

The Concordant Newsletter

NUMBER 2

APRIL-JUNE 1996

EDITORIAL

AS MANY of our readers will be aware, our friend and fellow worker, Herman H. Rocke, fell asleep in Christ on April 25. He was nearly 88 years old (*cf Unsearchable Riches*, vol.87, pp.97-102). Though, in recent years, infirm in body, he remained strong in spirit. Intellectually, especially in his Hebrew translation work together with Dean Hough for the Concordant Version of the Old Testament, his competency actually increased in his latter years. Brother Rocke taught me many things, whether in points of teaching, questions of language, or issues of writing style. But most of all he gave us an example of the power of devoutness even as of steadfast commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ.

We received the following memorable note from Herman and his late wife Luise, dated November 9, 1990: "Now we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the transcendence of the power may be of God and not of us. So, while being afflicted, we are not distressed; we are often perplexed, but not despairing. And we are not despondent while our outward man is decaying, since our inward man is being renewed day after day after day All the three of you, Jim, Sue, and Marc, are always in our prayers. May the Lord grant you a season of refreshing. Thanks for the report of your trip to the Pacific Northwest, dear Jim. Our prayers had accompanied you on this trip. And thank you for your note, dear Sue; that means so much to us. God's grace and peace be with you. Loving greetings from both of us to all of you. Yours in Him, Herman."

J.R.C.



In this issue, we are pleased to reprint, from the 1922 edition, A. E. Knoch's reply to the published sermons of R. A. Torrey, which that author had entitled, "The Exact Truth Regarding an Eternal Hell." Accompanying this extended article, we also have prepared a new Chart of the Eonian Times. From The Beginning to The Consummation, the chart's center column demarcates the respective epochal eons of Scripture by the events which introduce each subsequent eon: The Disruption; The Deluge; The Day of Indignation; The Judgment. The various phrases in which the noun "eon" appears, are listed according to the specific eon to which they refer. The right-hand column lists each occurrence of the adjective eonian, according to the respective noun which it modifies. The left-hand portion of the chart categorizes and lists each occurrence of various eon-phrases according to that portion of the eonian times which it encompasses. The ruled lines of various lengths, some of which have breaks in them, together with the corresponding placement of each phrase, assist in indicating that portion of the eons to which each respective phrase refers.

CHRONŌN AIŌNIŌN

A Chart of the Eonian Times

2 Tim.1:9; Titus 1:2; (Rom.16:25)

Before the Eons. 1 Cor.2:7; [Jd.25]

God All

THE BEGINNING

2 Tim.4:18; Heb.13:21; 1 Pet.4:11; 5:11; Rev.1:6,18; 4:9,10; 5:13; 7:12; 10:6; 11:15; 14:11; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5
THE EONS of THE EONS Rom.16:27; Gal.1:5; Phil.4:20; 1 Tim.1:17

FROM THE EONS Eph.3:9; Col.1:26

CONCLUSION OF THE EONS Heb.9:26

THE ONCOMING EONS Eph.2:7

FOR THE EONS Luke 1:33; Rom.1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 2 Cor.11:31; Heb.13:8

THE EONS Eph.3:11; 1 Tim.1:17; Heb.1:2; 11:3; Jude 25

THE CROSS

cf 2 Pet.3:6, "The world that then was" and Eph.2:2. Then:

THE DISRUPTION

cf 2 Pet.2:5, "The ancient world" and Eph.2:2. Leads to:

THE DELUGE

The Present Eon.

Gal.1:4.

The Current Eon.

1 Ti.6:17; 2 Ti.4:10;
Tit.2:12.

This Eon.

Mt.12:32; 13:22; Mk.4:19; Lu.16:8;
20:34; Rom.12:2; 1 Cor.1:20;
2:6,8; 3:18; 2 Cor.4:4; Eph.1:21;
2:2 (with world).

For the Eon.

Mt.21:19; Mk.11:14; Jn.12:34;
13:8; 1 Cor.8:13.

From the Eon.

Lu.1:70; Acts 3:21; 15:18.

Out of the Eon.

Jn.9:32.

Conclusion of the Eon.

Mt.13:39,40,49; 24:3.

THE DAY OF INDIGNATION

The Coming Eon.

Mk.10:30; Lu.18:30.

The Future Eon.

Hb.6:5.

That Eon.

Lu.20:35.

For the Eon.

Mk.3:29; Lu.1:55; Jn.4:14; 6:51,58;
8:35,51,52; 10:28; 11:26; 12:34;
14:16; 2 Cor.9:9; Hb.5:6; 6:20;
7:17,21,24,28; 1 Pt.1:25;
1 Jn.2:17; 2 Jn.2; Jd.13.

For the Day of the Eon

2 Pt.3:18 (*cf* Dt.32:7; Mic.5:2;
7:14; Mal.3:4).

Conclusion of the Eon.

Mt.28:20.

THE JUDGMENT

THE CONSUMMATION 1 Cor.15:24.

The Consummations of the Eons. 1 Cor.10:11.

EONIAN

Times.

Ro.16:25; 2 Ti.1:9; Tit.1:2.

Life.

Mt.19:16; Mk.10:17;
Lu.18:18;
Mt.19:29; Mk.10:30;
Lu.18:30;
Mt.25:46; Lu.10:25;
Jn.3:15,16,36; 4:14,36;
5:24,39; 6:27,40,47,54,68;
10:28; 12:25,50; 17:2,3.
Acts 13:46,48.
Ro.2:7; 5:21; 6:22,23.
Ga.6:8.
1 Ti.1:16; 6:12;
Tit.1:2; 3:7;
1 Jn.1:2; 2:25; 3:15;
5:11,13,20.
Jude 21.

