

# THE BIBLICAL RECORDER AND SOUTHERN WATCHMAN.

DEVOTED TO RELIGION, MORALITY, LITERATURE, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE. T. Meredith, Editor.

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## TERMS

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From the Conference Journal.

## OUR PROTESTANT FOREFATHERS.

*The Lollards—Lord Cobham, and the sufferers under the statute of burning heretics.*

The death of Wycliff, which took place in 1384, checked, but did not crush, the springing plant of Reformation. His codes, his opinions, and his principles, were circulated by his followers, who were called Lollards; but why so called, we cannot satisfactorily explain. In spite of every attempt to keep them down, the Lollard Protestants increased in numbers, and spread from one country to another. Most of their tenets were directed against the doctrines and possessions of the Romish Church. They had ample cause to declaim against doctrines which dishonored God and enslaved men; and against possessions held in England, in great part by foreigners and all under the tenure of a foreigner's permission, at the will of the Pope. The Romanists knew the weakness of their cause too well, to trust their defence to argument and preaching; therefore they obtained an act of parliament, in 1399, under which they were empowered to burn the heretics. This act is called the statute *de Heretico Comburendo*, i. e. for the burning of heretics. What a parliament! What a state of things! What a picture of popery! Here is no concealment! The object of the bill was openly professed—to burn heretics! The preamble of the act runs in this style. "Whereas divers unauthorized preachers go about teaching new doctrines and heretical opinions, making conventicles and confederacies, holding schools, writing books, misinforming the people, and daily committing enormities too horrible to be heard, &c. it then enacts,—Therefore, if any person so convicted shall refuse to abjure such preachings, doctrines, opinions, schools, and informations, he shall be burnt on a high place before the people, that such punishment may strike terror into the minds of others." This account of the proceeding is copied from a Roman Catholic history of it (Dr. Lingard's). Observe, therefore, under the Roman Catholic establishment in this country, when the Papists were in power, (that establishment and that power against which Protestants are so called for protesting,) men were to be burnt for teaching new doctrines and heretical opinions, making conventicles and confederacies, teaching schools, writing books, and misinforming the people! The Act of Parliament specifies no other crime; for the charge "of daily committing enormities too horrible to be heard," means nothing; if any enormity had really been committed by the Lollard Protestants, their adversaries would have been too glad to state it fully and by name, to justify the severity of this *Burning Act*. But this statute was not rigid enough, therefore the House of commons, which was full of Roman Catholics in that day, petitioned the King, that "when any man or woman was taken and imprisoned for Lollardism, he might be instantly put on his answer, and have such judgment as he deserved, for an example to others of such wicked sect, that they might soon cease from their wicked preachings, and keep themselves to the Christian faith.

Popery and Protestantism now began fairly to display their opposite characters in England at the religious trials and executions which took place. In 1400, William Sautre, rector of Lynn, in Norfolk, after begging that he might be permitted to dispute before the Lords and Commons on the subject of religion, was brought to trial, and burnt on charges of which the following were the principal: "He saith that he will not worship the cross on which CHRIST suffered, but only CHRIST that suffered upon the cross;" also, "that he would sooner worship a temporal king than the aforesaid wooden cross;" also, "that every priest and deacon is more bound to preach the word of God, than to say the canonical hours;" also, "that after pronouncing of the sacramental words of the body of Christ, the bread remaineth of the same nature that it was before, neither does it cease to be bread."

Soon afterwards, John Badley was committed to the flames for no greater crime than this avowal: "After the consecration the bread remaineth the same material bread which it was before; nevertheless, it is a sign or sacrament of the living God. I believe the omnipotent God in Trinity to be One. But if every consecrated host be the Lord's body, then there are twenty thousand gods in England."

In 1417, during Henry V's reign, the celebrated Sir John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham, was roasted alive by a slow fire, after having been condemned as a heretic; or to use the words of his sentence, which sets forth Popery and Protestantism in contra-distinction, because "we have found him not only an evident heretic in his own person, but also a mighty maintainer of other heretics, against the faith and religion of the holy and universal Church of Rome; namely, about the two sacraments of the altar and of penance, besides the Pope's power and pilgrimages."

The offences of which Lord Cobham was guilty,

were his maintenance of a great number of itinerant preachers in many parts of the country; his care in collecting, transcribing, and circulating the works of Wycliff among the common people, and more especially his zeal in having copies of Wycliff's Bible multiplied at a very great expense to himself.

