

Whither Do I Go?

(No. II of Series)

After Death-- What?

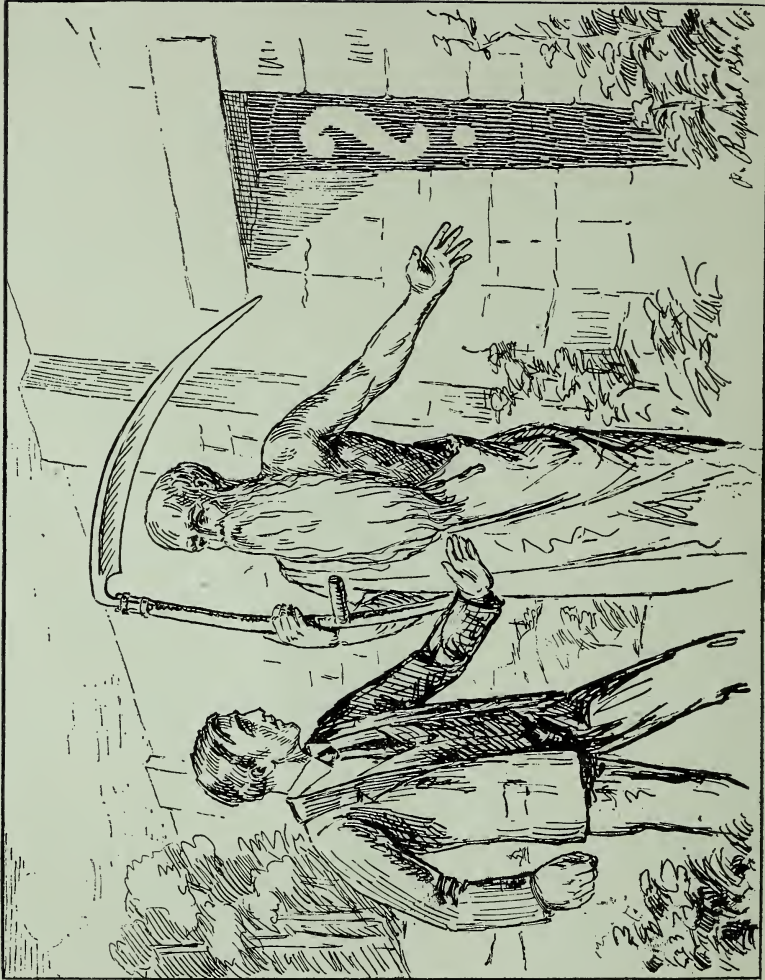
by

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The "Great Unknown"
is sufficiently known

A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

A gentleman, styling himself "a young scientist," recently asked the writer what he thought of "Thoreau's Philosophy of Life." Now we always take pleasure in conversing with a scientist who is also a philosopher. Not all scientists, as you are well aware, are philosophers. The world would be better off if they were. They usually try to discover their philosophy of life, and their theology of life through the microscope, or telescope, or on the dissecting table, or by assembling bones found under an accumulation of debris in remote parts of the world. The microscope leads them to take account of their bigness, which develops pride of intellect. The telescope induces them to think of their littleness, and moves them to conclude that the Infinite cannot be interested in them. In their vivisections they do not find an immaterial soul, and hence they conclude that there is no such thing. The assembling of bones leads them to trace their own origin to a natural rather than to a supernatural source, and they conclude that their destiny cannot be higher.

Now, Thoreau was not a very bad fellow, but he was a singular fellow, whose life would not interest a multitude of people. He believed in a life of retirement from the world, and followed it to some extent.

We asked the young man why he does not look for inspiration to One, Who is quite universally regarded as the great Teacher and the great Philosopher; to Christ, Who has been an inspiration to hundreds of millions throughout nineteen centuries, in the light of Whose teaching practically all riddles are solved, Whose doctrinal and moral codes are admitted even by His professed enemies to be the most lofty which have ever been promulgated.

