY TO THE  
REV. H. N. OXENHAM'S RECENT PAPERS IN THE  
*CONTEMPORARY REVIEW*

BY

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## PREFACE.

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THE following pages first appeared as an article in the *Contemporary Review* for July 1876, under the title of "The Restitution of All Things—The Teaching of Scripture and of the Church," in reply to four papers from the pen of the Rev. H. N. Oxenham, which came out in the January, February, March, and April numbers of the same periodical, and were there entitled "Eternal Perdition and Universalism, from a Roman Catholic point of view." Since then Mr. Oxenham has reprinted his papers in a separate form, under the title of "Catholic Eschatology and Universalism," together with a rejoinder (which appeared in the *Christian Apologist* for October 1876) to my criticisms. I therefore yield to the strongly expressed wish of others that my paper also should be reprinted. It will be seen that I have not added any reply to Mr. Oxenham's rejoinder. That rejoinder throughout is full of the same characteristics which mark the papers here examined. The one sufficient reply to it will be found in simply comparing Mr. Oxenham's assertions with the facts or quotations which are referred to and commented upon by him.

This can easily be done by any competent reader who wishes for the truth, as both in my volume on the "Restitution of All Things," and in this present paper, full references are given to all the points in question,\* and I am content to leave the facts of the case to speak for themselves with any who will make the necessary examination.

I will only here say further, that the new title chosen by Mr. Oxenham for his papers, and which I now follow, viz. "Catholic Eschatology and Universalism," though it may be more imposing, seems to me less correct than their original designation. "Catholic Eschatology," one would have thought, must surely include some notice at least of the bliss of the redeemed, of the work of the saints as kings and priests with Christ, and of their glory as joint-heirs with the Eternal Son in destroying the works of the devil, and in reconciling and subduing all things unto Himself, that God may be all in all. But Mr. Oxenham's "Catholic Eschatology" has nothing to tell us of all this, but only of that death and judgment and destruction which Holy Scripture calls *æonial*, and which, Mr. Oxenham contends, is never-ending. The omission is significant and instructive.

The Judge is at the door. He will ere long decide who have been true, and who false, witnesses of Him.

HIGHGATE :

November 1, 1876.

\* The references to the pages of Mr. Oxenham's papers follow the numbering of the pages of the *Contemporary*.

# “CATHOLIC ESCHATOLOGY”

## EXAMINED.



TRUTH, like Christ, age after age, is on its trial before men; but while it is being tried, it is really trying everything. Passed on from one tribunal to another, from high-priests to rulers, like Him who was the Truth, and always on its first appearance misunderstood, misrepresented, and even rejected as a deceiver, by those who should be foremost to welcome it, it is yet, by the very judgment men pass upon it, revealing what they are, and sifting all who come in contact with it. In this trial, some of those least valued by the world by their very weakness and griefs are prepared to recognise as divine that which the learned and self-satisfied agree to cast out. These, attracted to the truth, even though they little understand, and at times may even doubt and deny it, first giving themselves to it, and only so fully receiving it, cannot but in due time become its witnesses, content, even if it is mocked and misrepresented and slain and buried out of sight, for its sake to be cast out and misrepresented with it, in the faith

that, spite of its rejection, it yet must prevail, and that, though slain, it will surely rise again.

Some months ago a truth, which in every age has been knocking at men's hearts, and has here and there always found some few believers, and which in these last days everywhere is winning many to receive it—I mean the truth, or hope, as some are content to call it, of the final salvation or restitution of all—was brought before the readers of this REVIEW, in an article by Professor Mayor, with words, not of suspicion or condemnation, but of sympathy and commendation. And the testimony of one—I may say at once my own testimony—who, in opposition to the current opinion of the professing Church, had shown that Scripture, spite of apparent passages to the contrary, taught that the love and purpose of God, far wider and deeper than many even of His most loving children had thought possible, would not cease to work for the recovery of the lost, until all should be found and restored to Him from whom they had been beguiled or fallen, was recommended in these pages to the attention of the Church and world. Since then, in four consecutive numbers of this REVIEW,\* the same hope or truth of final restoration has been vehemently assailed, and again put upon its trial; the testimony of those who hold this hope, especially of the writer of the present paper, accused of error and irrelevancy; and the contrary doctrine of endless perdition argued at length with skill and learning by one, Mr. H. N. Oxenham, who has already

\* *Contemporary Review* for Jan., Feb., March, and April, 1876.

and deservedly made himself a place in the literary world. Little does the critic seem aware, that while he thus becomes both witness and judge, and declares and decides that this or that is truth, and this not truth, he is really being tried himself by what appears to be on trial, and, like the judges of the Truth of old, is showing by his treatment of that which is before him exactly where and what he is. Few remember this eternal law, that our views of any object absolutely and necessarily depend upon our state or standpoint, that is, on what and where we are, and upon the measure of light or darkness which we have to see by; and conversely, that by our views we may learn where we really are, like the mariners in mid ocean, by our observations discovering our true position; that whether it is of nature, in any of her varied kingdoms, or of Scripture, or of God and of His Christ, or future judgment, or of the things of this life, as to what is pleasure, gain, or honour, the view which each has tells us his state, that is, where he really is. If men can believe another, though their views differ, their creed may be one; for our belief on any question may be beyond our view, and may confess some truth, which may either be wholly unseen, or of which our first very differing views are but the partial apprehensions. But if we will each only believe so much of any fact or truth as we can see, our view must not only depend upon, but also show exactly, where we are. Mr. Oxenham, by his views of future judgment, shows us where he is, while at the same time it is no less true that where he now is accounts for and explains many of his views.

But a man may say, “I get my views from the Church, or from the Bible, or from the Creeds, and these cannot be wrong.” I answer, How much do you understand the Church, or the Bible, or the Creeds? The Church may speak the truth, and not only may you wholly misinterpret and misapply her true testimony, but she herself, because she is God’s witness, may like Caiaphas utter words, as when he said, “It is expedient that one man die for the people,” of the true sense of which she may herself be quite ignorant. How often in teaching the young are we made to feel that, even with the truest words, we can make them see only just so far as they have learned to see. Whether it is in Greek or mathematics, something more is needed than true teaching—even the power to receive and digest what is communicated. And how often, as he advances, does the teacher himself learn, that, even while he has been teaching truth, the truth has been far wider and deeper, and even other, than he has at the time conceived it. If I err not, it is so with all the Church’s teaching. How much is there in the order of the Christian Year far beyond the thought of the Church herself, which ordained and arranged this order? She had her own thought, for instance, in the appointment of All Souls’ Day; but God through her by the same day may have been bearing a far wider and still more blessed testimony. This is true too of the Creeds, which not only may confess far more than the Church’s children apprehend, but confess it for reasons, and in relation to matters, which as yet they have not thought of. Why, for instance, is the Church

an article of faith, as in the words, “I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church,” when “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence or conviction of things unseen?” Or why in the Creeds is the Church linked, not with Christ, whose body she is, but rather with the Holy Ghost? or why, again, is she linked with the forgiveness of sins, as when we say, “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins?” Is it only because she is herself forgiven, or because also she is God’s appointed instrument and means for others’ forgiveness? And, again, how far does our view of this “forgiveness and remission of sins,” or of the “one baptism,” through which it is effected, exhaust the great mystery? The answer each may make to these questions will give his view; but does this view measure or fathom the depth which is here spoken of? And so of Holy Scripture, how much do we see of its meaning? Should we without an apostle’s help have seen the two covenants, law and gospel, in Hagar and Sarah? Or how many would have detected what the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us is intended by the omission of father and mother in Melchizedek’s history? The eye only sees what it has learnt, and brings with it power, to see. It is not enough to have a revelation before us. We need eyes and heart to read that revelation. Do what you will before a babe, it does not see it. A man may say, “I take my view of the sun’s rising from what I see.” The question is how much he really sees. What a lesson it is that this sun-rising, perhaps the grandest and clearest of all natural phenomena, is not the truth, but only an

appearance of it. In every department of knowledge, therefore, that which marks the man is that he has learned to distinguish what really is from what appears so. No one can do this at first. Therefore God gives us fathers and teachers to help us in our first endeavours to understand His books, whether of grace or nature. And we are no more fit at first, simply because we have the Bible in our hands, to be our own teachers and guides or the guides of others, and no more intended for it, than we are fit, because nature is before us, to be our own astronomers, our own architects, or our own engine-drivers.

But it may be said again, If a thing is proved it will be clear. Clear to whom? A proof is a proof, but not to every one. Take the proof of the Binomial Theorem. To whom is it a proof? Surely not to every one; not even to all those who can use the forms of this theorem. So as to the proof from Holy Scripture of what is God's purpose toward the lost. The clearest proof may be, and must be, and there is mercy in it, no proof to some.