From the Gospel Messenger.

## HADES OR THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

The Rubric prefixed to the Creed in our American Prayer Book, says, that "any Churches may omit the words: 'He descended into hell,' or may, instead of them, use the words, 'He went into the place of departed spirits,' which are considered as words of the same meaning in the creed." As these words involve a principle of application and deep concern to every individual, I propose to bestow upon them a short examination. And the more am I urged to do so, from the fact that very few christians at the present day seem to recognise the truth which they contain, or indeed, to have any knowledge even of its existence.

What doctrine does this language then teach? By a reference to the creed it will be perceived that the Rubric is a direction concerning the profession of Christ's descent into hell. For such was the doctrine of the belief almost from the times of its earliest composition, and it has been retained and perpetuated in our Church, as well by the creed itself, as by the language of the third Article, which declares, that "as Christ died for us, and was buried; so also is it to be believed, that he went down into hell." We have already said, that this language is almost co-eval with the first publication of the creed. But the doctrine which it teaches, is much older than the creed itself. For in the New Testament we read, as a quotation from the sixteenth Psalm; "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption." But as the soul of the Messiah could not remain in hell, unless it was actually there; nor could it be there, unless it had first descended; so it necessarily follows, that the truth conveyed by this language of the creed rests upon the sure foundation of Scripture, viz. that Christ descended into hell.

But what is the sense of this declaration?—Some, who have been unable to obviate the direct application of this passage to our Saviour, have endeavored to show, that it means nothing more than burial, from the supposed circumstance, that the term hell is in the Bible occasionally employed to designate the grave. But Dr. Campbell has shown in an elaborate dissertation on the subject, that such was not the original sense of the term; nor do any of the passages in which it occurs whether figurative or literal, admit of a full and proper interpretation with such a signification attached to it. In the text already quoted, such a sense would convict the sacred writer of the veriest tautology; and to the candid mind there must appear an evident distinction in his language between the corruption of the body in the grave, and the remaining of the soul in Hades. But waiving the authority of this text for the present, the sense of the Church cannot admit of a doubt. For after saying in the creed, that Christ was crucified, dead and buried, it would not surely have been guilty of the folly of adding "he descended into hell," if the phrase meant nothing more than had been before expressed. Still less would the compilers of our articles have committed the gross absurdity of adding a distinct article to assure us that Christ went down into hell, if by that expression they intended nothing more than his death and burial. For they had already twice before asserted that he was both dead and buried.

As this sense cannot be at all maintained, other writers, prompted by a desire to give coherence and completeness to their theoretic system, have been led into an opposite extreme, and have maintained the extravagant position that our Saviour actually went down to hell, and underwent the very agonies and torments of the damned.—Calvin uses the strongest language to express this view. It was necessary, he says, for Christ to feel the severity of Divine vengeance, to struggle with all the forces of hell, and to be agonized with the horror of eternal death, as if by actual contact and experience." And so with the Scotch confession: "he suffered his humanity to be punished with a most cruel death, feeling in himself the anger and severe judgement of Christ, even as if he had been in the extreme torments of hell."

But patient consideration will evince to us that this interpretation is utterly unfounded. It is true, indeed, that in virtue of his being the innocent victim on whose head were laid all the sins of the world, our Lord did suffer in our stead, and in some awful and mysterious sense endured the vengeance of Almighty Justice.—But he could not have suffered the precise amount or nature of the punishment to be undergone by the wicked. For as he was without guile and holy in heart, so he could not have had the consciousness of guilt. But this is one of the bitterest ingredients in the cup of the sinner's doom. To know that of his own free will he committed acts of crime, despised warnings, contemned authority, returned evil for good, and refused to be swayed by divine love, even by the love of God incarnate; this consciousness it is which will harrow up the soul of the sinner, with an agony more keen than his welterings in the surge of fire, and will awaken groans more deep than those of the scorpion's lash. Yet who will say that Christ ever experienced such a feeling as this? Who will affirm that his spotless

