

ON one occasion Agassiz, wishing to examine the interior of a glittering ice-chasm among the Swiss Alps, got three men to lower him down several hundreds of feet by means of a rope attached to a basket. He remained thus for some time, until his curiosity was satisfied, and then gave the signal to the men at the top to pull him up again. But they found they could not. In their haste all had forgotten the weight of the rope. They had allowed for his own weight and that of the basket, and were able to lower him down; but were utterly powerless to draw him up. He had to remain in that position for some hours longer, until they got additional assistance which enabled them to draw him up again.—The rope may be compared to 'habit,' the weight of which is so often forgotten.

I MAKE me cords to hold from wrong,
And bind my will by purpose strong;
But my resolves, as cords of tow,

Before the strength of passion go,
Like hempen hands, which flames o'errun,
Or icy streams before the sun. . . .
Lord, who has ta'en me by the hand,
'Tis only by Thy strength I stand.

FOR REFERENCE.

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The Use of Dante as an Illustrator of Scripture.

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IV.

THE *INFERNO*.

IT is proposed to treat the *Inferno* very much more briefly than the *Purgatorio*, although from one point of view this first *cantica* of the *Divina Commedia* might seem the best adapted of the three to supply interesting and attractive illustrations for the use of Christian preachers and teachers. For it is undoubtedly the best known to their hearers: it has been truly said that many people could answer questions as to its first three cantos, and as to the episodes of Paola and Francesca and of Ugolino, who would fail in any further examination concerning Dante.

But, as has already been briefly intimated (THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, xvi. 393), there is a very serious difficulty in the way of bringing forward references to this division of the poem as illustrations of teaching founded upon Scripture. That difficulty lies in the terrible definiteness of the eschatology of the *Inferno*, which emphatically and repeatedly excludes 'all hope' for those numerous souls who pass through the gate of hell as having died sinful and unrepentant (*Inf.* i. 114-117, iii. 1-9, 85-87). Such definiteness most of us now feel to be lacking—it would seem designedly lacking—in the Bible

itself. Its teaching appears to exhibit three tendencies, which there is nowhere any attempt to harmonize. For (1) there are passages, chiefly in the Synoptic Gospels and the Apocalypse (Mt 25^{41, 46}, Mk 9⁴³⁻⁴⁸ and parallels, Rev 14¹¹ 20^{10, 15}), which appear, upon the face of them, to involve interminable penal suffering. (2) There are other passages, chiefly in the Pauline Epistles (as Ro 5¹²⁻²¹ 11³², 1 Co 15²¹⁻²⁸, Col 1²⁰), which seem intended to express the universal efficacy of the work of Christ, and which consequently involve the ultimate salvation of all men from sin and its punishment. (3) There are also expressions in many parts of the New Testament (as Mt 10²⁸ 16^{26f.}, Ph 3¹⁹, 2 Th 1⁹) the language of which is most simply and naturally interpreted as meaning the final and absolute 'destruction' or extinction—perhaps by a lengthy and painful and thus adequately penal¹ process—of souls into which evil has entered too deeply for them to be by any means 'renewed again unto repentance.' To dismiss any one of these three views as being altogether destitute of scriptural support is impossible. And though the first of them has no

¹ Adequately penal, except of course in the view of those who can accept the principle that offences committed against an Infinite Being must therefore require an infinite penalty.

doubt commanded general assent in Christendom, and more especially in Mediæval Christendom, yet great names from Origen onwards may be cited on behalf of the second, and the third is now seen to have been so generally ignored only or mainly because of the unproved assumption of the natural and necessary immortality of every created soul.¹ The cautiously balanced teaching, and perhaps still more often the silence from any teaching, as to future punishment in many or most of our pulpits at the present day, proves the widespread though often unacknowledged admission of the fact that there is (to say the least) something to be urged on behalf of all those three views, and that Christianity cannot safely be regarded as being inseparably bound up with the first of them.