The notion that it is a sign of progress and of independence to be a little singular, to relinquish time-tried theories for something new, is philosophically unsound. Man is not to be perpetually groping in the dark

after truth. It should be expected that most of it has been discovered by this time, and that he can actually come into possession of it.

Our "young scientist" believed in the continuance of life after dissolution by death. Granting that there is another life beyond the grave, that there is an eternal life, it becomes clear that one's philosophy of life here must be based on that for which this is a preparation. Means must always be related to their end. A matter of paramount importance is, therefore, the correct answers to the questions:

"What comes after death?"

"What is the character of life after death if man has an immortal soul which must continue to live?"

FIVE-SIXTHS OF HUMAN RACE BELIEVE IN IMMORTALITY

You may have heard your university professor express his doubts about immortality. But you certainly are not disposed to build up your life on a doubt. You may have read an article, or for that matter many articles, in the big magazines whose writers assailed the philosophy of Christ. But did they refute Christ, or offer a philosophy of life half as encouraging as His?

Did they *prove* a theory which goes counter to the common belief of nearly all people from the birth of the human race?

Who are these men who, while being anything but specialists in matters religious or moral, pretend to be the great prophets of the day?

Do they claim that the disunity among Christians, the contradictory teachings preached from pulpits of the various religious sects, are responsible for skepticism?

It is very true that many who are tolerated as ministers of the Gospel of Jesus do call in question this or that teaching of faith defended with great vehemence by others of their cloth. But if we except those who follow the new Humanist movement they do not question the continuance of life after death. The ministry

of souls would have absolutely no significance if immortality were not its sum and substance.

Travel the world over today, turn over the pages of the history which deals with any given people, civilized or uncivilized, in any age of the past, and you will discover that belief in immortality has been the consistent, prevalent belief. You will find that it has always been held that life here is related to life hereafter, and that the fate of any individual will be determined by the sort of life he lives here.

Five-sixths of the population of the world at this day profess adherence to some form of religion, and whatever their religion may be, whether it be Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Animism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Spiritualism, they believe in a Supreme Being, Who must be served in this world; and they believe in immortality. The one-sixth, unattached to any of these religions, is not attached to Atheism, and does not pretend to have any proof that the whole of man totally dies when he breathes his last in death.

It is not fair that the believer in immortality should be called on to prove the correctness of his faith. The burden of disproving certainly belongs to the unbeliever. The small minority should prove that the consciousness of mankind is in error. The rule should not owe explanations to the exception, but vice versa.

Science confesses that it has no opinion to offer; that it deals purely with phenomena or material things. The most that it can claim is that it has not come in contact with the soul during its investigations. All who believe in a soul hold it to be a spiritual, and therefore an invisible, entity which cannot be reached in the laboratory. However, science does hold that even matter is indestructible; that it can be dissolved into the tiniest atoms. But it professes ignorance concerning these atoms. But if it be recognized that the common consent of mankind is a criterion of truth; that truth is likely to be found in the belief of five-sixths of the human race today, then we are confronted with a situation which

has a very practical bearing, which affects the weal or woe of every human being.

Granting this, are the skeptics wise? Are they playing safe? Are they not risking too much even by remaining indifferent? Is there not too much at stake to follow a "perhaps" theory?

II

LET HUMAN REASON JUDGE

But what answer does human reason, unhampered by pronounced likes or dislikes, propose to the question: "WHAT COMES AFTER DEATH?" Human reason offers many answers:

(1) Everyone knows that the human heart has yearnings which are not, which cannot be altogether gratified in this world. If these yearnings are common to all people they must be natural. If they be natural, they must have been implanted in the very nature of man by God Himself. If God is responsible for these yearnings, He is obligated to make their realization possible. But, as is generally conceded, they cannot be gratified in this world.

The poor man wants riches; the richest man longs for more; the sick crave for health, and the generality of people desire longer life; the ignorant lament their lack of knowledge, and the learned are restless for more.