soul was ever conscious of remorse? Impossible! He knew, and always affirmed, that his sufferings were undergone in the behalf of others,—that he gave his life a ransom for many and boldly challenged the fiercest of his accusers, if possible, to convince him of sin. Our Saviour then could never have suffered from this feeling. The very supposition seems to be impious. But again: the sinner feels that he is the enemy of God, and in perdition becomes the victim of hopeless despair. With his own hand he has barred the door of mercy to prevent his entrance into heaven; hope has taken her everlasting flight, and the key which unlocks the gate of peace is dropped into the bottomless abyss. Despair now with all its tormenting agonies, takes possession of the lost soul. Who can believe that Jesus ever endured such a feeling as this? Was he ever deprived of the animating influences of hope? Did he not even in the garden of Gethsemane declare that he could summon to his aid more than twelve legions of angels?—He could not then, have suffered the feeling of despair, which is part of the soul's torments in hell. Another feature of the suffering there is, that it will be eternal. But Christ's sufferings were not eternal. And, therefore, they were not the same as are to be those of the condemned.—Viewed in any light we may please, indeed, the sufferings of Christ cannot be considered as identical with those of the lost in hell. And consequently, this interpretation of the Article cannot be correct.

We are then led back to the Rubric already quoted for the true sense of the expression; it is, that he went to the place of departed spirits.—This is a perpetuation of the old Catholic doctrine of an intermediate state. That is, the old Catholic Church taught, and our Church still teaches us to believe, that there is an intermediate state in which all the souls of the dead are to remain until the resurrection. They are not taken at once to their places of final destination; neither to supreme happiness, nor to the lowest misery. But in the intermediate state, the pious and faithful enjoy foretastes of that bliss which awaits them; the wicked undergo the beginning of their eternal torments. The first are not perfectly happy; the latter are visited with a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.—This view is made necessary by the doctrines of the resurrection and the judgement. For, as we believe, that neither perfect joy, nor perfect sorrow, can be experienced by the soul, without a corporeal existence; so are we assured, that these states are not to be entered upon until after the resurrection. But if any one should affirm that they can, we are then left to inquire, why is the resurrection of the body taught? Wherein consists the necessity of such a resurrection? If the soul can enjoy supreme felicity without the body, why should a body be given to it after death? Would it not rather be an incumbrance than a blessing? And can we suppose that a soul, which has for ages, or millions of ages, been worshipping beneath the throne of God, burning in the blaze of his glory, and ranging throughout the boards of his dominions, would be pleased to return and unite itself once more with the body which has for the same length of time been mouldering in the dust? Would not such a demand on the part of the Almighty appear rather as a punishment than as a favor? And yet if there be no intermediate state, if the disembodied soul be susceptible of the highest happiness, and enter upon such enjoyment immediately after death: then this will have to be the fate of every faithful soul departed in the Lord. But this makes the doctrine of the resurrection to be unnecessary and vain.

Nor does it harmonize any better with the doctrine of a future judgement. For if the soul be adjudged to its final abode immediately after the death of the body, why should there be another and a final judgement? It is in Heaven, why should it be brought down to be judged again? Or it is in hell; why should it be called up to be condemned? But on the supposition of an intermediate state, all these doctrines harmonize and form together a consistent whole.—After death the body is consigned to corruption, the soul descends to Hades. Here commence its rewards of punishments. If a believer in Christ, is washed in that fountain which was opened up for sin and for uncleanness in the house of David, and sanctified by the Spirit of holiness, peace and joy are its portion, and its visions of glory are bright with promise. But if sinful and unbelieving, it begins then to be visited with a part of those torments which await it as the full measure of the second death. Here all the dead remain until the reign of grace shall be ended, until God shall close the administration of things in this world. Then shall the living be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, each to be united to its expecting soul; then shall the judgment be set, and the books be opened,—then shall be heard the solemn sentence: "Come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world,—depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Then shall each be rewarded or punished according to the deeds done in the body; and then, not before, shall the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. This view gives consistency to the whole system of christianity; gives to each doctrine its appropriate position, and of the whole forms a beautiful harmony.

This view was prevalent among the Jews, especially among the Pharisees, as may be seen in the antiquities of Josephus, and more particularly in his discourse concerning Hades. Though Warburton seems to think that this fragment is of the Greek and Roman Mythology furnish traces of the same doctrine.

\* Unde etiam nunc oportuit cum inferorum copia aeternaque mortis horrore, quasi consensit manibus, luctari. Inst. Lib. ii. c. xvi. s. 10. See also Witts on the Creed, Dissert. xviii.

"Hic locus est, partes ubi se via findit in ambos. Dextera, quae Divis magni sub mœnia tendit; Hac iter Elysium nobis: at læva malorum Excipiet penas, et ad impia Tartara mittit."

