

# THE PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

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## I.

### MODERN MIRACLES.

WE have not to argue in this paper the abstract possibility of miracles, nor to defend the historic verity of the Gospel and apostolic miracles. Our question lies within the circle of the miraculous. The principal form in which it arises in our day, is the claim to the power of healing the sick by the prayer of faith. This claim is preferred upon scriptural, rational, and historical grounds.

The main positions assumed in its defence are the following :

1. There is no evidence that miraculous gifts were ever withdrawn by God from the Church.
2. The promises of miraculous power given to the first disciples and apostles were for the *whole* Church of *every* age.
3. God is clearly revealed by His word as the Healer of the body no less than as the Saviour of the soul.
4. The reason why the Church does not now enjoy these miraculous powers in greater measure is her weakness of faith.
5. The Church everywhere needs to be reshaped to the apostolic model, and reinvested with her apostolic powers.\*

The most thorough consecutive discussion from this point of view is the book of the Reverend A. J. Gordon, of Boston, entitled "The Ministry of Healing," which is written in an excellent spirit, and is plausible and ingenious. A large part of this paper will be devoted to the discussion of the positions of this volume.

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\* Rev. A. J. Gordon, "The Ministry of Healing," pp. 2, 3, 7; Rev. W. E. Boardman, "The Great Physician," pp. 28, 117; Theodore Christlieb, D.D., "Modern Doubt and Christian Belief," p. 336.

### III.

## INFANT SALVATION AND ITS THEOLOGICAL BEARINGS.\*

A GREAT change of sentiment has taken place in recent times respecting infant salvation. For many centuries it was a dogma of orthodoxy that young children passing out of the world without baptism, were lost. This dogma is found in the earliest Protestant Confession,† and it long continued to prevail, more or less widely, among the churches of the Reformation. In the same churches it is now a common belief that all who die in infancy, whether baptized or not, inherit eternal life. What is signified by this change of opinion? What theological consequences are involved in the belief that all who die in infancy are saved? In order to answer these questions more clearly, I will first note a few salient points in the history of opinion concerning the salvation of young children.

### I.

#### A GLANCE AT THE HISTORY OF OPINION ABOUT INFANT SALVATION.

##### (a) *Teaching of Scripture and of the Fathers.*

The New Testament contains but little directly touching the subject. There is, indeed, a marked reticence with regard to it. At the same time, the whole tone and spirit of the New Testament in reference to little children is full of sweetness and benignity. By far the

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\* The substance of this article was prepared—the part relating to probation more than a year ago—to be read before a circle of clerical friends. The doctrine of Infant Salvation has deep roots and involves grave theological problems. My aim in the following paper is chiefly to furnish hints and points of view, that may possibly aid in finding these roots and in solving these problems. It is only a brief study on what has long seemed to me a very great subject.—G. L. P.

† De Baptismo docent, quod sit necessarius ad salutem, quodque per Baptismum offeratur gratia Dei: et quod pueri sint baptizandi, qui per Baptismum oblato Deo necipiantur in gratiam Dei.

*Damnant Anabaptistas, qui improbant Baptismum puerorum et affirmant pueros sine Baptismo salvos fieri.* Confess. August., Part I., Art. IX.

most important passage bearing upon the question of their salvation is Mark x. 13-16: *And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them; and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it He was MUCH DISPLEASED, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.* These words of the Lord Jesus—so unlike any other words ever spoken on earth before or since—might well be called the Gospel of the little children. Interpreted by the accompanying action of the Saviour, and by the example of His own infancy, they furnish most substantial Scriptural ground for believing in the salvation of babes and sucklings.

The writings of the apostles touch the problem before us chiefly in the way of general statements respecting the nature and working of the redemption through Christ. Some of these statements—as, *e. g.*, Romans v. 15-19, and 1 Cor. xv. 22—are very wide in their scope, and have been regarded by eminent theologians as fully warranting the conclusion that dying infants are all saved. The apostolic Fathers, so far as I have been able to examine them, contain almost nothing about the relation of children to the Gospel. On this point, as on so many other points of interest, they shed no light. What first made the salvation of infants a subject of special reflection and brought it into the arena of theological debate, seems to have been the question of their baptism. When baptism came to be regarded as the necessary instrument of regeneration, the fate of children dying unbaptized naturally aroused inquiry; and it was at length decided that they were lost. The influence of Augustine was all-powerful in making this opinion an article of the Church's creed. Hence he was called *durus infantum pater*. But, inexorable as was the logic of this greatest of the Fathers, his heart relented at its consequences; and while he taught that infants dying without baptism were lost, he taught, at the same time, that their punishment was of the mildest sort—*pœna damni*, not *pœna sensus*, as it was afterward defined—the loss of heaven rather than the torment of hell. Still, the Augustinian dogma of infant perdition continued for more than a thousand years to cast a baleful shadow over the face of childhood.

(b) *Protestant doctrine in the 16th and 17th centuries.*

Only by a severe struggle was Protestant Christianity able to throw off this incubus. The earliest symbol of the Reformation, the Confession of Augsburg, as we have seen, asserted the old view. But

Zwingle rejected it, and even avowed his belief in the salvation of all dying in infancy. Calvin, also, in harmony with his doctrine of election, refused to tie the salvation of infants to an outward rite.

The necessity of baptism, however, as the ordinary channel of renewing grace, appears to have been a general belief in the Reformed churches throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Near the close of the sixteenth, Hooker indicates the dominant opinion by arguing in favor of a milder view :

Touching infants which die unbaptized, sith they neither have the sacrament itself, nor any sense or conceit thereof, the judgement of many hath gone hard against them. But yet, seeing grace is not absolutely tied unto sacraments, and, besides, such is the lenity of God that unto things altogether impossible he bindeth no man, but when we cannot do what is enjoined us accepteth our will to do instead of the deed itself ; again, forasmuch as there is in their Christian parents and in the Church of God a presumed desire that the sacrament of baptism might be given them, yea, a purpose also that it should be given ; remorse of equity hath moved divers of the school divines in these considerations ingenuously to grant that God, all merciful to such as are not in themselves able to desire baptism, imputeth the secret desire that others have in their behalf, and accepteth the same as theirs rather than casteth away their souls for that which no man is able to help.\*

During the period from the death of Hooker to the meeting of the Westminster Assembly in 1643, the subject was discussed earnestly and in various aspects, especially by the Puritan divines. The relation of children to the Church and the Gospel formed one of the leading questions of that age. Many books were written upon it ; some of them catechisms, some of them theological treatises. In order to fully understand the teaching of the Westminster symbols on the point before us, one should by all means acquaint himself with this literature. Much of it was composed by men afterward prominent in the Assembly. Here is the title of one of the books referred to :

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION OF ELECT INFANTS. Professed by the Church of England, according to the Scriptures, the Primitive Church, the present Reformed Churches, and many particular divines apart.

By Cor. Burges, Dr. of D., and one of his Majestie's chaplaines in ordinary.

TITUS III: 5. According to his mercy he saved us with the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,

*Sacramenta in solis electis efficiunt quod figurant* (Aug.)

At OXFORD. 1629.

Dr. Burgess was one of the assessors, or vice-presidents, and owing to the ill-health of Dr. Twisse, often acted as prolocutor, of the Westminster Assembly. He was chairman of the first of its three grand committees, and an active member of the committees that drew up the

\* *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book V., chap. LX., 6.*

Confession of Faith and revised the Larger Catechism. The argument of his treatise is that, while not all baptized infants will be saved, yet all *elect* infants, who are baptized, ordinarily receive the Spirit in that sacrament. His views were sharply assailed, and many charged him, as he says, with being "guilty, not only of *Arminianism*, but even of direct *Popery*, and of teaching a *doctrine of devils*." They wittily, and not without some reason, compared him to "a famous general that levies a strong army, draws them out into the field, sets them in order or battaile, and raises great expectation of some honorable exploit, which in conclusion proves to be no other than *the breaking of an Egg shell*." This book, with one or two others of a similar character, helped to make many converts to the Anabaptist ranks, and tempted even Richard Baxter to abandon infant baptism. Two extracts will suffice to show its aim and animus :

If this be *Arminianism*, or *Popery*, to say, all right receivers do, ordinarily, receive the Spirit in baptism—so long as I restrain it only to *right* receivers and declare, that by right receivers I mean only those that belong truly and indeed to the election of Grace ; I must be content to bear this brand, as many do the name of *Puritane*, without desert (p. 56). If Anabaptists might as freely show themselves here among us as they do in other countries, this doctrine of Baptismal grace would be better entertained by such as now impugn it without consideration of this sequel. This, therefore, to me is without all controversy, that *what the Scriptures do attribute to Baptism as the principal part and as it were the soul of Baptism, is, ordinarily, communicated from Christ unto the elect, although infants* (because in them actual faith is not required), *in baptism*. Where the Scripture makes no difference, why should we ? (p. 25).\*

The following is an extract from a sermon by Stephen Marshall, called the most eloquent preacher of his time, and one of the strongest, as well as most popular, members of the Assembly of Divines. In this sermon he undertakes to refute the opinion of John Tombes, the Anabaptist, in his "Exercitation about Infant Baptism"; and having considered it under several points of view, thus proceeds :

This opinion puts all Infants of *all Believers* into the self-same condition with the Infants of *Turks* and *Indians*, which they will readily acknowledge ; and from thence, unavoidably, one of three things must follow—1. Either all of them are damned who die in their Infancy, being without the Covenant of Grace, having no part in Christ. Or, 2. All of them saved, as having no original sinne, and consequently needing no

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\* Dr. Burgess was an able and learned theologian and one of the master spirits of the Assembly. By its order he furnished a title to the Confession of Faith, and prepared the official copy which was presented to the two Houses of Parliament by the whole Assembly. Special thanks were given to him "for his great pains in transcribing the Confession"; and it was, probably, by him that the phrase "elect of infants" in the original draught of Chapter X., sect. III., was changed to "elect infants." This is of some importance as bearing upon the true meaning of that expression. I am indebted for these facts respecting Dr. Burgess to Prof. Briggs' invaluable article on "The Documentary History of the Westminster Assembly" in the first number of this REVIEW.