All this, which is the necessary result of our being such as we are, and of the nature of God's words and works, all of which to us at least are veils to cover truth, even while they are also revelations, has a direct bearing upon the question under consideration, as to what God has revealed respecting the future of those who die here impenitent. For it is to what is revealed, or said to be revealed, that I confine my consideration, and more especially to what is revealed

in what we call Holy Scripture. Some, by far the greater number of those who accept the Bible as a revelation from God, have understood it as teaching that the lost are lost for ever, and will suffer everlasting punishment. As to what this everlasting punishment will be they differ; some, like Mr. Oxenham, making it mainly a *pœna damni*, others contending for a *pœna sensûs*; but that it is to be endless has been the view of the majority of those who take Scripture as their guide—a view which they receive on the authority of our Lord’s express words. On the other hand, all through the ages, another witness has been heard, the witness I grant of a minority, but of a minority which has included some of the most thoughtful in the Church, to some of whom, as to Origen, we owe more even as to the very letter of Scripture than perhaps to any others. These, believing the Scripture to be divine, while they confess that at first sight it seems in many places to teach the doctrine of everlasting punishment, see in it another teaching just as express, if not far more plain, not resting on any single word, such as *αἰώνιος*, but on the character and purpose of Almighty God, that His lost shall all at last be found, for “He will have all men to be saved,” and has distinctly said, that “where sin abounded grace did much more abound.” They have therefore concluded that there must be some secret here, the true answer to which is not to be got by ignoring one half of the testimony to keep the other half, but by patiently waiting to learn what is the key to what looks like contradiction and inconsistency. For these

searchers into Scripture have noticed how all God's books contain precisely the same difficulty. They see in Nature, which is surely a revelation of God, that it is everywhere full of apparent contradiction: not only with force against force, heat against cold, darkness against light, death against life, its very elements in ceaseless strife everywhere; on one side witnessing of a Preserver, on the other of a Destroyer; here boundless provision for the support of life, there death reigning; but also that our sense-readings even of the clearest physical phenomena, such as the rising and setting of the sun, are opposed to truth and fact, and need to be corrected by a higher faculty. They see the same apparent inconsistency in Providence, which is also a revelation of God, but which, like Nature, is a veil quite as much as a revelation; with the wicked in prosperity, while the righteous suffer; with crime in one instance punished, in another unpunished here; and with creatures born to almost certain life-long suffering, who, as far as we know, cannot be suffering for any wrong-doing of their own. They are not surprised, therefore, to see the same apparent contradiction in that Book which the Church accepts as a revelation, on the testimony of which so many base their belief in endless punishment. For they have learnt, by their own experience, how while they are themselves under the first covenant, which only works death, and wrath, and condemnation, they cannot credit God with the “thoughts of peace” He has towards us, but are through fear of death all their lifetime subject to bondage.

But having themselves passed from under that cloud into the ministry of light and life, and learnt what the death and judgment have done for them, they see what this same judgment may do for others also, and that the cloud, though dark, is really big with blessings.

What then does Scripture say as to the final destiny of man? Its testimony appears at first sight contradictory. It speaks of “few finding the way of life,” and yet “in Christ of all being made alive,” of God’s elect being only “a little flock,” and yet of “all the kindreds of the earth being blest in Abraham’s seed;” of “mercy upon all,” and yet of “everlasting or eternal punishment;” of the “restitution of all things,” and yet also of “eternal destruction;” of the “wrath of God for ever and ever,” and yet of “all things reconciled to Him;” of “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels,” and yet of the “destruction through death, not of the works of the devil only, but of him who has the power of death, that is, the devil;” of the “second death, and the lake which burneth with fire,” and yet of “no more death or curse,” but “all things subdued by Christ,” and “God all in all.” Is not this apparent contradiction? What can it really mean? Is there any key, and if so, what is it, to this mystery?

To this, the short and easy answer of some is that the Book contradicts itself, and so betrays its purely earthly origin. But the common reply of believers, which Mr. Oxenham approves, is that these opposing words only mean that some are saved and some are lost for ever; the simple objection to which is, that, in

asserting one side of Scripture, this explanation not only ignores and denies the testimony upon the other side, but represents God in a character absolutely opposed to that in which the Gospel exhibits Him. Can this then be the true solution of the riddle? Is this indeed the glad tidings of great joy to all people? Is it not rather a misapprehension arising out of some mystery connected with the method of our redemption? I have endeavoured elsewhere\* to show that the truth which solves the riddle is to be found in those same Scriptures which seem to raise the difficulty, and lies in the mystery of the will of our ever-blessed God as to the process and stages of redemption; first, His will by some to bless and save others; by a first-born seed, “the first-born from the dead,” the elect of this and other ages, to save and bless the later-born; secondly, His will therefore to work out the redemption of the lost by successive “ages” or dispensations, or, to use the language of St. Paul, “according to the purpose of the ages;”† and lastly, His will (thus meeting the nature of our fall) to make death, judgment, and destruction, the means and way to life, acquittal, and salvation; in other words, “through death to destroy him that has the power of death, that is, the devil, and to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

To go into all this would be impossible here.

\* See “Restitution of all Things,” pp. 27-95.

† Eph. iii. 11; *κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων*, translated, in our Authorized Version, “the eternal purpose.”

I say nothing therefore of the light which is thrown upon this question by seeing that the “first-born” or “elect,” so far from being, as some have thought, the only saved, are but first-born and elect, like Christ their Head, to be the means to save and serve others, and have a relation to the whole creation, which shall be saved in the appointed time by the first-born seed, that is, by Christ and His body, through those appointed baptisms, whether of fire or water, which are required to bring about the “restitution of all things;” the first-born or first-fruits being elect to be priests and rulers to the later-born, and a pledge, as St. Paul declares, that “if the first-fruits be holy, the lump shall also be holy.” Nor can I show here how this blessed and promised consummation can and will be accomplished only through those so-called eternal or “æonial” times,\* figured by the “times” and the “times of times” of the old Jewish dispensation, which, like the days of Creation, are the periods during which the Divine Word is working, to bring a ruined world, which is without form and void, with darkness on its face, to bear again the image of God and to be all very good. But I may say that these æonial or age times are the key to unlock all that is hid under that word which our version translates “eternal” or “everlasting,” but which really is “of the ages,” and refers always to the times during which the present fall, for Scripture asserts a fall, is being remedied.

\* The *αἰῶνες*, or *χρόνοι αἰώνιοι* of 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. ii. 4-7, and iii. 11, 21; 2 Tim. i. 9, and Tit. i. 2, &c.

I must, however, for a moment dwell on the other truth to which I have referred, namely, that death, condemnation, and destruction, are for sinners the one only possible way to life, acquittal, and salvation; because to most this is the great difficulty, which, till they have themselves passed through the process, seems utterly perplexing and incredible, while yet it solves the great riddle. This, the lesson of the Cross, is yet not understood by many who in word confess that the Cross and it alone saves them. They do not see that to be quickened we must die, and that death and judgment are the way to life and blessedness. For fallen man there is indeed no other way. For the one only way out of any world, in which we are or may be, is by a death to it, even as the only way into any world is by birth into it. We have by the serpent's lie not only had our true life poisoned, and so, by losing the life of heaven, have been unable to remain and live in Paradise,—for we cannot live in any world without the life of it,—but we have also to our sorrow had another life quickened in us by the same false word, which, while it poisoned the heavenly life, quickened another which was its very opposite; and, having now the fallen life, we have come in spirit into another spirit-world, of self-love and envy, pride and wrath, altogether unlike that for which we were created; and being in this dark world, the only way out of it is by dying to it. But the mere death of the body, which is only the end of our natural animal life, is not necessarily the death or end of that fallen life in which our spirit lives.

The first-born or elect indeed, by receiving the Divine Word, which slays the hellish life within and quickens the heavenly, have even while here in this earthly life, through the loving chastenings and sorrows which God sends, died to and so come clear out of the dark world, “delivered,” as St. Paul says, by death with Christ, “from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” But those still living the selfish life have not so died. At death, that is, the death of the body, they are still in spirit within the sphere, and under the power, of that dark world whose life they live. How are they to be delivered from it? There is but one way, death; not the first, for that is passed, but the second, even that death to the hellish life, which is accomplished by the Word, which kills to make alive. Therefore has God promised a “second death,” that those who have not here died to sin and hell may through God’s loving judgment do so at last; His judgment for them, even as for His first-born and elect, being the appointed way of their deliverance.

