



9.20.02

*Library of the Theological Seminary,*  
PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by Prof. B. B. Warfield, D.D.

Division ..... *SCC*

Section ..... *2429*

*v. 4*

THE  
MAGAZINE OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

VOL. 1.

DECEMBER, 1889.

No. 3.

FOR THE MAGAZINE OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

REDEMPTION AFTER DEATH.

BY PROFESSOR CHARLES A. BRIGGS, D.D., UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, N. Y. CITY.

THE time has fully come when Protestant Churches are compelled to confront the question of the Middle State and the nature of Christian life therein. This crisis is due : (1) to an entire change of attitude toward the Second Advent of Jesus Christ ; (2) to the spread in the churches of the Arminian doctrine of probation ; (3) to the general acceptance of the new doctrine of the universal salvation of infants ; (4) to the development of the doctrine of sin and guilt in connection with a further unfolding of Philosophical Ethics and a deeper study of Christian Ethics. In these four directions Protestantism and especially Calvinistic Churches, have departed a long distance from the Creeds of the Reformation and the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster.

*I. Limiting the Love of God.*

The doctrine of the Middle State depends chiefly upon the doctrine of redemption. All mankind are born into this world in a condition of sin and ruin. All need redemption. Redemption is born of the love of God. God is love. The love of God is the well-spring of election, predestination unto life, and all the acts and works of God for the accomplishment of the redemption of man. It is a doctrine of scholastic Protestants that divine sovereignty is the source of the election. Some of these scholastic divines have gone so far in their subordination of the divine love to the divine sovereignty, that they have pushed the love of God and the compassion of the heavenly Father behind the justice of the judge and the good pleasure of the sovereign ; and thereby have come close to the unpardonable sin of limiting the grace of God and denying the power of the Divine Spirit. A genuine Protestantism, such as we find in the creeds of the Reformation, teaches that God's election is an election of grace. The grace of

God is so vast and inexhaustible that we may assume that God will redeem a larger number of our race than any man could suppose. God's love and power to save are infinitely greater than the love and redemptive yearnings of all creatures combined.

The love of God works redemption through Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world, and through the Holy Spirit, who imparts the new life and growth without which salvation is impossible ; and also through the paternal superintendence and government of the Heavenly Father. The redeemed consist, therefore, of those who belong to the elect of God, who have been purchased by Jesus Christ and who have been born of the Holy Spirit. The redeemed consist of the elect only. There can be no redemption that does not originate in the election of grace ; in the love of the Heavenly Father's heart. The Reformers and Puritans apprehended the love of God and magnified the divine grace in election and predestination. That is the reason they made so much of these high doctrines. They also emphasized the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, which is so closely related to the doctrine of the divine grace. Scholastic divines, when they substituted sovereign election for the election of grace, divided mankind into two classes, those predestinated unto life and those predestinated unto everlasting death, and thus made both classes dependent upon the good pleasure of the will of the sovereign, without regard to their actual sins or acceptance of the provisions of redemption. As a natural result of this theory the mass of mankind were doomed to everlasting perdition in hell fire, and only a few were snatched from the burning. These scholastic divines also substituted God the Judge for God the Father, and accordingly overlooked the Fatherhood of God and abandoned the doctrine of for-

Who rescues them? all have been

giveness of sins. The supreme forms of this scholasticism were the supralapsarian theory, that made the decree of election and preterition prior to the decrees of the creation and the fall of man, and the kindred Antinomian theory, that made justification eternal and entirely independent of human faith and repentance. Such scholasticism had no need of a Middle State between Death and the Day of Judgment. It is hard to see what need there was of life in the present world. It is difficult for this theory to explain why God did not send men to heaven and hell at once in accordance with his arbitrary and eternal decree, which has no respect to life in this world and life after death, without requiring them to undergo a life and death which have no effect whatever upon their eternal welfare. Antinomianism has ever been regarded as a heresy. It was a sad mistake that supralapsarianism was not placed with Antinomianism in the catalogue of heresies. The repute of a few distinguished divines, who maintained it, ought not to have restrained the Church from branding their error with the stigma it deserves.

God's love is a love that is eternal in its origin. It is also everlasting in its outgoings toward God's creatures. It is a love prior to time and above and beyond all time, but it is also a love that enters into time and pervades all time. If we have a real apprehension of the Living God and of the Fatherhood of God we cannot doubt that the divine love is a living and unfolding love, and that it assumes the form of parental love that never forsakes the child from his birth onward through all the ages of his growth, even to the end. From this point of view, if life in this world is brief and life in the Middle State is long, we must rise to the conception of the love of God as accomplishing even greater works of redemption in the Middle State than in this world. The Roman Catholic Church has ever had this conception. Its doctrine of purgatory has a powerful influence upon the religious life in this world, and upon the entire system of Roman Theology. Protestantism, when it threw overboard the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, also threw away with it much of the ancient Catholic doctrine of the Middle State. It magnified the love of God in the grace of election and forgiveness of sins in this life, but did not trace the workings of the divine grace in the Middle State.

### II. *The Living God.*

Protestantism, however, laid hold of the doctrine of the Living God, and found vital

union with Him in redemption, and, in this respect, overcame the abstract ideas of God that governed the Roman Church. This doctrine of the Living God was abandoned by Protestant scholastics. Dr. Isaac Dorner again brought it into prominence, and it is becoming fruitful in a living theology. This doctrine is important for the unfolding of the Middle State. Those who are in vital relations with the Living God can never die. They live on beyond the gate of death; they live the life of God, in communion with God. Such a life, hid in this world with Christ, there manifests itself in its richness and fulness. It unfolds from one degree of glory into another. What wonders of redemption are wrapped up in life with God! What infinite possibilities are within the reach of that being whose life is begotten of God, and whose life has no other end or aim than the transcendent experience of divine sonship and the supreme blessedness of God-likeness!