Salvation.

Hb.5:9.

Redemption.

Hb.9:12.

Covenant.

Hb.13:20.

Allotment.

Hb.9:15.

Kingdom.

2 Pt.1:1.

Evangel.

Rv.14:6.

Consolation.

2 Th.2:16.

Glory.

2 Cor.4:17; 2 Ti.2:10;
1 Pt.5:10.

God.

Ro.16:26.

Fire, Punishment, etc.

Mt.18:8; 25:41,46; Mk.3:29;
2 Th.1:9; Hb.6:2; Jd.7.

Other Occurrences.

Lu.16:9; 2 Cor.4:18; 5:1;
1 Ti.6:16; Phn.15; Hb.9:14.

*God
All
in
Christ*

God All in all

A REPLY TO:
"THE EXACT TRUTH REGARDING
AN ETERNAL HELL"

THE glorious truth that God, through the death of His Son, will reconcile the universe to Himself (Col.1.20), has been attacked by one who is considered by many to be the foremost advocate of eternal torment as a Scriptural doctrine. His sermons assailing this gracious truth have been issued in pamphlet form under the title "The Exact Truth Regarding an Eternal Hell."¹ We hold the position that an exact inquiry into the Scriptures on this subject is sure to lead to the conviction that they teach a universal reconciliation. Here, however, is a pamphlet which claims accuracy as its chief argument in favor of the very opposite.

The following criticism is *not* the "exact truth" on this subject, but a reply to the aforesaid pamphlet which purports to give it. The "exact truth" is found only in the Scriptures. It is no great feat to expose the inexact reasonings of men, but we are too deeply impressed with the superhuman accuracy of God's holy word to claim any of its excellencies for ourselves. We invite the reader, therefore, to test every statement and discover "the exact truth" in the Scriptures, not in this faulty attempt to direct attention to them.

We are in sympathy with the pamphlet on these two points: Our appeal shall be to the Scriptures alone, and accuracy shall be the prime principle of procedure.

We have one disadvantage which we desire to remove at the outset. The pamphlet deals with the subject in a very gen-

1. "The Exact Truth Regarding an Eternal Hell," [mailing address in 1922:] R. A. Torrey, Biola Book Room, 53B S. Hope St., Los Angeles, Cal.

eral way. We do not wish it understood that we hold every position which is attacked. We fully agree that annihilation is not taught in the Scriptures, and that the restoration spoken of by Peter (Acts 3:19-21) is confined to that spoken of in the prophets. We wish only to uphold the triple truth of the salvation and vivification of all mankind and the reconciliation of all creation.

"... We both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, *who is the Saviour of all men*, specially of those that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10).

"As in Adam, all are dying, even so, *in Christ, all shall be made alive*" (1 Cor. 15:22).

"Having made peace through the blood of His cross, *through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself...*" (Col. 1:20).

We believe God, in the Scriptures quoted above (from the Authorized Version), yet stand ready to consider candidly and accurately any other passages which seem to contradict their plain direct declarations.

That we may the better understand the pamphlet and its argument, a brief outline will be helpful. There are two sermons, one answering the question "Is There a Literal Hell?" the other "Is Future Punishment Endless?" The first fixes the term "hell" on both Gehenna and the lake of fire and seeks to show that the devil, the beast, and the false prophet and the worshipers of the beast suffer consciously in it. The Lord's warnings against Gehenna are quoted. The inference is that hell is a place of conscious torment for all mankind forever.

The second question as to the duration of punishment, first takes up the word "everlasting" and, by appealing to its connection with the life of the believer, etc., infers that it denotes endlessness. "Forever and ever" is then put through the same argument because of its connection with God and Christ.

Some objections are then considered, among them Philipians 2:9-11; Acts 3:19-21; Ephesians 1:9,10; 1 Corinthians 15:22.

Finally four passages (2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27; John 5:28,29; 8:21) are given, "any one of which settles the question."

The conclusion is personal.

The true character and animus of the doctrine is revealed to us in these opening words:

"I wish that the things that I am going to preach to you tonight were not true. God wishes so, too."

What sort of a god is this? If he is helpless to carry out his own wishes with regard to the "impenitent," how can we be sure that his plans for us will not miscarry, too? Is this the One Who "worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will"? Who "is able to subdue all things to Himself"? This is not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The passage given for this depressing doctrine is 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is longsuffering to usward, not *wishing* that any perish, but that all should come to repentance." If we wish the exact truth, we will confine the statement and the import of this scripture to the *us* of whom Peter speaks. Peter is writing to the dispersed of Israel (1 Peter 1:11). God's counsel for that nation is salvation. His counsel for the nation will be fulfilled, even though some among them apostatize. The inaccuracy here lies in substituting a *wish* for *all mankind* in place of His *counsel* for the *one nation* of His choice. Such looseness is sure to lead to conclusions that dishonor Him.

The reason assigned for God's impotence is man's so-called free moral agency. Salvation depends upon man's choice. The human will is the determining factor. What say the Scriptures? "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy*" (Rom.9:15,16). And again, "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Rom.9:18).