Saviour ; which most of the Anabaptists in the world doe own, and therefore bring in all *Pelagianism*, *Universal Grace*, *Free-will*, etc. Or, 3. That although they be tainted with Originall corruption, and so need a Saviour, Christ doth *pro beneplacito*, save some of the Infants of *Indians and Turks*, dying in their Infancy, as well as some of the Infants of *Christians*, and so carry salvation by Christ out of the Church, beyond the Covenant of Grace, where God never made any promise. That God hath made a promise to be the God of *Believers*, and of *their Seed*, we all know ; but where the promise is to be found, that he will be the God of the seed of such parents who live and die his enemies, and their seed, not so much as called by the preaching of the Gospel, I know not. These men say the Covenant of Grace made to the *Jews*, differs from the Covenant of Grace made with *us* ; but I desire to know whether in the *one*, or in the *other*, they find any promise of Salvation by Christ to any Infants dying in their Infancy, whose parents no way belonged to the Family of God, or Covenant of Grace (p. 7).

The sermon was preached in Westminster Abbey, in 1645, at the morning Lecture appointed by the House of Commons. Tombes, who was as indefatigable, as he was able, in advocating the Baptist doctrine, immediately published a treatise in reply to it. Mr. Marshall responded in "A Defence of Infant Baptism," dedicated to the Assembly of Divines and the Scottish Commissioners. It appeared in 1646. In this work, as previously in his sermon, he was understood to reflect the sentiments of the Assembly, then busily engaged in preparing the Confession of Faith and the Larger Catechism. I will give a single extract. In his sermon Mr. Marshall had said that if infants of pagans were saved, "Salvation was carried out of the Church, whereof God hath made no promise." Tombes replied that "Salvation is not carried out of the *invisible* Church, though some Infants of Pagans should be saved by Christ." Mr. Marshall rejoined :

It's true ; and I adde, that if any man shall say, *the Devils should be saved by Christ* ; even that opinion would not carry salvation out of the invisible Church. But, Sir, we are enquiring after the salvation of them to whom promise of salvation is made. Now, when you can prove that God hath made a promise, that he will gather a number, or hath a number whose names are written in the Lamb's book, although their parents never knew Jesus Christ, nor themselves ever live to be instructed, you may thus persuade your Readers to believe that even some of the Infants of Pagans dying in their Infancy belong to the invisible Church ; and till then you must give him leave to believe that this answer is brought in as a shift, only to serve your present need (pp. 87-88).

The following is an extract from a sermon by another leader in the Assembly, Dr. Anthony Tuckney, Master of St. John's College, Cambridge. Dr. Tuckney was chairman of the Committee on the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and appears to have taken as influential a part as any member of the Assembly in framing them. His sermon is entitled "NONE BUT CHRIST," and was preached at St. Mary's, Cambridge, in 1652. In it he discusses the question, what

hope there may be of the salvation of such as die infants—the children of believing Christians—and comes to this conclusion :

Whether God may not work and act faith in them then [*i. e.*, when dying] (as he made John the Baptist leap in the womb), which Beza and other of our divines deny, and others are not unwilling to grant, I dare not peremptorily determine ; yet this I may say, that he acteth in the souls of believers *in articulo mortis*, when some of them are as little liable to put forth an act of reason, as they are *in articulo nativitatis*. But the Scripture (for anything that I know) speaks not of this, and therefore I forbear to speak anything of it. Only (as I said) it giveth us ground to believe, that they being in the Covenant may be so wrapt up in it, as also to be wrapt up in the *bundle of life*.

Of the salvation of those dying in infancy beyond the Christian pale he intimates no hope whatever. This sermon is especially significant because Anthony Tuckney was one of the authors of the Westminster standards, and also because it was preached some time after the adjournment of the Assembly.

The following is the title of one of the numerous catechisms, which prepared the way, and served, more or less, as a basis for those of Westminster :

GUIDE UNTO TRUE BLESSEDNESS ; OR, *the Body of the Doctrine of the Scripture directing one to the Saving Knowledge of God.* By Saml. Crooke. 2d Ed., 1614.

Crooke was an eminent theologian and one of the Puritan Fathers. I will give a single question and answer from this book :

Q. How doth God deal with reprobates, dying infants? A. Being once conceived, they are in the state of death by reason of the sin of Adam imputed and of original corruption, wherein also dying, they perish ; as (for instance) the children of heathen parents ; touching the children of Christians, we are taught to account them *holy*.

The effect of such discussions as these is plainly visible in the carefully guarded statements of the Westminster divines. I will cite three bearing directly upon our subject. The first is found in the Confession of Faith, chap. X., III. :

Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth.

The others are found in the Conf. of Faith, chapter XXVIII., sects. V., VI. :

Although it be a great sin to neglect this ordinance [*i. e.*, baptism], yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.

The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time when it is administered ; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.

These and corresponding statements of the Westminster standards moulded opinion in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, both of Great Britain and this country, for the next 150 years. In the Established Church of England—at least in the case of the so-called “high-church” members—among the Lutherans at home and in the German dispersion, and wherever the symbols of the Synod of Dort bore sway, baptism continued to be widely regarded as, ordinarily, a necessary condition of salvation. It is still so regarded by those who adhere firmly to the old churchly doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

(c) *Growth of the modern evangelical view.*

We have seen that from the time of Augustine until Luther infants dying without baptism were generally supposed to be lost; and that while the old dogma long continued to rule in some portions of the Protestant Church, in other branches it was so modified by the doctrine of election and the gradual abandonment of baptismal regeneration as to rob it of its sting. We have also seen that, while ceasing to regard baptism as an absolute condition of saving grace, most Reformed theologians still held that infants dying out of the Christian pale and covenant, were lost. If, for example, a single one of the Westminster divines believed that all who die in infancy are elect and consequently saved, he never, so far as is known, avowed such belief. There were, no doubt, differences of opinion in the Assembly as to the precise terms and means of infant salvation; but I find no record of any difference of opinion as to its being limited.

Several causes, however, were already at work to modify and in the end revolutionize current doctrine on the subject. Among the most potent of these may be reckoned the growth of Baptist sentiments, the influence of Quakerism, and the Arminian controversy.

The Baptist movement in England during the second half of the seventeenth century was very determined and full of spiritual force. One of its popular leaders was a man of extraordinary genius, as well as piety; whose writings, scattered broadcast, found their way into thousands of Pedobaptist families, and must have contributed not a little to mitigate the bitter prejudice against “Anabaptists,” which had prevailed during the earlier part of the century. This movement was in effect an emphatic protest against the old theory of infant salvation as in any wise dependent upon baptism. What impression it made upon the theological opinion of the age may be seen in Bishop Jeremy Taylor’s famous “Discourse of the Liberty of Prophecy.”\* It is also seen very clearly in the following extract from

\* See Sect. XVIII., entitled, *A particular Consideration of the Opinions of the Anabaptists.*



Richard Baxter's "Animadversions on a Treatise of Baptismal Regeneration," by Thomas Bedford :

I conceive the doctrine as likely a means to make men Anabaptists, as most know, if it go unresisted. When men see wrong ends put upon baptism, and too much given to it, they are ready to suspect our doctrine concerning the right ends, and to give as much too little to it. It is hard resisting an Error ; without being driven into the contrary extreem, especially to vulgar spirits. And I speak not this upon an uncertain conjecture, but upon much sad experience. I have known too many of my special friends that have either turned Anabaptists, or been much staggered, by occasion of this doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration ; when they had discovered once the error of that, they presently began to suspect all the rest, thinking that we might as well mistake in the rest as in that. And indeed, I was once in doubt of Infant Baptism myself ; and the reading (and discovering the error) of Dr. *Burgess* and Mr. *Bedford's* Books of Baptismal Regeneration was one part of my temptation.\*

The influence of George Fox and his followers in loosening the bands of traditional belief respecting infant salvation, although more indirect and subtle than that of the Baptists, was yet by no means slight. It touched the very roots of the whole matter. Quakerism propounded a theory of the Gospel and of the operations of Divine grace utterly antagonistic to the old ecclesiastical formulas ; and there was much in the Christian heart of England that at once responded to this theory. Before the death of George Fox and John Bunyan thousands of good men, who had been trained up to regard water-baptism as, ordinarily at least, necessary for the eternal safety of those dying in infancy, were, doubtless, saying to themselves: "Does the New Testament really oblige us to hold a doctrine which leads straight to the conclusion that the children of all these godly Baptists and Friends, dying in infancy, are probably lost?"