I do not, however, suppose that any statement of this truth can make it clear to all, much less that so bald and imperfect a sketch as that here given can free the subject from the mists with which it is surrounded. I rather refer to these points as illustrating the character of the criticism which has appeared in the recent numbers of this REVIEW from the pen of Mr. Oxenham. While the book he criticizes calls special attention to the fact that the texts of Scripture, on which the doctrine of eternal punishment is based, present only one

side of the testimony of Holy Scripture, and that to settle the matter in this way, not only ignores half the Bible, but wholly overlooks all that is taught as to the method of our salvation by death, and also represents or misrepresents God by setting Him before us in a character opposed to the whole spirit of the Gospel, in Mr. Oxenham's articles on the subject there is no attempt to explain all this, which confessedly lies at the very foundation of the inquiry. One might read all that he says, and never be aware that the book, on the authority of which the doctrine of endless punishment is asserted, has on the very face of it this great and manifest difficulty. Only imagine the book of Nature being studied in this way; with one class of facts systematically ignored; with one law, say of gravitation, fully laid down, while the opposite law, of centrifugal motion, was altogether overlooked; what results in science could follow from such a method? Yet this is the way in which not a few yet read the Scriptures, taking their first partial sense-readings for the truth, and shutting their eyes to all that the same Scripture testifies upon the other side.

But the articles which Mr. Oxenham has given us are "from a Roman Catholic point of view;"\* and

\* Mr. Oxenham, in the reprint of his papers, objects to these words "from a Roman Catholic point of view," which were part of the title under which his essay originally appeared in the *Contemporary Review*. But no one, I think, except Mr. Oxenham himself, can read his papers without observing throughout the plainest marks of the writer's position, though he may himself be quite unconscious that it is so.

possibly “a Roman Catholic point of view” does not permit one to see the whole question. There are points of view from which but little can be seen. What Mr. Oxenham sees, however, has its value, as helping us to gauge the gain or loss of looking at this question, as he does, from a Roman Catholic standpoint. Has this “point of view” helped him? An examination of his views, which, if not altogether the result of his position, yet witness where he is, may throw some light on this matter.

Beginning, then, with an allusion to the spread and “extreme novelty, at all events in this country, as maintained by men professing to accept the Bible,” (p. 223,) of what he calls “Universalism,” which, he tells us, “disorganizes the entire structure of Christian doctrine,” (p. 227,) Mr. Oxenham proceeds, after a few words as to that which he thinks “lies at the root of most of the angry reclamation,” to “the leading causes which help to account for the modern spirit of antagonism to this doctrine of eternal punishment.” These, according to Mr. Oxenham, are two, (p. 229,)—first, the popular opinions and fancies as to the nature of this eternal punishment, in the case of unbaptized infants and the heathen, and as to the comparative number of the saved or lost; and secondly, the neglect or denial of the doctrine of Purgatory and prayer for the dead. This is the substance of his first paper. Let us suppose all this correct. What does it prove as to the truth or untruth of endless punishment or universal restitution? But so far from being correct,

these statements, except the one as to the spread of unbelief in endless torment, are all misleading, and indeed erroneous. For, first, is the doctrine of universal restitution an "extreme novelty?" Gieseler's statement (and there is no higher authority) is that "the opinion of the indestructible capacity for reformation in all rational creatures, and the finiteness of the torments of hell, was so common even in the West, and so widely diffused among opponents of Origen," (he is speaking of A.D. 324 to 451,) "that though it might not have sprung up without the influence of his school, yet it had become quite independent of it." \* Jerome's words too, which I shall again notice, as to the texts of Scripture upon which some in his day rested their hope that all "punishment would one day come to an end," † and Augustine's reference to the "very many (*imo quam plurimi*) who, though not denying the Holy Scripture, do not believe in endless torments," ‡ and the well-known passage in his "City of God," respecting those whom he calls *nostri misericordes*, who are "unwilling to believe that endless punishment will be inflicted," § not to speak of other proofs, show how entirely contrary to fact Mr. Oxenham's statement is as to the "extreme novelty" of this doctrine. Is then this doctrine "an extreme novelty, at all events in this country, as maintained by persons professing to accept

\* "Eccl. Hist.," vol. i. § 82.

† At the end of his Commentary on Isaiah, lib. xviii. in cap. lxvi.

‡ "Enchirid. ad Laurent.," c. 29.

§ "De Civ. Dei," lib. xxi. c. 17.

the Bible?” Has Mr. Oxenham never heard of Jeremiah White, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and chaplain to Oliver Cromwell; \* or of Peter Sterry, another distinguished Puritan of the same period; † or of George Rust, chaplain to Jeremy Taylor, and Dean of Connor; ‡ or of the famous Dr. Henry More, Fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge, one of the greatest scholars of his day; § or of the non-juror William Law, author of the “*Serious Call*,” to whom, perhaps more than to any other, under God, England owes the revival of religion in the last century, whose “*Address to the Clergy*” is full of this doctrine; or of George Stonehouse, Vicar of Islington, a hundred years ago; || or of Richard Clarke, Curate of Cheshunt about the same time; ¶ or of Dr. Newton, Bishop of Bristol; \*\* or of Dr. Thomas Burnet, Master of the Charter House; †† or of the Chevalier Ramsay, †† with many others now forgotten; all of whom bore their unfaltering testi-

\* Author of the “*Restitution of all Things*.”

† Author of the “*Rise, Race, and Royalty of the Kingdom of God*,” and the “*Revelation of the Everlasting Gospel Message*.”

‡ Author of “*Letter of Resolution concerning Origen*,” printed 1661.

§ Author of “*Divine Dialogues*,” in Two Parts, printed 1688.

|| Author of “*Universal Restitution a Scripture Doctrine*,” printed 1761.

¶ Author of the “*Gospel of the Daily Service of the Law*,” printed 1767.

\*\* Author of a Dissertation “*On the Final State and Condition of Men*,” in his Works, vol. iii. p. 702, 1782.

†† Author of “*De Statu Mortuorum et Resurgentium*,” 1715.

‡‡ Author of the “*Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*,” 1749.

mony to this truth of restitution, and whose works, though now little known, still remain to witness how clear and persistent has been the testimony on this subject?

And as to Mr. Oxenham's assertion—for it is but an assertion—that “Universalism disorganizes the entire structure of Christian doctrine,” (p. 227,) is not the fact exactly the reverse? The objection only proves the confusion of thought which passes current for sound doctrine, and how little the nature of the fall, and the redemption by Christ, are really understood. What the Scripture teaches is, that man by disobedience and a death to God fell from God under the power of death and darkness, where by nature he is for ever lost, as unable to quicken his soul as to raise again his dead body; that in this fall God pitied him, and sent His Son, in whom is life, to be a man in the place where man was shut up, there to raise up again God's life in man, to bear man's curse, and then through death to bring man back in God's life to God's right hand; that in His own person, Christ, the first of all the first-fruits, as man in the life of God, broke through the gates of death and hell; that those who receive Him now through Him obtain the life by which they also shall rise as “first-fruits of His creatures;” that “if the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy,” and that therefore “in Christ shall all be made alive.” Is not Sir James Stephen therefore quite right in saying that the dogma of eternal punishment is at best “a mere isolated truth, standing in no necessary connection with the rest,” (p. 227,)

but practically contradicting all that the Gospel tells us of Christ's work, and God's character? For if God is indeed love, and wills that all men should be saved, and doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; if Christ indeed died for all, as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;” the difficulty is to conceive how this can consist with any being for ever lost to God, or how Christian doctrine can be complete without some such conclusion as universal restitution. But here as elsewhere we only see what we have learned to see.

As to the supposed causes of the present unbelief in endless punishment, namely, first, the “*idola fori*,” or “popular opinions and fancies as to the place and exact nature of this eternal punishment,” as examples of which Mr. Oxenham cites Calvin's statement respecting “babes a span long crawling about the floor of hell,” (p. 229,) and the notion that the number of the lost will far exceed that of the saved, (p. 230;) and secondly, the neglect or denial by Protestants of the doctrine of purgatory and prayer for the dead, (p. 234;) does Mr. Oxenham really believe that these are the true causes either of the spread of the doctrine of universal restitution, or of the repugnance to the idea of never-ending torments? Is not the true cause this rather, that men instinctively feel that the doctrine of everlasting suffering—not the “popular opinions or fancies” about it, as Mr. Oxenham suggests, but the doctrine itself as stated by the most learned of its sup-

porters, such as Augustine, Jerome, or Dr. Pusey—directly contradicts what the Gospel reveals of God, and further is in direct opposition to certain portions of Holy Scripture, which, while in some places it threatens “æonial punishment,”\* whatever this may be, most distinctly affirms the “restitution of all things” and the “reconciliation of all?”† Can Mr. Oxenham really think that Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, and all that large body of believers, of whom Jerome and Augustine wrote, who “though not denying Holy Scripture do not believe in endless torments,” but “believe that after certain periods of time those who are condemned to the pains of hell shall be delivered out of that state,” were led to their rejection of this doctrine of never-ending sufferings either by the “*idola fori*” which Mr. Oxenham speaks of, such as Calvin’s “span-long babes crawling about the floor of hell,” or by any Protestant denial or doubt as to a purification by fire to be accomplished after death, or the propriety of prayer for the departed? Did they not all hold both prayer for the dead and a purification by fire after death, and yet with this, and because of this, believe in restitution, simply because Scripture distinctly taught that at last “God should be all in all,” and would “reconcile all,” and “have mercy upon all?”‡ It is this same testimony of Scripture, which has forced thousands in this day, slowly and in spite of all their early training, to give up the doctrine of everlasting suffering. They do

\* *κόλασιν αἰώνιον.*

† Acts. iii. 21, and Col. i. 20.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 28; Col. i. 20; and Rom. xi. 32.

not, as Mr. Oxenham says, reject the doctrine of endless punishment “because of its difficulties, which to them appear inexplicable,” (pp. 432, 433,) but because they believe that it is utterly irreconcilable with the revelation given by God Himself.