An accurate survey of the Scriptures will bear out the wise man's proverb: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps" (Prov.16:9). Many other passages (e.g., Psa. 19:21; Prov.16:33; 20:24; 21:1; Acts 17:26; Rev.17:17) show clearly that man may choose and will as freely as he wishes, but he cannot carry out his will. His acts are not free; they are entirely under God's control. The book of Esther is written to teach

us this truth. God alone works all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11). He is able to subdue all things to Himself (Phil.3:21). Who hath resisted *His* will (Rom.9:19)?

But, we will be asked, what of those who choose to trample God's saving love under foot? Let us take God's own answer to this question: "God locks up *all* in stubbornness in order that He may be merciful to All." If even the crucifixion was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23), why should we hesitate to bow our heads to this truth? God locks up *all* in stubbornness. Why? To send them to an "eternal hell"? *No! That He may be merciful to all!* (Rom.11:32).

Well may we lift our hearts in unison with the apostle and exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom.11:33). And well may we bow in adoration and worship as we repeat the grandest and most comprehensive and enlightening doxology of all: "for *out of Him*, and *through Him* and *for Him* are all things: to Him be glory for the eons! *Amen!*" (Rom.11:36).

No Scripture is given for the supremacy of man's will over the wishes of God, except that He "has made us in His own image." But if man is made in the image of a god who has no power to carry out *his* wishes, why should man be so highly endowed? If that god is not a free moral agent, why should men be free to do as they choose? In effect we are told that man is greater than God. Scripture tells us that God is greater than man (Job 33:12).

We are heartily in accord with much that follows and will endorse it by transcribing a few salient statements. "Majorities are not always right." "We cannot settle the question by reasoning as to what such a Being as God must do . . ." "There is only one way to settle this question right. That is by going to the Bible and finding out what it says, and taking our stand firmly and unhesitatingly upon that." "*All we know about the future is what the Bible tells us.*" Another point

is well taken. The word *hades* is used in place of "hell" as in the Revised version.

HADES

Instead of following the usual custom and jumbling *hades* and Gehenna and the lake of fire all under the one term "hell," there is a laudable attempt to distinguish *hades* from the others. But the definition of *hades*: "*The place where all the spirits of the dead, good and bad, went,*" destroys the attempted distinction in practice.

Is this the "exact truth" as found in the Bible? If so, where is it found? Is the *spirit* ever associated with *sheol* or *hades*? We know that, at death, *the spirit returns to God* Who gave it (Ecc.12:7). We know that our Lord commended His spirit to the Father. His soul, however, was left in *hades* (Acts 2:27) or the unseen. And so everywhere, at death the soul, which is the seat of sensation, not the spirit, returns to *hades*, just as the spirit returns to God Who gave it and the man returns to the soil out of which he was taken (Gen.3:19).

But we must not infer from this that *hades* harbors only the souls of the dead. It is a general term for that which is *unseen*, whether the unseen state or the unseen world. The gates of *hades* (Matt.16:18) cannot be the hosts of departed souls marshalled against that church, but the unseen powers of wickedness which will assail it during the great tribulation. The *hades* which is cast into the lake of fire had been emptied of the dead which it contained. The devil and his angels are all a part of the unseen—*hades*.

After the usual explanation that *hades*, before the ascension of Christ, was divided into two sections, Paradise for the blessed and Tartarus for the wicked dead, and that He emptied the Paradise and took it up to heaven with Him (Eph.4:8), we are told: "No blessed dead are now left in Hades . . . all that are dead who have not yet been raised, or caught up into the Celestial Paradise, all who are still in *Hades*, shall be "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev.20:14).

It must be noted that none of this is Scripture. It is merely

inference from the Bible. We are nowhere told that Paradise was in *hades* or will ever be in heaven. We know that it was in Eden and will be on the new earth (Rev.2:7; 22:2). There is no warrant in the Word of God for placing a garden in the bowels of the earth or in the celestial sphere. Tartarus is never connected with the dead but with the wicked spirits (2 Peter 2:4). To go beyond this is not faith but fancy. That Christ at His ascension emptied Paradise cannot legitimately be deduced from the fact that "He led captivity captive," when the context in neither Psalm nor epistle bears the slightest relation to the dead other than Christ Himself (Psa.68:18; Eph.4:8).

If the blessed dead were all caught up into a celestial paradise, then David certainly must be there. Then David has ascended into the heavens. Yet "David is *not* ascended into the heavens" (Acts 2:34). This *settles* the matter. David is not ascended, neither have all the blessed dead ascended. Leading "captivity captive" (Eph. 4:8), means just that and not the inmates of *hades*. Why should they be called "captivity"? And why should they still be termed *captives* in Paradise? One fact destroys all this inference. "David is *not* ascended."

Not only Peter, but Paul, too, was ignorant of this teaching. He tells us that, if Christ has not been raised then those who have fallen asleep have *perished* (1 Cor.15:18). Not so, we are told, for if He had not been raised they would still be in Paradise in *hades*. Paul says that, in case we are not raised we are of all men most to be pitied. Oh, no! we are assured. Resurrection after death is not at all necessary to happiness. Before resurrection, we are in blessed consciousness in the celestial Paradise.

When a series of inferences or a line of reasoning leads directly counter to a Scripture, it is time we took the advice of our pamphlet: "We cannot settle this question by reasoning." For accuracy's sake, let us note that we are nowhere told that the dying thief went *down* into Paradise, nor did our Lord teach that "He [Himself] went *down* into the heart of the earth" (Matt.12:40). The Lord is answering his appeal, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom."

