

**Is
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Everlasting?**

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A REPLY

At first it was not at all my intention to publicly reply to the criticism under this title, which appeared in *Grace and Truth*, the organ of the Denver Bible Institute. I have changed my mind because the article is a model of its kind, and presents the popular arguments against universal reconciliation in a clear and clever way, so that it is especially suitable as the background for a profitable reconsideration of the subject. It seems to be a sincere attempt to set forth God's truth, and only occasionally lapses into a detraction of those whom it opposes. We wish to use it mainly to expose its *method*. The *manner* in which it abuses the Scriptures is enough to condemn it. To this we wish to draw especial attention.

It is possible to prove anything by the Bible if we may take texts out of their contexts. We are practically sure of the truth if we keep each passage in its proper place. The article is full of the former offense. It confounds the various judgments under the one term "hell", notwithstanding an effort to distinguish them in other parts of the same magazine. The twenty-fifth of Matthew, Christ's judgment of living nations according to their treatment of His brethren, is applied universally. The judgment of the worshipers of the wild beast is forced on every enemy of God. Hades is mixed into the confusion. Gehenna is invoked to provide its horrors. Almost all of God's judgments, at various times, con-

4 "The Final Judgment of the Wicked"

cerning various offenders, are heaped upon the head of every sinner of the race. Is this not a travesty on justice, an outrage on divine revelation, an affront to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ?

There are not many rhetorical subterfuges in this article, but a few stand out glaringly. The heading reads, "Is Everlasting Punishment Everlasting?" This is a subconscious admission on the part of the writer that he takes for granted what he is supposed to prove. It is quite unnecessary to write an article to prove that everlasting means everlasting. Before he produces any facts he seeks to insinuate his conclusion into the minds of his readers, and to make any attempt to oppose it seem silly. We agree with him that everlasting is everlasting. But we do not agree that *punishment* is everlasting. *That* is what he seeks to sustain in his arguments. His heading intimates the weakness of his contention.

"The Bible means just what it says when it says that the final judgment of the wicked is everlasting punishment. Read his clear and scriptural discussion, and as you see the inescapable reality of the endlessness of hell-fire may the Spirit of God mightily stir your heart to the end that with renewed zeal you shall tell forth the good news of the crucified Christ Who alone can save us from the never-ending torment of the lake of fire."

This is the editorial prelude to the article. We heartily commend its spirit. We, also, insist that "*the Bible means just what it says when it says . . .*" Very good! But where does it say that "the final judgment of the wicked is everlasting punishment"? This is crucial. If there is such a statement in the Scriptures, he should produce it. It is a solemn and awful responsibility to put words into God's mouth on this subject which He has not spoken, and make it appear as if He had. The phrase "everlasting punishment" occurs only once in the Authorized Version of the Bible, so the reference must be to Matthew 25:46. But this is *not* the final judgment. It is *not* of the wicked in general. It is not faith in God's word but in a human perversion of that word which is

especially commended by the editor of *Grace and Truth*.

As this will come before us more fully in the article itself, we will not enlarge upon it now. We are further assured that it is a clear and scriptural discussion concerning "the inescapable reality of the endlessness of hell-fire". In this, the "Hell Number" of *Grace and Truth*, there is a laudable effort to distinguish between hades, Gehenna, and the lake of fire. Hell is used of Gehenna, though sometimes confounded with the lake of fire. How much better if these scriptural terms had been discriminated! We shall see that the torment of the lake of fire is confined to a few in the Scriptures. Here it is extended to all mankind. Why add to the word of God, especially the last book, which warns us especially against such a practise?

"Hell" is a most confusing and misleading theological term. It is used of hades, which means the *imperceptible*, the unseen. It is used, in Scripture, not merely of the realm of the dead, but of all that cannot be perceived by the human senses, including the powers of darkness. All go there at death, saint and sinner alike. Our Lord went there after He had finished His sacrificial sufferings. Surely *He* did not suffer in "hell"! The parable of the rich man and Lazarus must be interpreted by the other Scriptures, not contrary to them. Gehenna is the vale of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, which is even now used as an incinerator of the city refuse. Its fires will burn during the coming kingdom. Comparatively few criminals will be cast into it. It is not imperceptible. It is as unlike hades as can be. The lake of fire is still another concept. It is never called "hell", in the Bible, for those who come out of hades are cast into it. It should never be confounded with Gehenna, or with the unseen. The word "hell" has become so corrupted by human error that it no longer has any claim to a place in the divine vocabulary. Perhaps no more striking example can be given of its misuse and of the constant effort of

our translators to hide the real meaning of the words *sheol* and *hades* than the quotation which adorns the whole back cover of this number of *Grace and Truth*. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. *Psa. 9:17.*" The word *turned* is *shuv* in Hebrew, and *always* means return, as in Genesis 3:19, "till thou return to the ground." Hundreds of passages might be given to substantiate this. *In order to conceal the truth* the "Authorized" version mistranslates this *turn*. Leeser's version has *return*. The American Revision has *turned back*. *The wicked came from the unseen. They will return thither.* If you insist on using the term "hell", they came from "hell" and to *that* "hell", where they were before, they *return*. This shows that the literal meaning, the *imperceptible*, gives the true significance of the term. The article commences.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment:
but the righteous into life eternal (*Mat. 25:46*).