The effect of the controversy between Arminianism and Calvinism in modifying opinion on the subject, early appeared. But it is best seen, perhaps, in the last century, when Arminian doctrine became embodied in the great Wesleyan revival and set out upon its career of world-wide evangelism. Much of the Anglican Arminianism of the seventeenth century, that, *e. g.*, of Laud and Jeremy Taylor, was extremely high-church and very unevangelical ; and it readily accepted the old baptismal dogma. Nor was the great Methodist

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\* *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants' Church-membership and Baptism.* 4th ed. London, 1656, p. 293.

Baxter, as is well known, was regarded with no little suspicion and dislike on account of his moderate, mediating position in reference to the theological and ecclesiastical questions of the day ; and infant baptism was one of them. Some of his writings were said to be "stuffed with gross Arminianism." A collection of the passages, in which such men as Richard Baxter and John Bunyan were called hard names, and denounced as unfaithful to Christ's truth, by some of the most eminent contemporary divines, would form a very suggestive little volume.

founder himself able at once to throw off the influence of this dogma ; but he seems to have done so in the end. It is certain that the genius of Methodism, unembarrassed by the doctrine of infant election, or the Augustinian theory about baptism and the church, has contributed effectively to the modern evangelical view respecting infant salvation.

Another cause that has wrought with power in the same direction, is the wonderful development of the Christian idea of man, of human brotherhood, and the solidarity of the race, which has marked the last hundred years beyond any period since the New Testament times.

All these causes—not to mention others—have tended, directly or indirectly, not only to undermine belief in the old dogma of infant salvation as connected with water-baptism, but also to introduce a wholly new way of looking at the subject ; I might almost say, a new religious consciousness in reference to it. The change from the position generally held by Calvinistic divines at the beginning, or in the middle, of the seventeenth century, to the ground taken by Dr. Charles Hodge in 1871, in his "Systematic Theology," is simply immense. It amounts to a sort of revolution in theological opinion ; a revolution all the more noteworthy from the quiet, decisive way in which it was at last accomplished, the general acquiescence in it, and also the apparent unconsciousness of its logical consequences. Without attempting to trace here all the different stages or indications of this change, I will refer to a few that are especially connected with Presbyterian and Congregational opinion on the subject. One of the most striking is found in Dr. Isaac Watts' treatise entitled, "The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind," first published in 1740. The work bears throughout the marks of Dr. Watts' acuteness, candor, and piety. The discussion is carried on in the form of question and answer. Question XVI. is this : "What will be the state and condition of that Part of Mankind who die in Infancy, under any of the dispensations of the Covenant of Grace?" The answer is deeply interesting and shows that Dr. Watts, in his quiet retreat at Theobalds, had pondered this part of the problem of human destiny with the sensibility of a most loving heart, and yet in the calm, fearless spirit of a Christian philosopher. Pressed by its difficulties, he sees no other solution than the annihilation of a large portion of those who die in infancy. Even in the case of the children of the righteous, he feels more or less perplexed, but, on the whole, believes they are saved.

It is therefore only the children of wicked parents concerning whom I suppose the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God will join to destroy them entirely by death, or to resume the forfeited life of soul and body. It seems evident to me, that though there

are some hints and reasonable hopes of the happy resurrection of the offspring of good men to be derived from Scripture, yet all other children in this world are also brought down to death for the sin of Adam by the word of God, and they are left in death. But neither reason or Scripture, so far as I can find, provides any happiness or unhappiness, any reward or punishment for them in the world to come; and how can we go further than reason or Scripture will lead us? And if I may frankly speak my own sentiments here, I would say, since neither reason nor Scripture certainly and plainly teach us anything concerning the souls of the infants of wicked men after death; and if I must not leave them in a state of non-existence, I would much rather choose to suppose them at the death of the body entered into a new and personal state of trial than I would condemn them to a wretched resurrection and eternal misery for nothing else, but because they were born of Adam, the original transgressor. This is only a comparative thought by the way. But to pursue and support my present scheme of their annihilation at death, I must answer two or three objections.\*

Having answered a number of objections, he sets forth the advantages of his "scheme." One is that it will vindicate the conduct of Divine Providence with regard to the millions of infant creatures in all the numerous nations of the earth, from the severe censures which have been cast upon it by men in accusing the doctrine of original sin. For if they suffer nothing but *temporal death*, as being fallen in Adam their head, all these terrors of pretended cruelty and severity will vanish, while it appears that eternal damnation belongs only to those who have been guilty of actual transgression in their own persons; for there is not one word, he adds, in all the Scriptures concerning eternal misery inflicted upon any person merely for the sin of Adam.

Toward the end of the third quarter of the last century Augustus Montague Toplady, author of "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," a man of genius and a vehement Calvinist, avowed strongly his belief in

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\* *The Works of Isaac Watts, D.D.* Vol. III. (Leeds' ed.), pp. 499-500. In the latter part of the century Dr. Watts' view respecting infant annihilation was adopted conditionally by Dr. Nathaniel Emmons, the sage of Franklin. His language is as follows:

"It appears from what has been said concerning native depravity, that if children die before they become moral agents, it is most rational to conclude that they are annihilated. . . . It is certainly supposable that children may exist in this world some space of time, before they become moral agents; but how long that space may be, whether an hour, a day, a month, or a year, or several years, as many suppose, we do not presume to determine. But during the space, whether longer or shorter, they are not moral agents, nor consequently accountable creatures in the sight of God or man. It is rational to conclude, therefore, that God will not treat them as accountable creatures, nor reward or punish them. Of course, we must conclude that they will be annihilated." Emmons' *Works*, Vol. IV., p. 510.

Dr. E. himself, however, believed that infants become *moral* agents—"men in miniature," to use his own words—as soon as they become *natural* agents. As to their salvation he seems doubtful. God, he says, "has not been pleased to inform us expressly whether He does renew the hearts of the whole, or a part, or none, of those little children who die soon after they become moral agents. . . . From all the light we can find in Scripture on this subject, it seems to be the most probable opinion that He renews only some of those who die soon after they become morally depraved and guilty." Vol. IV., pp. 510-11.

universal infant salvation. I give two passages from his writings relating to the subject : \*

No objection can hence arise [*i. e.*, because Christ died only for them that believe] against such as die in infancy (all of whom are undoubtedly saved) ; nor yet against the salvation of God's elect among the heathens, Mahomedans, and others. The Holy Ghost is able to inspire the grace of virtual faith into those hearts (especially at the moment of dissolution) which are incapable of exerting the explicit act of faith.—pp. 142-143.

You observe that with regard to infants, the rubrick declares it is certain by God's Word that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved. I firmly believe it. Nay ; I believe more. I am convinced that the souls of all departed infants whatever, whether baptized or unbaptized, are with God in glory. And I think my belief warranted by an authority which cannot err, Matt. xviii. 14.—pp. 645-646.

A little more than half a century later, in 1828, Dr. Lyman Beecher, then in the midst of his memorable career in Boston and of the sharp contest with Unitarianism, repudiated, with characteristic energy and boldness of speech, the doctrine of infant damnation. The controversy excited general interest, and Dr. Beecher's part in it contributed materially to establish the modern view.† And this brings us again to Dr. Hodge. His language is as follows :

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\* See Toplady's "*Complete Works*," in one volume, published in London, 1849. Toplady was a minister of the Established Church, but his matchless hymn, and also his staunch Calvinism, endeared his name to Presbyterians and Congregationalists throughout the English-speaking world.

† See *The Spirit of the Pilgrims*, Vol. I., pp. 42, 78, 162.

I have not space for a detailed notice of the growth of opinion on this subject in the American churches ; but the views of two Calvinistic divines, contemporaries of Dr. Beecher, and eminent for their theological learning and weight of character, deserve mention. The first is Dr. James P. Wilson, of Philadelphia. In his "*Essay on the Probation of Fallen Men*," published in 1827, he says :

"Since indisposition to holiness is a universal character of our nature, and infants inherit disease and death, the wages of sin ; there must exist some connection between us and our first parent, whereby we are justly introduced into the world in his image and lapsed state, without our choice. This doctrine is plainly asserted in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere ; nevertheless it does not follow that any dying in infancy are lost ; since their salvation by Christ is more than possible."—pp 15, 16.

The other is Dr. John H. Livingston, of the Dutch Reformed Church. In the "*Analysis of a System of Theology*," published in 1832, some years after his death, he says :

"It has frequently been objected against the system of divine truth as explained in this volume, that on the principles it advances the salvation of infants is not possible. In answer to this we observe : adults are not saved for their faith, and although faith is represented as that act by which the believer is united to his Saviour—and thereby a basis is constituted for the imputation of the Saviour's righteousness—yet this union and all the subsequent progress in sanctification are effected by the direct operation of the Spirit of God on the heart of the believer. The Spirit of God is therefore in the strictest and fullest sense the bond of union. Faith is the first act of the renewed soul assenting and responding to and manifesting the work of the Spirit. . . . We do not know that the Spirit of God cannot be the bond of uniting to the Saviour those who are not capable of exercising or manifesting that they exercise faith on Him. Infants

The common doctrine of Evangelical Protestants is that all who die in infancy are saved. This is inferred from what the Bible teaches of the analogy between Adam and Christ (Rom. v. 18, 19). We have no right to put any limit on these general terms except what the Bible itself places upon them. The Scriptures nowhere exclude any class of infants, baptized or unbaptized, born in Christian or in heathen lands, of believing or unbelieving parents, from the benefits of the redemption of Christ. . . . Not only, however, does the comparison which the apostle makes between Adam and Christ, lead to the conclusion that as all are condemned for the sins of the one, so all are saved by the righteousness of the other, those only excepted whom the Scriptures exempt; but the principle assumed throughout the whole discussion teaches the same doctrine. That principle is that it is more congenial with the nature of God to bless than to curse, to save than to destroy. If the race fell in Adam, much more shall it be restored in Christ. If death reigned by one, much more shall grace reign by one. This "much more" is repeated over and over. The Bible everywhere teaches that God delighteth not in the death of the wicked; that judgment is His strange work. It is, therefore, contrary to the whole spirit of the passage (Roman v. 12-21) to exclude infants from "the all" who are made alive in Christ.