But such was not Dante's position. His acceptance of the current eschatological system of his day, though by no means logically complete and apparently by no means satisfactory to himself, was such as to leave no room for any admission of the lines of thought denoted by the modern names of 'Universalism' and 'Conditional Immortality.' His *Inferno* contains no glimpse of any passage from Hell to Purgatory, or of the possibility of life being worn out and extinguished by suffering, or even of that merciful 'mitigation' of pain for which some of the Fathers (including Augustine himself at times) and of the schoolmen allowed themselves to hope (see *Inf.* vi. 103-105, and Plumptre's note). No doubt he strained not a few points (as in the cases of the heathen Statius and Ripheus and Trajan) in order to limit the number of those who were excluded from entrance to Paradise either directly or through Purgatory; but for that number the exclusion was endless and hopeless, and the agonies were unrelieved. And that doom he accepted as compatible with, nay, as expressly ordained by, not only Divine Justice and Wisdom, but even Divine Love (*Inf.* iii. 4-6).

Those who have made a careful study of the causes of modern infidelity in the pages of its most popular exponents cannot doubt that one of the two chief of those causes has been the revulsion from the hardness of such traditional eschatology (the other having been the practical elevation of the Old Testament to the same level with the New

as an authority on religion and morals²). This may well make the preacher or expositor cautious and sparing in his references to Dante's *Inferno*, even when they are only made by way of illustration. But it does not oblige him to abstain from them altogether, if only he is careful not to confuse, or to appear to confuse, the certainty of retribution for unrepented sin with its necessary endlessness—either in any particular souls or in God's universe at all. And probably nowhere else can he find such impressive illustrations and exemplifications of that *essential and causal connexion between sin and punishment*, and that *close fitness of the adaptation of the latter to the former*, which are undoubtedly set before us in the Bible as principles of the Divine government of the world. The actual working of these principles is perhaps most tersely summed up in a saying from the Book of Wisdom, 'that by what things a man sinneth, by these he is punished' (10¹⁶ R.V., on which verse Farrar's full and interesting note in the *Speaker's Commentary* is well worth consultation; compare also Wis. 12²³). But the truths involved in that saying are amply supported in the canonical books. Especially, no doubt, this is the case in the Old Testament, as may be seen by reference to Job 4⁸, Pr 1³¹, Is 3^{9b-11}, Hos 8⁷ 10¹³. But we are not allowed to think that this law of the Divine working is abolished—though of course we are told how it may be mercifully overruled and superseded—under the Christian dispensation. For the imagery of 'sowing and reaping,' which is employed in those verses of Job and Hosea, is reproduced in all and more than all its former sternness by St. Paul in the passage which he prefaces with the solemn warning, 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked' (Gal 6⁷⁻⁸); and the prospect of due retribution is also present in such passages as Mt 16²⁷, Ro 2⁶, Lk 6^{38b}, Ja 2²³, Rev 13¹⁰ 18⁶.

This close connexion between sin and punishment 'in the way of natural consequence' (Butler's *Analogy*, pt. ii. chap. v.), so that punishment shows itself to be no arbitrary penalty inflicted from without, but, as it has been truly called, 'the other half of sin,' is exhibited with terrible force by Dante in certain scenes of the *Inferno*. There the retributive punishment is clearly shown to consist in 'the

¹ There is much of interest on this point in Gladstone's *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler*; see especially pp. 151 ff., 182 ff., of the smaller edition (1896).

² On this second cause, see the reference to a new work by Professor Bigg, in 'Notes of Recent Exposition' in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, vol. xvi. p. 370 f.

unceasing continuance of the sinful activity itself, now transformed to torment' (Witte's *Essays on Dante*, p. 129 of Eng. trans.; see also Moore's *Studies in Dante*, ii. 238, and note). This point is particularly well brought out by the Rev. J. S. Carroll in his recent work on the *Inferno*, called *Exiles of Eternity*, from which some quotations will be made below.

i. The most distinct and impressive case is that of the Wrathful, whose punishment is shown in the Fifth Circle (cantos vii. 100–viii. 63). During their horrible and degrading sufferings there is no abatement of their wrath, which is turned against the only available object for it, namely, their fellow-sufferers—

And I, who stood intent upon beholding,
Saw people mud-besprent in that lagoon,
All of them naked and with angry look.
They smote each other not alone with hands,
But with the head and with the breast and feet,
Tearing each other peicemeal with their teeth.