Three varieties of heresy today are confusing the minds of men concerning the final judgment of the unbelieving. The first of these teaches that all men will have a second chance after death. This is notoriously the teaching of Russellism; but the Mormons subscribe to it in teaching that the living can save the dead by being baptized for them, and the Roman Catholic purgatory is a variant form of the same heresy. The second teaches that the final judgment of the wicked dead will be annihilation. After suffering in the lake of fire for a period of time commensurate with the depth of their wickedness, they will be blotted out and will be no more. This heresy is held both by Russellites and Seventh Day Adventists. And the third teaches that all men, believers and unbelievers alike, will be saved eventually. With differences this is held by the Universalists and a group on the Pacific coast headed by A. E. Knoch. To answer all the details of these heresies is obviously impossible in the brief limits of this article; but to attempt to do so is unnecessary, for all collapse once it is demonstrated that the Bible means just what it says when it says that the final judgment of the wicked is everlasting punishment.

This is the introduction. We are thankful for the words, "With differences". It is usual to couple us with Universalists in order to prejudice the saints against us, just as a believer in the Lord's coming may be called an

Adventist, if it is intended to discredit his teaching. We firmly hold to salvation through Christ alone. We believe God, when He says that through the blood of the cross of His Son He will reconcile the all to Himself (Col. 1: 15-20). We invite attention to the context of this passage. We believe that the all *created* through God's Son is the same all which He will *reconcile*. We cannot help believing God on this point and urge all to consider what God has said. He will reconcile the universe. Do not try to reason about it. Let the context do that for you. We ask you to read God's word yourself. We refrain from forcing our interpretation upon it.

Turning to Colossians, ask yourself a few questions. Who are included in the "all"? Is it confined, *in the context*, to Israel or the nations, or a class? Is it limited in time? Ask the same questions about the creation which is the same in scope (Col. 1: 16). Did Christ create *all*, or only a part? The underworld is not mentioned. Did another Creator create this, or was there no underworld in the beginning? So in the future. Reconciliation is the same in scope as creation. All who were created in the Son of His love will be reconciled through the blood of His cross (Col. 1: 20). It includes all, whether on earth or in the heavens. It is the *context* which absolutely demands that every creature estranged from God shall be eventually reconciled to Him at the consummation.

Ask these same questions regarding Matthew 25: 46. Read the whole chapter. The time is limited to the glorious advent of Christ. Have we any right to apply it to all time? That is one of the worst sins that can be committed against God's revelation. It reduces it to inextricable confusion. Let us follow out this idea. We will wrongly suppose that this is "the final judgment of the wicked". Then the Jews will not be judged at all! There are no Jews in this judgment. Only the nations are judged according to their treatment of His brethren. Then "the final judgment" does not deal with all the

sins of men, but only with their treatment of the Jews! Then "the final judgment" will not include the dead at all! These nations are not raised from the dead. The context clearly shows that this cannot be the final judgment in any sense.

Preceding our Lord's return in glory to the earth to establish the kingdom, the Jews will be persecuted as never before. When He comes, Christ will judge the living nations, who survive the terrors of that time, to determine their place in the kingdom. That will depend entirely on their treatment of His brethren, during the time of Jacob's trouble, not on their other sins. This judgment is not *final*. Matthew deals with the *kingdom*. The chapter deals with the time of its establishment. The judgment is confined to the nations then living. No others are included. Is it not the height of heresy to apply their judgment to all mankind?

We protest against the translation "punishment". *Kolasis*, everywhere else in Greek, denotes corrective chastisement, and is used of *pruning*. Lexicographers rightly reason that it cannot keep this meaning if it is *everlasting*. They therefore change it to suit. "Everlasting" is itself wrong, so they change *kolasis* to correspond with the wrong translation everlasting, making both wrong. Instead, they should have reasoned that *kolasis* was corrective, therefore eonian cannot be endless. Those who do not succor the Jews are given age-long, or *eonian chastening*, not everlasting punishment. The proper Greek word for *punishment* is *timōria*. *Kolasis* occurs only twice in the Scriptures, and never of the final judgment. God speaks of the *judgment*, not the punishment of the wicked.

The body of the article is divided into three sections, the first dealing with the time, everlasting; the second insisting that only resurrected beings enter into this punishment, and the third making it the second death. Keeping in mind the fact that the twenty-fifth of

Matthew alone speaks of everlasting punishment, these subdivisions of the theme are startling indeed. The nations in this chapter are *not* "resurrected beings", and *cannot* enter the *second* death because they have not yet suffered the first! The whole article, therefore, is a classic example of wresting the Scriptures. Unrelated segments are rearranged in order to form a new combination which seeks to put God behind the doctrine of eternal torment for every unbeliever. We quote again:

There are at least three reasons why we believe that everlasting punishment is everlasting.

I. THE BIBLE CALLS IT EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

The first reason why we believe that everlasting punishment is everlasting, is that the Bible says it is just that. Many Scriptures might be quoted in substantiation of this, but one will be sufficient here, for as we proceed we shall see others.

Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Mat. 25:41, 46).

There has been a labored attempt on the part of some to prove that everlasting does not mean everlasting, their argument being based on the recognized fact that the word "aionios" used here is derived from the word "aion" which literally means "age", wherefore "aionios" must mean "pertaining to the age" or "age abiding". The same word, however, is repeatedly used throughout the New Testament to designate the life which the believer receives by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this word which is translated "eternal" in speaking of eternal life in Matthew 25:46 quoted above. And the same word appears in John 3:16, where it is translated "everlasting".

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Because the same word is used to designate both of them, we are irresistibly forced to the conclusion that if everlasting life is everlasting, then everlasting punishment is everlasting. But if everlasting punishment is not everlasting, neither is everlasting life. Those who would limit the unbeliever's punishment logically limit also the believer's salvation, and it is somewhat amusing to see how such false teachers wriggle and squirm in the attempt to escape the logic of their own position. If we believe, as we do, that "the gift of God is ETERNAL life", we must believe also that unbelievers go their way into "EVERLASTING punishment".