The conduct and language of our Lord in reference to children are not to be regarded as matters of sentiment, or simply expressive of kindly feeling. He evidently looked upon them as the lambs of the flock for which, as the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life, and of whom He said they shall never perish, and no man could pluck them out of His hands. Of such, He tells us, is the kingdom of heaven, as though heaven was, in great measure, composed of the souls of redeemed infants. It is, therefore, the general belief of Protestants, contrary to the doctrine of Romanists and Romanizers, that all who die in infancy are saved.\*

This is certainly strong language, and if Dr. Hodge was justified in declaring it to express the common view of evangelical Protestants, the change of opinion on this subject must have been very rapid since the opening of the century. For at that time it cannot be denied, I think, that Dr. Hodge's doctrine, as he states it in the passages just quoted, would have met with decided opposition. And my own impression is that, had it been taught so unequivocally in the Presbyterian Church, even a third of a century ago, by a theologian less eminent than Dr. Hodge for orthodoxy, piety, and weight of character, it would have called forth an immediate protest from some of the more conservative, old-fashioned Calvinists. They

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certainly are (humanly speaking) as suitable subjects for the operations of divine grace as adults. *It is therefore evident that we have advanced no principles which render it impossible to believe in the salvation of infants. The feelings of our nature prompt us to hope on this subject more than we dare assert. God has imposed silence on our tongues.*" —pp. 328-9.

\* *Systematic Theology*, vol. i., pp. 26-7. Having repelled in a note (vol. iii., p. 605) the late Dr. Krauth's charge that the Westminster Confession teaches that only a certain part of those who die in infancy, are saved, Dr. Hodge adds: "We can only say that we never saw a Calvinistic theologian who held that doctrine."

To this Dr. Krauth replied by saying that he had seen "more than one Calvinistic theologian" who held that doctrine; reiterating his charge against the Westminster Confession, and then citing copiously from the opinions of leading Calvinistic divines of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries on Infant Baptism and Infant Salvation. His citations seem to leave no room for doubt that the most of them believed in a limited election of those dying in infancy.

would have been afraid of it on account of its theological consequences. We have an illustration of this state of mind in the hostility which the doctrine met with in Scotland in the earlier half of this century. The introductory essay to an excellent little book for bereaved parents, edited by William Logan and published in 1861, contains some striking statements on the subject.\*

\* *Words of Comfort for Parents Bereaved of Little Children.* London: James Nisbet & Co.

The essay was written by the Rev. William Anderson, LL.D., of Glasgow. I will quote from it somewhat freely, because it draws so vivid a picture of the doubt and misgiving with which thousands of good men, trained up in the old belief, not in Scotland only, but in England, Germany, and our own country, regarded the open avowal of belief in universal infant salvation; and because it recognizes so distinctly the fact that their opposition indicated no special lack of Christian tenderness and charity, but grew out of what loyalty to revealed truth, as they understood it, seemed to them to require. In the course of his essay Dr. Anderson refers to the Limbo, where, according to the doctrine of Rome, unbaptized infants suffer the loss of heaven, and then goes on to depict a poor widowed mother whose child had died at birth, resorting to a priest, and saying to him:

"My neighbor expends all she can save on the Masses for her profligate son, in the hope of delivering him from Purgatory and raising him to heavenly blessedness. May not I do the same for delivering my infant who never did any sin, from the Limbo in which he is imprisoned, so that we three shall be a happy family in the kingdom of God? Tell me, priest."

Getting no relief from him, she goes away to see if she can find her unbaptized child among the Protestants. Here are some passages that follow:

"It was well for the fore-described mother that it was recently she came forth from Popedom on her pilgrimage in quest of her infant among Protestants. I speak especially of the Protestants of Scotland. Even so lately as sixty years ago [1800], unless she had chanced to enter at some singular corner, she would have found it better for her heart to return to Rome, and quiet her anxieties as best she could with the reflection that the Popish Limbo was not so woeful as the Protestant hell. Our Protestantism, commencing with the Sovereign decree of election, equitably assigned to those who died in infancy their proportional share of the *mercy*, but not less equitably their proportional share of the *judgment*—the judgment of reprobation or preterition; so that calculating the infant's share by that of the adult's, as manifested in faith and a holy life, there was left a vast multitude who perished eternally. Parental affection early demanded, and easily attained, the modification, that the whole of such children of *pious parents* as died in infancy should be included in the decree of salvation. With this the heart of Scotch Protestantism for a long time remained satisfied. With the exception of those born of pious parents, and the proportion saved by the general decree; all the rest, in millions upon millions, were doomed to everlasting woe. For two centuries and a half after the Reformation this was the prevailing dogma, and when fifty years ago [1810] Common-Sense, warming into life out of the dreadful torpidity, began to vindicate the character of God, the rights of Christ, and the feelings of humanity, it was with hesitancy and bated breath, and amid suspicions of their soundness in the faith, that a few voices were heard suggesting the *possibility* that all who die in infancy are saved.

"The question was agitated in this form for a considerable time, and Common-Sense gained ground. About forty years ago [1820], when he who sketches this review entered on the public ministration of the Gospel, there were found a few lifting up their voices in protest and advocacy, that it was not only *possible* but *probable* that all who died in infancy, having been guilty of no actual sin—no rejection of Him who was appointed the world's Redeemer, were saved.

If on this side of the Atlantic the doctrine of the salvation of all, who die in infancy, earlier and with less of a struggle, "enjoyed a very wide proclamation throughout our land," it was largely due to the theological courage, great-heartedness, and commanding influence of those two eminent servants of Christ, Lyman Beecher and Charles Hodge.

Before passing from this part of the subject it will not be out of place to say a word on the temper of mind in which we ought to judge the men of former times, whose opinions about infant salvation seem to us so alien from the true design and spirit of the Gospel. Nothing is easier than to judge them wrongfully. It is not to be presumed that we are really better or more tender-hearted than they were; nor is it at all unlikely that if we had lived in their day, and been educated as they were, we should have equalled, if not surpassed, them in the harshness and inhumanity of our opinions. Some of them were among the best and holiest men of their genera-

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"I must now speak in the first person. As having been from the beginning (*ab ovo*, as they say) of anti-slavery tendencies, I 'cast in my lot' with the pleaders for *probability*, to share the odium of being suspected—suspected! *denounced*, as being *unsound*, and licentiously squandering the salvation of Christ. But Common-Sense was with us and we prospered. Nay; that is not the accurate account. It protested against our pottering limitations. Mere *probability* of all being saved implied, it said, the *possibility* of some or many of infant spirits, who have neither done, nor spoken, nor thought an evil thing, being consigned to the fires of hell. Civilization, not to speak of piety, will not endure it. You must progress, reverend sirs. So we of the anti-slavery school ascended the platform to proclaim the *certainty* of the salvation of all dying in infancy—when the pro-slavery Conservatism of Dogma was now in its turn reduced to a feeble protestation that we were wise above what is written—as if it were not written that God is just, which He would not be were He to consign to hell fire any infant spirit. All Common-Sense says Amen. You need not try by sophistication to reduce the judgment. . . . Simply, it is most dreadful to think with what thoughts of God the mind of Scotland was impregnated, and *that* not long since.

"Not long since! There remain at this moment not a few of the old Conservative party, who hold by the antique doctrine of the *possible* damnation, at least of an incalculable multitude of infant spirits. *I know some of them*, and they are every whit as kind-hearted as myself. It is dogma which, like a Cerberus, stands in their way, preventing their entertainment of the blessed hope, that Christ's reward, otherwise so meagre, shall be magnified by His receiving into His kingdom every human soul which was rescued in infancy from the corrupting influences of this world. But even this dogmatic difficulty is in process of being overcome. One, confessed by all to be the most acute and eloquent of living pleaders for the theory of a limited Atonement, has recently published a treatise in which he declares his conviction that the stroke of death is never appointed to fall on any infant who was not included in the Elective decree. The principle will be eagerly laid hold of, I am persuaded, by many besides the brethren of that eminent divine and preacher; so that we shall soon enjoy a very wide proclamation throughout our land, made without hesitancy or any disheartening potterings with mere possibilities or probabilities, that all children dying in infancy are saved; so that the dark imagination of any one of them being doomed to everlasting woe shall be excluded from our theology and pulpits; no more to torment the minds of the people with its horrors."—pp. xx.-xxiv.

tion; and nothing, we may rest assured, but fidelity to what they sincerely believed to be the imperative claims of truth led them to such terrible conclusions. Augustine was a great theologian and a saint in spite of his hard doctrine respecting the fate of children dying without the grace of baptism. Dr. Watts was one of the gentlest, purest, and most useful servants of Christ in the last century; his name is dear to the Church of God, and especially dear to pious mothers, because of his sweet hymns for children; and yet he broached the fearful theory of infant annihilation. The lesson taught us by such strange facts in the history of religious belief is not self-complacency, but charity and self-distrust. Very likely some of our own opinions, which we identify with Revealed truth, will be justly regarded a hundred years hence as wholly contrary alike to reason and Scripture.