### III. *Narrow Views of Redemption.*

Protestantism was at fault in taking too narrow a view of redemption. It was necessary to magnify justification by faith and carefully separate it from sanctification and glorification, but it was a mistake to lay such stress on justification and faith that sanctification and love were thrown into the background, and this to such an extent that some divines had the assurance to teach that good works were hurtful to salvation. This narrowing of the original base of the Reformation was the chief reason why Staupitz and other evangelical men preferred to remain in the Church of Rome. The Church of Rome still maintains a more comprehensive view of redemption than is common in Protestant Churches. Her fault is that she does not distinguish and properly define justification and sanctification. Protestantism defined justification, but left sanctification in a very uncertain condition. The Puritan Reformation unfolded the doctrine of sanctification and defined it as a progressive work of God, but did not define its appropriating instrument. It laid stress on the importance of sanctification in this life. It saw that sanctification must be completed in the Middle State, but it left this subject in such an obscure form that it has been the general opinion in Calvinistic Churches that sanctification was completed at the very moment of death.

### IV. *Judgment at Death.*

This interpretation was favored by the scholastic divines, who coined the doctrine

of a judgment at death which assigns to heaven or hell or purgatory. This doctrine of a judgment at death has no warrant in the Scriptures or in the creeds of Christendom. It is not only unsupported by Scripture and the Symbols, but it violates them all; for it throws the day of judgment into the background, robs it of its place and importance in the Christian system and in religious experience, and applies many passages of Scripture that belong only to it, to the judgment at death, and so makes death the supreme issue.

Furthermore, the doctrine of a judgment at death is a heathen doctrine derived from the heathen mythological conception of a god of the realm of the dead. It was taken up by the scholastic divines of the Middle Ages, and borrowed from them by the Protestant scholastics. It does violence to the doctrine of Scripture and the creeds, that the human race had its probation in Adam, and when he fell was judged in him and condemned to death and the abode of the lost. The heathen doctrine of a judgment at death throws both the original judgment and the final judgment into the background, and puts a crisis in a false place in the history of redemption.\*

#### V. *The Second Advent.*

Furthermore, the attitude of Theology, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has been changed toward the great crisis of the Second Advent and the Day of Judgment. The doctrine of the Scriptures and the doctrine of the Church in all its Creeds and Liturgies is that the Advent is imminent. This is expressed in that wonderful hymn, *Dies Iræ*. But in the eighteenth century two errors, that were revived by the Anabaptists and a few isolated scholars, gained a rapid supremacy in the Theology of the Protestant Churches. The one of these is the Premillenarian doctrine. This separated the advent of the Messiah by a thousand years from the last judgment. It retained the church doctrine of the imminency of the Advent, but pushed the divine judgment into the background. The other error was still more serious, for it postponed the second Advent as well as the judgment until after the Millennium had been completed, and thus antagonized the doctrine of the Church as to the great crisis. This latter opinion has so prevailed in the nineteenth century, that it has been regarded as orthodox, owing to its advocacy by

leading divines in the British and American Churches.\*

Both of these serious errors should be banished, with the doctrine of a particular judgment at death, as all alike contrary to the Scriptures and the Creeds; and as obstructions to the development of a Biblical and Historical Theology. The Millennium of the Scriptures and of the Fathers is not an object for our future expectation. The Church has already enjoyed that experience and is enjoying it now. The Millennium of popular conception is a conceit without support in the Scriptures or in the Creeds. The crisis that we are to look forward to, long for, watch for, and pray for, is the Advent of our Lord in glory and judgment at the end of the age, to glorify his saints and perfect his kingdom. In modern Eschatology the Millennium has usurped the place of the Middle State.

#### VI. *The Means of Grace.*

The Roman Catholics teach that the divine grace is imparted by the sacraments of the Church. Accordingly, all who have not enjoyed these sacraments are excluded from heaven, and also from purgatory. The Lutherans teach that the grace of God is imparted by word and sacraments. It is difficult for the Lutheran to extend redemption beyond the bounds of the Christian Church and the use of the means of grace. The Reformed Churches teach that the divine grace is not limited to the ordinary means, and hence the Divine Spirit may work apart from the Church and its ordinances, and so it is possible to conceive that the Kingdom of God is more extensive than the visible Church. But the question still remains, How may the divine grace be appropriated by the person to be redeemed?

The Protestant Reformation made an important advance in the History of Doctrine by its definition of *Justification by Faith only*. This is the banner doctrine of Protestantism, the doctrine by which the Church stands or falls. The Roman Catholics confound justification and sanctification. They make sanctification the product of the sacraments of the Church in this life. It is appropriated by the use of the sacraments. It is carried on in the Middle State by purgatorial fires. The Protestants separated justification from sanctification, and represented that justification was appropriated by *faith alone*, and not through the bare use of the sacraments. They taught that sanctification was the fruit of justification, but they did

\* See Briggs' *Whither?* pp. 195 seq., 1889, Charles Scribner's Sons.

\* Briggs' *Whither?* pp. 200 seq.

not carefully define it. It is the merit of the Puritan Reformation that it defined sanctification, repentance, and the doctrines related to them. These doctrines were considered in their relation to this life and the ultimate state, but were not applied to the Middle State.