A part of this logic seems unanswerable. If the "punishment" is not everlasting then the life *here spoken of* is not eternal. However logical it seems on the surface, the conclusion is unscriptural. *Whenever our reason leads us into direct contradiction to God's word we may be sure that our logic is at fault.* We know that *death will be abolished* (1 Cor. 15:26). Not many believe this, but God has said it. Death is the last enemy. This abolition will be accomplished by making all alive (1 Cor. 15:22). This will be done at the end of the eons, or ages. The believer has eonian life. He lives until there is no death. Hence he *practically* has "everlasting" life. But such is not the statement of the Scriptures. They are concerned with the eons. They do not promise us life thereafter, because *all* receive it then. The believer receives the life of the ages, not eternal life.

The unbeliever receives eonian, or age-abiding, judgment, ending in the second death, *until death is abolished*. Then both believer and unbeliever receive "everlasting" life. The Greek words *aiōn* (age or eon) and *aiōnios* (age-abiding or eonian) *are never* used of endlessness. Scripture speaks of the "eonian times" (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2). All intelligent Bible scholars know that "the end of the *aiōn*" is not the end of the world, but of this age. Each eon has a beginning and an end. Eonian life is limited to the eons. The "everlasting punishment" of Matthew 25:46 lasts for that eon, little over a thousand years. The eonian life of the believer lasts for two eons. How can anyone have *eonian* life after the eons are past? All then have life, for death is also past.

What saint, whose mind has been sanctified by contact with the word of God, will rest satisfied with the judgment foisted upon the Bible by its translators in this passage? Faith is fine. Let us always believe God, even if we cannot understand Him. But let us not allow it to degenerate into credulity. Let us make sure that God has indeed spoken when He seems to sanction what

is contrary to truth and righteousness. In their hearts all will agree that there is something wrong with the sentence of everlasting punishment for failure to help the Jews, while entirely ignoring all the other sins and crimes committed by each individual in the chastened nations. Make it *eonian*, age-lasting, and all is clear even if it seems severe. Then each one will later stand before the great white throne to answer for his other delinquencies. We stand for more judgment, not less, but always scriptural and just, not unscriptural and irrational.

O, the sordid selfishness of soulish saints! We would sink untold billions into endless woe just to be sure that we will be happy, when the basis of blessedness is blessing others! Yet *this passage does not assure us eternal life!* It is not written concerning us at all! When did we succor the Jews in their distress? When did we feed and clothe and visit them? As this "eternal" life is only for those who have done this, the passage, if applied to the majority of the saints today, actually proves that *we* are destined to everlasting punishment! How can a sentence passed on nations in the coming eon, or age, be applied to us without violating every principle of justice and intelligence?

The time is always vital to any interpretation. Apply this passage to the present and it probably will prove that the writer of this criticism, if he has not visited the Jews in jail, is threatened with "everlasting punishment"! Personally, though I have often helped those in jail, I do not remember that one of them was a Jew. Does that doom me to everlasting punishment? It is not a question of faith in Christ here. It is works, and only such as affect the saints of the coming kingdom.

Many have pointed out the fallacy of interpreting all the good things in the so-called "Old Testament" of the church, and all the bad of Israel. Yet these same teachers seek to fasten on all unbelievers what is spoken of a very few, and apply to all the righteous what is written of a

small class. They commit a double felony. They rob the righteous for their own happiness, and pervert the judgment of the ungodly to bolster up their own lack of faith in God. If the possession of "eternal" life depends on this it is precarious indeed. We do not need to rob others. Our life is *hid with Christ in God* (Col. 3:3). We will be roused incorruptible and immortal (1 Cor. 15:54). Will a millionaire commit petty larceny? This is worse. We quote once more:

But even still stronger language is used in speaking of the judgment of unbelievers, and the terms employed reveal with unmistakable clarity the awful endlessness of hell. In Revelation 14:11, speaking of the judgment of the worshippers of Antichrist, the Holy Spirit says,

The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

And in Revelation 20:10, we read,

The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

In both of these passages the expression in the original, as in the English, is the same, and literally means "unto the ages of the ages". Only blind prejudice could fail to see that the Holy Spirit has employed a term which is even more graphic in its denotation than our English word "eternity". Those who enter into the lake of fire shall suffer unto the ages of the ages, or in other words for a countless succession of ages, each age of which is composed of other ages, even as our present age is composed of weeks and months and years.

Let us be intelligible in discussing these awful themes. It may mean little to us whether billions upon billions of human beings suffer for eternity, but it means much to them and far more to God. Such illogical statements as the following show irrational prejudice which ought not to be present in so solemn a discussion. "Those who enter the lake of fire shall suffer *unto* the ages of the ages, or, in other words, for a countless succession of ages. . . ." If one period of time is *unto* another let us not reason that it is that other. If the rendering *unto* is correct, then the following argument is altogether useless.

In the vain attempt to prove that everlasting punishment is temporary punishment Mr. Knoch invents a most remarkable theory. According to his theory there are five ages. Two of them are past. We are living in the third; and there are two yet in the future. The first of these future ages is the Kingdom of Christ; the second, a pure fiction invented to beguile the unwary. It is these two future ages, says Mr. Knoch, which are "the ages of the ages". (Of course there had to be two in order to agree with the plural of the expression.) The punishment of the wicked, according to this writer, is to endure until these two future ages have run their course, then they will be brought forth and will enter with the believing into eternal life. A most ingenious theory, surely, but it collapses like a soap bubble when one turns to such a passage as Revelation 22:5 which says,

There shall be no night there; and they need no candle,
neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them
light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The time of which this passage speaks is a time *following* the Kingdom of Christ. In other words the first of Mr. Knoch's future ages has run its course by this time, and yet "the ages of the ages" stretch into the future. And so it will be when ages follow ages in the eternity period. The ages of the ages will always stretch ahead beyond the sight and ken of man.