Nor will the Protestant denial of purgatory, any more than the other opinions which Mr. Oxenham refers to, account for the widespread unbelief in endless torments. The truth upon this point rather is, that the doctrine of Purgatory, properly so called, which gradually grew up from the fifth to the seventh century,\* in contradistinction to the earlier view of purifying fire held by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Ambrose, and others,† was itself a natural result of the efforts of Augustine and others to silence the doctrine of restitution. The doctrine of a purifying fire runs, I believe, all through the Scriptures. Not only do the prophets speak of that “spirit of judgment and burning with which the Lord shall purge away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and cleanse the blood of Jerusalem;” the fulfilment of the vision of the “burning bush,” which burnt and was not consumed because God dwelt in it; but both St. Peter and St. Paul speak of the “fiery trial which must try us,” the “fire which must try every man’s work,” even that of

\* Hagenbach, after describing the earlier doctrine as to cleansing fire, says that “Gregory the Great may rightly be called the ‘inventor of the doctrine of purgatory,’ if we may call it an invention.”—“Hist. of Doctrines,” vol. i. § 141, p. 407.

† See Hagenbach, “Hist. of Doctrines,” vol. i. § 77, pp. 235–237.

believers, while “they themselves shall be saved, yet so as by fire.” Our Lord Himself too speaks of the “fire which He came to cast into the earth,” that “baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire,” without which no fallen creature can be perfected. For “our God is a consuming fire,” and to dwell in Him we must have a life, which, because it is of the fire (for fire burns not fire) can stand unharmed in it. The believer, therefore, like the material world, must not only go through that baptism, which “is as the waters of Noah,” but that other baptism of fire also, by which alone the final transmutation of the creature from corruptible to incorruptible can be effected. The early Fathers too have the same doctrine of “cleansing fire,”\* which should sooner or later try and perfect all, through which even the Blessed Virgin and Peter and the much-loved John would all have to pass, if they would be conformed to Christ; a fire which, whether in this present life or at the judgment, must, because God loves us, perform its work. But when instead of this, as time went on, and carnal conceptions grew in the Church, the doctrine of endless punishment was taught by many of the greatest Church teachers, there followed with it as a necessary result the Roman view of purgatory, giving men some hope for those loved ones,

\* The *πῦρ καθάρσιον* of Origen, *Contr. Cels.* v. 15, called by Clement of Alexandria *πῦρ φρόνιμον*, *Strom.* vii. 6, and *πῦρ σωφρονοῦν*, *Cohort.* § 47. I believe the expression, “*ignis sapiens*,” which we find in Tertullian, Jerome, and others, originally was used in reference to the same cleansing.

who, if not fit for heaven, could not be believed worthy of an everlasting hell. But on the change from the early doctrine of a cleansing fire to that of endless torments, and purgatory, properly so called, I cannot enter further here.

And here, in passing, a word as to Mr. Oxenham's view of the eternal perdition of unbaptized infants. These children, he tells us, “are indeed ‘damned,’ in the sense that they cannot attain to the Beatific Vision. . . . But it is no conscious loss to them. Still less does it imply any suffering of body or soul. On the contrary, it is consistent with the highest enjoyment of natural beatitude and with a natural knowledge and love of God. They are in what would have been Adam's condition if he had neither fallen into sin nor been endowed with original justice. Balmez thinks this principle may be extended to the case of adults, especially in heathen nations, who die with their moral and intellectual faculties so imperfectly developed that they may be regarded as, in responsibility, children.” (p. 230.) Eternal perdition, therefore, does not imply “any suffering of body or soul,” but, “on the contrary, is consistent with the highest enjoyment of natural beatitude and with a natural knowledge and love of God, in what would have been Adam's condition if he had not fallen into sin.”\* Let us suppose for a moment

\* How widely different this doctrine is from that generally set forth for Roman Catholics may be seen by consulting a

that this explanation of Mr. Oxenham's is satisfactory. It is still open to one objection, namely, that it contradicts, and if it is true overthrows, all that he says a little lower down on the words *αἰώνιος* and *κόλασις*. For *αἰώνιος*, he tells us, "conveys the full idea of everlasting," and *κόλασις* is not a "corrective chastisement," but torment. (pp. 725, 726.) But all the lost suffer this *αἰώνιον κόλασιν*: unbaptized children and the heathen are lost: so while they are in "eternal chastisement" or "punishment," with "quenchless fire, and the undying worm,"—for Mr. Oxenham tells us that the expression *αἰώνιος κόλασις* is "strictly synonymous" with this, (p. 726,)—they yet are not only without "any suffering of body or soul," but on the contrary in the "highest enjoyment of natural beatitude and with a natural knowledge and love of God." But even this does not agree with what he again tells us further on "is meant by the dogma of eternal damnation: it means in one word leaving the sinner to himself." (p. 433.) Where, I ask, does it mean this? Does it mean it in the words just quoted, as to "quenchless fire," and the "undying worm," and the "shut door," and "many stripes." Certainly it does not mean this in the Fathers, as countless passages from Augustine and Jerome would prove. And all this is advanced by a writer who objects to Universalism

pamphlet, entitled "Hell opened to Christians, from the Italian of the Rev. F. Pinamonte, S.J.," illustrated with woodcuts, portraying the tortures of the damned, published by James Duffy, Wellington Quay, Dublin, and Paternoster Row, London.

because it does such violence to the language of Holy Scripture.

As to the other alleged “misapprehension,” “which,” Mr. Oxenham tells us, “has probably done more than all other misconceptions put together to prejudice men’s minds against the doctrine” of endless punishment, (p. 230.) viz., that more are lost than saved, his reply is that this opinion, though “widely held,” “has not, as far as he is aware, ever found place in the creed of any Christian community, and certainly neither does, nor possibly could, appertain to the doctrine of the Catholic Church ;” (p. 231 ;) while “Lacordaire, who has devoted a volume of his ‘Conférences,’ ‘on the Results of the Divine Government,’ to an elaborate and minute examination of the subject,\* comes to the conclusion that the great majority of mankind will be saved.” (p. 234.) Yet, when this selfsame argument is applied to the question of eternal death, for certainly no creed or canon of the Church received by East and West declares it, Mr. Oxenham’s reply is that “the belief of the Church is not to be collected solely from creeds and definitions of Councils.” (p. 617.) The omission, therefore, of an opinion or doctrine in the Creed has a bearing on the question of the comparative number of the saved or lost, but no bearing whatever on the question

\* This is scarcely correct. Lacordaire has *not* “devoted a volume of his ‘Conférences,’” but simply one single “Conférence” (the 71st) to this “examination.” It is worth reading, if one wishes to disagree with the Abbé’s conclusions, as is also the next, (the 72nd,) which attempts to prove on philosophical grounds the endlessness of misery.

of everlasting woe. Meanwhile the apparent evidence of Scripture is perfectly overwhelming as to the fact that the many shall be lost and only the few saved; while "the immemorial belief of the Church," (p. 222,) which Mr. Oxenham so often appeals to, is in the same direction, the greatest authorities having laid it down as unquestionable that the vast majority of men will certainly be damned.\* That this teaching of Scripture asserts that the majority are lost for ever is, as I have endeavoured to show elsewhere, simply a misapprehension of its meaning; the truth being rather that the few who find the narrow way are the "first-born" or "first-fruits," the elect seed, in whom all the kindreds of the earth shall one day be blessed; while the many who are lost are those whom I may call the later-born, who are only brought back to God by the ministry of the elect through the judgment of the coming age or ages.† Mr. Oxenham does not, however, receive this explanation, but spite of the well-known words, "The wicked (not a few of the most wicked) shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," and "strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it,"—plain words

\* See Corn. & Lapide, in Num. xiv. 30, and Apoc. vii. 9.