That kingdom will not be in the heart of the earth. It is called a paradise in the Septuagint, the version used by the Jews in our Lord's day (Isa. 51:3). The Lord assures the *malefactor* (not the "thief") that he will be with *Him* in Paradise (Luke 23:43).

GEHENNA AND THE LAKE OF FIRE

The use of "hell" for both Gehenna and the lake of fire makes distinction between them difficult. To get the "exact truth" with this handicap is impossible. To call Gehenna "hell," a word associated with much which cannot be true of Gehenna, is itself a cause of confusion. To use "hell" of the lake of fire is inexcusable. It is never so called in the versions. It is misleading.

By calling each one of these by its Scriptural name and refusing to use the name of one to describe the other, we shall at least leave the door open for exactness. They are all distinct. Hades, by both etymology and usage, concerning the soul, is the imperceptible or unseen state. Gehenna is located in the vale of Hinnom just below Jerusalem, and will be the place of judgment in the coming kingdom. The lake of fire and sulphur is nowhere associated with it. At the very time that sinners in Israel will suffer in Gehenna, the beast and the false prophet will have their place in the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20) into which no other human beings are cast during the millennial kingdom. Then all the dead—even those who have suffered in Gehenna—will be raised (Rev. 20:5) and those not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). So it is quite possible for an Israelite to enter both Gehenna and the lake of fire. They are distinct in the Scriptures. Let us keep them so.

The same lack of exactitude which confuses all judgment into one "general" judgment, makes men mis-mate Gehenna and the lake of fire under the one unscriptural term "hell." The same lack of accuracy which leads many to "apply" the sermon on the mount to the present grace is more glaringly evident in others who know that it applies to the kingdom, yet persist in clinging to those portions of it which give us

the place of judgment in that age. If the meek do not inherit the earth now, neither are the wicked cast into Gehenna. Let us be consistent!

If by "hell" Gehenna is meant, we would be tempted to reply "Yes" to the question "Will there be a literal hell?" There is a literal Gehenna. It is a literal place, it will have literal fire which will burn continually, with literal worms feeding on the carcasses of those who will be cast into it. It has its place in the kingdom of God (Mark 9:43-49). The Son of Man will gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling (Mark 13:42). This, however, continues only during that kingdom age. It is displaced by the lake of fire in the next age (Rev.21:8).

But if by "hell" Gehenna is meant and we are asked "Is there a literal hell?" we would say "No." It is not a place of punishment. A friend of mine took a walk through it a few years ago. He saw no fire, no worms, no wailing and gnashing of teeth. At that time Gehenna was no "hell" except in the old Anglo-Saxon sense of "hole" or valley.

If we call the lake of fire "hell" we cause still further confusion. If Gehenna is future, the lake of fire is still more so, so far as most men are concerned. Except the beast and the false prophet, no one has any part in it until after the great white throne judgment (Rev.20:11-15).

In this connection, the argument is diverted to a discussion of death and destruction, as the usual fate of the wicked.

DESTRUCTION

The word destruction is twice defined by the author as "a portion in the lake of fire." The reason given is that "in Rev. 17:8, 11 we are told that the beast goeth into 'destruction,' so if we can find out where the beast goes, or into what he goes, we shall know what 'destruction' means in the Bible usage." The claim of some that destruction means annihilation, is indeed mistaken. But neither can we countenance the conclusions to which the above-quoted definition drives us, namely, that the ointment which Mary "destroyed" (Matt.26:8; Mark 14:4,

wasted), and Simon the sorcerer's money (Acts 8:20), have no "portion in the lake of fire."

This points us to the false principle on which the whole argument rests. The ointment, the money, the saint (Acts 25:16), the vessels of wrath (Rom.9:22), Judas Iscariot (John 17:12), and the wild beast (Rev.17:8,11), all suffer destruction, but not necessarily the same in character, duration, or intensity.

What right have we, or any other, who wishes to be exact, to insist that the judgment which befalls "the rest of the dead" (Rev.20:5), be the same as the fate of the beast, false prophet, or the devil? This is "adding" to the things which are written in this book (Rev.22:18).

God's judgments are not vengeful and indiscriminate. He will render to each according to his deeds (Rom 2:6). The deeds of the wild beast and the false prophet call for their own special judgment. This they receive. Why, their case is so special that they are thrust into the lake of fire over a thousand years before the rest without even being brought before the bar of judgment. Shall we "reason" from this that destruction means a casting into the lake of fire without appearing before the great white throne, and thus deny that august session entirely? No. What God says of them should not indiscriminately be applied to others.

The worshipers of the beast are marked out for a fate corresponding to their deeds. What is said concerning their judgment, should be applied to them alone: "If anyone is worshiping the wild beast and its image, and is getting an emblem on his forehead or on his hand, he, also, is drinking of the wine of the fury of God, blended undiluted in the cup of His indignation, and he shall be tormented in fire and sulphur in the sight of the holy messengers and in the sight of the Lambkin. And the fumes of their torment are ascending for the eons of the eons. And they are having no rest day and night, those worshiping the wild beast and its image, and if anyone is getting the emblem of its name" (Rev.14:9-11, CV).