Calvinism remained indifferent to the question of the Middle State, because it was content to leave all to the electing grace of God.

### VII. Probation.

But Arminianism and Semi-Arminianism could not be so indifferent. Daniel Whitby first formulated the doctrine of Probation in this life, in his attack upon the Five Points of Calvinism; and Bishop Butler gave it currency among all the opponents of English Deism, so that it has been largely appropriated by Calvinists, and has in many respects warped Calvinistic Theology.\*

The doctrine that this life is a probation calls attention to the fact that it is so in fact only to a very small portion of our race. And if the redemption of a part depends on their use of their probation, how can those be saved who have no probation at all? It seems necessary, therefore, to extend probation for these into the Middle State, or to give the vast majority of mankind over to the devil. Accordingly, Whitby taught the annihilation of the wicked,† and Butler consistently held to the extension of probation into the future life.‡ Other probationists must either follow their example or else abandon the doctrine of probation altogether. Arminians and Semi-Arminians must in the end take one of these two alternative courses.

Arminians and Semi-Arminians, who are in our churches, and who believe in the doctrine of probation, must face this question. If probation is to be extended to the Middle State, they must in some way conceive of the gospel extending into Hades, for it is difficult to see any possibility for regeneration there without it. Several theories have been proposed to overcome this difficulty.

(1) Some think that when our Saviour preached to the imprisoned spirits he organized those whom he saved into a church, and left them in Abaddon with a commission to preach his gospel to the lost. This is not in itself impossible. It might be said that such a mission would be so difficult and exacting, that it is hard to believe that the Saviour would lay it upon any of his re-

deemed. And yet I cannot help the thought that there have been and are to-day Christians who would be willing to go into the depths of Abaddon to glorify Christ and save souls. How much more, those who may have been redeemed by Christ in Abaddon itself might regard it as a privilege to labor for him in this prison of the lost!

(2) It has been conjectured that hypocrites and others, who know the gospel, but have no saving experience of it here, may recall it there and be saved by it, and in this way become the preachers of Hades. In that ingenious book, *Letters from Hell*, the author suggests that hypocritical priests and people assemble in church on the sabbaths in Hell as was their habit in this world, and that they are tormented by not being able to recall the gospel to their minds. It seems to me that it is far more likely that the larger portion of them would remember it. Such a paralysis of the memory is unpsychological. The lost are not to be imbeciles or madmen.

And it is not incredible that a considerable portion of the Bible might be recovered from the memories of those who go thither. This is certainly true if the current opinions in the Christian Churches are true, that all Heretics and Jews are sent there. A Hades full of Protestants, as the Romanists think, could hardly be without the Gospel. A place of torment where Roman Catholics are found by the hundreds of millions—popes, archbishops, monks, nuns, and all, could hardly be in such terrible ignorance of Christ and his Word. The Old Testament, with its Messianic promise, could hardly pass from the minds of all Jews. Even Unitarians, Universalists, and German Rationalists might reasonably recall some of those passages of the New Testament that contain in them the sum of the gospel, and are called by Luther little Bibles. In this case we would have to ask whether the gospel could lose its power there; whether it would be deprived of the influence of the Divine Spirit, and finally, whether all those who have gone there have become so hardened as to be incapable of faith and repentance?

(3) It has been generally thought by the advocates of an extension of redemption to the abode of the lost, that the Saviour might commission some of the redeemed of this world to preach his gospel there. It is true this would be a difficult and hazardous work for any man to undertake. It is true that there was an impassable gulf that Abraham and Lazarus were not allowed to cross. But this did not prevent our Saviour from crossing that gulf during his ministry to the

\* *Walter?* pp. 217 seq.  
† *Elementary*, II. *Thess.*, p. 391, ed. 1710.  
‡ *ology*, I. 13, II. 6.

underworld, and it does not exclude the possibility that he might bridge that chasm for the heralds of redemption in his wondrous love for lost souls. It is conceivable that he may have done this. But it is without any warrant from Holy Scripture and must remain pure conjecture. The difficulty lies not in the inability of the Messiah to send, or in the readiness of preachers to go, but in the feasibility of the work itself.

Many in the early Church thought this work feasible. The Shepherd of Hermas represents the apostles and martyrs as carrying on the preaching of Christ in Hades. And, indeed, what man is there, who has a spark of heroism, who would not rather work for Christ among the lost in Hades, if there were any possibility of such a work, than to pass centuries in a dreamy state of existence in Paradise, or live a life of ease and selfish gratification in the heights of heaven? Far better to work in Sheol than idle in heaven. The current views of the state of blessedness are unethical and demoralizing. They have little attraction for men of intellect and power, or for souls on fire with love to Christ and eager for the redemption of men. If we cannot serve our Saviour in heaven better than on earth, there is little to attract us after death. But thanks be unto God, we know that we may glorify him in the better world. We may share the aim of Paul, that whether in heaven or on earth we may be well-pleasing to Him. There are inexhaustible treasures of redemption that we may appropriate for ourselves, and that we may share in distributing to others.

All such theories of redemption of lost souls after death are castles in the air. No one can put any confidence in them. They have no solid ground on which to rest. They are not so dangerous as some would have it; they do not convince any one; they cannot disturb the real faith of the Church. They may unsettle those who see the crisis for mankind in the event of death. And they will render real service if they should destroy this error altogether.

They may expose the weakness of the current Eschatology. They may thus be a blessing in disguise. For the real faith of the Church, as expressed in the creeds of Christendom, looks forward, now as in the ages of the past, not to the day of death or a millennium, but to the Second Advent of the Messiah and his day of judgment, when He will make the final decision that will issue in everlasting ruin to some wretched creatures but in everlasting bliss to the human race as a whole.