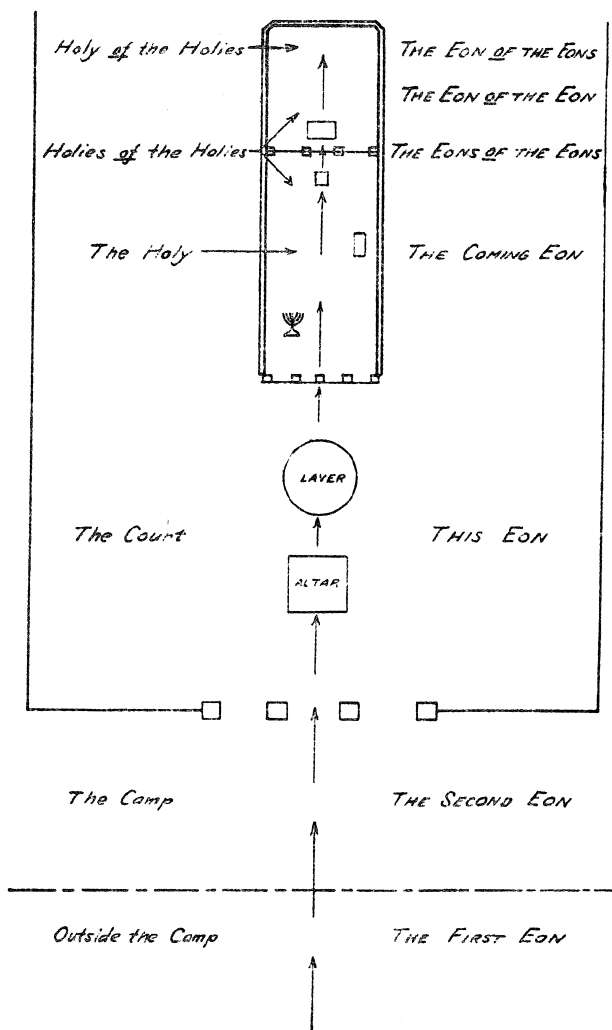
The phrase "*unto* the ages of the ages" cannot stretch to eternity. The word *unto* always denotes a limited period *before* the following era. If it is a true reflection of the original, then "punishment" is not *in* the ages of the ages at all, but ends when they begin. We mention this matter only to show that the change of our rendering *for* to *unto* is fatal to "everlasting punishment". We admit that *eis* means *unto* in *space*. If we could honestly do so *we* would press this meaning, when used of *time*. It would absolutely preclude any idea of eternity. But a close study of the *usage* of this connective with *time* shows that it is the equivalent of our *for*, as in all idiomatic English translations. We will not take advantage of this mistake, for we wish the truth, not a logical victory.

If "the ages of the ages" means a countless succession of ages there should be some evidence for it in the languages of inspiration. Even in English we have no parallel. We might seek to express such a thought by

"ages upon ages", "ages after ages," but never by the genitive, "ages of ages". There is no ground for giving it such a meaning in English. In the inspired originals we have exact parallels. These determine its force for us. It surely is not blind prejudice to intelligently compare this phrase with others of the same kind rather than force upon it a meaning which is dictated only by our desires. Show us a single parallel in Hebrew or Greek in which the genitive plural follows the plural in order to denote infinity in any sense, and we will consider it.

Readers of the Bible are familiar with a similar phrase in connection with the tabernacle of Israel. Everyone knows of the holy of holies, and the preceding holy place. These are called "the holies of holies" in Hebrews 9:25, in the best manuscript. It gives us an exact parallel in space corresponding to the "the eons of the eons" in time. In fact the whole tabernacle system has a remarkable correspondence with the eonian times, as shown on the accompanying diagram. There are five divisions in each. The two inner holy places are related to the court, the camp and the world without, just as the last two eons are related to the previous eons. Both show the way to God, one in space, the other in time.

Are "the holies of holies" in the tabernacle a countless succession of holies? Is each composed of other holy places even as our age is composed of weeks and months and years? The idea is so incongruous that it needs no refutation. This form of speech does not multiply the holy places. It relates them to the others. The holy of holies brings before us *one* holy place as the outcome of and superior to other inferior holy places. The holies of holies are confined to the *two* holy places in the tabernacle as related to the court and the camp. This is the usage of the Hebrew, followed by the Greek and also by English. None of these languages will tolerate the thought of infinity. Not a single genuine example can be given without changing *of* to a different connective.



THE HOLY PLACES AND THE EONS

No one who will intelligently consider the correspondences between the tabernacle arrangement and the eons, will fail to be convinced that the likeness is essential rather than accidental. The five zones, from the great world without, through the camp, the court, the holy place, to the holiest of all, have many features in common with the five eons. The great central fact of all, the cross of Christ, is represented by the brazen altar, in the third space and eon. The holy place is an apt figure of the coming eon, and the holiest of all, with its shekinah glory, finds its counterpart in the new earth, where the glory of God displaces the light of the sun.