Inf. vii. 109–114.

To use Mr. Carroll's words (p. 127), 'They are obviously abandoned to their own passions; on earth for a lifetime they gave them free rein, and now they are completely beyond their control, and rage on in intensified fury.'

Such continuance of anger, and of the hatred into which protracted anger hardens, may be seen also in *Inf.* xxx. 76–78, xxxii. 51, 134. And we may compare what is said in xiv. 63–66 as to the torment of Capaneus being caused by the unextinguished raging of his pride.

ii. In the same muddy lagoon with 'those whom anger overcame' (l. 116) are even more deeply plunged the Sullen (*tristi*)—those who without due cause had been in their lives morose and discontented, refusing 'to see the sunshine that exists even in the hardest lot' (Carroll, p. 135), and thus lacking in that 'fruit of the Spirit' which is 'joy' (Gal 5²²), and who now continue to be so with abundant cause—

Fixed in the mire they say, 'We sullen were
In the sweet air, which by the sun is gladdened,
Bearing within ourselves the sluggish reek

[i.e. a dull, gloomy sulkiness];

Now are we sullen in this sable mire.'

Inf. vii. 121–124.

iii. Looking back to the Fourth Circle (*Inf.* vii. 1–99), where the Avaricious and the Prodigal (who here, as in the *Purgatorio*, are placed together) receive their punishment, we may note two striking

illustrations of the tendency of evil passions (a) to perpetuate and intensify themselves even when there is no longer anything to be gained by them, and (b) in themselves to work out the punishment of those who have become enslaved to them.

(a) These two classes of sinners—those who had selfishly grasped and hoarded, and those who had selfishly wasted and squandered—have not been brought in their misery to any contrition for or recoil from their own forms of selfishness, but are only possessed by bitter contempt and rage against the other form of it—

Here saw I people . . . many,
On one side and the other, with great howls,
Rolling weights forward by main force of chest.
They clashed together, and then at that point
Each one turned backward, rolling retrograde,
Crying 'Why keepest?' and 'Why squanderest
thou?' *Inf.* vii. 25–30.

(b) Between those clashing the two bands are hurried onward unrestingly until they meet and turn again. Of this Mr. Carroll writes, with special reference to the miserly band (p. 117), 'The meaning [of this incessant movement] is obvious. It is the unrest which covetousness produces here prolonged into another world. Aquinas says that one of the "daughters of avarice is restlessness," and we might have known it without his testimony. . . . These souls have given to gold the passion and devotion meant for God Himself;' and so, having missed the Highest Good, they are tormented by a perpetual restlessness (see *Inf.* vii. 64–66, previously quoted in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, xvi. 549).

iv. Another kind of restlessness, less repulsive in its circumstances, but not represented as less agonizing, is the penalty of those who had lost their self-command by giving way to sensual passion (Second Circle, canto v.). They are borne along helplessly in a tempestuous blast—

The infernal hurricane that never rests
Hurtles the spirits onward in its rapine,
Whirling them round, and smiting, it molests them;

It hither, thither, downward, upward, drives them.

Inf. v. 31–33, 43.

To quote Mr. Carroll once more (p. 89): 'Even in this present life and world, it not infrequently happens that this sin grows into a wild hurricane of passion, before which reason is swept away as a straw, and the man is driven on helplessly after he has lost the power to enjoy. It may be thought that in another world where the flesh no longer

exists, the passions of the flesh must of necessity subside; but Dante's conviction is far otherwise. He thinks rather of the naked human soul, a whirlwind of lusts, bereft for ever of the means of gratifying them.'