### VIII. Salvation of Infants.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed National Churches, the entire population belonged to the Church by baptism, and the great majority by partaking of the Lord's Supper. The National Churches took entire possession of their respective countries, and either banished, reduced to submission, imprisoned, or put to death dissenters. The conception of the everlasting death of children did not spring into the mind of theologians or the people, except so far as they were involved in the everlasting damnation of the heathen. This was taken as a matter of course. But in those days there was little contact with the heathen, and the mind of men was not impressed with this awful fact. There were a few theologians, such as Zwingli and Cœlius Secundus Curio, who held that the grace of God extended to the heathen. But at that time theology did not confront the problem.

The development of Puritanism in the seventeenth century and the origination of a large number of sects in Holland and Great Britain, such as Anabaptists, Baptists, Quakers, Unitarians, Universalists, Arminians, and the new circumstances that arose, disclosing thousands and millions of unbaptized children in Christian lands, forced the question of the salvation of unbaptized children upon the attention of theologians. Furthermore, the result of the religious conflicts in Great Britain and Holland produced a large class of men and women who declined communion with the churches in the way of sacrament. The strict rules of the dissenting churches, excluding all but those who would comply with their rules, and changing the churches into a multitude of religious clubs, increased the number of the population who did not belong to the Church and were not professing Christians. This forced the ministry to consider whether these men and women, many of them leading upright lives, were to be damned in Hell forever. In the eighteenth century these matters came before the mind and heart of Christians as never before. The result of these things has been a gradual change of opinion on these subjects, and the recognition of the universal salvation of infants and the admission that men may be saved who are not in communion with the Church.

The present century brought the Church of Christ face to face with the heathen world. Hundreds of millions of heathen stand over against nominal Christians half their number. The latter must be reduced by multi-

tudes who are inhabitants of Christian lands, but who do not profess the faith of Christ. It is safe to say that there are not one hundred millions on the earth to-day who comply with the methods of salvation taught in Christian Churches. The damnation of these millions of heathen, who have never heard of Christ, and millions of nominal Christians, who do not use the means of grace offered them by the Church, is an awful fact for the Church to confront after nearly two thousand years of Christianity on the earth. The ministry and the people do not really believe that these multitudes will be damned. The matter is eased a little by the theory that the dying infants of the heathen are saved, and some of the best of heathen adults may attain redemption; but the great mass of the adult population of Asia and Africa—yes, of Europe and America also—are doomed to hell-fire according to the popular theology. The ministers preach it, and the people listen to this doctrine as they do to many others, but they are not moved by it. They accept it as orthodox doctrine without understanding it; but they do not really believe it in their hearts. If they did they would be more worthy of damnation than the heathen themselves. If a single man were in peril of physical death, the whole community would be aroused to save him. No price would be too great. Men and women would cheerfully risk their lives to save him. Those who would not do this would be regarded as base cowards. But here, according to the average missionary sermon, are untold millions of heathen perishing without the gospel, and at death going into everlasting fire. Vast multitudes of unevangelized persons in our cities and towns and villages are confronting the same cruel destiny.

If the ministry and people really believed it they would pour out their wealth like water; they would rush in masses to the heathen world with the gospel of redemption. There would be a new crusade that would put the old crusades to shame. Those who have the gospel, and will not give it to others who know it not, may incur a worse doom in the day of judgment than the ignorant. Those who knew the Lord's will and did it not will be beaten with many stripes; those who knew not and did things worthy of stripes with few stripes.\*

The difficulty is to construct the doctrine of the salvation of infants and the heathen in harmony with established doctrines.

The Protestant doctrine of justification by

faith implies that there can be no salvation without justification on the part of God and faith on the part of man. The Westminster doctrine is that,

"God did from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification; nevertheless they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them" (xi. 4).

This passage not only teaches the common Protestant doctrine of justification and connects it with the doctrine of election, but it also rules out the Antinomian doctrine of eternal justification without faith, which was current in the time of the Westminster Assembly. The Westminster divines did not think of any application of Christ apart from personal faith; for they distinctly state:

"Redemption is certainly applied, and effectually communicated, to all those for whom Christ hath purchased it; who are in time by the Holy Ghost enabled to believe in Christ, according to the gospel" (Larger Catechism, Ans. 59).

Believing in Christ is therefore universal so far as the elect of God and the redeemed of Christ are concerned. There is no salvation without personal faith.

The Westminster divines were not clear in their views as to the faith of infants and incapables. Some supposed that the children, being bound in the covenant with their parents, the parents' faith laid hold of justification for their children; others supposed that the germs of faith and repentance were planted in them by the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration either in connection with Baptism or apart from it.

No orthodox Protestant thought of justification without the exercise of personal faith on the part of the justified. There must be an application of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit to every one to be saved, and there must be a personal appropriation of Jesus Christ on the part of all who are redeemed. The order of Salvation is necessary in all its parts for every child of God.

"Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth" (xi. 1). (*Westminster Confession of Faith.*) "All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son, Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption" (xii. 1). "They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are farther sanctified really and personally" (xiii. 1). "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved" (xvii. 1).