The "*fumes* . . . ascending for the eons of the eons" (Rev. 14:11), is a figure of speech similar to the one used in Jude 7,

"a specimen . . . [of] the justice of fire eonian." When sulphur and fire rained from the heavens on Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, the inhabitants were killed and the fumes ascended from the land (Gen.19:28). This event is well remembered. The Israelitish worshipers of the wild beast are the supreme sinners of mankind. They have no rest day and night while they are worshiping the wild beast and its image and shall be tormented until they die (Rev. 14:9-12; 16:2,8,9; 18:8), some of them by the blade (19:21). Their fate will be remembered through the eons of the eons.²

Briefly, then, what *does* "destruction" mean? A few examples in the past will help us to see the breadth of the term and the true usage of the Scriptures. The Son of Man came to seek and to save *that which was destroyed* (Matt.18:11; *lost AV*). He bade them go to the *destroyed* sheep of the house of Israel (Matt.10:6; *lost AV*). The sheep, the coin, and the prodigal were all *lost* or destroyed (Luke 15:4-32). Were they suffering in the lake of fire beyond redemption?

In the second sermon, it is claimed that those who know not God and obey not the gospel, shall be punished with *everlasting destruction* (2 Thess.1:9; "eonian extermination," CV).

"Extermination" (*olethron*, WHOLE-RUIN) may have a common root with "destruction" (*apōleian*, FROM-WHOLE-LOOSING, which is the the word used in Revelation 17:8, 11 of the judgment of the wild beast), but its meaning is distinct. Timothy is told of the desire for riches "which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim.6:9; "extermination and destruction," CV). Here both terms are used in such a way that they must have separate significations. And, even if one should become wholly ruined ("extermination"), and suffer all possible disintegration or "loosing" ("destruction"), it does not follow that any such ongoing or "eonian" judgment, is therefore an *everlasting* judgment.

Surely we ought to gather the meaning of a word from *all*

2. For a more detailed consideration of Revelation 14:9-11, see *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.84, pp.74-77.

its occurrences, not from one special set of Scriptures which suit our purposes. And surely we ought not to attempt to fasten that meaning on another word altogether. "Destruction" in itself conveys neither the thought of annihilation nor of conscious suffering. This each one can prove to his own satisfaction by considering all of the occurrences in a concordance based on the Greek text.

DEATH

Two passages in which death is used figuratively are brought forth to define death. "Dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph.2:1) and "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim.5:6), do not refer to literal death. They tell us what death is, only when we recognize their figurative force. As the dead are oblivious to the things of this world, so were we to God. She who liveth in pleasure is not oblivious to the world. Her death is Godward. The "conscious existence" is limited to that in which she lives. She has no consciousness toward God.

The attempt to define death by the judgment of the beast and false prophet or the worshipers of the beast, is illogical. The judgment of the worshipers of the beast, is only until their death. And, the judgment of "the rest of the dead" (of mankind) in the lake of fire, is not necessarily the same as that of the beast and false prophet themselves. Why wrench the truth out of its place when this only causes confusion? Death is fully defined in the Scriptures. "Soil thou art and unto soil shalt thou return" (Gen.3:19) cannot be improved upon. The man returns to the soil, the spirit to God Who gave it, and the soul to hades.

We conclude, then, that there is no "literal hell" now. The soul, at death, returns to hades, the *unseen* (which is usually translated hell). Gehenna, also translated hell, is a literal spot near Jerusalem. It has some of the characteristics of a "hell," but is only used of human corpses. The lake of fire is also future and ought not to be misnamed "hell."

The second sermon, "Is Future Punishment Endless?" is

an appeal to prejudice. It begins with stating the undoubted fact that "majorities are often wrong," and then seeks to prove the supposition that the word *aiōnios* means without end by giving instances of its use in the Greek Scriptures. These respective instances are given and concluded with an assertion that it means everlasting here, "no one questions it." It means it here, "by universal consent"; "beyond a question" it means it here. Or simply: "Certainly," or "of course" it means never ending (pp.25-27). Then some objections are considered, only two of which (Phil.2:9-11; 1 Cor.15:22) have any real bearing on the point raised. These are followed by four passages (2 Cor.5:10; Heb.9:27; John 5:28,29; 8:21), "any one of which settles the question."

The conclusion is personal.

THE EONS OR AGES

The whole question of the duration of God's judgment of the ungodly (Rom.2:3) depends upon the doctrine of the eons or ages. If ages are "tumbling upon ages in endless procession," all the passages which tell of the consummation or "end" when God will be All in all, are not to be relied upon. What we wish to know is, Did the eons have a beginning? Will they have an end?

Paul tells us of a secret "which God designates before—before the eons" (1 Cor.2:7, CV). In the same epistle he speaks of the "ends [i.e., 'consummations'] of the eons" (10:11). The time occupied by the eons is called the "eonian times." God's purpose and grace was given us "*before* eonian times" (2 Tim.1:9, CV). God promised eonian life "*before* times eonian" (Titus 1:2, CV). With this evidence, who can doubt that the eons are a distinct portion of time, with a definite beginning and end? Hence, that which is *eonian* (usually translated "eternal" or "everlasting") cannot refer to time before the eons or after they have run their course, but only to time in the eons.

Who has not wondered why some things in the Scriptures last "forever" and others last "forever and ever"? We would naturally suppose that there could not be any "*and ever*" added to

"forever." And this mystery deepens when we discover that "for ever and ever," to be consistent, ought to be translated "forever and *further*." If we wish to be exact we must allow that "forever" is not endless.