We have repeatedly suggested that no explanation of "the ages of the ages" is satisfactory which does not also explain the difference between it and "the *age* of the *age*" and "the *age* of the *ages*". A countless succession of ages absolutely obliterates any possible distinction. On the other hand, the exposition we offer fully accounts for all the facts. The last eon is "the eon of the eon", and "the eon of the eons" in the same sense as the most holy place is the holy of the holy and "the holy of holies". Every explanation which ignores these three phrases thereby proclaims its own inadequacy. These expressions are inspired by God, and are true tests of that which conforms to His revelation.

In the Unveiling, or Revelation, we are usually taken with John to the scene of his visions. They are not presented as future, but present. It is very striking, as we near the end of the book, to note occasional changes to the future tense. For instance, in between the vision of the new earth and that of the new Jerusalem we read, "He who is conquering *will* be enjoying these things, and I *shall* be His God" (Un. 21: 7). The standpoint of the Speaker is in the past. So in the next chapter, John is shown the river of water of life and the tree of life. Then we read that the throne of God and the Lambkin *will be* in it (Un. 22: 3). If John is still present, viewing the

scene, then he would see the throne as a present reality. He would write "the throne . . . is in it". So with all that follows, until the Lord says "Lo! I am coming swiftly!" (Un. 22:7). Surely this is not in the last eon!

In every case "the eons of the eons" refer to the last two. A superficial reading of this passage seems to supply the one case in which this is not true. A close study, on the contrary, confirms its usual significance. From the standpoint of any time prior to the coming of the Lord, *the time when John speaks*, there are two future eons.

That the post-millennial eon is not "pure fiction" is not only evidenced by the fact that "forever" always ends before this eon begins, and it is the "*and ever*" of "forever *and ever*", but it is recognized by great students of the Scriptures, such as Trenchard and, we understand, James M. Gray, dean of the Moody Bible Institute. We quote again:

It in no wise lessens the force of this expression to note that it is also used to designate the eternity of God

Who liveth for ever and ever (literally to the ages of the ages) (Rev. 15:7).

Prove that the punishment of the inhabitants of the lake of fire will have an end, and you will have annihilated God; but until you can annihilate Him be not so foolhardy as to reject His word when He declares that His enemies shall be

tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Such a statement as this shows the careless, hard-hearted indifference with which good men corrupt the word of God in order to consign all His enemies to eternal torment. What are the facts? Torment for the eons of the eons, in the Scriptures, is limited to the wild beast, the false prophet, the Slanderer, and to the smoke that ascends from the torment of the Israelitish worshipers of the wild beast (Un. 14:10). These are the most flagrant rebels in the universe, hence deserve the direct doom. It is not *God* Who declares that [all] His enemies shall suffer this fate. It is one who puts out his hand to stay God's ark. It is useless to speculate what proportion

of His creatures will be tormented thus. I suppose that it refers to about one billionth part. The statement may be one-billionth true in regard to numbers and is infinitely false in regard to time.

Let us appeal to the illustration we have already used, and apply it to the tabernacle. The high priest is in the holies of holies. Does this prove that he is *confined* there? It states a very pregnant fact, full of significance. It does not hinder him from going into the court or the camp or even the world around. It is not logic, it is not reason, which makes negative inferences from positive statements. God says He lives for the eons of the eons. The "inhabitants of the lake of fire" are "punished" that long. We thoroughly believe that *the length of time is the same*. Thereafter death is abolished, as God has said (1 Cor. 15:26). If God lives until there is no death, is it reasonable to infer that He will be annihilated? It would be silly for God to insist that He will live when death has been abrogated.

Herbert Hoover, president of the United States, lived during the world war. Many of its victims bear thankful evidence to that fact. But I have yet to find anyone who has used it to prove that he was born at its beginning or is now dead, seeing that the war is over. It is so senseless an inference that no one cares to sponsor it. When God asserts that He lives for the eons of the eons (not *to* the ages of the ages), it is the height of absurdity to infer that He lives at no other time. There was a time before the eons (1 Cor. 2:7). Was He living then? During the Lord's day and the succeeding day of God, He will be in vital contact with the earth in a sense which is impossible at present. His life will be evident everywhere, in power, not hidden, as now. In this way He will live for the eons of the eons. Compare the phrase "resurrection of *life*". The resurrection of judgment also restores to life. Life is used in an intensive sense. We quote:

II. IT IS RESURRECTED BEINGS WHO ENTER
INTO THIS PUNISHMENT

The second reason why we believe that everlasting punishment is everlasting, is that it is resurrected beings who enter the lake of fire.

This we are taught specifically in John 5:28, 29:

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

We cannot condemn too severely or too often the evil practise of wrenching Scripture from its context, which is so flagrantly exemplified in this section. The "everlasting punishment" of the twenty-fifth of Matthew is notable for the fact that it applies to *living nations* who have not been raised from the dead. Yet here we are asked to believe that this punishment is eternal *because* they are "resurrected beings"! If there really is force to the argument, it proves the opposite. We could retort that, since those to whom everlasting punishment applies are *not* "resurrected beings", therefore it is *not* endless. Both arguments are fallacious, for they have no scriptural premises. There is no passage to prove that a "resurrected being" must live endlessly. On the contrary, God speaks of a second *death*, not an endless life, for those "resurrected beings" who stand before the great white throne, whose names are not in the book of life.

Note the phrasing of the passage quoted. There is a "resurrection of *life*" and a "resurrection of *judgment*". If there is any argument here, it seeks to prove that the resurrection of judgment is also a resurrection of life. The logical inference is the opposite. Those in the "resurrection of damnation" are *not* raised to life in the sense here used, but to the second death. *Resurrected* beings are not immortal or incorruptible. All of those who were raised from the dead in the past have died again, except the Firstfruit, Christ. The argument applies only to those *made alive*, or *vivified*, in the resurrection of *life*;

not to those in the resurrection of damnation. These cannot die. The others must die. They return to death, and, unless resurrected again, cannot be punished everlastingly. They are raised in order to be judged because there is no "punishment" possible in death.