There is but one way of salvation for all, one *ordo salutis*. There is but one kind of justification, one kind of sanctification, one

\* Luke xii. 48.



kind of saving faith, and one kind of repentance unto life. The modern extension of the doctrine of redemption so as to include not only infants of believers, but all infants; and also so as to embrace not only the people of God under the Old Covenant and the people of God who accept the New Covenant, but also multitudes from among the heathen, who have not the light of either of these covenants, but only the light of nature, raises the question how these can be saved consistently with the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith and the Puritan doctrine of sanctification. It is evident that the orthodox divines of the seventeenth century constructed their systems of doctrine without any conception of such an extension of redemption. The theory of some modern theologians, such as the elder and younger Hodge, that they may be saved without personal faith, subverts the fundamental principle of Protestantism. The current unformulated theory that they can be saved without acceptance of the righteousness of Christ undermines the fundamental principle of Christianity. Christians are not saved in classes or masses, but as individuals out of the mass of corruption. It is anti-Christian to say that the entire race of men may be regarded as redeemed, unless it is expressly said that they are lost. On the contrary, the Bible and the Creeds teach that all are lost unless they are personally redeemed and experience the work of grace. There must be some way in which infants, incapables and pious men beyond the bounds of Christendom may be brought into contact with God and His Christ, and have an opportunity to believe in him, or they cannot be saved in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures and the creeds of Christendom. Unless this can be done Protestantism—yes, the entire system of Christian doctrine, breaks down.

The fault of modern Protestantism has been in neglecting the doctrine of salvation as a whole, with its *ordo salutis*, and in thinking too exclusively of the initial steps. Justification by faith was too exclusively in the minds of the early Protestants, and regeneration is unduly prominent in American Protestant Theology since the rise of Methodism, having taken the place of the older doctrine of Effectual Calling. It is not difficult to understand that the Divine Spirit may regenerate all the elect in this world, and plant within them the seeds of faith and repentance, so that redemption may have its beginning here for infants and incapables. We may also see this faith and repentance germinate and spring up under

the light of nature, and feel after God and His Christ in many among the heathen; but the redemption thus begun must in some way bring them to Christ in order that they may have the possession and enjoyment of salvation.

From the Arminian doctrine of probation and of human responsibility for the initiation of redemption, the first steps of regeneration must take place in the Intermediate State for all these persons or not at all. But from the Calvinistic position, which makes the divine grace prevenient, it is easy to hold that every elect person is actually regenerated in this life before he leaves the world. It seems that the birth of little children into this world would have no significance if they were not to have their regeneration here also. They must be born as children of Adam to take part in the ruin of the race, and it would seem that only the children of Adam have a share in the Saviour of the race. From this point of view Calvinism ought to have no hesitation in advancing into the doctrine of the Middle State. The salvation which is begun here by regeneration is carried on there. For the vast majority of our race who die in infancy or have lived beyond the range of the means of grace, their salvation begun in this life by regeneration is carried on in the Intermediate State with the exercise of personal faith in Christ, whom they know there for the first. There the germs of faith and repentance that have been put in their hearts in regeneration by the Holy Spirit spring up in the sunlight of Christ's own face, and lay hold of him as their Saviour. Not till then are they justified, for there can be no justification without faith for them any more than for others. The Intermediate State is for them a state of blessed possibilities of redemption. This is beautifully expressed in a hymn of Ephraim, the Syrian, translated by Professor Gilbert:

“ Our God, to Thee sweet praises rise  
From youthful lips in Paradise;  
From boys fair robed in spotless white,  
And nourished in the courts of light.  
In arbors they, where soft and low  
The blessed streams of light do flow:  
And Gabriel, a shepherd strong,  
Doth gently guide their flocks along.  
Their honors higher and more fair  
Than those of saints and virgins are;  
God's sons are they on that far coast,  
And nurselings of the Holy Ghost.”

The Intermediate State is, therefore, for a considerable portion of our race a state for the consummation of their justification. The Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone forces to this position.

IX. *Progressive Sanctification.*

But justification by faith belongs to the earlier stages of redemption. All those who are justified are also sanctified. No one can be ultimately and altogether redeemed without sanctification.

It is necessary that believers should have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that they should be "more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," and "so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The doctrine of immediate sanctification is a heresy which has always been rejected by orthodox Protestants.

The Westminster Confession definitely states: "This sanctification is throughout, yet imperfect in this life." If imperfect in this life for all believers, there is no other state in which it can be perfected save in the Intermediate State. The Intermediate State is therefore for all believers without exception a state for *their sanctification*. They are there trained in the school of Christ, and are prepared for the Christian perfection which they must attain ere the judgment day.

I am well aware that it has been a common opinion that believers are at their death—that is, in the very moment of death, completely sanctified. This opinion seems to be favored by the statement of the Shorter Catechism—"The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness." (Quest. 37.) This is one of a number of instances in which the Shorter Catechism by its brief, unguarded statements has occasioned error. The Larger Catechism is fuller and clearer when it says: "The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible church enjoy immediately after death, is in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness, and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory." (Quest. 86.)

The phrase "immediately after death" is the phrase of the question: "What is the communion in glory with Christ which the members of the invisible church enjoy *immediately after death*?" and it is designed to cover the *entire period* of the Intermediate State as distinguished from the state of resurrection, and it is not limited to the moment after death, in which the Intermediate State has its beginning. This is clear from Question 82, where the general question, "What is the communion in glory which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?" is answered in the follow-

ing three divisions of condition, which appear in three questions that follow: "The communion in glory, which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is in this life, immediately after death, and at last perfected at the resurrection and day of judgment." It ought to be clear to any one that, having made sanctification a work of God's grace and a growth extending through the entire life of the believer and left incomplete at death, and that, having denied the doctrine of immediate sanctification, the Westminster divines could not be so inconsistent as to teach that at the moment of death, occurring at various stages in the growth in holiness, sanctification then changed its nature, ceased to be a progressive work, a growth, and became immediate, an act of God like justification. This would be to undermine the Protestant doctrine of sanctification. It is essential to the integrity of the Protestant system of faith that we should resist the Antinomian doctrines of eternal justification without faith and of immediate sanctification at any time or in any state or place.