FOREVER AND EVER

An experience fell to my lot in my investigations of the difference between "forever" and "forever and ever" in the Hebrew Scriptures which impressed their force upon my mind most powerfully. It may serve to help others and, at the same time, show the extreme accuracy of the distinction between them. I had tentatively made up my mind that "forever" ends with the new heaven and new earth (Rev.21,22) while "forever and ever" goes on to the consummation. The former was associated with the present earth, the priesthood, and so forth, all of which do not find a place in the new earth; the latter is always used in reference to the kingdom, which continues for an "ever" longer. Being pressed for time, a helper kindly went over all the passages of "forever and ever" to test this conclusion. But, to my confusion, some were found (Jer.7:7; 25:5) which overthrew my theory. I determined, however, to make sure. My helper worked from the English, so I would check it by the Hebrew. I turned up the first offending passage and found to my surprise that a different phrase, which the Greek LXX usually translates "from the eon and till the eon" was used. This was perfectly in line with my assumption. And when I found the second instance of the same, I feverishly turned to the others, and, to my delight, they too proved to be an error of the translation! My "theory" was truth! It not only stood the test but was so accurately correct that it ferreted out the only instances in which our translators had added an "ever" without warrant. Since then no one has been able to convince me that "forever" and "forever and ever" are equivalents.

My investigations into the New Testament Greek phrases for "forever and ever," were much more prolonged and difficult, but the results were, if possible, more exact and satisfac-

tory than in the Hebrew. There are three different phrases, as follows,

The Eon of the Eon

The Eon of the Eons

The Eons of the Eons

and I made up my mind that, until I was able to give a sure and satisfactory reason for each variation, I would hold my tongue. For several years I was kept off the track by the introductory connective, which literally means INTO. "*Into* the eons of the eons" was "Greek" to me until a thorough canvass of every occurrence of its usage in connection with *time* revealed the fact that, idiomatically, it corresponds to our *for*. "Take, therefore, no thought INTO the morrow" (Matt.6:34) means *for* the morrow. This simplified matters. The Hebrew "forever," when used of the epochal eons, now corresponded with the Greek "for the eon," and "forever and ever" with "the eons of the eons." It was evident that the single eon of the second phrase came before the new earth. But what of the other phrase, "for the eon of the eon"? This is the most conclusive and interesting of all.

"The eon of the eon" occurs only once (Heb.1:8) and defines the time in which the *Son* is on the throne. Mark that this is said to the *Son*. Speaking of the consummation (which comes at the end of the eons) when *all* sovereignty and authority and power are abolished, Paul tells us "then shall the *Son* also Himself be *subject* . . ." (1 Cor.15:24-28). Does the Son reign when *all* sovereignty and authority and power are abolished? Does He rule when He is subject? No! He rules so well that He rules rule out! The *kingdom* continues without end (Luke 1:33) in the hands of the Father; but Christ's kingdom is limited to the "eons of the eons" (Rev.11:15), during which He puts all enemies under His feet (1 Cor.15:24,25).

The following admission is worthy of repetition: "It is frequently said that the word *aiōnios* according to its derivation means age-lasting, and therefore may refer to a limited period. *Even admitting this to be true* [our italics], we should bear in mind that the meaning of words is not determined by

their derivation but by their usage, and the most important question is not what the derivation of this word may be, but as to how it is used in the New Testament." All of this is very good if the word *aiōnios* were not such a close relative that we may hardly speak of one as a derivative of the other but rather one is the name or noun, the other the adjective of the same thing, more closely allied than "destroy" and "destruction." And what does our author think we may deduce from *their* relation? He bases his meaning of "destruction," not on this form of the word, but on the verb, for "the verb from which the noun commonly translated 'destruction' and 'perdition' is derived, is the one translated 'to perish.'" He would have us go with him and deduce the meaning of the noun from the verb, which we cheerfully and confidently do. But if we invite him to consider the noun of *aiōnios* as a help to its meaning, he shrinks back. "The meaning of words is not determined by their derivation"—*except* when it helps to consign the human race (with a few exceptions) to "an eternal hell."

But he is quite right in his position that "destroy" and "destruction" have the same meaning. The grammatical form does not affect that. It simply shows its relation to the other words in the sentence. So always. Die and death, rise and resurrection, suffer and sufferings, make alive and life, reconcile and reconciliation—each pair has the same meaning but not the same grammatical force. And in English the noun resurrection does not even differ in form when used as an adjective. We speak of the resurrection (noun) and the resurrection body (adjective). How much more reason, then, have we for believing that the noun *aiōn* and the adjective *aiōnios* have the same meaning. To be exact, the following list is taken from my grammatical analysis of the Greek Scriptures and are all the forms exactly like the one we are studying. *Ouranos*, heaven; *ouranios*, heavenly; *epouranios*, celestial; *kataxthonios*, subterranean (noun *xthoon*, not used); *makrochronios* (from *chronos*, time) long-timed; *aiōn*, eon; *aiōnios*, eonian. Is not heavenly that which relates to heaven? Does not long-timed relate to time? And is not eonian that which relates to the eons?

The accompanying chart of the Eonian Times is reprinted to give a graphic presentation of the five eons of which the Scriptures speak and to show the relation of the last two to the whole series. The first three are eons of sin and destruction: the last two are eons of bliss and restoration. In the former, God's enemies rule into a chaos of ruin. The latter, Christ, the Son of God, reigns into perfection. The first three represent the root; the last two garner the fruit of the eons. Hence the latter are called "the eons *of* the eons." Every occurrence of "eon" and "eonian" is shown in its place on the chart.

And as the last eon is the result of Christ's work during the previous eon (in which the millennium occurs), it is "the eon *of* the eon" (singular). In another sense it is the fruit of all the preceding eons; hence is called "the eon of the eons" (plural, see Eph.3:21).