We never find in one individual the enjoyment of all the things for which the human heart longs. Suicide is very common among the wealthy, and those who fill high places have one disappointment after another. The prospect of the termination of wealth, of honors, of everything else by death itself takes away from one's complete happiness here. Solomon, who enjoyed everything that the world prizes highly, such as immense wealth, the plaudits of a whole nation, the pleasures of appetite and sense, the greatest fund of wisdom and knowledge, declared in his last days that he found "in all things vanity and affliction of spirit." St. Augustine, who lived the life of the worldling and of the unbeliever for many years, was wont to cry out, "O God, too late

have I known Thee, too late have I loved Thee! My heart was created for Thee, O God, and it will never rest until it rests in Thee."

Reason would have every right to accuse God of being inexcusably cruel, which would be tantamount to the denial of God's very existence, if He filled the human heart with all sorts of longings which would be utterly impossible of realization. But granting that death does not terminate the existence of man, granting that this life is related to another which begins when this ends, and God presents Himself to human reason as a good God, as One Who would not want man's heart to be satisfied with any or all things of this world, so that it might aspire higher and might not forget Him Who wishes to be his "reward exceeding great," Who wishes to fill the heart and soul with happiness to its utter capacity, and everlastingly.

(2) If there were not a life beyond the grave to right the inequalities of this life, God would not be just, which is another way of saying "there is no God."

The inequalities in this life are apparent to everyone. A child is born to a king and another is born to a poor man living in a hovel on the same day. The one is reared in luxury and is in a position to enjoy every creature-comfort which this world is able to afford; the other will feel the sting of poverty throughout youth, and because of the handicap will likely be deprived of education, of the means of ever enjoying a decent livelihood.

One child is born with a sound mind in a sound body, while still another is born mentally defective or a cripple, or blind, or deaf and dumb. Other inequalities will readily suggest themselves to you, but do they not all bring home the conviction that God would be "a respecter of persons" and be deserving of censure, as far as human reason can determine, if He had not a time of His own when the unfortunates here, reconciled to His inscrutable will, and serving Him as best they knew how, could be made everlastingly fortunate?

(3) If the human soul were not immortal, we would be confronted with an inexplicable situation. The im-

plication would be that most of the wicked would go unpunished and most of the good unrewarded. While the skeptic is frequently quoted as saying that people have their purgatory or hell here on earth, everyone knows as a matter of fact that the ones who have most of it are the good. Virtue is not practiced, in any considerable degree, by the generality of those who bend all their efforts to secure their heaven here. Is not the question frequently asked: "If there is a God why does He allow the wicked to thrive and the righteous to be in want?" If there were no life beyond the grave, no satisfactory answer could be given to this question based, as it is, on a very noticeable fact. But grant the existence of a future life, and a very plausible answer immediately suggests itself. The man of faith sees God "chastising those whom He loves" all through history. Paradoxical as this seems to be, in the light of a never-ending existence during which the Almighty can make happy those whom He loves, afflictions in this world are a blessing, because they tend to withdraw man's affections from things material and temporal and fasten them on things spiritual and eternal.

From the standpoint of faith, who was more loved by the Almighty than He Whom He calls "His well beloved Son"? Yet Who was more afflicted than He? Of His own free will He suffered poverty to its lowest depths; suffering the most agonizing; persecution, the most unspeakable; death, the most shameful and painful.

He was never unhappy under all this affliction; never disturbed in mind; never given to complaint, because He related it all to the glory in Heaven, of which it was the purchase price. Referring to His lot in this world, St. Paul says: "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, for which cause God also hath exalted Him." In other words even the humanity of Christ came into possession of far greater glory than it would have attained if it had not been subjected to affliction in this world. To His followers Christ said: "You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Like the Master His disciple Paul

was filled with comfort, "exceedingly abounding with joy" as he says "in all our tribulations." It was the same Apostle who declared that the sufferings of this world bear no comparison to the joy which they lead to when accepted from God with the same love which motivates Him to send them.