† The "Quicunque Vult" is twice referred to by Mr. Oxenham, (pp. 225 and 320,) as if it settled the question; but even granting this "Psalm" to be a Creed, which strictly speaking it is not, the passage referred to, as to "the wicked going into everlasting fire," simply repeats the words of Scripture, without explaining them, the question still remaining, as to what Scripture means by this language.

spoken by the blessed Lord Himself,—still argues that because this doctrine has not been asserted in any Church Creed or General Council, it is to be regarded “as a mere opinion, and has no shadow of claim to be considered part of the revealed faith.” (p. 231.) Only imagine if the question, instead of touching the nature and duration of future punishment, were as to the comparative number of the saved or lost, how those who contend that the many will be damned might point triumphantly to such texts as those just quoted, and ask, Can anything be plainer than such statements of Holy Writ? Yet in the teeth of these plain statements, and though he quotes and endorses Hooker’s opinion, “that where a literal interpretation [of Scripture] will stand, the furthest from the letter is commonly the worst,” (p. 627,) Mr. Oxenham nevertheless believes that the majority of mankind will be saved, (pp. 231, 234,) and that the opposite view is “a mere opinion which has no shadow of claim to be considered part of the revealed faith.” And this is the deliberate conclusion of one who contends for taking the plain meaning of our Lord’s own words.

I will not here examine all that Mr. Oxenham urges on the ground of Reason as to the improbability of universal restitution or the probability of a never-ending hell, (pp. 425, 426,) for this question has been discussed by Professor Mayor in the May number of this REVIEW, and my object is to consider, not so much what sense or reason say, but rather what Scripture is supposed to say, on this question. Nor do I care to follow Mr. Oxenham into the views of the ancient heathen

world, (pp. 234, 235, and 616, seq.,) interesting as these are on this question as showing man's natural thoughts of God and of himself without revelation, because Christ's resurrection, for those who believe it, and I write for such, has since the days of Greece and Rome thrown new light upon man's lot, proving that the dead and cursed—for Christ was dead and cursed for us—spite of the curse and death, may be and have been raised again to highest heaven. This truth, with other secrets of God's purpose to the world, which, as the Apostle says, were "hid from the ages and generations" which Mr. Oxenham speaks of, when men felt after an unknown God, uncertain whether He were for them or against them, or how the sins which they were conscious of could ever be removed, has been unlocked, for some of us at least, by the appearing of the Lord, who "hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." And for us, with all the light which shines from Christ's appearing, to rise no higher in our hopes or views than those upon whose conscience the cloud of God's just judgment weighed in the days before the spirit of sonship descended upon men, seems to me as shameful as for much-loved sons always to cower as slaves, or for men at noonday to have the fears of children in the dark.

I pass on therefore to Mr. Oxenham's assertion respecting the Councils and Fathers, and the teaching of Holy Writ, on this subject. I am guilty, so he asserts, of "special pleading" about the Fifth Council, (p. 622,) and my quotations from the Fathers, "imposing as the

array may at first sight appear,” are either “inconclusive,” “misapplied,” or “mistranslated.” (p. 622.) Now, as Mr. Matthew Arnold says, “an Englishman has such a respect for fact himself that he can hardly imagine grave people presenting him with anything as fact, when they have absolutely no right whatever to do so.” Mr. Oxenham’s assertions, therefore, if unchallenged, may be received for truth. In justice to the truth, therefore, I am obliged to follow him into the facts referred to, as well as into his criticisms on those passages of the Fathers (and he only attempts to shake the evidence of very few) which he asserts do not bear on this question. To some readers perhaps this part of the subject may seem unimportant. For others I know it will have very special interest.

As to the facts, then, I had asked where and when the Catholic Church had ever authoritatively condemned this view of restitution? At what Council, or in what decrees, received by East and West, were we to find the record and the terms of this condemnation? I knew, of course, and stated, that Theophilus of Alexandria, the persecutor of Chrysostom, and then Anastasius of Rome, who, according to his own confession, until called upon to judge Origen, knew little or nothing about him, and later on the bishops at the Home Synod under Mennas at Constantinople, the latter acting under court influence, two hundred years after his death, had condemned Origen. But there was no evidence, that I was aware of, to show that the doctrine of restitution had ever been condemned, at least by any General Council; while on the

other hand several of the leading Fathers distinctly held that all men would at last be saved.\* This was my "special pleading." What is Mr. Oxenham's reply? He cites against me all the facts I had conceded as to Origen's condemnation by certain local bishops; only adding as another fact, what is still open to the gravest doubt, and denied by some of the greatest authorities on Church Councils,† that the eleventh canon of the Fifth Council also names Origen with others who had been condemned, and that this canon was confirmed by the Sixth and Seventh Councils. (p. 621.) Let us accept all this as fact, (though in the canon, even as cited by Mr. Oxenham, there is not the slightest reference to any of Origen's views,) how does all this prove in any way that the doctrine of restitution ever was condemned? As showing the truth upon this point, let us look at the Acts of the Home Synod under Menas, which, as I had conceded, without doubt condemned Origen. But for what did it condemn him? Not for the hope of restitution. On the contrary, though the Emperor sent a list of Origen's opinions to the Council, including among others in his ninth article the doctrine of restitution, with a letter requiring them diligently to read his "exposition" of Origen's errors, and then to "condemn each one of them," the Council, while they

\* "Restitution of All Things," pp. 96, 97.

† Walch, perhaps the greatest of all authorities on Church Councils, after sifting the evidence on both sides most fully, decides that Origen's name in this eleventh Canon of the Fifth Council is an interpolation.—"Ketzehistorie," vol. viii. pp. 284-290. The facts which he cites as proofs of this are, I think, unanswerable.

enumerated with careful minuteness Origen’s heretical opinions, would not and did not condemn the doctrine of restitution. To this one point, spite of Justinian’s express desire that they should condemn it, they make no allusion whatever in any one of the fifteen canons which they then passed. All this must be known by Mr. Oxenham, even if the original documents have never been examined by him, for the whole subject has so recently been brought under our notice by one of whom, or of whose work, Mr. Oxenham can hardly be ignorant ;\* yet spite of this he quotes the condemnation of Origen under Mennas as a proof of the condemnation of the doctrine of restitution, when he knows, or should know, that this Council, while condemning Origen’s errors, did not condemn the doctrine of restitution.

The fact is that this doctrine, though held by Origen, as by many others of the early Fathers, was not the error which then went by the name of Origenism, which rather referred to certain speculations as to the form or formlessness of God, the subordination of the Son, the nature of the resurrection body, the passing of human souls into the bodies of beasts, the return of rational beings into a state where substance, number, bodies, and names, should all be lost in a unity such as that in which they were supposed to have

\* I refer to the Rev. F. N. Oxenham’s “Letter to Mr. Gladstone,” entitled “Everlasting Punishment ; is the Doctrine *de fide* ?” (Rivingtons) pp. 17-25, where all the facts of Origen’s condemnation are fully given. And see especially the “Note,” pp. 94, 95 on the “pre-existence of souls,” and the “monstrous restitution” founded on it.

pre-existed, and lastly the never-ending alternations through which all rational souls might pass, from misery to blessedness and from blessedness to misery for evermore.\* These were the main grounds of the dispute, as begun in Egypt, and then carried over to Constantinople. And to argue that because Origen was condemned for these fancies, therefore the doctrine of restitution has also been condemned, is just like saying that because St. Peter had to be withstood and rebuked by the Apostle Paul for his vacillation at Antioch, in reference to the doctrine of the admission of Gentiles to Church privileges without circumcision, therefore the doctrine of the same St. Peter as to "Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison," or the "day of God," had been then and there "rebuked" also. But what makes this argument still less justifiable from Mr. Oxenham is that he knows quite well, for he tells us so himself, (p. 436,) that "Origen's peculiar theory was widely different from modern Universalism,"—(this by the way is said to the disparagement of modern Universalism,) (pp. 431, 628,)—and yet spite of this "wide difference," which he confesses, the condemnation of Origen for his "peculiar theory," which no modern Universalist holds, is taken by Mr. Oxenham as proof that the Church has formally condemned the hope of Restitution.

