

## PROF. SHEDD'S FOREBODINGS.

The *Sunday School Times* reports Prof. Shedd as saying: "No theological tenet is more important than that of eternal retribution, to those modern nations, which, like England, Germany, and the United States, are growing rapidly in riches, luxury, and earthly power. Without it, they will infallibly go down in that vortex of sensuality and wickedness that swallowed up Babylon and Rome."

No one believes more strongly in the certainty of divine retribution for sin than do we, and that the end of incorrigible sinners will be "the lake of fire which is the second death." But by "eternal retribution" Dr. Shedd means the doctrine of endless torment in hell for all who die out of this life unsaved, in the defence of which he has recently published a book. And his argument is for the expediency of holding on to that doctrine as a defence against threatening destruction. To this we reply:

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1. In this momentous matter, only that which is *true* is expedient.
2. Dr. Shedd's remedy has historically failed. It did not save the world from the fearful anarchy and social wreck of the French Revolution.
3. The modern nations he refers to have not been restrained by it from developing the evils which he deplors.
4. Perhaps the false view of God involved in this doctrine is largely responsible for this "departing from him, desiring not the knowledge of his ways." The current doctrine in the church on this subject, in hiding from men any hope for any class of mankind in any of his administrations beyond the grave, has concealed a part of his gospel, and denied his fatherhood. Wrong views of his relation to the race necessitate wrong views of his relation to individual men, and so sour

and harden them against God. What the world is perishing for is the lack of the knowledge of God.

5. If Dr. Shedd's doctrine is therefore now needful for the defence of society against ruin, it is so because it has helped to bring society into this state of danger by drawing a frowning mask over the face of God, and so repelling them from him.

6. There are intimations in Scripture that there were to be larger unfoldings of the grace of God to mankind, as they were able to bear it. "Who gave himself a ransom for all; to be testified to in its own times" (1 Tim. 2:6).

7. In the general decay of the old [R855 : page 4] doctrine of future punishment, which was doubtless a great restraint in ruder times, the world now needs a new presentation of the majesty and certainty of God's law of punishment. The church needs to be warned anew that "The Lord shall judge his people," and that "Our God is a consuming fire." The world needs a doctrine of punishment, not so vast and vague and inconceivable that both reason and conscience reject it, but one that shall convince them that, in all the laws of nature and of life and of human society, the eyes of the Lord are now "open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings," and that his great harvest law is surer than the motions of the stars, for this world and for all worlds. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." God's great love has provided a ransom for all from death; but even resurrection, which is to all a boon, must proceed according to this great law of harvest, and bring with it "judgment" for those "that have done evil."

### **MR. MOODY'S PREACHING.**

In this connection we refer to a letter of Dr. A. E. Kittredge in the *Independent* of January 28, describing Mr. Moody's late visit to Chicago, in which he indicates that the power of his preaching is largely

due to his ability to impress men's minds with the conviction that God loves them. He quotes these as characteristic sentences from one of his sermons:

"God always loves us. He hates sin, but he loves the sinner. He loves, because he can't help it."

"There is one thing that death has never been able to conquer, and that is a mother's love."

"Our love is changing, but he loves us right on, through all our sorrows and our sins." **[R856 : page 4]**

"Because God is angry with the sinner, it proves that he loves him."

"His love is unchanging, unailing, and everlasting."

These sentences illustrate how Mr. Moody, although holding theoretically the orthodox doctrine of an eternal hell, keeps it in the background, where he has no right to keep it, if true, and how he moves men by a fresh revelation to them of the fact that God's love for them is deeper than their sins. If God's love is "stronger than a mother's," if "death cannot conquer it," if it continues "right on, through all our sorrows and sins," and if even his anger is the dark side of his love, we may well ask what room is left for the creed doctrine that, for the sins of this life he will first torment the soul of the sinner in hell, and then raise him in body, in order to thrust him back to be punished "in body and soul, with unspeakable torments, with the devil and his angels, in hell-fire forever." (See questions 29 and 89, Larger Catechism.)

There is immense power in the long-concealed doctrine of God's love to men. And the proof that death cannot conquer it, as Mr. Moody affirms, is found in the fact that he gave his Son to effect the ransom of all from death, and that its conquests extend through the realms of the dead. The redemptive character of resurrection is the proof out of Scripture that men need, that God's love is stronger than death. Knowing

this, there will be no longer any temptation to conceal from them the other side of truth, which is too much absent from Mr. Moody's sermons, that "he will render to every man according to his works," and that the atonement is not a makeshift, by which any man may escape the just consequences of his sins, but a wonderful alembic of love by which these necessary judgments are for us converted into the way of life.

– *Words of Reconciliation.*