And as they are supposed to have derived many of the irreligious sentiments from the Jews, so their views are not unimportant to teach us what the Jews believed.

From the "Teacher Taught."

## ON THE DUTIES AND RELATIONS OF MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL TO SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

We shall never know how rich a boon Heaven has bestowed on the world in the Institution of Sunday-schools till the motto of Christendom in relation to them shall be—Action, general action, constant action, action in all the relations of life.

In the section on the organization of schools we have already expressed at some length our views of this subject.

There can be no question that ministers and officers of Churches, and the whole body of the elder members of our Churches, both male and female, are much less generally engaged in the prosecution of Sunday-school labor than could be desired and expected. We do not mean by this that ministers or other officers of churches should all take classes, and engage to be regular attendants on the exercises of the schools. This in some cases might not be practicable; but there are officers connected with the school and its support which they might well fill; and if they only regularly visited the place of teaching, and thus practically showed their interest in the progress of affairs there, the effect would be most obvious and salutary.

We are not disposed to attribute the apparent willingness of the Church, and her officers to leave the Sunday school to itself, to indifference or carelessness on their part. Of two things we are persuaded: 1. That where ministers and Churches have entered with zeal and spirit into the oversight and labor of Sunday-schools, the utmost harmony and kind feeling have prevailed, and great prosperity has attended the institution; and, 2. That very often such oversight and labor are forborne from the impression (unfounded as it may be) that they are not desired, or might be esteemed officious.

Every truly pious & intelligent Sabbath-school teacher will desire to act under the inspection, as well as with the entire and cordial approbation, not only of the parents, whose children he instructs, but of the minister to whose congregation he labors, and whose auxiliary he desires to be in gathering and feeding the lambs of the flock of Christ. So far from considering such inspection an interference, or such co-operation an indication of a want of confidence, those teachers who are every way best qualified for the work, will feel their hearts cheered and their hands greatly strengthened by it. It will encourage them in all their endeavors to teach their children the fear of the Lord, and it will stimulate them to greater diligence in qualifying themselves for the work, and will animate their supplications for the blessing of God upon their efforts.

The work of training up the rising generation for the service and glory of God, without interfering with parental and individual obligation, or in any way diminishing the mighty sum of it, is the duty of the Church, the whole Church of Christ; nor can she transfer her solemn responsibility to other hands. To neglect her duty and to leave her work to others, will be to betray her trust, thin her ranks, cloud her glories, dry up the stream of her richest mercies, and call down the displeasure of her insulted Lord.

We regard it as one of the most interesting and peculiar features of the Sunday-school system, that it provides a place in which the services of laymen may be most efficiently employed for the building up of the Redeemer's kingdom, without encroaching in any manner upon the rights or province of his appointed ministers. And it is another feature, perhaps not less interesting than peculiar, that the influence of the Church and her ministry can be brought to bear fully and happily upon the Sunday-school without any undue interference. If, on the one hand, ministers and other officers of Churches would interest themselves in the plans and proceedings of the Sunday-school, giving to them a prominent place among the objects of inquiry and interest, and regarding them, in works as well as in words, as the hope and stay and crowning grace of the Church; and if, on the other hand, the Sunday-school would look to the Church and her ministry for counsel and co-operation, and cherish towards them a spirit of unvarying kindness & confidence, there is reason to believe that the relations of both would be greatly improved.

It is through the teachers chiefly that the influence of a faithful, discreet, intelligent ministry is felt upon the school, and it is the ministry chiefly who give the tone to the Sunday-school feeling of the Church. It is a matter of the first importance, therefore, that all these parties should understand and advance the common interest. All of us are but subordinate agents in the prosecution of the work, and we should rejoice that the institution we cherish, is so manifestly sustained and prospered by the unchangeable Being on whose promises the Church itself rests her hope of final triumph and glory.

## PRE-EMINENCE OF THE BIBLE IN PRODUCING HOLINESS.

But there is a caution that is not out of place while speaking of the Bible as the means of holiness. It is not by the learning and wisdom of this world that the soul is fitted for heaven, no more is it by the mere learning and literature of the Bible. There is reason to fear the cases are not few, in which the Bible is regarded more as a volume to be described and eulogized, and as furnishing topics of intellectual research, than as a directory to heaven, and a guide to immortality. "The letter killeth." Biblical learning is not piety. A man may be a profound critic, an acute controversialist, an able expositor; his inquiries and reasoning may discover an enlarged and comprehensive acquaintance with the sacred volume; he may employ all his resources in the promotion of biblical knowledge; and yet be at heart a stranger to the sanctifying power of truth.