As to the quotations from the Fathers which I had cited to prove that some of the greatest of them held the

\* This last is the point specially mentioned by Augustine in the well-known passage, "De Civ. Dei," lib. xxi. c. 17.

doctrine of final restitution,\* and which are declared by Mr. Oxenham to be either “inconclusive,” “misapplied,” or “mistranslated,” no reply would be needed had my critic only quoted the passages which he is pleased to dismiss thus summarily. He tells us that Clement of Alexandria, in saying, “Proinde universos quidem salvat, sed alios per supplicia convertens, alios autem spontaneâ assequentes voluntate, . . . *ut omne genu flectatur Ei, cœlestium, terrestrium, et infernorum, hoc est, angeli, homines, et animæ quæ ante adventum Ejus de hac vitâ migravere temporali,*” only means that “the propitiation of Christ was offered, not for Christians only, but for the heathen and those who lived before the Incarnation also.” (p. 623.) The words, “*Universos salvat, alios per supplicia convertens, alios autem spontaneâ assequentes voluntate, ut omne genu flectatur Ei, cœlestium, terrestrium, et infernorum,*” mean only that an atonement was made for all mankind. In the words too quoted from Jerome, as to the views of some in his time, who maintained “*supplicia aliquando finiri, et licet post multa tempora tamen terminum habere tormenta,*”—and this because it is written, “God hath concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all,”—Mr. Oxenham tells us “Mr. Jukes again misses the point through mistranslation: St. Jerome is stating, without endorsing, the opinion . . . that the sensible sufferings of the lost may after a time” (or more correctly at certain times) “be diminished or

\* See “Restitution of All Things,” pp. 174–191.

relieved." (p. 625.) This, so my critic gravely asserts, is the meaning of the words, "*Supplicia aliquando finire, et licet post multa tempora terminum habere tormenta.*" So again in the extracts from Justin Martyr and Irenæus, that "those souls which have appeared worthy of God die no more, but others are punished as long as God wills them to exist and to be punished," and that "he who rejects the life given to him, ipse se privat in sæculum sæculi perseverantiâ," "Mr. Jukes evidently misunderstands, and in the case of Irenæus also mistranslates," for "perseverantia," so Mr. Oxenham tells us, "does not mean 'continuance for ever,' but 'perseverance in good.'" (p. 623.) Any competent reader can judge how far this statement is correct by looking at the passages in question and their contexts, in the latter of which "perseverantia" is repeatedly used in the sense simply of "continuance." For those who cannot read the originals it may suffice to say that Jeremy Taylor, in his famous sermon on "Christ's Advent to Judgment," quotes both the passages referred to in the sense I have assigned to them, as proving that "Origen was not the first that said the pains of the damned should cease."\* As to the two Gregorys, of Nyssa and Nazianzus, Mr. Oxenham is content to say, that "it is well known that they sometimes speak doubtfully on this doctrine; but, on the other hand, they elsewhere

\* Jeremy Taylor's "Works," vol. v. serm. 3. Spite of this Mr. Oxenham says, that "that theory [of annihilation] was first broached among persons not professing to be atheists in the nineteenth century." (p. 621.)

most unequivocally assert it." (p. 623.) Now their "most unequivocal assertion" amounts to this, that in the passages referred to by Mr. Oxenham, which occur in their popular writings, they, like Origen in similar writings, use the common language on the subject; \* while, instead of "sometimes speaking doubtfully on this doctrine," Gregory of Nyssa wrote plainly and strongly in favour of restitution, and Gregory of Nazianzus more than once gives hints to show that he too received the same doctrine. Neander's testimony upon this point of fact, which is beyond all question, is as follows:—"But this particular doctrine [of Restoration] was expounded and maintained with the greatest ability in works written expressly for that purpose by Gregory of Nyssa. God, he maintained, had created rational beings in order that they might be self-conscious and free vessels for the communications of the original fountain of all good. All punishments are means of purification, ordained by divine love to purge rational beings from moral evil, and to restore them to that communion with God which corresponds to their nature.

\* The passage from Gregory of Nazianzus occurs in his fifteenth sermon, on "the plague of hail." The lesson is that it is better to repent now than hereafter. The sermon is just a parallel to so many passages of Scripture, which urge sinners to repent for fear of God's wrath. The passage from Gregory of Nyssa, in his sermon "concerning those who put off baptism," (p. 219, Edit. Grets.) says that there is hope for the baptized; but of the unbaptized, that "salvation is denied by a definite prohibition." He refers to the words, "He that believeth not shall be damned." The contradiction here, if it is a contradiction, to their other statements, is only apparent, like that in Scripture.

God would not have permitted the existence of evil, unless He had foreseen that by the redemption all rational beings would in the end, according to their destination, attain to the same blessed fellowship with Himself.” \*

Now when it is borne in mind that Gregory of Nazianzus presided at the Second General Council, and that to Gregory of Nyssa tradition ascribes all those additions to the original Nicene Creed, which were made at the same Second General Council, and which we now recite as portions of it, †—when we remember the esteem in which the name and works of this same Gregory of Nyssa have ever been held, both during his life and since his death, and that he was referred to both by the Fifth and Seventh General Councils, as amongst the highest authorities of the Church, ‡—we shall be better able to judge the worth of the assertion, which is sometimes made, that the doctrine of final restitution is, as Mr. Oxenham asserts, “a heresy.”

On this point therefore I will only add, that by the same process as that which Mr. Oxenham adopts in reference to the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Gregory of Nyssa, and the others whom I have quoted, it might be proved, and an attempt has actually been made to prove, that even Origen never held the doctrines usually and rightly attributed to him, but only spoke according to the so-called Catholic dogma. I have now before me a work,

\* Neander, “*Church Hist.*,” vol. iv. p. 455.

† Nicephor. “*Eccl. Hist.*,” lib. xii. c. 13.

‡ Tillemont, “*Mémoires*,” tom. ix. p. 601.

published in Rome in 1864, by Professor Vincenzi, of the College there commonly called the *Sapienza*,—which the author tells us was graciously received by the Pope himself, with the words “Sarebbe un gran bene se si potesse ridonare la fama ad un tant’ uomo,”—the whole drift of which is to prove that Origen never held what his words most distinctly prove he did hold.\* Vincenzi’s argument, perhaps I should say his assertion (which is that of Mr. Oxenham here respecting Gregory of Nyssa) is, that “it is a baseless charge to say Origen sometimes doubted of the endlessness of the punishment of demons and the wicked, for he asserts it in the strongest and clearest words;” the proof given being that “in certain passages of his writings Origen speaks of future punishment as *αἰώνιος*.” † Of this work and its author, spite of the Pope’s good wishes, the Abbé Freppel, Professor of Sacred Rhetoric, and Dean of the church of St. Geneviève in Paris, does not hesitate to say, “Toute critique sérieuse devient impossible, lorsqu’on aborde les ouvrages d’un auteur avec le parti pris, soit de le dénigrer, soit de faire son apologie.” ‡ Whether these

\* This work, by Vincenzi, is in four octavo volumes : the title of the first is, “Gregorii Nysseni et Origenis de æternitate pœnarum in vitâ futurâ omnimodo cum dogmate catholico concordia;” of the second, “Origenes ab hæreseos notâ in cæteris institutionibus vindicatus;” of the third, “Historia critica quæstionis inter Theophilum et Hieronymum, adversarios Origenis, et Origenis patronos, Johannem Chrysostomum et monachos Nitrenses;” of the fourth, “Vigilii Papæ et Origenis triumphus in Synodo Quintâ Œcumenicâ.”

† Vincenzi, vol. i. pp. 76 seq. and p. 277.

‡ In his “Cours d’Eloquence Sacrée,” vol. i., entitled “Origène,” p. 404.

words apply to the criticisms we have been considering; I will leave the reader to decide.\*

Not more successful is the attempt to set aside the testimony of the Early Church, as to the purification of all through fire, by asserting, for Mr. Oxenham gives no proof of it, that the passages cited from Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and others, refer only to "the doctrine of Purgatory," (p. 624,) which at the time these writers lived had not been heard of. Dr. Newman states the simple fact when he says,† that "the Primitive doctrine is not condemned in the [xxii<sup>nd</sup>]

\* I add here a word or two respecting Chrysostom, "against whom," Mr. Oxenham says, "no charge of Origenism, distinct or indistinct, was ever brought at the Synod of the Oak or elsewhere." (p. 623.) Any one who will take the trouble to consult the "Annals" of Baronius from A.D. 401 to 405, almost *passim*, will find that Chrysostom was credited with Origenistic leanings, and accused and reproached constantly from A.D. 401, onwards, on that account. The main points of accusation were, first, that he favoured the Origenists, and ordained some of them, and, secondly, that he declined to join in condemning Origen's books, and was in the habit himself of reading them. To the same effect is the Note by Severinus Binius, upon the history of the Synod of the Oak, given by Labbæus. ("Conc. Gen.," vol. ii. p. 1329.) Jerome, too, in a letter to Theophilus of Alexandria, (Ed. Ben. vol. iv. p. 727, Epist. 88,) says, that apart from other crimes (Jerome's words are "*scelus*" and "*flagitia*,") Chrysostom's conduct with regard to the Origenists was enough to account for his condemnation. So too George of Alexandria, in a tract entitled, "Res Beati Chrysostomi," given in the "Bibliotheca" of Photius, p. 252, seq. Mosheim's account of the matter ("Eccl. Hist.," vol. i. p. 359,) is, that "this Synod (of the Oak) declared Chrysostom unworthy of his episcopal office, among other causes on account of his too great attachment to Origen and the followers of Origen."