(4) Our personality does not change despite the fact that physicians tell us that our body undergoes many changes. You have often heard that your body is renovated every seven years. Yet there is a continuity of the interior man from babyhood to old age. Your memory is proof that you are the same person you were back in early childhood. Is there not something independent of your body which sees, hears, feels, thinks, even when your body sleeps? By having his attention called to this otherwise deep mystery, a physician of Carthage told St. Augustine that he was converted from unbelief to belief. He tells that he had a dream in which he saw a handsome person standing in his presence who said to him: "Dost thou see me?" He answered, "Yes, I see you." The young man rejoined, "Dost thou see me with thine eyes?" "No," answered the physician, "for they are closed in sleep." "With what, then, dost thou see me?" "I know not." The young man continued: "Dost thou hear me?" "Yes." "With thine ears?" "No, for these too are wrapped in sleep." "With what then dost thou hear me?" "I know not." "Are you speaking to me?" was the next question. "Yes." "With thy mouth?" "No." "With what then?" "I know not." Then the young man said: "See now, thou sleepest—and yet thou seest, hearest, and speakest. The hour will come when thou wilt sleep in death, and yet thou wilt see and hear and speak and feel."

When we observe the birthday of George Washington, or Abraham Lincoln, we certainly assume that their spirits still live. When wreaths are placed on the grave of the unknown soldier, in every country whose sons were engaged in the late World War, who would dare say that by common consent the people in these several countries do not believe that his soul is still alive?

The contention of the materialist that belief in immortality had its origin in fear, or even that it is the result of education, is not worthy of consideration. All the people, all the time could not have been fooled, and belief in immortality is prevalent in every nation today and traces may be found even among the most barbarous people of the past. The little child, in whom the light of reason is only budding, shows an intense interest in the subject of God and eternity, as every mother will tell you, as every Sunday school teacher will tell you.

Everyone knows that for nine-tenths of the transgressions of law, whether human or divine, there is no punishment save the lashings of conscience; and conscience is disturbed because it cannot altogether rid itself of the conviction of accountability, and therefore of immortality.

The late Cardinal Manning, a convert to the Catholic religion, refers in the following beautiful language to reason's verdict:

"Finally, 'Non omnis moriar' is a consciousness of my rational nature. It clings to me at every moment. It is confirmed by my hopes and by my fears, by the dictates of my reason and by the instincts of my heart, by my conscious relation to a Supreme Law-Giver, by my whole sense of moral responsibility to Him, and by a sleepless anticipation of an account, a balancing, and a completion hereafter of my moral life and state now. And this consciousness is not derived from sense, nor dependent upon sense. I am more sure of its truth than of any reports of sense, and of any syllogisms of logic. Moreover, what I find in my own consciousness I find to exist in the consciousness of others; and not of one or two here and there, but of all men, at all times, and in all places. And this *communis sensus* of men is a certain evidence of truth, not so much by reason of the number of multitude or witnesses, as by the universal voice of human nature, which is the voice of its Maker and of its Judge."

He, who teaches that this life is the beginning and complete end of every human being, degrades his race

and deprives humanity of its only great incentive to honesty, morality, and self-culture. Conversely, therefore, he who believes in immortality and responsibility to a Creator, is stimulated to avoid evil, to do good, and to cultivate all the finer traits of the human heart.

III

REVELATION ENLIGHTENS REASON

While reason has made it clear enough to the people of all nations that man will survive after death, reason is not competent to determine the character of our existence in the other world. Having only reason to guide them, the Egyptians believed in the transmigration of souls. The Hindus believed that they were to be absorbed in Nirvana. The Chinese and other Orientals have always worshipped their ancestors, believing them to be still living happily in the great beyond. The Greeks and Romans believed in a Tartarus or hell, and in Elysium, a Paradise of joy.