From almost any part of the *Inferno* instances might be quoted of the exact and signal appropriateness of punishments to past sins—such appropriateness as conscience often suggests to men in the later years of this life, as for instance when those who, through preoccupation in early and middle life with their own ambitions and interests, have 'shut out love,' find themselves in their declining years unfriended and uncared for, and so 'shut out from love': 'as I have done, so God hath requited me' (Jg 17) is their heart's sad confession. But in the four cases that have been here noticed, and in the first two of them more particularly, we have seen much more than the mere appropriateness of the choice of penalties; we have seen also that the punishments are to a greater or less degree actually worked out by the survival of the sinfully formed habit, so that in Dante's terrible pictures of them he illustrates that continuity of evil present and future which before him prophet and apostle had set forth under the imagery of sowing and reaping.

THE PARADISO.

'In entering upon the study of the *Paradiso*, we enter the Holy of Holies of the Divine Comedy,' so writes the Bishop of Ripon in his Introduction to the two volumes of Mr. Vernon's admirable *Readings* which deal with this third *cantica* (p. xix). It is a happy expression, but one which in itself suggests that the entrance is for the few rather than for the many. And so, as a matter of fact, it has proved to be. For, great as are the 'mystic beauties' of the *Paradiso*, so that it is probably more precious to the most profound students of Dante than the *Inferno* or the *Purgatorio*, it is undoubtedly less widely appreciated and less generally known (even in extracts and allusions) than either of them. The poet himself seems to have been prepared for this to be so: he speaks in *Par.* ii. 10-15 of the comparatively 'few' whom he can now expect to accompany him in his course, and having thus 'warned off more superficial readers,' he 'addresses himself to those few of a more meditative turn, for whom he says that this

part of his poem is distinctly intended' (Vernon's *Readings, in loc.*).

Consequently, we cannot expect that illustrations from, and references to, this division of the Divine Comedy will come home to as many people as those which are concerned with the simpler and more familiar parts of the poem. But there are two fundamental and practical principles of Christianity which are brought out in certain parts of the *Paradiso* with such singular beauty and power that no one who makes any attempt to deal with Dante as an illustrator of Scripture could leave those passages unnoticed.

i. The first of these principles is *obedience and submission to the will of God* in all things, and at whatever apparent cost. It is a principle of life brought out constantly in the New Testament, as for example in Mt 6¹⁰ 7²¹ 12⁵⁰ 26⁴², Jn 7¹⁷, Ac 21¹⁴, Eph 5¹⁷ 6⁶, He 10⁷.

And its importance has been emphasized by some of the most thoughtful and philosophic of Christian writers. Bishop Butler says, in a well-known passage, that 'resignation to the will of God is the whole of piety: it includes in it all that is good' (Sermon xiv. vol. ii. p. 179, in Oxford ed. of 1850). John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, writes that to live and pray in the spirit of the Saviour's words, 'Not my will, but thine be done,' is 'indeed the true life and spirit of religion; this is religion in its meridian altitude, its just dimensions' (*Discourse on the Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion*). But what Dante especially brings out is the eternal and universal scope of this principle of religion: earth is not its only sphere; acceptance of and submission to the orderings of the Divine Will constitute man's duty and blessedness even in heaven itself, so that we in our daily subduals of our own wills are making progress in doing God's will 'on earth, as it is in heaven.' Twice he introduces this thought, and each time as a means of supplying an answer to the perplexing question: If there are various degrees of nearness to God in heaven, and so of the fulness of the enjoyment of his presence,—and it would seem from the different degrees of fitness for God's presence which characterize men at the times of their departure from this life that there must be such degrees in the next life, if personal identity is in any real and intelligible sense to be preserved,—then how can it be that in the lower and outer ranks there is no such dis-