In his cold walks of theoretic science, he may never once visit the garden or the cross.—Or he might gaze upon them for half a century with his present vision, and never discover the great "mystery of godliness. The truths of the Bible are comprehended by the heart. To be destitute of the "single eye," is to be blind to its transforming glories. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." The Gospel is a revelation of love. Christianity is love embodied in its purest form. And love can be comprehended only by love. I look upon no small portion of the biblical erricism of the present age as a curse to the Church. Such is all the Rationalism of Germany, and such is the modern Unitarianism of our own land. It is a cheerless region, where the Rose of Sharon never blooms; a bleak and wintry sky, where no ray from the Sun of righteousness visits the sterile soil. How can the branches flourish where not even a root is found but is artfully unclasped, or rudely torn from the Living Vine? As soon might you expect the feeblest infant to live and thrive cradled amid the mountain snows, as the genius of Christianity to flourish in such a climate. I tremble at recommending the literature of the Bible, lest I should do it at the expense of its spirituality. I venerate the scriptures for their historical research, for their literary merit, for their legal and political wisdom, and for their lofty principles of liberty and morality; but I venerate them unexpressably more because they are "the wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation."

Let others win the laurels to which human science may aspire; be it ours to guide the wandering to the feet of the Saviour; to lead them to his cross; to strew the cypress over the tomb where he was laid; and there on that hallowed spot, with them to renew our faith and our devotion!

What is the character of the religion of which the Scriptures are thus instrumental?—There is a beauty and sublimity in its spirit which throw all other religions into the shade.

If there is a system of truth which is most obviously intended and fitted to refine and exalt the human character, that system is to be found in the sacred Scriptures. When the God of heaven unfolded his purpose of forming a people to his praise, and giving them a character that should correspond with the elevated principles of his own spiritual kingdom, he uttered his design in the following strong and emphatic language.—"A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you." What amazing truths lie concealed under such a design? The character which the Bible forms is formed upon the highest model. And what is that model? Is it the insensibility, the apathy, the anger, the pride, the egotism, the worldliness which are so natural to men? Is it the cold indifference of a stoical philosophy? Is it the affected tranquility and unengorged voluptuousness of the disciples of Epicurus? Is it the rank, and wealth, and scepticism of the Academics? Is it the intellectual rashness and moral phantoms of the modern philosophers of Europe? No, it is none of these. These have had their day, and done what they could to exercise the foul fiend from the human heart, and left it more corrupt and wicked than before. The Author of this great and venerated book, by this instrumentality, imparts to men his own spirit; forms them in his own image; communicates to them the elements of his own divine excellence. It is a character never understood by the world before, and one which none, even the princes of this world, knew. The late celebrated Robert Hall, in a discourse of unrivalled excellence upon the influence of modern infidelity remarks, that "infidelity robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence, even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness for which we are formed, and which kindles such unspeakable rapture in the soul, finding in the regions of scepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. The idea of deity is composed of the richest elements. In the character of a benevolent Parent and Almighty Ruler, it embraces whatever is venerable in wisdom, whatever is awful in authority, whatever is touching in goodness. Human excellence is blended with many imperfections, and seen under many limitations. It is beheld only as detached and separate portions, no ever appears in any one character whole and pure. So that when in imitation of the Stoics, we wish to form out of these fragments the notion of a perfectly wise and good man, we know it is a mere fiction of the mind, without any real being in whom it is embodied and realized. In the belief of a Deity, these conceptions are reduced to reality; the scattered rays of an ideal excellence are concentrated, and become the real attributes of that being with whom we stand in the nearest relation, who sits supreme at the head of the universe, and pervades all nature with his presence." Although in nothing does man fallen and unregenerate now resemble this exalted portrait, yet is it the great design of the Bible to recover and restore him to this pristine integrity; to elevate him above his moral debasement, and re-invest him with the moral dignity, which shall ultimately make him "like unto the angels," and "perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect."

DR. SPRING.

## ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

If there could be an intermediate space between inspired and uninspired writings, that space would be occupied by Leighton. No show of learning no appearance or ostentatious display of eloquence

\* Acts ii. 27.

† Preliminary Dissertations, Diss. vi. pt. 3.