But divine revelation has clarified the sort of fate the soul will have in eternity. It will be either with God or separated from God. "Come ye blessed of My Father, take possession of the Kingdom prepared for you" expresses the reward of faithful service to the Creator. "Depart from Me, ye cursed" expresses the fate of those who ignored the Creator and His commandments while they were on trial or probation in this world. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" is the invitation to the good; "cast them into outer darkness" is the sentence pronounced against the wicked.

It should be evident that those who love and serve God well in this world should be rewarded for their loyalty; and just as evident that those who shut Him out of their lives here should be shut out of His kingdom there.

It is not conceivable that Almighty God would leave us in the dark concerning the manner of attaining unto our eternal destiny. The infidel's assumption that the Almighty is too great to concern Himself with human-kind, infinitely beneath Him, is not philosophically

sound. If it was not beneath the Almighty to create us and to provide in a thousand ways for our temporal well-being, it is not beneath Him to show an interest in our eternal well-being. If He created us incorruptible He did so for a very definite purpose.

Because of its nature the human soul is vastly superior to any amount of material bigness. Therefore the whole universe, before which each one of us feels his littleness, is actually inferior to the tiniest babe.

MAN'S IMMEDIATE FATE AFTER DEATH

According to Catholic belief, which means the universal belief of all Christians for fifteen centuries, the belief not only of 325,000,000 Catholics in union with Rome today, but of 100,000,000 Greeks who are not in union with Rome, and of the remnants of early Christian schismatics of the fourth and fifth centuries, still extant in the Near East (therefore the belief of more than three-fourths of all the Christians in the world at this time) the human soul is either admitted directly into Heaven, or sentenced to Hell, or consigned for a time in Purgatory, following death and judgment.

This teaching is most consonant with human reason. Those who died as saints, who were God's faithful and loyal children throughout their lives here, should be immediately admitted into the realm of His bliss. Those who despised Him during life, ignored His laws, lived shamefully even according to the estimation of men, and died unrepentant, are never entitled to the holy company of the saints, and therefore must be separated from God forever. Those who loved God and neighbor in a moderate way, who strove to avoid serious evil, yet did not worry over the frequent commission of minor offenses, and who died in that state; as well as those who, after falling seriously, turned to God in repentance, but died without having made complete atonement for their guilt, must undergo a temporary expiation in a middle state, which we call Purgatory.

The justice and even propriety of the three realms beyond the grave is readily granted if one takes account

of the three classes into which one would always think of dividing Christians here on earth. No one would dare to divide mankind into two classes only, but would group people in at least three divisions, constituted respectively of the very good, the very bad, and of those who do not fit into either of these extreme groups.

According to the general proposition "as a man lives so shall he die," if man lives in a state of separation from God here, separation from Him in the other world should clearly be his lot. If he lives in the closest union with God here, immediate union with God hereafter should be his reward. If he lives imperfectly and dies imperfectly, he must be prepared for Heaven by a "purging" process. Does not human justice deal with man in a similar manner? It punishes the one guilty of gross crimes by death, or by imprisonment as long as it is possible to inflict it; but it punishes the petty criminal a given number of days, or months, or years, and then liberates him.

WHAT IS THE CHARACTER OF HEAVEN'S REWARD AND HELL'S PUNISHMENT?

Heaven's reward is first of all a state of supernatural bliss, which consists in the vision of God. St. John (1 Ep. III, 2): "We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be; we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is."

Every faculty of the soul, every sense of the body, will be rewarded to its fullest capacity. The intellect of man will be illuminated by the "light of glory," so that he will understand a thousand things which he could not grasp on earth. The will of man will be perfectly conformed to the divine will, so that there could be no possible dissatisfaction. The heart of man will love God with an intensity not experienced by any saint while living in this world.