content and envy as would mar the happiness of heaven? Dante finds the reply to that question in the acquiescence of all in the place and orders assigned to them by the Divine Will—an acquiescence so heartfelt and thorough that it excludes all thoughts of competition and comparison with others, and thus makes dissatisfaction and jealousy impossible. It will be enough to give the reference to the later of these two passages, namely, *Par.* vi. 118–123,¹ for there the expression of the principle is rather obscure, and does not easily lend itself to quotation in English. But the other and earlier passage deserves to be exhibited in a rather long extract. It occurs in the Third Canto, where Dante, who in Paradise is guided no longer by Virgil but by Beatrice, has entered the ‘Heaven of the Moon,’ which is the lowest of the ‘Ten Heavens,’ and that which has the slowest movement (l. 51, quoted below). There he meets the spirits of those who had through force and pressure failed to keep their sacred vows, and in whose lives there had therefore been an element of instability, of which the waxing and waning moon is a fitting emblem. He begs of the shade who seems most wishful to speak with him, and whom he afterwards finds to be his wife’s cousin Piccarda Donati, who had been dragged away by her brother Corso from the convent which she had entered, that she will tell him her ‘name and destiny.’ In the course of her reply she says—

‘Thou shalt recognize I am Piccarda,
Who, stationed here among these other blessed,
Myself am blessed in the slowest sphere.

And this allotment which appears so low
Therefore is given us because our vows
Have been neglected and in some part void.’

Par. iii. 49–57.

He further asks—and there are no nobler lines in the *Divina Commedia* than those in which he is answered—

‘But tell me, ye who in this place are happy,
Are you desirous of a higher place,
To see more or to make yourselves more friends?’²
First with those other shades she smiled a little;

¹ Reference may also be made to *Par.* xxxii. 58 ff.

² *I.e.*, according to the view generally taken of the line, to make more friends for yourselves (cf. *Lk* 16⁹); but perhaps the meaning may be, to make yourselves more beloved by God, and so in a fuller degree His ‘friends’ (*Ja* 2²³).

Thereafter answered me so full of gladness,
She seemed to burn in the first fire of love:
‘Brother, our will is quieted by virtue
Of charity, that makes us wish alone
For what we have, nor makes us thirst for more.
If to be more exalted we aspired,
Discordant would our aspirations be
Unto the will of Him who here secludes us.

Nay, ’tis essential to this blest existence
To keep itself within the will divine,
Whereby our very wishes are made one
[*i.e.* with God’s will];
So that, as we are station above station

[*i.e.* in various grades]
Throughout this realm, to all the realm ’tis pleasing,
As to the King, who makes His will our will;
And His will is our peace;’³ this is the sea
To which is moving onward whatsoever
It [*i.e.* the will of God] doth create, and all that nature
makes.’

Then [adds Dante] it was clear to me how everywhere
In heaven is Paradise, although the grace
Of good supreme there rain not in one measure.

Par. iii. 64–90.

ii. The other great principle of the Christian Revelation which Dante brings out in his *Paradiso* is the *eternal endurance and supremacy of Love*, in heaven as in earth, but there in full and unalloyed perfection. This is taught perhaps most directly by St. Paul, when he declares that ‘love never faileth’ (*οὐδέποτε πίπτει*, never falls out of being or out of use, *1 Co* 13⁸); but it is taught no less certainly by St. John, who tells us that ‘God is love’ (*1 Jn* 4^{8, 16}), and that in the future manifestation ‘we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is’ (*1 Jn* 3²).

Dante’s view of heaven is pervaded throughout by this thought; Mr. Gardner (*Hibbert Journal*, vol. iii. p. 60) quotes Shelley as having given ‘the one adequate summary of the *Paradiso*, when he characterized it as the story of “how all things are transfigured except Love.”’

(a) In the ‘Epistle to Can Grande’ (*Ep.* x.), which there are many strong reasons for regarding as the work of Dante himself (see Moore’s *Studies*, iii. 284 ff.), and which at least is a very early and valuable guide to the moral and spiritual significance of the *Divina Commedia*, and especially of the *Paradiso*, we find this distinct explanation of the symbolism of the tenth and highest Heaven: ‘It is called the Empyrean [*i.e.* the sphere of fire],

³ Matthew Arnold, among others, has called attention to the remarkable beauty and expressiveness of this line in the original, ‘E la sua volontate è nostra pace.’

which is to say that it is a heaven blazing with fire, or rather ardour, not because there is in it material fire or ardour, but spiritual, which is holy love or charity' (§ 24, in Miss Hillard's translation).