In all of the passages dealing with the future the word *life* is used in a special, exalted sense. Those in the resurrection of judgment must have life in a subordinate sense, or they would not be resurrected at all. Those in the resurrection of *life* must have life in a superior sense. It will be incorruptible, beyond the reach of death. Let us always distinguish between resurrection, which applies especially to the body, and rousing (usually translated *raise* in English versions) used of the soul, and vivification, making alive, which emphasizes the spirit, and is used only of a resurrection of life, which brings incorruption and deathlessness. Confuse them, as is here done, and the result will be error, apparently backed by the Bible.

The lake of fire is called the second death. In it some suffer torment. A hasty inference would make the second death the suffering of torment. But it is notable that the lake of fire is not called the second death until after those raised for judgment enter it. Those who are tormented in it, the Israelitish worshippers of the wild beast, the false prophet and Satan, *have not died before*. It cannot be the second death for them. Let us always keep separate what God has sundered. It is only to those who emerge from the first death that the lake of fire becomes the second. To them there is no more torment in the second death than there was in the first.

The monstrous, unscriptural idea that men are tormented in death, before they are brought to judgment, is so revolting to every sense of justice that its absence from the word of God is one evidence of divine inspiration. Even among civilized men a prisoner is not punished before he is judged. If the men of Adam's day

have been tormented ever since and will suffer until the day of judgment, *when they will be tried*, then God's judgment is a farce, and there is no reason for a resurrection. There can be no "punishment" in death. That is why men are roused to be judged. They are "punished" *while raised*. Their "punishment" ceases when they enter the second death. Quoting once more:

Another passage which has been miserably perverted to teach universal salvation must be interpreted in the light of this Scripture. The passage to which we refer is I Corinthians 15:22.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Without question the thing which holds the foreground here is the resurrection of believers. But that unbelievers are also included cannot be doubted when we give full value to the "as" and "so". The effect of Adam's transgression was universal—it brought death to the whole race. So also must be the effect of Christ's resurrection—it must bring resurrection to the whole race. But the teaching of this Scripture is limited by the teaching of that already quoted. For some that resurrection will be a resurrection of life—for others a resurrection of damnation.

This is a classic example of the paralysis of reason when dealing with the word of God. Let us first reason this out as it should be done, then note the method of arriving at the opposite conclusion. The fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians is concerned largely with *resurrection* (*anastasis*, verses 12, 13, 21, 42) and *rouse* (*egeirō*, verses 4, 12, 13, 14, 15, 15, 16, 16, 17, 20, 29, 32, 35, 42, 43, 43, 44, 52). But it also speaks of *vivification* (verses 22, 36, 45) or *making alive*. We do not read that all shall be *raised* or *roused*, but all shall be MADE ALIVE. Since we concur that "the teaching of this scripture is limited by the teaching of that already quoted", *it must refer to a resurrection of life*. All are not merely to be *raised* for judgment (though that is true at a previous time), they are to be *made alive* in a resurrection of *life*.

Had this read "all shall be *raised*" or "all shall be

roused”, then the argument presented would be worthy of consideration. But when all depends on the word *life* and the usual terms are carefully avoided and “made alive” is used instead, it is the height of unreason to point to “resurrection” in *other parts of the chapter*, base an argument on it, and then force it on this text. “Made alive” has been wrenched out and “raised” inserted. There are contexts in which this would not be so subversive. But here the whole argument depends upon it. Leave the passage as it is and we are right. Change it, as is here done, and we are wrong.

What says the context? Does it support *resurrection* or *vivification*? *How* are all to be made alive, and *when*? The last enemy to be abolished is death (verse 26). That is the complete vindication of this Scripture *as it stands*. It must refer to the second death. The first death cannot be the last enemy. It is long after the resurrection of judgment. It is accomplished by putting death out of action. All *saints* will be vivified in the resurrection of life. All *sinner*s will be raised in the resurrection of judgment, but sent back into death. *All* who have died in Adam will be *made alive* when death is *abolished* at the consummation, when Christ abdicates the throne and God is All in all (1 Cor. 15: 22-28). Quoting again:

Yet another Scripture which teaches that when unbelievers receive their final judgment it will be in resurrected bodies is Revelation 20:12-13:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

These clear statements are in full harmony with what we have already seen. Those who go from the judgment of the Great White Throne into the lake of fire will be men in bodies which have been raised from the dead.

Now we know, of course, that the suffering of the wicked does not depend upon their being in the body. The rich man in Hades was a disembodied spirit, yet he said to Abraham,

I am tormented in this flame (Luke 16:24).

But the fact that those who go into the lake of fire are souls in bodies which have been raised from the dead serves to emphasize the eternality of their suffering. And surely the bodily character of that continued conscious existence points the thrice repeated warning of Mark 9:43-48 to the effect that hell is a place where

their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

"We know." These are wonderful words. Should they ever be used, in this connection, of anything which is not actually inspired? "We know, *of course!*" This is a subconscious admission that we do not really know. As a matter of fact we do *not* know that the suffering of the wicked does not depend upon their being in the body. The very evidence here adduced is against the supposition. If the rich man in hades was a "disembodied spirit", how was it that he had a tongue? How was it that he could not pass the great gulf? (Luke 16:23-26). Undoubtedly, we will be told that this is figurative. If so, by what law of language may we reason about figurative things as though they were literal? Scripture knows nothing of "disembodied spirits" except in visions. All sensation, in human beings, is dependent on a body vitalized by a spirit, the two combined giving consciousness, or sensation, which is called soul.

