

[R424 : page 8]

DR. ABBOTT ON "CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY."

Dr. Lyman Abbott, the well-known editor of the Christian Union, in an editorial in a recent number of that paper, announces his belief in the probability of the doctrine of conditional immortality and of the annihilation of the incorrigibly wicked. As the article is lengthy and contains much relative to other points than those above mentioned, only that part of it relating to these particular doctrines is here given. After mentioning the final triumph of Christ over all things and the consummated glory of the redeemed, he says:

"In the New Testament picture of this hour of triumph I see no shadow of scowling faces, of angered and unrepentant rebels; in the New Testament echo of this song of the redeemed I hear no interrupting of wail or wrath from any far-off prison-house of despair. After the last enemy is destroyed, shall sin, worst of all enemies, still live, and work his ruin eternally? When God hath put all enemies under Christ's feet, shall this worst of all enemies still rule in triumph over some remote, reserved corner of creation?...The more I study my Bible, the more unscriptural seems to me the conception of endless sin; the nearer I come into fellowship with God my Father, my Saviour, my Comforter, the more intolerable grows the thought of it to me. And I thank God for the good hope in His Word, which permits me to look forward to and haste toward the day when this terrible tragedy of sin and pain will come to an end. If I believe in the hopeless doom of incorrigible sin, and also in the undimmed glory of a perfected kingdom of love, I must believe in the annihilation of the incorrigibly wicked ...Fire in the Bible is generally an emblem of destruction, not of torment. The chaff, the tares, the fruitless tree, are thrown into unquenchable fire, not to be tortured, but to be destroyed. The hell-fire of the New Testament is

the fire of Gehenna, kept burning outside of the walls of Jerusalem to destroy the offal of the city; here was the worm that dieth not and the fire that is unquenched; emblems of destruction, not of torment. ...I find nothing in the new Testament to warrant the terrible opinion that God sustains the life of his creatures throughout eternity only that they may continue in sin and misery. That immortality is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, that man is mortal and must put on immortality, that only he can put it on who becomes through Christ a partaker of the divine nature, and so an inheritor of Him 'who only hath immortality,' that eternal life is life eternal, and eternal death is death eternal, and everlasting destruction is destruction without remedy – this is the most natural, as it is the simplest, reading in the New Testament."

– Selected.