Assuming, then, for the present, that the salvation of all who die in infancy is the common doctrine of evangelical Protestants, I proceed to consider some of its theological bearings.

## II.

### THEOLOGICAL BEARINGS OF THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL INFANT SALVATION.

(a) *Its bearing upon doctrine respecting original sin and the subjective conditions of pardon and eternal life.*

Original sin, according to the doctrine as embodied in the Westminster symbols, involves the guilt of Adam's first transgression, a total corruption of nature, the wrath of God, and eternal death; actual sin differing from it not in essence, but only as the branch from its root, or the effect from its proper cause. Potentially the one pre-exists in the other. Infants, therefore, although not actual transgressors of the Divine law, are yet exposed to its penalty in such sense as that they need to be renewed and justified in order to be saved. Augustine taught, and the Latin church followed him in teaching, that this renewing and justifying grace comes to them through baptism. Such, too, as we have seen, was the general belief of the early Protestantism. In a very mild and cautious way the Westminster divines held the same position. The doctrine, that all who die in infancy are saved, abandons this theory, and puts in its place the simple good-will and sovereign mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Dying infants are saved—not because of their innocence of actual sin; not because of the faith of their parents, or of a special divine covenant



with their parents; not because of their baptism, but—solely because God gave His only begotten Son for their redemption. They are saved through Christ, in Christ, and for His sake alone. This does not contravene the teaching of Scripture respecting the privileges of Christian birth; it only shows that far deeper and wider than even these gracious privileges is the saving pity and love of the Father Almighty. And few things in the whole compass of thought seem to me so impressive as this homage of the Gospel to infant personality, whether as participating in the spiritual ruin of the race, or in its capacity to be renewed and to inherit eternal life through Christ.

I have referred to the bearing of infant salvation upon the doctrine of original sin as taught in Calvinistic symbols. But, practically, there is here no essential difference between Calvinism and evangelical Arminianism. The vital point is not in any particular theory, or statement, of the connection between Adam and his posterity in the matter of sin; the vital point lies in a simple recognition of the fact that infants belong to a fallen race and need a Redeemer in order to inherit eternal life. This is implied in the very expression, infant *salvation*; and in this Richard Watson is as emphatic as Dr. Hodge. Both agree in teaching that in consequence of that great spiritual catastrophe called the fall, human nature in its very roots became so alienated from the life of God, and so infected with evil, that only by renewing grace can even the babes and sucklings of the race be made meet for the kingdom of heaven.\* This involves no

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\* The evangelical Arminianism, represented by such theologians as Richard Watson, cannot be too carefully discriminated from the Pelagian type of Arminianism with which the writings of that great master of sacred eloquence and theological erudition in the 17th century, Bishop Jeremy Taylor, are so deeply charged, and which was represented in the early half of the last century by Dr. John Taylor, of Norwich, whose ablest opponents were John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards.

The evangelical Arminianism of Methodism has very close and vital affinities with the Puritan evangelical type of Calvinism; and it is for the interest of the Christian cause to emphasize this fact. So, at least, thought one of the ablest and most sagacious Calvinistic theologians our country has produced. I refer to the late Henry Boynton Smith. In a letter, written in January, 1871, and addressed to a distinguished Methodist clergyman, he says:

“What is it that keeps Methodists and Presbyterians apart? Is it anything *essential*—to the Church, or even to its *well-being*? For one, I do *not* think that it is. Your so-called ‘Arminianism,’ being of *grace*, and not of *nature*, is in harmony with our symbols. It is a wide outlook, which looks to an *ecclesiastical* union of Methodists and Presbyterians; but I am convinced that it is vital for both, and for Protestantism and for Christianity *vs.* Romanism in this country; and that it is desirable *per se*.

“I am also persuaded that our differences are merely intellectual (metaphysical), and not moral or spiritual; in short, formal and not material. As to *polity*, too, so far as the Scriptures go, there is no essential difference between us. Your ‘bishops’ I do not object to, but rather like; and our ‘elders’ I think you would like, on due acquaintance. As to Christian work, where you are strong we are weak; but your local preachers and class-leaders, are they really anything more than our ‘elders’—lay elders—under another name?

denial of their artless innocency and loveliness, and of their latent spiritual capabilities as the offspring of God ; it is simply a recognition of the fact that in their yet unconscious, infantile being there is latent also an evil principle so radical, so potential, and so contrary to all good, that nothing but the new-creating power of infinite Love can conquer and destroy it. The fact is, indeed, a dark mystery that passeth understanding ; but, for all that, it is none the less a fact, attested by the universal conscience and experience of the race, as well as by the plain teaching of Scripture.

Infant salvation has an important bearing also upon doctrine respecting the subjective conditions of being saved. In the case of adults, to whom Christ has been made known, these conditions are repentance, and faith, and obedience. But the salvation of infants would seem to prove that such conditions are not always necessary. Neither singly, or united, are faith, repentance, and obedience the meritorious ground of any man's salvation. The doctrine of justification by faith is, indeed, most precious ; by it the Church of God stands. But this is not because there is any saving virtue in our faith ; in itself faith is no better than love or hope ; what clothes faith with such wondrous power is, that by it we lay hold of and appropriate Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. But infants cannot so embrace Christ ; and, therefore, taking them up in His everlasting arms and laying His once-pierced hands upon them, He, by the Spirit, impregnates their unconscious souls with the virtues of His death and unites them to Himself, without condition. And this shows, as perhaps nothing else could show, that our salvation is all and altogether of grace—a sweet pure gift of Divine Love.

(b) *The bearing of Infant Salvation upon the doctrine of man's spiritual nature and immortality.*

For myself I never tried to speak a word in season to a young mother weeping over the lifeless form of her child, without feeling that the death of infants subjects the truth, as well as the consoling power, of the Gospel to the sharpest possible test. It requires no little faith to look into the face of a new-born babe and say :

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" We have got to face in this country the *organized* power of Romanism, as well as the now unorganized power of Rationalism. In my judgment, the co-operation, if not union, of the Methodists and Presbyterians, especially in the Middle and Western States, is essential."

This letter is a testimony to the catholic and statesmanlike spirit in which Dr. Smith considered all questions bearing upon the progress of the kingdom of Christ. He had spent the previous year abroad—it was the year of the Vatican Council—and had returned home profoundly impressed with the perils that threatened evangelical Protestantism from the side both of Romanism and Rationalism.

Sweet baby, little as thou art,  
 Thou art a human whole ;  
 Thou hast a little human heart,  
 Thou hast a deathless soul.\*

But to stand by the bier of this same sweet babe and feel sure that it is still "a human whole," and, unharmed by the stroke of death, lives on, and will live on forever, in the kingdom of heaven, requires faith of a supernatural quality. No such faith ever existed beyond the light of revelation ; I doubt if such faith often exists, even amidst the light of revelation, outside of souls specially illumined and uplifted by the Spirit of God. Its vital conditions are wanting. What true light or comfort, what immortal hope, can the wisdom of this world, in its noblest exercise, extract from an infant's grave? †

To the materialistic science and thought of our age, especially, the doctrine of infant salvation, if less offensive, is not at all less incredible than would be the old dogma of infant damnation. But nobody can deny that it is infinitely precious to bereaved parents and appeals with resistless force to some of the deepest and most sacred instincts of humanity. Nor can anybody deny that it is a doctrine in harmony with the very genius of Christianity. So long as we believe that the Eternal Word, in becoming flesh, passed through the virgin's womb and the straits of unconscious infancy, we must also believe that in the infant of a day—yea, in the child yet unborn, there is the "potency and promise" of complete spiritual manhood. The Incarnation itself is the divine witness and embodiment, as it is also the impregnable rampart, of this amazing verity. The infant of a day is yet an immortal person ; that is the Christian doctrine. And among all the new truths that came into the world with the Babe of Bethlehem

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\* Hartley Coleridge.

† The more deeply we reflect upon the subject, the more, I think, shall we be led to seek the tap-root and ultimate ground of the immortality of infants in their vital relation to the creative and upholding Logos. *All things were created by Him, and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him (ἐν αὐτῷ) all things consist.* This would help us the better to understand their vital union to Christ as the redemptive Logos ; for that is the condition and essential form of their salvation. It is my belief that in the great doctrine of the Incarnation, especially in its bearing upon the whole domain of childhood, both before and after birth, whether living or dying, there are still hidden priceless treasures of wisdom and knowledge. To learn how to solve the puzzling questions connected with infant destiny, we must gaze long and steadily upon the Babe in the manger, and then, like the wise men from the East, when they saw the young child with Mary His mother, fall down and worship Him. Neither Christian life or Christian thought can dispense with the story of the Holy Child Jesus, any more than they can dispense with the story of the Crucified or Risen Jesus. Each is essential to the integrity and saving power of His blessed Gospel. "By the mystery of Thy holy Incarnation ; by Thy holy Nativity and Circumcision ; *Good Lord, deliver us,*" is fitly placed among the petitions of the old Litany.

few have wrought with greater or more benignant power than this. It was by asserting the doctrine of infant personality that the early Church branded as crime and sin against God abortion, the exposure of new-born babes, and other horrible practices of the pagan world. It is by asserting the same doctrine that the herald of the cross, in our day, brands as crime and sin against God similar cruelties and abominations of modern heathenism. And if the conscience of professedly Christian society is ever aroused to the murderous guilt of tampering with human life in its origin and birth, it must be in the light of the same truth.