This scene is in "hades". What does that prove in regard to the lake of fire, in which this "punishment" is supposed to be? May we take any statement regarding "hades" and use it of the lake of fire? If so, Abraham will be in the lake of fire, or at least will have a good view of it to entertain him for all eternity! Hades is cast into the lake of fire. It is the imperceptible realm. It always is connected with the *soul*, when used of mankind. Christ's soul was not left in hell. Hades, the unseen or imperceptible realm, is practically equivalent to oblivion.

Once more the Scriptures are wrenched. "Hell" is said to be a place where "their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched". This is said of the vale of Hin-

nom, below Jerusalem, during the kingdom. Worms will devour the city offal and the bodies of unburied criminals. Fires will be kept burning to dispose of this refuse. Why confuse this with the lake of fire? No worms can live in a fiery lake. And why confuse the life of the worms with that of its victims? Why take passages which are definitely limited by their contexts to a comparatively few criminals in the kingdom and apply them to all mankind? Will this not bring the word of God into contempt and ridicule? When God says Gehenna He means Gehenna and not the lake of fire. He has made a distinction with a difference. Who has a right to ignore it or obliterate it? We quote again:

III. THIS PUNISHMENT IS THE SECOND DEATH

The third reason why we believe that everlasting punishment is everlasting is that the Bible calls it "the second death".

This is the term used in Revelation 20:13-15:

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Another Scripture which emphasizes the fact that it is resurrected beings who suffer the second death is Revelation 20:6.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.

Since the Spirit takes special care to inform us that the second death has no power over those who have part in the *first* resurrection, the self-evident implication is that there are some on whom it will have power after they have been resurrected. This agrees with the words of Revelation 20:13-15 which we have already quoted. Since death will have given up the dead which were in it, and since death is to be cast into the lake of fire, the inevitable conclusion is that those who, up to this time, have been held in the grip of death have been raised from the dead in order to take their place in the final judgment. This further confirms the fact which we have already faced—all who go into the lake of fire will be resurrected beings.

Think of what this means. Lost souls, suffering the torments of hell, have nothing to look forward to but age upon age of continued torment. They can find no surcease for these

sufferings in death. For them physical death is forever past. The death which they are suffering is the second death in the lake of fire, which, according to Revelation 20:10, is a condition of fiery torment which shall continue for ever and ever.

There is no reasoning here. There is not even inference. The "everlasting punishment" of Matthew twenty-five is not the second death, for it occurs more than a thousand years before the lake of fire as a second death begins to operate. But we will waive that, for it is a fact that the fate of nearly all unbelievers is the second death. How does this prove that it is everlasting? We are told that, for them, "*physical* death is forever past. The death which they are suffering . . . is a condition of fiery torment . . ." The proof is, "and they will be tormented day and night for the eons of the eons". Of whom is this written? The Slanderer, the wild beast, and the false prophet. What right has anyone to alter this so that it includes all others? Such corruption of the Scriptures is a crime worthy of the second death, apart from the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

The lake of fire is called the second death only in connection with those who have been previously raised from the dead. It is never so called in relation to the Slanderer or the false prophet, for they have not died before, and are not dead in it. They are not like the bulk of mankind. The Slanderer is not human. The wild beast has been given a superhuman life. The false prophet had power to give spirit to his image. To these the lake of fire is not the second death and Scripture is careful to guard against any such inference. I know of no greater corruption of God's word than to take their penalty and apply it to the billions upon billions of beings, men, women, children, infants, most of whom never heard of Christ or His salvation. Very, very few of these have committed any act which so fearfully affects God's character as this perversion of His word, or is worthy of such a severe penalty.

The lake of fire is called the second *death* in order to

distinguish the fate of those who stand before the great white throne, *who have been judged*, from those who suffer in it, who sinned so publicly and atrociously that no trial was necessary. Those who go into the second death are those who came out of the first, to be judged. They return to the same state as that from which resurrection brought them. The beast and false prophet are *living* in the lake of fire. These are *dead*. Their resurrection was physical. Their death will be physical, for resurrection refers primarily to the body, as rousing does to the soul, and vivification to the spirit.

It is a marvelous thing to receive life for the eons, to be enjoyed in congenial surroundings. It would be a much greater miracle to give life to unbelievers to be preserved in the midst of the most deadly environment it is possible to conceive. No normal human being can live in a fiery lake. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged this in his day. But the miracle that preserved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego kept them safe and unharmed. We are asked to believe that, *for those who have been judged and have suffered in accord with their deeds before the great white throne*, the lake is a lake of life, in which they will be miraculously preserved in order to suffer infinitely. This in the face of God's plain declaration that, for them, it is the second *death*, a temporary place of oblivion until death is abolished and all are made alive in Christ, at the close of the eons. Quoting finally:

How thankful we should be that through our Lord Jesus Christ salvation has been provided for every man. And how our hearts should leap with joy at the promise which our Saviour has given:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

And how the thought of the endlessness of the punishment of lost souls should stir us to do everything in our power to snatch them as brands from the burning. Our Lord Jesus Christ has died to save them, and God has committed unto us the word of reconciliation, that through His Word upon our

lips lost men may believe in Him and be saved. If men go out from the presence of the King into everlasting punishment it must be because they have trampled under foot the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us resolve that it must be also because they have spurned our earnest, persistent, loving pleading with them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire;
hating even the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 23).