There are some theologians who persuade themselves that they can believe in the immediate justification and the immediate sanctification of infants, of incapables and of heathen adults in the change of death, in that supreme moment of transition from this life to the Middle State. Such a theory may be stated in words, but it is inconceivable in fact. What a transformation would take place in the intellectual and moral powers of infants, incapables and the dark-minded heathen! Such a metamorphosis is not taught in the Scriptures or the Creeds. It would violate the intellectual and moral constitution of man.

Those who believe it may claim that all things are possible to God. But it might be said that it is just as possible for God to use the water of Baptism, *ex opere operato*, to work regeneration, as Sacramentarians believe; and it is just as possible that the elements of the Lord's Supper may be changed into the real body and blood of our Lord, as the Roman Catholics believe. These divine transformations are just as possible to God and just as credible to the mind of man as the immediate transformation of a little babe into a perfectly holy man in the image of Jesus Christ; or of the instantaneous accomplishment of the entire *ordo salutis* for an idiot in the very moment of death. All such magical doctrines are subversive of the entire structure of Protestantism. They belong to an age of magic, and have no place in an age of Reason and Faith.

It was a keen thrust of Möhler that Protestantism without a purgatory must either let men enter heaven stained with sin, or else think of an immediate magical transformation at death, by which sin mechanically and violently falls off from us with the body. Hase justly replied that Protestantism would not accept this dilemma, and that Protestant Theology taught that the divine grace was operative, and men capable of moral development after death. This view is the established opinion in German Theology. Dorner, Martensen, Kahnis, and other divines teach that there must be a growth in sanctification in the Middle State. All Protestants must accept this doctrine or they are sure to be caught in the inconsistency of magical, mechanical and unethical opinions. This opinion is commonly held by Protestants in Great Britain. Why should Protestants in America lag behind their brethren in Europe? We have been caught in the snares of recent errors. Let us break through the snares and re-establish ourselves in the ancient Christian doctrine of the Middle State.

The deeper ethical sense in German Theology since Kant forced divines to distinguish grades of sin and guilt and punishment, and to study as never before the psychological origin of sin and its development in human nature. Attention was thus called to the words of Jesus that the sin against the Holy Spirit was the only eternal sin, the only unpardonable transgression. This sin is not only unpardonable in this age, but also in the age to come. This raises the question whether any man is irretrievably lost ere he commits this unpardonable sin, and whether those who do not commit it in this world ere they die are, by the mere crisis of death, brought into an unpardonable state; and whether, when Jesus said that this sin against the Holy Spirit was unpardonable here and also hereafter, he did not imply that all other sins might be pardoned hereafter as well as here. This conclusion was reached by Nitzsch, Tholuck, Julius Muller, Martensen, Dorner, Schaff, and many others.

The doctrine of immediate justification and sanctification at death involves the conceit that the child who dies in infancy a few moments after birth is immediately justified and sanctified, receives saving faith and all the Christian graces in an instant; while his brother, who lives in this world, is not justified until he reaches the age in which he can exercise personal faith, and then he has all the struggles of life to undergo until he reaches the limits of human life without the comforts of sanctification, which he cannot

receive until death. If this were so, then blessed are those who die in infancy, and thus outstrip their fellows in the Christian race. Vastly better to be born to die, than to be born to live in this uncertain world. What parent would not prefer to lay all his children in an early grave, assured of their salvation, rather than expose them to the dreadful risks of life and the possibility of eternal damnation? According to the current beliefs, those Chinese mothers who put their children to death make more Christians than all the missionaries.

Overcome with such reflections, we might express our misery in the complaint of Job,

“Why died I not from the womb?  
Why did I not give up the ghost when I came from the belly?  
Why did the knees receive me?  
Or why the breasts, that I should suck?  
For now would I have lain down and been quiet,  
I would have slept; then had I been at rest.”

The Christian doctrine of sanctification forces us to the conclusion that the Middle State is now and has ever been the school of Christian Sanctification. The Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is a perversion of the true doctrine. It is mechanical and unethical, like other peculiar doctrines of the Roman Catholic system. But it is better than a blank agnosticism. There is much truth and some comfort in the midst of its errors, and it has profound consolation to offer to the bereaved and penitent. Here is one of its greatest strongholds. It is less mechanical and less unethical than the theory that has prevailed among Protestants that there is both immediate justification and immediate sanctification in the article of death.

The doctrines associated with Christian sanctification lead to similar results. Are the experiences of saving faith, assurance of grace and salvation, religious worship, the communion of saints confined to a few adult Christians in this life? Have they no meaning for the vast majority of the redeemed? Rather for the best of Christians the sublime truth and comfort involved in these doctrines are not realized until they enter upon the Middle State.

Those who hold the doctrine of immediate sanctification at death do not really understand the Protestant doctrine of sanctification and the principles of Christian Ethics.

Regeneration is an act of God and from its very idea is instantaneous, for it is the production of a new life in man. Regeneration is only one of the terms used in the New Testament to describe this beginning of Christian life. Resurrection is more fre-

quently used. Creation is also employed. Effectual Calling was preferred by the Westminster divines. All these terms indicate a divine originating act. Regeneration is always such, and cannot be otherwise.