*(c) Bearing of universal Infant Salvation upon doctrine respecting the visible church and the means of grace.*

The old orthodox view taught that God's saving grace moves and operates through certain prescribed channels and institutions, among the most important of which are the church, the sacraments, the written and preached Word, the Sabbath, worship, and religious nurture. The Shorter Catechism, in its answer to the 88th question, expresses substantially the sense of all the earlier Protestant symbols:

The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are His ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

See also the Confession of Faith, Chap. XXVI., Sect. 2:

The visible church . . . consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, *out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.*

But if all those dying in infancy are saved, then a large portion of the human race become partakers of the benefits of Christ's redemption quite independently of His ordinances; they are saved without the church, without the sacraments, without the written or preached word; without any outward means whatever, except simply their birth and death in a redeemed world. This is the negative side of the doctrine. Its positive side is the presence and activity of Divine grace—that is, of the whole saving power of the Gospel—not merely outside {the pale of faith in Christian lands, but throughout the darkest regions of heathendom. Not in Europe and America only, but in Asia and Africa and the Islands of the sea, myriads of infant souls are every year passing through the gates of death into life eternal. It is hard to adjust our ordinary religious formulas and beliefs to such a statement; still harder to grasp its full significance and its logical

consequences. And hence, as I have said, the doctrine of universal infant salvation seems to me to be essentially a revolution in theological opinion. One may, indeed, assert the doctrine and there let it rest, without attempting to adjust to it old beliefs. But a thoughtful mind, searching for truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, will not easily be content to take this course. The intense earnestness with which the question of infant salvation was discussed in the time of Augustine, and by some of the ablest divines of later times, indicates its vital connection with the general doctrines of grace. It does not strike me, therefore, as likely that the new view will become firmly established and receive the stamp of orthodoxy, without exciting, sooner or later, a great deal of discussion as to its ultimate grounds and consequences.

And this suggests still another aspect of our subject :

(d) *Bearing of Infant Salvation upon the conception of this life as a probation, and upon doctrine respecting the life beyond the grave.*

Here we come to one of the most interesting and momentous problems of religious thought. I will indicate a few points that appear to me specially worthy of note. The conception of our present existence as a probation is not less familiar, or less generally accepted, than that of the next life as a state of retribution. Is there any reason for doubting the correctness, or at least the adequacy, of this view? So far as I have been able to trace it, the term "probation" came first into common use in the latter part of the 17th or early part of the 18th century; I mean, in its strictly technical, theological sense, as the moral equivalent of this life. I do not find it in Hooker, or in the Puritan divines, or in Jeremy Taylor, nor in the Confession and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly; neither do I find it, to my surprise, in Barrow or South. It is not to be found even in Crabb's "Synonymes." My impression is that it grew in part out of the great Deistic and Arminian controversies, and partly, perhaps, out of the special devotion to natural theology which marked the last century. One of the first instances of its use which I have found, occurs in Dr. Daniel Whitby's noted book on the "Five Points," published in 1710. In the 4th Part of that able work he discusses "The Liberty or Freedom of the will of Man in a state of Trial or *Probation*." A little more than a quarter of a century later appeared Bishop Butler's "Analogy," in which the term often recurs. Butler employs it as a key to the moral government of God in this world. The 4th and 5th chapters of Part I. are devoted to an exposition of what is involved in "a state of probation"; and they are two of the most suggestive chapters of his

great work. The influence of Bishop Butler has impressed itself upon the whole subsequent course of English thought in the department of Natural Religion. To him, then, more than to any other man, we are, probably, indebted for the peculiar meaning and general use of the term "probation," as expressing the distinctive character of this life. And here, if I may digress for a moment, the question arises, Why the conception of this life as a probation is not more emphasized in the Presbyterian standards? I say "the Presbyterian standards"; but, I might say, in the standards and also in the theology of the Reformed churches.

Two answers may be given to the question—1. The conception of this life as a probation belongs to natural rather than Revealed religion. Bishop Butler, as I have said, treats of it as belonging to natural religion. The main object of Revealed religion is not to show that we are on trial for eternity, but to acquaint us with a Saviour, and enable us to embrace Him unto everlasting life. It assumes that we are lost already. It teaches that our race had its one great probation at the beginning and failed utterly; and that now its only hope is in the redemption through Christ. *By the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified.*

2. But again, the conception of this life as a probation is, perhaps, not more emphasized in our Presbyterian standards, because their ruling, overmastering idea is that of God's free, sovereign, electing grace in Christ. *According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love!* This idea, in one form or another, dominates and shapes the whole Calvinistic system; and while I do not here say that it is inconsistent or irreconcilable with the conception of this life as a probation, it is certainly far removed from such a conception; the two views belong, as it seems to me, to quite different spheres or planes of religious thought. And had Bishop Butler been an evangelical Calvinist in his theology, I doubt if his two chapters on "A State of Probation" would have been what they are. By this I mean that on the Calvinistic theory of man as a fallen being, the main question relates to his salvation, not to his probation; he is *condemned already, dead in trespasses and sins*; and no course of conduct on his part, without the special intervention of Divine grace, can secure for him everlasting life. There is in him no proper germ of that life; nor can he initiate it by a mere act of his own will. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. We love Him because He first loved us.*

The probationary conception of this life, at all events, is wholly inapplicable to that large portion of the human race who die in infancy. They are confessedly incapable of a probation in any proper sense of that term. We cannot think of them as here passing through a moral trial, on the result of which depends their weal or woe in the next world. They do neither good or evil here, nor will they be rewarded or punished there. But a religious theory of this life, which fails to meet the case of so large a portion of the human race, must needs be, to say the least, a partial, inadequate theory.

If we compare this conception of the present existence with that based upon God's redeeming love and mercy in Jesus Christ, the contrast is very striking. Take the most 'high-toned' Calvinistic theory of the Gospel: whatever else may be said of it—however stern and forbidding it may appear in some of its aspects—nobody can well deny that it meets the case of dying infants, without difficulty or inconsistency. It can say: "They are *saved*; saved, not by works of righteousness which they ever did—not as a fair reward of their virtuous conduct—not as the result of a probation—but simply by the new-creating power of the Holy Ghost, out of God's infinite love and mercy in Jesus Christ." And this is, in truth, just what it does say. On no other ground could a Calvinistic theologian, so thorough and conservative as Dr. Hodge, have affirmed his belief in the universal salvation of those who die in infancy.

'But if this life is not in some true and important sense a probation, how will you explain the immense stress which the Bible lays upon conduct, or what it says about the trial of faith, a day of judgment, and the retributions of eternity?'

A complete answer to this question would lead too far away from my present design. But I will venture to suggest a brief answer. This life, then, in the case of the righteous, is a training-school, in which they are educated for eternity; a spiritual discipline, by which they are purified and rendered meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; a divine service, in which they are to glorify their Father in heaven and bless the world by their good works. And here, no doubt, probation comes in, but comes in—not as the ruling principle, but as one element in the process. It is a trial for gaining the quickest, most complete victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; for growing as fast as possible into the image of the Master; for learning in the best manner to do and suffer the holy will of God; for abounding to the utmost in all the fruits of righteousness. To the good man, this life, I repeat, is a holy discipline, a spiritual service, and a training-school for immortality. The lessons in this

divine school are often very hard to learn; the service is not easy to flesh and blood; the discipline is frequently severe and tedious—for *whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth*. But all this can scarcely be called a probation. The prime mover and also the finisher of the process is Divine grace, and not the human will. Strictly speaking, there is no real uncertainty as to the final issue. *My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands*. Adam stood or fell, according to his free choice; the result was self-determined; it all depended upon his own will. But those who are vitally united to Christ in the new birth, come under a different order; while they also are free to choose and do choose, yet that is not the ground of certainty that they will never be cut off from Him, and so finally perish. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints rests ultimately upon God's love and immutable purpose in Christ, not upon their own choice. *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*. In this whole sphere of Christian thought we find ourselves in contact primarily with the spiritual and personal rather than the ethical. The aboriginal and last ground of any man's salvation, according to the Scriptures, is not that he has been under moral government and has proved faithful to its requirements, but that the Father Almighty, out of His infinite love and compassion, chose, called, and redeemed him. The ethical element comes in, just as it comes into the daily Christian life, but as subordinate to the spiritual and personal.

And here again we see how much more full of light and comfort in reference to the death of infants is this view than that based upon a 'probation' theory. Regarded from the mere ethical stand-point, it is hard to dispose of the souls of those dying in infancy; hard to see in what way God, conceived of solely as a moral governor, can dispose of them. Infants belong to a fallen race, and therefore need to be saved; but in accordance with the principles or by the agencies of simple moral government how, without any development or trial of character, without ever knowing good or evil, are they going to be saved? It is easy enough to see how they can be saved by God's fatherly love, pity, and new-creating grace in Jesus Christ; but how they can be saved in any other way, without violating, logically or theologically at least, some principle of a system of pure moral law and order, it is difficult to imagine.