(b) The passage of the *Paradiso* itself, in which this is most fully and beautifully expressed, occurs at the point where Beatrice has been guiding Dante from the 'Primum Mobile,' the ninth and last and greatest of the material heavens, into the immaterial Empyrean itself—

With voice and gesture of a perfect leader
She recommenced: 'We from the greatest body
Have issued to the heaven that is pure light;
Light intellectual replete with love,
Love of true good replete with ecstasy,
Ecstasy that transcendeth every sweetness.'

Par. xxx. 37-42.

(c) Again, in *Par.* xiv. 37-41, a passage relating to one of the lower heavens, that of the Sun, it is declared, by the voice of Solomon, concerning the spirits of the wise that the degree of the brightness of the vesture that clothes them is proportioned to the ardour of their love.

(d) Piccarda's mention of 'charity' as quieting the will (*Par.* iii. 71, quoted above) may be here recalled; and with it may be compared xxxii. 61-63, and also xxvii. 8, where 'love and peace' are conjoined as ingredients in the life of Paradise.

(e) And the complete extinction of all rivalries—even of those ecclesiastical and theological rivalries which here on earth seem so often to linger as the last infirmities of otherwise saintly minds—by the peace-making influence of heavenly love, is brought out indirectly, but very effectively, where the two great, and to some extent rival,¹ mendicant orders of the Franciscans and

¹ As to some of the occasions for 'jealousies and collisions' between them, see J. C. Robertson's *Hist. of the Christian Church*, bk. vi. chap. viii. (vol. i. p. 595 of first edition). And Dean Milman, in the course of describing a certain controversy early in the fourteenth century, says: 'The

Dominicans come before us. There, in canto xi., St. Thomas Aquinas, the famous Dominican theologian, is chosen to speak the praises of the life and work of St. Francis; and similarly on the other hand, in canto xii., it is St. Bonaventura, for a time the General of the Franciscans, who pronounces the encomium on St. Dominic. So is represented the expression of that mutual and perfect harmony among the people of God to which Isaiah looked forward as a necessary element in the future prosperity of Israel, 'Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim' (Is 11¹³).

(f) Finally, we may note how, in his concluding lines, the poet tells us as to himself that the result of his admission into the Empyrean, and of the vision of unspeakable glory that was there granted to him, was to bring him into perfect accordance with and obedience to the orderings and influences of Divine Love—

Strength failed that lofty vision to pursue;
But now, as whirls a wheel with nought to jar,
Desire and will were swayed in order due
By Love, that moves the sun and every star.

Par. xxxiii. 142-145 (Plumptre's translation).

So does Dante exemplify in himself the accomplishment of the lofty moral purpose, which, as we are told in the 'Epistle to Can Grande,' he had before him throughout his great poem: both of that poem as a whole, and of the *Paradiso* as a part of it, 'the end is to rescue those who live in this life from their state of misery, and to guide them to the state of blessedness' (§ 15); and thus 'the object of the whole work is not speculative, but practical' (§ 16).

Dominicans, in the natural course of things, were strong on the opposite party; it was a glorious opportunity for the degradation of their rivals. Under their influence the University of Paris . . . pronounced judgment against the Franciscans' (*Latin Christianity*, vol. v. p. 276 in ed. 2).

Contributions and Comments.

How Long was Christ in the State of the Dead?

THE interval between the death and the resurrection of our Lord is of deepest interest; but how long exactly it lasted is not easily determined. In

Scripture the time is given in various phrases. Christ Himself most commonly speaks of His rising again on the *third day*. This, however, like all ordinal numbers is an indefinite expression and cannot of itself, no matter how often repeated, fix exactly the duration of that interval. We re-