"If men go . . . into everlasting punishment it must be because they have trampled under foot the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." Again we desire to remind our critic that this doom comes only to those who do not help the Jews in the coming tribulation (Mat. 25:41-46). Why alter the word of God? Nor is it true in its wider sense. Billions will be judged who never heard of the cross of Christ. Seeing the force of this, some, as Sir Robert Anderson, leaned strongly toward a special judgment for all who were not "Christ rejectors". As there is nothing in the Scriptures to sustain this distinction, he was inclined to leave them in the hands of God, while he became an agnostic as to their fate. This is the normal reaction of a reasonable man to the atrocious injustice of the orthodox view. Strong as was his faith, Sir Robert Anderson found it impossible to believe such infinite fiendishness.

We wish to commend the writer of the article for his unreasonable conclusion. It shows that his heart refuses to follow his head. Only a small percentage of humanity hitherto have heard the evangel. *Destiny is not based on its refusal*. Humans who live and die without hearing it will be raised and judged and cast into the lake of fire. That is the word of God. No one can disprove it. Those who seek to limit judgment to Christ rejectors do so because they see the utter injustice of their teaching as regards the heathen and infants. They condemn their own doctrine, and seek an escape from it. Finding no loophole in the Scriptures, they invent one of their own.

If it were true that only those who trample under foot the cross of Christ suffer everlasting punishment,

and the rest are in God's hands for a milder fate, the only rational conclusion is that the evangel is the means of eternal torment to all who do not believe it. The difference between *everlasting* punishment and any other is infinite. Hence it would be infinitely better not to preach the evangel. The risk is too great. So small a proportion of those who hear are saved, that it is better to leave all in God's hands. Thank God, that is just where they are, and not even the evangel can take them out of His hands. The evangel may increase their condemnation, but it is not the means of their infinite woe. On the contrary, it will eventually become the means of their infinite weal.

Why do many today refuse to hear the evangel? Because of this very teaching! No sane man can justify God if He dooms to eternal torment those who had absolutely no recourse in the matter. They deserve *judgment* commensurate with their deeds. But nothing that they can do deserves infinite damnation. God's creatures are limited in every way, even in their capacity to do evil. It is a solemn consideration that very few unbelievers have the opportunity to commit so great a sin as to alter God's revelation as is done in this article.

The closing passage is another instance of misfitting a text of God's holy word. We have been hearing of the lake of fire, and we receive the impression that no one can be saved out of it. Now we are exhorted to save them, pulling them out of the fire! The subject is too solemn for such an anticlimax. Jude is not speaking of the lake of fire. Nothing in his context suggests it. Why take it out of its setting and put it where it makes the Scriptures appear absurd?

David was right when he preferred to fall into the hands of God rather than man. Should not we, though beyond the reach of condemnation in Christ Jesus, be very tender and considerate in judging those who deserve no sorer fate than we ourselves? We cannot take credit for believing, for our salvation is wholly of grace. In-

stead of that we see Christendom, and those who are teachers, and who suffer for God's truth, wresting passage after passage in order to pervert God's judgment of unbelievers. If this were done in order to mitigate their fate it could be condoned. God's just judgments are severe. I do not plead for any mitigation. But I do protest against threatening the whole world with the fate He has reserved for relatively few of His greatest enemies.

To sum up: All was created in the Son of God's *love*, and all will be reconciled by the *blood* of His *cross* (Col. 1: 13-20). This gives us the *origin* and *destiny* of all. The chastening judgments which occur during the eonian times deal with the *process*. They are all limited in duration and accord with the sin which they correct and the consummation God has in view. The judgment of individuals varies according to the deserts of the delinquents (Rom. 2: 6-10; Un. 20: 13), hence it cannot be infinite. It must be inflicted in *life*, not in death, or there would be no resurrection of judgment. The death state is not endless. *Death will be abolished*, after it has served its purpose, by the vivification of all (1 Cor. 15: 22-28; 2 Tim. 1: 10). *Redemption* and *eonian* life are only for those who believe during the eons. At the great jubilee, the consummation at the close of the eons, those who have not been redeemed will be *delivered* and come into their own through the blood of Christ's cross. Thus God will become All in *all*.

This article is not intended to set forth these great doctrines, but to suggest, to God's saints that there is much glorious truth which is still hid from advanced Bible students. It hopes to stimulate further investigation. The doctrine of the eons, or ages, is briefly stated in *The Divine Calendar*, and more fully set forth in *All in All*. We urge everyone to acquaint himself with the *facts* which underlie this teaching. Intelligent students will wonder how "forever" can be endless when it is so

often followed by "and ever". Follow out this hint. But, above all, be honest in dealing with God's words. Do not "apply" all the good to yourself, and all the bad to others. Believe *just what God says* when He says . . . Do not snatch the sword out of His hand and run amuck, as so many zealous, devoted servants of His are doing today.

I call upon the Denver Bible Institute and all the institutes and publications dealing with the word of God, no matter what their stand as to the future of unbelievers, to repudiate the vicious system of interpretation which applies every adverse verdict in the Scriptures to every individual sinner in the world. I adjure them to acknowledge that Matthew twenty-five is limited to those among the nations, living at the coming of the Son of Mankind in glory, who do not succor His brethren, the Jews, in the time of their trial. To these alone is the phrase "everlasting punishment" (eonian chastening) applied by God. I likewise adjure them to publicly declare that future torment is spoken only of the greatest offenders, the worshipers of the wild beast, the wild beast, the false prophet, and the Slanderer. It is not used of any others. Let God be true . . . ! A. E. K.

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