The conception of this life as a probation has, perhaps, never been unfolded with more acuteness and force than by Bishop Butler in the



chapters of "The Analogy," already referred to. But in vain do we look through these chapters for a solitary ray of light on the fate of those dying in infancy. One of his chief arguments from analogy in favor of a future state of rewards and punishments is drawn from the case of childhood and youth as a preparation for manhood. He says:

Take in God's moral government over the world, and consequently that the character of virtue and piety is a necessary qualification for the future state; and then we may distinctly see how and in what respects the present life may be a preparation for it; since we want, and are capable of, improvement in that character, by moral and religious habits; and the present life is fit to be a state of discipline for such improvement; in like manner as we have already observed, how, and in what respects, infancy, childhood, and youth are a necessary preparation and a natural state of discipline for mature age. And who knows (he says later) whether the security of creatures in the highest and most settled state of perfection may not in part arise from their having had such a sense of things as this [that is, the frailty of our nature; of the boundless extravagance of ungoverned passion; of the power which an infinite Being has over us, etc., etc.] formed, and habitually fixed within them, in some state of probation.\*

On the ground of either of these views of the essential character of this life in relation to the next, what shadow of chance or hope is there in God's moral government of the world for dying infants? Look for a moment at the argument: infancy, childhood, and youth are a *necessary* discipline for mature age—that is, for the virtues, enjoyment, and duties of mature age; so the present life, by the discipline of its trials, experiences, virtuous actions, etc., is "a *necessary* preparation" for the eternal state.

But suppose infancy, earliest infancy, is *never followed* by childhood and youth; that so far as mature age is concerned, it is a pure waste and blank: what is then the force of the analogy? Why, that those who die in infancy, before and without any probation, are mere withered germs of humanity; an early grave robs them of all chance for the next life; renders utterly unattainable "a necessary qualification for the future state"; in a word, puts them in reference to the next life just where an early grave puts one in reference to mature age in this life. I confess I should not like to read these chapters of Bishop Butler in the hearing of a mother just bereft of her child. What they say about the discipline of life might impress her with the possible good effect of affliction upon her own character; but as to the eternal future of her child they contain not only no word of cheer, but are full of despairing suggestion. Nor do I see how it is possible, on any merely ethical view of human life and destiny, to speak

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\* Part I., Chap. V.—*Of a State of Probation, as intended for Moral Discipline and Improvement.*

words of real comfort and hope to a sorrow-stricken mother. Compare with such a theory the simple teaching of the New Testament: *Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven*; and we see the vast difference between logic and faith; between a mere moral system, on the one hand, and, on the other, the personal assurance and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ! For myself I believe that one of the best and surest rules for testing the evangelical character of any theory of this life in relation to the next—whether an ethical or theological theory—is its power to meet the case of that large portion of the human race who die in childhood.

So far, then, as those dying in infancy—and I may add all other classes of irresponsible human beings—are concerned, this life, I repeat, is certainly no probation. So far, too, as the true followers of Christ are concerned, this life cannot be said to be a probation in the full, strict sense of that term. But what is it in the case of those who are at once responsible and out of Christ?

This question hardly falls within the scope of our discussion; but, to avoid misapprehension, I will say a word in reply to it. To the natural, unregenerate man, then, this life is a grand spiritual opportunity—a dispensation of Divine love and mercy—for the wilful neglect or loss of which he must reap the consequences in the next world. We may, indeed, call this opportunity a probation; but does it not lack some of the vital elements of a real, complete probation? *That* would seem to involve a certain freedom, an autonomy of will, scarcely consistent with the spiritual bondage and alienation from God, which is a distinctive mark of our natural state. So long as a man is unconverted and out of Christ, what is the moral trial he is undergoing? Is it a trial that can issue in eternal life in virtue of any power of his own, unaided by special grace? Is he not, as was said before, "*condemned already*," "*lost*" beyond all hope, except through the intervention of the infinite mercy of God in Jesus Christ? Unless he seize his spiritual opportunity and, renouncing all other ground of confidence, humbly accept the salvation freely offered in the Gospel, what would a thousand years of such probation as belongs to his natural state avail him?

Now just here, as it seems to me, is the knot to be untied. Some endeavor to untie it by ascribing to the natural man such freedom of will and power of attaining to true virtue, as may enable him of himself to secure the rewards of eternity. The evangelical view maintains that the natural man, while endowed with reason and conscience and strictly responsible for his own character, is yet utterly unable of

himself to secure eternal life; that he needs, therefore, first of all, to be saved, not proved; and that he can be saved only by God's free grace in Christ.

In his work on the "Five Points," to which I have before alluded, Dr. Whitby discusses the whole subject from the Arminian stand-point of his day, and aims to show that the Calvinistic doctrines respecting Predestination, the Extent of the Atonement, Grace, Freedom of the Will, and final Perseverance, are irreconcilable with the conception of this life as a probation. His arguments are very acute and plausible; and if his understanding of the Calvinistic doctrines were correct, would, perhaps, be conclusive.

The subject is, unquestionably, beset with formidable difficulties on any theory; especially as it bears upon the great majority of the human race, living and dying beyond the Christian pale. Around it gather some of the darkest mysteries of the Providential system. But for all that, the Calvinistic theory, interpreted in an evangelical spirit, comes nearer, I hold, than any other to untying the terrible knot. It may *look* very harsh, and even cruel, yet not be so at heart. Not long before his death, Coleridge, referring to the "Pilgrim's Progress," said: "I could not have believed beforehand that Calvinism could be painted in such exquisitely delightful colors." And commenting on Bishop Jeremy Taylor's "UNUM NECESSARIUM; or, The Doctrine and Practice of Repentance," he speaks of it as confirming his "opinion that Calvinism (Archbishop Leighton's, for example), compared with Taylor's Arminianism, is as the lamb in the wolf's skin to the wolf in the lamb's skin: the one is cruel in the phrases, the other in the doctrine." \*

However this may be, we may feel quite certain that the system of theology which shall successfully bear the brunt of the atheistic thought and science of our time, and also prove best fitted to meet its intellectual and spiritual wants, will be the one that rests most firmly upon the creative will and eternal purpose of God, the Father Almighty, while it embodies most fully the divine ideas of grace and truth, revealed in Christ and realized in the everlasting Gospel.

In answer, then, to the question, 'Is this life a probation?' I reply both yes and no. Yes; probation enters into it, on its ethical side, as a subordinate element; there is in this life more or less of moral trial. No; probation is not its most essential, universal character, and fails utterly to meet some of the principal facts in the case. Redemption, not probation; no mere ethical system nor any doctrine

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\* *Literary Remains*, Vol. III., pp. 303-4.

of natural religion, but Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, is the real key both to the meaning and the perplexing mysteries of this life.

This digression has carried me further than I intended, and yet it will help, I trust, to a better understanding of our subject. Much of the difficulty connected with the recent discussion of a "second probation" appears to me to grow out of a wrong use of this word. A future, or second probation, in the case of those who die in infancy, at least, is a misnomer; and whether viewed from the theological stand-point, or from that of Christian feeling, seems open to the strongest objections. Is there not something inexpressibly painful in the thought that little children, on passing from the prayers and loving arms of saintly mothers through the gate of death, go—not to a state of endless safety in the bosom of their Redeemer, but—to the dread alternative of being saved, or lost forever, by an exercise of their own infantile choice? For if the fact that they have no trial here, requires that they should have one there, then all who die in infancy must endure such trial: whether they go from the sanctities of a Christian home, or from the savage wilds of heathenism.

And then, if we look at the subject theologically, nothing, surely, could be more antagonistic to what may be called the Calvinistic idea. Whether only a portion of those who die in infancy are elect, as the framers of the Westminster and other Reformed symbols held, or all who die in infancy are elect, as Dr. Hodge held, in either case their salvation must be supposed to be certain; and it would seem a very strange way to render their election sure by conditioning it upon an act of their own choice in the next world.

But while a future 'probation,' in the case of those dying in infancy, seems to me to be founded neither in reason or Scripture, it cannot be denied that the doctrine of universal infant salvation involves some very difficult, as well as very interesting, questions in eschatology. The thoughtful Christian mind, musing reverently on things to come and following eagerly every clew furnished by Revelation to the mysterious existence beyond the grave, will be satisfied with nothing short of the utmost attainable knowledge and understanding of the subject. Few will be bold enough to assert that this limit has already been reached. Much of the traditional eschatology was formulated more than a thousand years ago, and grew out of conditions of religious life and thought very different from those of the modern Christian world. Some of its articles were shaped largely by the anthropology and natural science and mental philosophy of the times. Its method of Biblical study and interpretation, as well as its conception

of the universe, varied a good deal from our own. It is not, therefore, desirable, even if it were possible, that our thoughts about the unseen world and its vast realities should all square exactly with the definitions or move strictly in the grooves of the ancient systems of theology; provided only they square with the revelations and move within the sphere of the Word of God. How different is the modern evangelical view of infant salvation from that of the old church eschatology! And if we heartily adopt it, we cannot help trying to adjust it, as far as possible, to the other parts of our belief. The modern view agrees with the ancient view in ascribing the salvation of infants solely to renewing grace. But the question, when and how this grace operates, acquires a special interest and significance, the moment we assert that all who die in infancy, the world over, whether born of Christian or of heathen parents, are its subjects.