Here, then, is an exact meaning for each of the phrases used in the Scriptures. The only real answer to this would be equally definite and satisfactory meanings for each separate phrase. We call upon anyone to produce a distinct yet harmonious definition for each separate expression. Until this is done, what common ground is there on which to consider the rival significations? If "the ages of the ages" are "ages tumbling upon ages [for all eternity]" (as the author claims), is "the age of the ages" *one* age tumbling on other ages," and "the age of the age" one age tumbling on another age? Which ages are they? When do they tumble?

And what are we asked to believe? That "the expression according to its form means ages which are themselves composed of ages." No evidence or example is given for this remarkable assertion, doubtless for the reason that none can be found. We will give a list of phrases of like form in the original (a noun followed by its genitive case): Servant of servants (Gen.9:25); holy of holies (Ex.26:33); chief of the chief (Num. 3:32); song of songs (Song of Songs, 1:1); King of kings (Dan. 2:47); God of gods (Dan.2:47); Prince of princes (Dan.8:25); evil of evil (Hosea 10:15; i.e., great wickedness); Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil.3:5); King of kings, Lord of lords (1 Tim.6:15).

In every case something is intended which is one (or more) of a number, and of highest rank in that number. Thus the holy of holies was one of the holy places in the tabernacle and temple, and was also the *most* holy (Ex.26:33), as the Authorized Version renders it. So the last two eons are, as all will admit, the best of them all because Christ is at their head. If "the form of these expressions" is not the same, where is the difference? Like the phrases we are considering, they are all polyptotons in which a noun is repeated in the genitive case.

But what of "eternal life"? Surely the believer's life is endless! If we had the heart of God we would be glad to shorten our bliss to grant sinners relief from unutterable torment. But no, in order that we may be happy forever we have no hesitancy in consigning the rest to torture eternal! But there is no need for this dilemma at all. A little exactness will solve the whole problem.

The words of our Lord concerning the judgment which ushers in the kingdom (Matt.25:46), are supposed to settle the whole question. The inference from this *seems* to be unanswerable: "And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." "The same Greek adjective is used in connection with punishment and with life Certainly this qualifying adjective must mean the same in the one half of the sentence that it means in the other half of the sentence" Very good indeed. But our Lord did *not* thus "convey the impression that the punishment of the unsaved was of the same duration as the *life* of the saved." He did say that it lasted as long as the *eonian* life of the saved.

The believer's life is not limited to the eons. He receives eonian ("everlasting") life while the unbeliever receives eonian judgment in death. But, at the consummation, death is abolished and *all* receive life (1 Cor.15:22,26). The unbeliever never receives *eonian* life, but after the eons he receives eternal life. The believer enjoys eonian life until the consummation and then receives eternal life. In both cases, eternal life comes as the result of the abolition of death. Eonian life is only for

those who believe. God is the Saviour of *all* mankind, *especially* of those that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10).

If we believe *God's* explanation of "as in Adam all die, even so, in Christ, shall all be made alive," that this is brought about by the abolition of the last enemy, death, at the consummation when the Son abdicates in favor of the Father (1 Cor. 15:28), then we will acknowledge that not only Christ, in the past, not only those who are His, in His presence, but the rest of mankind, included in the *all*, will be made alive as well, at the consummation. Why worry about life when there is to be no death? Eonian life is not brought to its end by God putting His saints in the tomb, but by the introduction of universal, eternal, post-eonian life, when God will be All in all.

The phrase "eonian God" (Rom. 16:26) no more means that God is limited to the eons than the phrase "Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. 4:14) implies that He is excluded from heaven. The one shows His relation to the earth, the other His connection with the eons. Nor is there any lack of contrast between the unseen things which are eonian and the things which are seen, which are only for a little while (2 Cor. 4:18). The eons are tremendous periods of time. This eon has already lasted about four thousand years. The next eon will last over a thousand years. The final eon may well be of a greater duration than either of these.

The whole appeal in this matter is to our lack of confidence in God Himself. God's object is to become so thoroughly All in all His creatures, that they will not need even His assurance for their faith. During the eons, faith rests on His word: after the eons, sight rests on God Himself as He has been revealed by the eons. The eons will have failed of their purpose if God still needs to assure His family of His protection and providence and love. He will have them trust Him as a little child which never needs to be assured that its father will provide for it, because he has always done so.

It is difficult to restrain oneself when passages which definitely define a certain class and their judgment—such for instance as those who worship the beast—are applied to all

the "finally impenitent." We earnestly urge and implore those who write on these solemn themes not to wrest God's holy word in this distressing fashion. True and righteous are His judgments, but false and faulty do they become when applied to others than to those whom He has specified. What earthly judge would stand this for a moment? When he sentences a murderer to the gallows, he does not condemn to death another prisoner who has stolen bread to feed his starving family. And yet again and again the doom of the devil, the beast, the false prophet and those receiving the mark of the beast, is read into the sentence of the "impenitent" in general.

OBJECTIONS

"Every knee of lost men and of the devil and his angels, too, will be forced some day to bow in the name of Jesus and every tongue forced to confess that He is Lord." But what sort of *force* is found in the passage? The name "Jesus" means *Saviour*; to bow the knee is elsewhere proof positive of true worship (Rom. 11:4; Eph. 3:14), and it is for the glory of God as *Father*. There is no force in this passage except what is forced into it.

It is rightly contended that "the restoration of all things whereof God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets," is limited to the coming eon or the millennium.