Heaven, being God's own home, the masterpiece of an Architect Who is omnipotent, must be a place of inexpressible beauty. St. Paul refers to its grandeur, even

as it will appear to the senses of man, when he declares: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man what things God has prepared for those that love Him."

In addition to all this the blessed in Heaven will enjoy the company of the myriads of angels, whom God created to assist at His throne, and of all the holy personages who ever lived in this world, the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Law; Mary, the Apostles, the martyrs, the virgins, the "righteous made perfect," of the New Law. The happiness of those in Heaven will be enhanced by the consideration that "their joy no man will take from them;" it will be theirs forever.

The fate of those who are sentenced to Hell will be the opposite to that possessed by those whose good fortune it was to attain Heaven. They will be separated from God, their Creator, "their first beginning and last end." They were made for Him, and hence cannot possibly be permanently happy without Him, yet they must live on, banished from His presence. They will be punished in their wills, which will be turned away from God in hatred; and there will be nothing for their hearts to love.

They will be punished in the senses of their bodies. While Holy Scripture is very plain in its declaration that they will be punished by fire, and the Church believes that the Bible is to be understood literally in this particular, there has never been a definite pronouncement by the Church concerning the character of the torments by which the senses will be punished. Usually a judge uses very clear language, and language which is to be understood literally, when he pronounces sentence. When Christ speaks of the sentence which is to be pronounced against the wicked, He uses the word "fire," and He calls the affliction of the damned by the same name on other occasions. Even if He spoke figuratively, there could be no consolation for the wicked, because even figuratively understood the pain would be akin to fire.

The company of the wicked will be constituted entirely of reprobates, a class the very antithesis of that

which fills Heaven, namely, the fallen angels, and the criminals, who infested human society on earth.

Despair will dishearten them as much as the permanent possession of Heaven heartens the saved, for the affliction of Hell will be as eternal as the joy of Heaven. Just as the glory of Heaven cannot be described by human language, neither can the misery of Hell.

HOW RECONCILE THIS TEACHING WITH GOD'S GOODNESS?

Do not say that God would not be good if He sentenced a creature to Hell. You could not conceive of Him being good if He received criminals into Heaven, and treated them as He treats those who loved Him on earth "with their whole hearts, with their whole minds, and with all their strength." Remember that God's goodness and His justice cannot be in conflict. Did you ever hear of human justice rewarding those whose lives were an habitual affront to the law? Heaven is not only a reward, but an endless reward, and of the greatest conceivable magnitude.

Why do you not apply your idea of goodness to human policy? A man is guilty of murder, or of burglary, or of fraud, or of arson, or of rape, and he is brought before the court and sentenced by a jury and judge to the penitentiary. Who is to blame, the judge or the criminal? Would society tolerate any different procedure? Does society accuse the judge of being cruel because he metes out punishment in accordance with the law? Do you honestly believe that every jail and prison should be closed, and that the criminal should not only not be punished on the score of "goodness," but that he should be rewarded? Now the same justice which demands the punishment of the criminal for the violation of human law, demands his punishment even more for the violation of the divine law. The existence of penitentiaries, and the fact that everyone of them is filled beyond capacity, does not incite fear in me or you, because we know that it is in our power to keep out of them. If people were arrested indiscriminately and

sentenced to the penitentiary when not guilty, the law would be blamable. So also would God be blamable if He punished creatures who are loyal. But such is not the case either on earth or where eternity begins.

God would also be blamable if He punished people for the violation of laws which it would not be possible for them to observe.

But why does God create a man who, He foreknows, will lose his soul? God created every human being for Heaven, and while He does foreknow who will fail to attain Heaven, His foreknowledge is not the cause of the man's eternal rejection. His foreknowledge is dependent on the free will of the human being. If the man who now stands at the brink of Hell should resolve to repent of his past, and to "walk in the way of God's Commandments," he would still be saved. Hence every human individual, who still has the briefest lease on life, may save his soul. God is always willing to "turn to him if he will turn to God." Therefore, no matter how mysterious may be to you the reconciliation of God's foreknowledge with your changing attitude towards Him, it is something theoretical. The fact remains that nobody will be lost if he will comply with the terms of salvation. The fact remains also that it is within everyone's power to render such compliance. God's foreknowledge and predestination are two different things.

