

DEATH NOT LIFE.

I think we are not warranted in concluding (as some have done), so positively concerning this question, as to make it a point of Christian faith to interpret figuratively, and not literally, the "death" and the "destruction" spoken of in Scripture as the doom of the condemned: and to insist on the belief that they are kept alive forever.

"Life," as applied to their condition, [the condition of the righteous] is usually understood to mean "happy life." And that theirs will be a happy life, we are indeed plainly taught; but I do not think we are anywhere taught that the word "life" does of itself necessarily imply happiness. If so indeed, it would be a mere tautology to speak of a "happy life;" and a contradiction to speak of a "miserable life;" which we know is not the case, according to the usage of any language. In all ages and countries, "life," and the words answering to it in their languages, have always been applied, in ordinary discourse, to a wretched life, no less properly than to a happy one.

Life, therefore, in the received sense of the word would apply equally to the condition of the blest and the condemned, supposing these last to be destined to continue forever living in a state of misery. And yet, to their condition the words "life" and "immortality" never are applied in Scripture. If, therefore, we suppose the hearers of Jesus and his Apostles to have understood, as nearly as possible, in the ordinary sense, the words employed, they must naturally have conceived them to mean (if they were taught nothing to the contrary) that the condemned were really and literally to be "destroyed," and cease to exist: not that they were to exist forever in a state of wretchedness. For they are never spoken of as being kept alive, but as forfeiting life; as for instance: "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life;"--"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." And again, "perdition," "death," "destruction," are employed in numerous passages to express the doom of the condemned. All which expressions would, as I have said, be naturally taken in their usual and obvious sense, if nothing were taught to the contrary.-- *Archbishop Whately.*