"For as in Adam all die, so also, in Christ, shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). It is contended that "made alive" must be limited to the resurrection of the body [an unscriptural phrase]. Now the word "resurrection" is used frequently in this chapter (though never limited to the body). If resurrection was intended in this passage, why was the word not used? Why was "made alive" substituted? The two thoughts are distinct. The Father both raises the dead and makes them alive (John 5:21). There is a resurrection of life and a resurrection of judgment. Which is intended by "make alive"? O that we would leave the Scriptures as they are!

A false light is thrown upon the universal reconciliation by the supposition that, if "the issues of eternity" are not settled by men in this life, then it can only be that they "have

another chance" after death! We do not believe that salvation or reconciliation is of man at all: it is of God. Men do not have a "chance" to be saved either now or in the hereafter. *God* calls and justifies and glorifies those who believe. And *God* locks up all in stubbornness in order that He may be merciful to all (Rom.11:32) in His own good time.

Now comes the final and conclusive proof. We quote: "Let me call your attention to four passages, any one of which settles the question, and taken together they leave no possible room for doubt for any candid man who is willing to take the Bible as meaning what it says, any man who is really trying to find out what the Bible teaches and not merely trying to support a theory." We trust all who read this, as well as the present writer, have a hearty desire to be included among sincere Scripture students. But how can we, with a good conscience, countenance such arguments as the following?

The first of the four passages to which he calls attention is not concerned with destiny at all, but the rewards of the believer at the tribunal of Christ (2 Cor.5:10). We believe that the dead will be judged according to their works (Rev.20:12). But while works may determine the *measure* of their judgment, their destiny is determined on an entirely different principle, for it is those *not found written in the book of life* who were cast into the lake of fire (Rev.20:15). And when death is abolished, they will be made alive, for the lake of fire is the only death which will be in existence when this is done. Let us remember, salvation is not of him who wills or runs, but of God (Rom.9:16).

The second passage to which he calls attention is even less in line with the subject. The ninth chapter of Hebrews is a strange place to find a lone text on the destiny of mankind! The writer is speaking of the tabernacle and the mediator and the priests. He refers to the type of the city of refuge into which a murderer must run, and in which he must abide "unto the death of the high priest which was anointed with the holy oil." Then the slayer could "return to the land of his possession. So these things shall be for a statute of judgment" (Num.35:

16-29). The death of the priest was the signet for "judgment." Not in the sense of condemnation, but as it appears when we read that "the Lord judges the widow and fatherless."

An adverse judgment—condemnation—is required only when the Greek word used here is prefixed by a preposition which means DOWN or "against." This our versions have consistently and correctly rendered "condemn." To judge does not mean to condemn.

To judge simply means to decide, with a view toward setting things right. The "judgment" (i.e., decided enactment) at the death of the high priest allowed the man to return to his patrimony. Who would not rejoice in such judgment? This type is fulfilled in Christ. "And in as much as it is reserved to the [i.e., those] men to be dying once, yet after this a judging, thus Christ also, being offered once for the bearing of the sins of many, will be seen a second time, by those awaiting Him, apart from sin, for salvation, through faith" (Heb. 9:27,28).³ The parallel is clear. It may be set forth as follows:

- a. The death of the high priest.
- b. Judgment (restoration to possession).
- a. The death of Christ.
- b. Salvation.

We must insist that this is a parallel—*thus*—not a contrast. The b must agree with the b. The judgment cannot be condemnation and "eternal hell."

The third passage to prove that the "issues of eternity" are settled in this life, is the Lord's announcement that "all that are in the tombs 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 judgment" (John 5:28,29). When once we believe God that "eternity" does not come until the eons are past, we will come to the conclusion that this passage has nothing to do with it at all.

3. A more thorough exposition of Hebrew 9:25-28, including the phrase, "yet now, once, at the conclusions of the eons," appears in *Unsearchable Riches*, vol.30, pp.109-116, and vol.82, pp.17-22.

The last and most "conclusive" passage remains. "He said therefore again unto them: I go away, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:21). It is inferred that this is final. They *never* could come. Let us inject this inference into these words on another occasion: "As I said unto the Jews, 'Whither I go, ye cannot come,' so now I say to you" (John 13:33). Consequently, all the apostles (except Judas—he had gone out) were doomed! They will never see Him! They, too, go to the "eternal hell"!

CONCLUSION

After a few personalities, the reasonableness of this "eternal hell" is urged on the ground of the rejection of God's Son and despising His mercy. Nothing is said of the billions who have not so much as heard of Him or whose hearts have been hardened towards Him through such teaching as this pamphlet. What of the heathen? the children? the infants? What reasoning can exult in their eternal torment? Shall we join in the "Hallelujah!" over their doom? God's "Hallelujah!" concerns Babylon; not the "impenitent" (Rev.19:1).

Testimony from such an eminent source, and by one who is the chief champion of an endless hell, must be given special weight. How does this teaching affect him? Here is his witness: "*Time and time again I have come up to this awful doctrine and tried to find some way of escape from it.*" We rejoice that we *have found* a way of escape. We rest in a doctrine from which we have no desire to escape, in which we exult; a *glorious doctrine* of a blessed and victorious God, whose Son laid the basis of the universal reconciliation in the blood of His cross; a God Who is able, through His Christ, to undo all the deeds of the devil; a God Whose essence is love, and Whose purpose, during the eons, is to become All in *all*. A.E.K.

Concordant Publishing Concern

P.O. Box 449

Almont, MI 48003-0449

(810) 798-3563

www.concordant.org email@concordant.org