The goodness of God towards man is outstandingly prominent. It was God's goodness, which moved Him to create mankind at all; it was His goodness, which led Him to create you and me in preference to millions of other possible persons who would have served Him much better than we do. It was His goodness, which moved Him to share His eternal glory with us; it was His goodness, which prevailed on Him to reveal His will to us so that we should not be in the dark concerning the requirements for salvation; it was His goodness, which led Him "for us and for our salvation" to become Incarnate, to be our Teacher, and to redeem fallen humanity by Calvary's Atonement. It was His goodness, which led Him to found a Kingdom here on earth, co-extensive

with the world, intended for every human being, where-
in the means of salvation are placed within the reach of
all people and dispensed to them.

MAN'S PERVERSITY

On the other hand it is man's perversity which leads
him to ignore God's goodness, to despise His love, to
reject His sovereignty, to decline His invitation to enter
His Kingdom on earth.

Surely there is more sound philosophy in this pro-
cess of reasoning than there is in all the pretended argu-
ments of infidelity. There is not an honest *disbeliever*
in this world. There may be *unbelievers* and skeptics,
or doubters; but is he a wise man who will follow the
program of doubt or uncertainty when a great issue is
at stake?

Few people really stand in need of mental convic-
tion in this matter of supremest importance. They do
stand in need of prayer to attain the grace of conver-
sion. They do stand in need of a greater measure of
good will, evidence of which will be a humble and pray-
erful attitude towards God, and the disposition, with
God's grace, to relinquish a life which produces no merit
for Heaven.

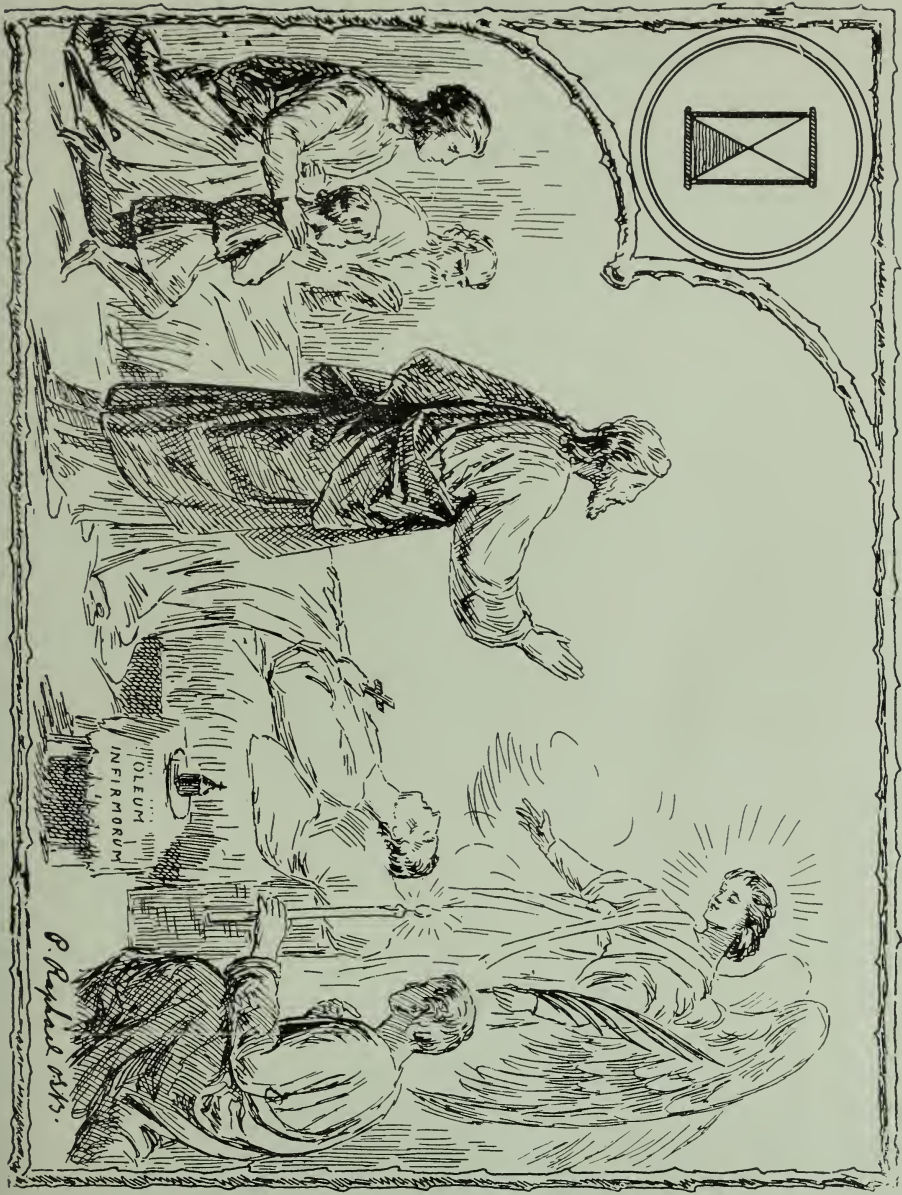
If your soul is immortal, and there can be abso-
lutely no question about it, it must live throughout eter-
nity. If it will not have won Heaven and the possession
of God, can you conceive of any alternative than separa-
tion from Heaven and from God? This is the worst
form of the Hell of divine revelation, and of the Hell
which the human mind, reasoning sanely, postulates.