† "Tract 90," p. 23.

Article, [of the English Church,] unless indeed the Primitive doctrine be Romish; *which must not be supposed*. . . . That doctrine is this, that the conflagration of the world, or the flames which attend the Judge, will be an ordeal through which all men will pass.” Dr. Harold Browne bears the same testimony, showing at considerable length what this Primitive doctrine of purification was. Speaking of Origen, he says, that “he considered all the pains of the damned as merely purgatorial, and that their sins would be expiated by fire.” But adds the Bishop, “this theory of Origen is so far from being the same with the Romanist’s purgatory, that, first of all, he places it instead of hell, and secondly, so far from looking for it between death and the resurrection, he taught that it would take place, after the resurrection, at the day of judgment.”\* This “theory,” the Bishop adds, was so “interesting,” and “Origen’s character and learning so captivating,” that “we find eminent writers both in the East and West embracing his speculations,” among whom the Bishop cites Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose, Hilary, and Gregory of Nyssa, “all whose views spring from the same source and tend to the same conclusion.”

The passages therefore which Mr. Oxenham attempts to explain away, by saying that they speak of Purgatory, meaning by this the Roman doctrine of Purgatory, speak in truth of something very different. And indeed the quotations given, by various allusions, or references to

\* “Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles,” pp. 498, 499, 500.

other particulars, such as that Apostles, like Christ Himself, must preach to spirits in prison,\* show that they speak of a cleansing, whether in this life or the next, in which the elect who have here won the prize will act as first-born and joint-heirs with Christ, in doing His very works, whether as prophets, or priests, or kings, throughout the coming age or ages; as prophets, in preaching like Christ to souls shut up; as priests, in serving beside the sacrifice of fire. For “the priest’s lips should keep knowledge,” to preach and intercede; but his work is even more ever to keep alive that fire, by which alone the sacrifices can lose their first and carnal form, and so ascend to God from His altar. The Church and world at this day are full of priests without fire, or, if fire is thought of, it is only natural, not spiritual fire, in lights upon the altar. The great High Priest “came to cast fire into the earth.” And He can yet no more spare the fallen nature of His elect than the priest of old could spare the creature which he offered. And so His members, when they shall arise as priests with Him, for “if they were on earth they should not be priests,” like Him are called to exercise the same ministry of holy fire, in that coming day when the “laver” shall be multiplied, as Scripture says, into “ten lavers,” and “the elect shall run to and fro as sparks among the stubble.”† For the elect are those who first after Christ have passed through the fires, without which no perfect change is wrought in any crea-

\* See “Restitution of All Things,” pp. 186 and 187.

† Exod. xxx. 18; 1 Kings vii. 38, 39; Wisdom iii. 7, 8.

ture; and having first been sacrifices in the hands of the first great First-born High Priest, and so been changed, for no sacrifice changes its form or ascends to God as “pillars of smoke” without fire, have in due time like their Head, who first trod this path for them, become priests also with Him to serve and help others, in that same passage or pass-over from life to death and death to life, which must be accomplished to change the old creation, through death and dissolution, to be without spot or blemish or any such thing. That those who looked for restitution in Augustine’s day saw something of this great truth, is shown from the passage already referred to in the “City of God,” which Mr. Oxenham so curtly attempts to set aside, and which distinctly states that some believed it would be brought about through the priestly intercessions or work of the elect.\*

It only remains to notice the argument from Scripture. Here, as is so usual with writers upon this subject, Mr. Oxenham dwells exclusively on that side of the testimony which speaks of the “ministration of death and condemnation,” though the Apostle expressly declares that this ministration is to be “abolished” and “done away,” while he wholly overlooks the other side as to the “ministration of righteousness and life,” “which remaineth,” without an attempt to solve the riddle of the apparent contradiction. I look in vain through Mr. Oxenham’s papers for such words as, “He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger for ever.” Not

\* “De Civ. Dei,” lib. xxi. cap. 18, 24, 27.

one word does he give us of God's being "Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe;" not one word of His "swallowing up death in victory, and wiping away all tears from all faces;" not a word as to the promise that "there shall be no more curse;" not a hint "that by death" (even possibly by the second death) "God will destroy him that has the power of death;" not a word of "mercy upon all," because "of Him and through Him, and to Him are all things;" all this is ignored; while the texts which seem to teach another doctrine are pressed as if there were no question respecting their true meaning.

Now I grant, of course, that there are texts, which seem opposed to universal restitution. We have seen that, taken in the letter, text clashes with text on this subject. All those texts which speak of "destruction" and "judgment" are explained by what has been said above as to the way of our salvation, and that it is by death alone that God destroys him that has the power of death. Those passages also which speak of the "lost," as for example St. Paul's words at the commencement of his Epistle to the Romans, are not the declaration of the final lot of any, but of the state of all by nature, till through union with Christ they are made partakers of His redemption. In this lost state some are held far longer than others, and therefore are in a special sense "the lost," as compared with the first-born who are made partakers of the first resurrection. But all the saved have once been lost, "for the Son of Man is come to seek and save that which is lost." The fact therefore that of

these lost some are lost for a longer or a shorter period proves nothing against their final restoration ; for the Good Shepherd must “ go after that which is lost until He find it.” Even if this were not so clearly revealed, the Scripture use of the word “ lost,” showing that the lost indeed are God’s loss, should sufficiently assure us that that loss cannot and will not be for ever. For it is not that the Shepherd finds a sheep which does not belong to him, or which he has not missed, or that the Woman finds an unknown coin, and adds it to her store, or that the Father adopts a stranger ; but rather that the sheep whose wandering seemed to make the Shepherd poorer for a while, is found by Him, to his own joy, and the coin that had been missed and mourned for is restored to the treasure which without it would have been imperfect, and the son, without whom the family circle had been incomplete, is welcomed with gladness to that home which had lacked something so long as he continued absent. But according to the views of those who believe in endless punishment God is to be a loser for ever and ever—a loser by that creation which was formed to show forth His praise, and which we are distinctly told will in every part of it one day praise Him, saying, “ For Thy pleasure we are and were created.”

There are, however, certain other well-known texts, which are relied on as teaching this doctrine of never-ending punishment. I do not here enter upon these, as I have examined them elsewhere, and what I have said here already is the key to almost every one of them. But on that verse which is most commonly appealed to

as deciding this question I may say a few words, I mean the well-known passage in the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, where the same word *αἰώνιος* is used by our Lord both of the life of the blessed and the punishment of the lost. Must not the same word in both cases have the same meaning? Certainly it must. On this point I agree entirely with Mr. Oxenham. But the question still remains, What is the true sense of the word in either case? Is it "everlasting" or "eternal," or "that which belongs to" or is "proper to the ages?" Perhaps another passage, where the same word again twice occurs in the same sentence, may help us to the true answer. In his Epistle to the Romans St. Paul speaks of the "mystery which has been kept secret," as our Authorized Version translates it, "since the world began," *μυστήριον χρόνοις αἰώνιαις σκεπημένον*, literally "from everlasting or æonial times," "but which now is made manifest by the commandment of the everlasting or æonial God," *αἰωνίου θεοῦ*.\* Here the same word in the same sentence is used of "God" and of certain "times." In each case the word must have the same meaning. It would, as Mr. Oxenham rightly contends, be absurd to hold that in the same sentence it is used in two different senses. But as describing these "times," which are called "æonial," the meaning of the word cannot be "endless," for we are elsewhere told by the same Apostle both of their beginning and ending,—of their beginning, for St. Paul tells us that "God hath called us with a

\* Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before æonial times,\* this “purpose of the ages” being the “hidden wisdom of God which He ordained before the ages unto our glory,” †—and of their end, for he says again, that “now once in the end, or completion, of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,” and again, that “on us the ends of the ages are met.” ‡ In this passage therefore the word, *αἰώνιος*, whatever it does mean, cannot mean “everlasting,” or never ending.§ This does not prove that therefore God is not everlasting, any more than His being called the “God of the whole earth” proves that He is not also “God of heaven;” but the use of the same word, both as to “God” and the “times” here spoken of, does surely demand that we should carefully inquire what the writer intended by this expression. My conviction is that here as elsewhere *αἰώνιος* means “connected with the ages,” the truth which lies under this term having to be learnt from what is elsewhere revealed in the same Holy Scriptures respecting these “ages.” The Church in these days has little to say of the “purpose of the ages.’ Few see that these “ages,” of which we read so often in the New Testament, are but the fulfil-

\* 2 Tim. i. 9, and Tit. i. 2. † Eph. iii. 11; 1 Cor. ii. 7.