But sanctification is the growth of that life from birth to full manhood, to the likeness of Christ. It is always in this world a growth; it is incomplete with the best of men at death. Does it change its nature then? Shall the little babe, the idiot, the seeker after God among the heathen, the Roman Catholic, the Protestant, and the saints of all ages, all alike in an instant leap over this period of growth, however different their stage of progress may be? Shall a babe become a man in an instant? Shall a savage become a philosopher in a moment? Shall a little boy become a John Calvin, and a John Calvin be conformed to the image of Christ, all at a divine creative word? Then the difference between regeneration and sanctification has disappeared for the vast majority of the redeemed.

If regeneration and sanctification are one act, how can we distinguish the intervening act of justification; and if regeneration, justification, and sanctification may all be one at death, why not in this life, as the Plymouth brethren teach? Why was the world turned upside down at the Protestant Reformation in order to discriminate justification by faith from sanctification if, after all these centuries of Protestantism, they are really identical for the vast majority of our race, and are only to be distinguished in those in Christian lands who live to maturity and become true Christians? Then Protestantism would be not only a failure, but also one of the greatest crimes in history. This is the pit of ruin into which the dogmatic divines of our day would force us rather than extend the light of redemption into the Middle State.

Those divines who confound sanctification with justification do not understand the principles of sanctification and Christian Ethics. Sanctification has two sides—mortification and vivification; the former is manward, the latter is Godward. Believers who enter the Middle State enter sinless; they are pardoned and justified; they are mantled in the blood and righteousness of Christ; and nothing will be able to separate them from his love. They are also delivered from all temptations such as spring from without, from the world and the devil. They are encircled with influences for good such as they have never enjoyed before. But they are still the same persons, with all the gifts and graces and also all the evil habits

of mind, disposition, and temper they had when they left the world. It is unpsychological to suppose that these will all be changed in the moment of death. It is the Manichean heresy to hold that sin belongs to the physical organization, and is laid aside with the body. If this were so, how can any of our race carry their evil natures with them into the Middle State and incur the punishment of their sins? The Plymouth Brethren hold that there are two natures in the redeemed, the old man and the new. In accordance with such a theory, the old man might be cast off at death. But this is only a more subtle kind of Manicheism, which has ever been regarded as heretical. Sin, as our Saviour teaches, has its source in the heart, in the higher and immortal part of man. It is the work of sanctification to overcome sin in the higher nature. We may justly hold that the evil that lingers in the higher moral nature of believers will be suppressed and modified with an energy of repentance, humiliation, confession, and determination that will be more powerful than ever before, because it will be stimulated by the presence of Christ and his saints. The Christian graces will unfold under more favorable circumstances than in this world. If it were possible that sanctification at death would make men so perfect in holiness as to remove all evil tendencies and habits, and not only destroy their disposition to sin, but so lift them above temptation that they would be not only like our Saviour during his earthly life, *posse non peccare*, but also like our Saviour after he had sanctified himself and risen victor over sin, death, and Satan, and attained the position of *non posse peccare*; even then they would only have accomplished the negative side of sanctification, the mortification or entire putting to death the old man of sin. They would still have to undergo the process of vivification and learn the *practice* of true holiness. What practice have infants and imbeciles when they enter the Middle State? How far short in practice do the best of men fall? Are they no longer to have an opportunity for the practice of true holiness? Will there be no chance to learn what true holiness is? The Middle State must, from the very nature of the case, be a school of sanctification.

#### X. The Reigning Christ.

It was a profound saying of Henry B. Smith that Eschatology ought to be Christologized. It is greatly to be regretted that he did not turn his own attention to that theme, and give us the fruit of his investiga-

tions. Dr. Schaff gave his attention to this subject many years ago in his book on the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and has added not a few valuable hints in his later publications.

Christ is the mediator between God and man in the exercise of his offices as prophet, priest and king. Those who passed a few years in this world, and then went into the Middle State and have been there for centuries, have not passed beyond the need of his mediation. The interval between death and the judgment has its lessons and its training for them as well as for us. The prophetic office of Christ continues to those who are in the Middle State. After his own death he went to the abode of the departed spirits, and preached unto them his gospel. He ascended into heaven, taking his redeemed with him. All those whom he has purchased with his blood ascend to him to abide with him. The redeemed robber is not the only one to whom he has something to say in the Middle State. All believers enter his school and are trained in the mysteries of his kingdom. Those mysteries are not cleared up by a flash of revelation; they are revealed as the redeemed are able to apprehend them and use them. It is improbable that Augustine, Calvin and Luther will be found in the same class-room as the redeemed negro slave or the babe that has entered heaven to-day. The Fathers and doctors of the Church will be the teachers of the dead, as they taught the living.

Christ's priestly office continues for them. They who enter the Middle State still need his blood and righteousness. Even if they commit no positive sin they do not reach positive perfection until their sanctification has been completed in the attainment of the complete likeness of Christ. They need the robe of Christ's righteousness until they have gained one of their own. He is still their surety, who has engaged with them and with God to present them perfect in the last great day.

But, above all, Christ is a king in the Intermediate State. Here in this world his reign is only partial; there it is complete. Here his kingdom is interwoven with the kingdom of darkness. There it is apart from all evil and hindrance. His reign is entire over his saints, and they are being prepared by him for the advent in which they will come with him to reign over the world.