YOUR JOURNEY NEAR ITS END

A great part of your journey towards death has
been made, probably the greater part. How does your
account stand with God? You will come into posses-
sion of happiness and riches eternal only after you will
have earned them on earth. If your debit account will

be greater than your credit account you can expect no reward. As the word itself implies, reward is bestowed only in return for service rendered. If you have been an habitual criminal rather than a devoted child of God, evidently you can expect nothing from your Creator and Heavenly Father. His infinite sanctity and justice must compel Him to "reward or punish according to your works." This thought runs all through Holy Scripture, and is based on common sense as well as on the eternal fitness of things. "For what a man soweth, that also shall he reap."

A consoling consideration is that it is never too late to turn from inaction to action for the salvation of your soul. God has said through His prophet, "If I shall say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and he does penance for his sins . . . none of his sins, which he hath committed, shall be imputed to him . . . he shall surely live, and not die" (Ezech. XXXIII, 15, 16). The Almighty also says: "If today you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." You are hearing His voice at this moment through the most effective means of wide communication. If anyone should be interested in your particular soul's interest, you should be. Not the one who is addressing you, but you yourself will be the gainer. Even if your prejudices obscure the light of your reason so that you are not yet altogether convinced of the immortality of your soul, you cannot afford to run a risk. "Play safe" is the motto which governs men in practically every other effort and transaction. This motto is particularly emphatic in the matter under consideration. Therefore, resolve, not sometime, but today, to turn to your God in prayer, in repentance, and in a decision to begin forthwith to walk the road which leads to life eternal.



P. Raphael del.

This is No. II in a series of pamphlets prepared by J. F. N. and published by OUR SUNDAY VISITOR, of Huntington, Indiana.

No. I is entitled "Sanity Applied to Evolution."

No. II is entitled "After Death—What?"

No. III is entitled "God's Way Is the Only Right Way."

No. IV is entitled "God's Kingdom There Reached Through His Kingdom Here."

These and others are recommended for serial reading to the agnostic, skeptic, and to the prospective convert.

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