‡ Heb. ix. 26; 1 Cor. x. 11. As showing that the *αἰῶνες* and *χρόνοι αἰώνιοι* are identical, see Rom. xvi. 25, and Col. i. 26; and 1 Cor. ii. 7, and 2 Tim. i. 9.

§ And yet Mr. Oxenham says, “There is nothing anywhere in the language of the New Testament to suggest that *αἰώνιος* means anything less than everlasting.” (p. 726.)

ment or substance of the "times and seasons," of the Sabbath year and Jubilee, under the old law, and all point to those "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, when He shall send Jesus Christ who before was preached," and when in due order liberty and cleansing will be obtained by those who now are in bondage and unclean, and rest be gained by those who are now without their rightful inheritance. But our Lord's words, "This is life eternal, [that is, the life of the age or ages,] that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent," sufficiently show that to know the only true God, as the sender of His Son to be a Saviour, and to know that Son as a Saviour and Redeemer, mark and constitute the renewed life which is peculiar to the ages. Æonial or eternal life therefore is not, as so many think, the living on and on for ever and ever. It is rather, as our Lord defines it, a life, the distinctive peculiarity of which is, that it has to do with a Saviour, and so is part of a remedial plan. And so of the rest, whether redemption, salvation, spirit, fire, punishment, or inheritance, all of which in certain texts are called "æonial," the epithet always refers to the same remedial plan, wrought out by God through "worlds" or "ages." But I cannot here go further into the proof of the true meaning of this word.\* Enough if what I have said lead any to examine these Scriptures more closely, and to look for themselves, into what they testify of the "purpose of the ages."

\* I have gone into the proof of it, "Restitution of All Things," pp. 48-68.

On this word therefore I will only add that here, as elsewhere, Mr. Oxenham is again inconsistent with himself; for he contends that in the matter of “everlasting or eternal punishment,” the word *αἰώνιος* must mean “endless,” while it is not so in reference to the “everlasting or eternal life.” “Eternal life” may pass away, for though “it is said of the believer that ‘he *hath* everlasting life’ already begun in him,” (p. 727, the italics are Mr. Oxenham’s,) this blessing may be lost; for the fact that “we become ‘partakers of the Divine nature’ in this life, (2 Pet. i. 4,) through sacramental union with Christ, certainly bestows no pledge of final perseverance;” (p. 628;) but the “everlasting punishment” is an “irreversible doom.” (p. 729.) So “everlasting life” may “certainly” come to an end, but not “everlasting or eternal punishment.” All this is quite characteristic of the writer, and shows how much he sees from his present “point of view.”

But Mr. Oxenham has two or three questions, to which he asks an answer. First, “If Christ *had* intended to teach the doctrine of eternal punishment, could He possibly have taught it in plainer or more direct terms?” (p. 627.) To this, I answer Yes, Christ could have said “endless,” a word often used by His professed disciples, but which He never used.\* Secondly, “If He did *not* intend to teach this doctrine, could He possibly have chosen language more certain *à priori* to mislead?”

\* It is sometimes said that the words, “Their worm dieth not,” &c., are equivalent to “endless.” But on this see “Restitution of All Things,” pp. 123-128.

(p. 627.) This cannot be so briefly answered, for it touches the whole question, why the God of Israel, our Saviour, is a “God who hideth Himself;” why His revelations have ever been with reserve and under a veil, whether of type under the Old, or of parable even under the New, Covenant? The fact however is that He has always thus spoken. Nor has the other fact, that many for a while would therefore misunderstand the revelation, kept God from still pursuing the same method of speaking to fallen men by type and shadow and parable. What if when He said, “He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one,” and again, “He that eateth me shall live by me,” some should misunderstand the words? their misunderstanding only proved that they were yet unfit for that truth which would shine out of the mystic words so soon as the hearers were inwardly prepared for it. For He has many things to say unto us, which we cannot bear at first, and our misapprehensions of His meaning, though they show us what we are, do not really hurt us, if we still walk humbly with Him.

The argument therefore which Mr. Oxenham presses, that the doctrine of eternal punishment stands precisely and exactly on the same ground as transubstantiation, (pp. 628, 629,) weighty as it may be to one who looks “from a Roman Catholic point of view,” may help others to see the real worth or worthlessness of proofs like this from Holy Scripture. On this point therefore I will only add, that both as to transubstantiation and eternal punishment, Mr. Oxenham, instead of understanding, is I believe only misunder-

standing, our Lord's most blessed words. But it is in Scripture as in the books of nature and providence; not only will our sense-readings never solve the difficulty, but such readings need to be corrected again and again if we would possess the real truth.

Mr. Oxenham has yet another question which he seems to think unanswerable, as proving that “there is no repentance in the grave.” “What mean,” he asks, “those repeated warnings about the thief in the night, the sudden return of the master of the house or of the bridegroom, the two men in one bed, the two women at the mill, the two men in the field, of whom one was taken and the other left?” (pp. 437 and 729.) I reply, they mean that the prize of being joint-heirs with Christ, if lost now, as Esau lost the birthright, is lost for ever. Once let us, who hear the Gospel, while we are in this life sell our birthright, and then though we may cry “with a great and exceeding bitter cry,” the glory of the first-born is for ever gone from us, and we shall find no place or means for reversing our choice, though when too late we seek to do so carefully with tears. But I do not on this account believe that even the Esaus have no blessing; for I read, “By faith Isaac blessed both Jacob and Esau concerning things to come;” and so, while the birthright is for ever lost, Esau yet has hope as “concerning things to come,” and will one day get a blessing, though never the blessing of the despised birthright. Only if we here suffer with Christ shall we reign

with Him : only if like Him we lose our life shall we save it for the kingdom.

In conclusion, one word as to the necessary results of looking at this question “from a Roman Catholic point of view.” From that point of view universal restitution cannot be seen. Therefore, so it is assumed, it cannot be. But they make poor discoverers who conclude there is no land when they can see nothing but sea ; so are they poor learners who deny a truth simply because they do not yet see it. But the Roman Catholic point of view has, if I err not, another disadvantage, for with those who look out from it authority is ever taken for truth, instead of truth for authority. Truth, according to the Roman theory, cannot be got save by authority. God did indeed once speak to men. The “Word of the Lord came” in bygone times to prophets and apostles. But all this is past ; revelation is complete and concluded. We are now only to learn what we are taught by those authorities which have been ordained, like the sun and moon, to enlighten all nations. What must be the result when, according to Scripture, “the sun is turned into darkness, and the moon into blood ;” when those ordinances in Church or State which have been set for lights give no light, but only blood or darkness ; when “the stars,” or “angels of the churches,” are “fallen to the earth,” and have “opened the bottomless pit, so that the sun and air are darkened as with the smoke of a great furnace?”\* What must be the

\* Rev. i. 20, and ix. 1, 2.

darkness of those who in such straits have no knowledge of a present Lord, to guide and teach men by His Spirit, who therefore put darkness for light and light for darkness, and bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter? Not of this kind was the faith of that Apostle whom the Church of Rome professes to follow. No Church authority, but the truth itself, taught him that Jesus was the Christ. Flesh and blood did not reveal it, but the Father who is in heaven. Peter believed the truth, because it was the truth, and this, spite of its being rejected and condemned by the assembled council of that nation which had been set apart to bear witness to the truth. Thus believing the truth, because it was truth, he had the witness in himself. On the other hand, the very power to recognise truth seems gone, when men have once decided that authority, not truth, is for them to determine everything. Any lie thenceforward may be their truth. Some antichrist has but to sit in the temple of God, and his dicta are the words of God.

I will only add the expression of my sincere thankfulness that the pages of the CONTEMPORARY have been open to the examination of this subject. Nothing, perhaps, has made more so-called infidels than the assertion that the Gospel declares unending torments. No question, therefore, can be of greater moment, nor can any theology which blinks the question meet the cravings which are abroad, and which I cannot but believe are the work of God's Spirit. Church reviews, however, seem as yet generally unable to give this

question a fair hearing. For the “restitution of all things” is to the Church what the “call of the Gentiles” was to Israel; and those who, like Paul, can receive the “wider hope,” like him must be content for a season to be rejected by the Pharisees and Scribes in Israel. They may, like the Apostle, even “expound the law and the prophets from morning to evening,” but some only will “believe the things spoken, and some will not believe.” God’s purpose, however, as declared in Scripture, cannot be set aside because the Church is blind to it. And my conviction is that the special opening of this truth, as it is now being opened by God Himself, everywhere, is an evident sign and witness of the passing away of present things in Church and State, and of the imminent judgment of apostate Christendom. But a voice yet says, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith.” May that Spirit yet more fully guide us into His own truth, and as a means yet more fully open those Scriptures, which, like the world around, contain unknown and undiscovered treasures, even the unsearchable riches of Christ, laid up for lost creatures.

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