The Church is chiefly in the Intermediate State. The Church on earth is only the vestibule of it. In this world we have

learned to know in part the Messiah of the Cross; there in the Middle State the redeemed know the glory of the Messiah of the Throne. There the Church is in its purity and complete organization, as the bride of the Lamb. There Christ the head and his body the Church are in blessed unity. We have glimpses in the Apocalypse of the vast assemblies of the saints in heaven about the throne of the Lamb. And the Epistle of the Hebrews gives us a picture of their organized assembly on the heights of the heavenly Zion. It is important for the Church on earth to have a better apprehension of its relations to the Church in the Middle State. The Protestant branch of Christendom is weaker here than the Roman Catholic. It is high time to overcome this defect, for it is not merely agnosticism, it is sin against the mysteries of our religion. The modern Church ought to return to the faith of the ancient Church, and believe in the "Communion of Saints."

#### XI. Consistency of Christian Doctrine.

We have developed the doctrine of the Middle State in the light of other established Christian doctrines. If the Church has rightly defined these, then it results from them that we must take that view of the Middle State that they suggest. If we are not prepared to do this we cast doubt upon the legitimacy and competency of these doctrines. We confess them inadequate and insufficient. The Calvinistic system, with its principle that salvation is by the divine grace alone, and that this grace is ever prevenient, enables us to believe that the *ordo salutis* begins for all who are saved by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit in this life. This regeneration begets the seeds of a perfect Christian life. For some the *ordo salutis* makes no further advance in this life; for others it advances in different degrees and stages; but for all the redeemed the Middle State is of vast importance as the state in which our redemption is taken up where it is left incomplete in this life and then carried on to its perfection. This view of the Middle State gives it its true theological importance. It enables us to look forward with hope and joy for an entrance upon it. This life is an introduction to it. It mediates between death and the resurrection, and prepares for the ultimate blessedness.

We have thus far considered only the redeemed. Those who do not belong to that company also enter into the Middle State. But their place is a different one. It is represented as a prison, a place of destructi-

and torment before the resurrection of Christ, in which they are reserved for the day of judgment. There is a silence on the fate of the wicked in the Middle State since the resurrection of Jesus that is profound and unbroken in the New Testament. The presumption is that their condition has not been changed by the resurrection, and that they remain in the prison-house of Hades. There are some who hold that there is a possibility of release from the prison house to join the company of the blessed. Such a hope would, indeed, be a comfort if it could be indulged for all mankind. But there seems to be no solid basis on which to rest it. The grace of God is so grand and glorious in its wonders of redemption that we may rest upon that as the solid rock of comfort. We gain more hope here than we can get from any other source whatsoever. We may be certain that when the final verdict has been rendered, we shall not be surprised that so many were not saved. But we shall rejoice at the wonderful extent and richness of the redemptive love of God in the unexpected multitudes of the blessed. And these will be not chiefly babes and imbeciles, but men and women who have undergone hardships in this life, and have overcome in its trials and temptations.

If we could find evidence in the Scriptures that there was any possibility of the extension of the benefits of regeneration and the efficacy of the means of grace into the abode of the lost, we should be glad to follow it. Or if we could see any evidence from other Christian doctrines that would lead to such a hope we would gladly embrace it. The Scriptures are not so decided against it as many suppose. The one passage with reference to Dives is not decisive for the present dispensation, and therefore does not shut the door of hope. The preaching of Jesus to the spirits in prison is not decisive for the present dispensation, and therefore does not open the door for a larger hope. Jesus by his resurrection made a change in the abode of the dead, by taking some of them at least with him from Hades to Heaven. We do not know what changes have been made in Hades in other respects.

The Arminian doctrine of *Probation* forces all those who believe in it to extend that probation into the Intermediate State. Sooner or later they will do it. But the Calvinistic system is in a very different position. The Calvinistic system solves the difficulties in a much better way. It does not limit the grace of God by human ability or inability. And yet there is nothing in Calvinism itself that prevents the extension

of redemption into a future life. In point of fact, Universalism sprang out of an extreme form of Calvinism. The grace of God might work in Hades as well as in this world. Regeneration might take place there as well as here, with or without the use of the means of grace. But we cannot escape the consideration that no one goes to Hades who has not been previously in this world, where the work of regeneration might have been wrought without waiting for the Middle State. If multitudes of infants and imbeciles are regenerated before departing from this life, why not also all others who are to be redeemed?

Let us heed the Saviour's warning, "Judge not that ye be not judged." We should cease damning our fellow-men and sending them to hell for difference of doctrine, of polity, and of mode of worship. Certainly if it rested with men, not one of us would ever see heaven. If the historic churches were to be the judges, they would empty heaven save of a very few ancient saints, and fill hell with historic Christianity.

If the judgment of the ecclesiastical authorities of the historic churches were ratified in heaven to-day, as they claim that they will be, every Christian now in the world would be excluded from heaven when he dies by the official decision of some one or more of the various ecclesiastic organizations that now govern the Christian world. What a *reductio ad absurdum* is the present opinion of Christendom on this subject!

The Messiah is at hand. There is a day of judgment that is hastening on. We are none of us prepared for it. Let us be thankful that there is a Saviour and a congregation of saints in the Middle State ready to receive us and prepare us for that day, and that when we depart this life in feebleness and imperfection we may be received into the company of the blessed, who will strengthen us and help us to climb the ascents of sanctification and glory.

#### CHEAP MISSIONARIES AND MISSION EDUCATION.

[A Reply to the article, "Cheap Missionaries," by Meredith Townsend, reprinted in our November number, pp. 93-97.]

BY PRINCIPAL MILLER, C. I. E., LL. D.

From *The Contemporary Review*, Oct., 1880.

It is a sign that the missionary movement has attained its majority when it begins to be treated as one of the forces by which the