Is this grace imparted before death, in the very article of death, or immediately after death? In either case how is the new, sinless life, which is freely given them in Christ, developed unto the measure of the stature of His fulness? for we surely cannot dream that they will remain always in the blank ignorance and helplessness of their earthly condition. What is the intermediate state—that unseen spiritual economy—in which, from being unconscious infants of an hour or a day, for example, they grow up into full-orbed Christian manhood? Do they become like “the spirits of just men made perfect” by pure miracle, by a single stroke of Omnipotence? or do they go into eternity, as to a great training-school—elect charity scholars, so to say, of the omnipresent Divine Master, who having purchased them here by His own blood, educates them there in the life everlasting? And what is their peculiar relation to the other and elder members of His mystical body in its triumphant, glorified state? \* These may

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\* The imagination of Christian poets, touched by grief, or inspired by hope, has often striven to picture the state of redeemed children in the other life; sometimes with exquisite tenderness and beauty. Here, for example, are some lines from a hymn on “The Death of Boys,” by Ephraim, the Syrian, translated by my friend, Mr. George H. Gilbert, of Dorset, Vt.:

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 life 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 nurslings of the Holy Ghost.*

serve as samples of questions in eschatology, naturally suggested by the doctrine of universal infant salvation. The number of redeemed children, according to this doctrine, is countless; it embraces more than a third of the whole human race from the beginning until now. And how can any one believe in a doctrine so vitally affecting the eternal destiny of mankind, full of such weighty instruction concerning the scope and power of the Gospel, and so unspeakably consoling, without pondering, over and over again, its pregnant lessons? Luther once said: "I have often need, in my tribulations, to talk even with a child, in order to expel such thoughts as the devil possesses me with. I need one at times to help me, who, in his whole body, has not so much divinity as I have in one finger." I cannot help feeling that if, when sorely pressed by the awful problems of human sinfulness and eternal punishment, we would oftener turn to the Gospel of the little children and meditate upon what it teaches about their relation to Christ and His vital relation to them, both here and *within the veil*, we should be refreshed in spirit and many a dismal, many a tempting thought be expelled. Perhaps our theology, too, would be brought into fuller harmony with the truth as it is in Jesus, and gain something in light and sweetness, if now and then it followed the same method. It might learn here, as nowhere else, that the grace of God is not tied to even His own appointed means, still less to any mere human schemes and formulas; and that there is a wide realm of His providential system, both in time and in eternity, of which it has pleased Him to give us almost no account; but which yet we know to be filled with special wonders of His creative and redeeming love.

(e) *Bearing of universal Infant Salvation upon the question of the salvability of the heathen.*

The general view of the Augustinian and mediæval orthodoxy was, as we have seen, that those beyond the Christian pale, infants and adults alike, were lost. This view passed over into the early Protestantism. No essential difference was made between the two classes. Believing parents and their baptized children were regarded as bound together in "the bundle of life"; and so heathen parents and their children were conceived of as bound together in the solidarity and *massa perditâ* of spiritual death. Zwingle, among the first Reformers, with an extraordinary theological boldness and stretch of charity, dissented from the traditional view; but he was severely censured for his rashness. At a later period, the possibility and even probability, that some heathen, both infants and adults, belonged to the election of grace, was admitted by Calvinistic

divines; and, still later, it came to be a common opinion of evangelical Protestants that all who die in infancy are saved. The new view, however, as I have said already, was revolutionary in principle. While a sharp distinction was taken between infant and adult heathen with respect to the degree or severity of their punishment in the next world, yet the belief that they were alike lost, was in keeping with the accepted theories respecting original sin, the organic unity of the family and the race, the efficacy of baptism, the nature of the church, and the subjective conditions of salvation.

The question now is, whether we can believe in the salvation of all heathen infants and logically stop there? Is this belief based upon a principle of Revealed truth so certain and so sharply defined as plainly to exclude all but infants from its gracious operation? Let us look at some of the grounds upon which the doctrine of universal infant salvation has been defended. Dr. Hodge assigns three: (1) The analogy between Adam and Christ, as taught in Romans v. 18, 19. (2) The principle involved in Paul's whole discussion, namely, that it is more congenial with the nature of God to bless than to curse, to save than to destroy. (3) The conduct and language of our Lord in reference to children.

The first and second of these grounds can hardly be limited to infants. If valid in their case, why not also in the case of others who die after personal consciousness has distinctly dawned, and the sense of right and wrong begun to act? Indeed, some of the children brought to Jesus were, probably, of this description, otherwise He would scarcely have "called them," when His disciples tried to prevent their approach, or have said: "Suffer the little children to *come* unto me." But even new-born babes are not saved because they are innocent of actual sin, but because of their redemption through Christ, and because it is "more congenial with the nature of God to bless than to curse, to save than to destroy." Precisely the same reasoning might be applied to other classes. To draw an impassable dividing line between infants and all little boys and girls, for example, in whom original sin has just begun to act, seems most unwarrantably to limit the grace of God.

"Remorse of equity," which, Hooker says, moved sundry of the school divines to devise a way by which infants within the Christian pale, dying unbaptized, might be saved, would move an evangelical divine to protest strongly against such a limitation. At all events, it is a limitation which no theologian who accepts the Westminster definition of original sin, and, at the same time, believes sincerely in universal infant salvation, could consistently adopt. Even Dr. Em-

mons admitted—though, to be sure, in obedience to the requirements of his theory of moral agency—that if any infants are saved, it must be after having been guilty of more or less actual “sinning.”

Dr. Hodge, in the passages cited from him, makes no reference to election; but from the Calvinistic point of view, this must be considered a vital element in the solution of the problem. The language of the Westminster Confession in reference to Effectual Calling is in part as follows:

“Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth. *So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.*”

These are truly comfortable words and full of the deepest meaning. “Regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth”; *that* is the ultimate ground of our belief that all who die in infancy will at last inherit the fullness of eternal life. It would seem also to justify the strongest and most cheering hope that a great number of “other elect persons,” gathered out of heathendom, shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, and all saints in the kingdom of God.

Universal infant salvation, then, does not and cannot stand alone; it has a most important bearing upon the whole soteriological doctrine. It shows how inconceivably wide and deep is God’s mercy in Jesus Christ. It shows that, speaking after the manner of men, He is doing all He can do for the actual redemption of the world; nothing keeps any soul from the gracious operation of His infinite love and pity but its own wilful choice of evil and refusal of the good. “*Nihil ardet in inferno nisi propria voluntas.*” *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*

(f) *Bearing of universal Infant Salvation upon our conception of the Providential system.*

I have already touched upon this point in referring to Bishop Butler’s chapters on the present existence as “a state of probation.” In unfolding the nature and design of such a state he takes no account of the case of nearly one-half of the human race. Had he adopted the “scheme” propounded by Dr. Watts four years after the publication of “The Analogy”; namely, that a large majority at least of those dying in infancy are annihilated—his argument would have required no modification. Indeed, it would rather gain force



on the assumption that there is no future existence to those who die before passing through the trials and discipline of this earthly life. Whether we consider the death of infants, or the question of their future destiny, it is plain that our theory, whatever it be, must stand vitally related to our conception of the Providential system. We cannot sever the two. The Christian idea of God's agency in the world includes the new-born babe as truly as the full-grown man; the one is as much the creature of His power, wisdom, and benevolence as the other; both alike live and move and have their being in Him.

Nor is it, perhaps, a harder task to frame a theory of the Providential system that will account satisfactorily for the sufferings and death of little children, than to frame one that will account satisfactorily for the strange phenomena of the life and death of adults. The difficulties in the two cases materially differ; but there is much in both concerning which we can only say: *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.* There is a night side to all the great truths and facts of His government, especially those which pertain to the eternal destiny of man; if it were not so, where would be the motive or the place for intellectual modesty, humility, reverence, patience, and hope? But there is also a side more or less illumined by the light of reason and revelation; and this we are privileged to study and in part to understand.

I do not see, then, how we can rest content with any conception of the system of Providence which does not take in the case of young children; or how we can believe intelligently in the immortality and salvation of all those who die in infancy, without a very comprehensive and far-reaching conception of that system. In a matter of such great spiritual significance, and coming home so to our business and bosom as Christians, we ought surely to seek the utmost attainable light. And yet one searches in vain through many an elaborate treatise on both the temporal and spiritual government of God for a single chapter—yea, a single page—in elucidation of this momentous subject. The children—that is, an immense minority of the human race—are virtually left out of account, as if they were not included in the Divine plan. The philosophers, for the most part, simply ignore their existence; while too many of the theologians seem to be strangely unconscious that, if really immortal, the problem of their spiritual being, here and hereafter, must needs involve fundamental principles of the Divine system. A theodicy that shall meet the claims of Christian thought and satisfy the cravings of the Christian heart, or charm to silence its doubts and fears, must vindi-

cate the ways of Providence toward the little children, as well as toward the full-grown men and women. Let us hope that as the kingdom of God comes nearer and nearer, and its heavenly light, whether shining through the ever-living Word, in the inspired Scriptures, or in believing souls, is more fully comprehended, such a theodicy may yet bless the world. Certainly, a great step toward it will have been taken when the doctrine, that the countless myriads of the race who die in infancy, instead of being annihilated or lost, are forever with the Lord, shall become the common faith of the Church, and, at the same time, all the theological consequences of the doctrine shall be recognized and assigned their rightful place in the system of Christian truth.

GEORGE L. PRENTISS.