

**Eternal Torment
or
Universal
Reconciliation**



A.E. KNOCH

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"... tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10, A.V.). "... these shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt.25:46, A.V.). "... the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36, A.V.).

"through Him to reconcile all to Him (making peace through the blood of His cross), through Him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens" (Col.1:20).

"Faithful is the saying and worthy of all welcome (for for this are we toiling and being reproached), that we rely on the living God, Who is the Saviour of all mankind, especially of believers. **These things be charging and teaching**" (1 Tim.4:9-11).

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Eternal Torment or Universal Reconciliation

FOREWORD

God's GLORY, and His place in our hearts, depends upon the conception we have of Him, as He is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our standards of right and wrong may be faulty, but we cannot help judging the Deity by them. If we *think* He is right we honor Him. Our ideas of might may be mean, nevertheless we must measure Him with them. If we *imagine* that He lacks sufficient might to master His creatures, our estimate of Him descends. If we believe that He works all according to His will, we cannot but admire Him. Our conceptions of wisdom may be crude, but we are forced to estimate the Deity by them. If there are problems beyond His powers, He is demeaned in our minds. But if we are convinced that He can cope successfully with any situation, we cannot but delight in Him. Our love is a feeble flicker, yet we must compare His with it. However much we seek to avoid it, if He does that which our love would not allow, we become cold to Him. But if our hearts are enlightened to see how far His love surpasses ours, and that naught that He does is condemned by our hearts, we are compelled to adore Him.

The consummation of all things is to reveal God and to make Him All in all. There is no question so important or so practical as an inquiry into the outcome of God's adventure. All will admit that, if many or few of His creatures are doomed to eternal torment, this raises serious doubts as to God's power and wisdom and love. Our hearts have become hardened to the thought of everlasting damnation, yet all will acknowledge that, in their inmost hearts, they wish that it were not so. Is not God powerful enough to overcome the powers of evil which have estranged His creatures from Him? Is He not wise enough to lure His own handiwork back to Him? Can He really love those He tortures for ever and ever? If He does, would He not be tortured Himself?

Even those who are most devoted to Him are disturbed by such thoughts. They feel that there is something wrong somewhere. Many wisely leave it all with God, Whom they have learned to trust and love, yet deep down in their hearts they yearn for some satisfactory solution.

This little handbook proposes to solve the question, and so give relief to the minds and rest to the hearts of all who love God and believe His Word, and thus to bring honor, glory, and adoration to His name. The brief tale of how it came to be written may help the reader to understand its message and its mission.

While whiling a while in Germany, intent upon the translation of a concordant version in the German language, I had considerable literature put into my hands, written by earnest, godly, learned men, against a literal interpretation of Paul's statement that God, through the blood of Christ's cross, would reconcile the universe to Himself (Col. 1:20). One in particular aroused my sympathy. While he took the stand that the Bible is against it, his heart refused to allow him to close the door to all hope, and he claimed that the final outcome could not be known. Others who spoke of the subject said that the Bible taught both sides, so it is impossible to be sure. I read all I could get against the salvation of all to find out just where the difficulties are. Finally the whole matter cleared up in my mind, and I saw that the real lack is a knowledge of the facts. Neither side was clear as to what God had actually said. My friends forced me to take enough time from my more important work to jot down such facts as would enable the simplest saint to grasp the truth, and rectify the erroneous impressions entertained on both sides.

I have simply put down a few disjointed facts which have come to me during several decades of translation work and in active defense of recovered truths. These have been desperately opposed by those who are enmeshed in tradition. They first try to prove my position unscriptural. Failing in this, they endeavor to convict me of apostasy from the creeds of Christendom. In this they succeed, but it condemns them, and they lose followers. Then they heap upon my head the utmost ignominy. In this I glory, for I am becoming as the offscouring of the world, the scum of the universe (1 Cor. 4:13) for His dear sake.

We desire to touch every vital point in this little handbook, yet keep its cost within the reach of all. We wish to give you the key to every riddle, yet leave the solution to yourself. We especially desire to remove the veils which have practically hid the truth on this theme. Therefore we tear away the false traditions of Christendom first. Then we remove the dark cover which philosophical mistranslations have laid over God's Book. With these gone all that is necessary is to read God's message to us more carefully, and its overwhelmingly glorious solution of this vexed problem illuminates our minds and

floods our hearts with exultant joy and praise and adoration to the God of all grace and glory.

We will no longer need to apologize to our hearts that God is not just as we would wish Him to be. We will no longer need to acknowledge to others that we wish He were otherwise. We will no longer seek to delay our judgment of Him until we have clearer light. We will exult in Him as He is. We will luxuriate in His love. We will delight to trace its activities, in judgment as well as in grace. His holy Word will be transformed from a misty mirror, with its hazy and distorted images, to a brilliant sun, diffusing warmth and love as well as light. Is not such a consummation devoutly to be wished? The facts in this little booklet can transform your whole outlook and life, for it will give you a God Who is worthy of the name. He is not a sentimental weakling, Who *would* save all if He *could*, or a ferocious fiend, Who *could* save all if He *would*, but a mighty, wise, and loving Deity, Whose hand can carry out the dictates of His heart, and Whose heart is so freighted with affection for all of the creatures which He created in the Son of His love, that it demands the response of every heart His hand has made.

This is not a plea for universal reconciliation. That must not be based upon our appreciation, but upon solid, incontrovertible facts, in God's written revelation of Himself. If the Scriptures were not the foundation of our jubilation, we would be in a fool's paradise. We must base all on the evidence God has given in the Sacred Scrolls.

With this blessed prize in view we pray the reader to spare no effort to thoroughly understand and test the facts here presented, not by his preconceptions, not by accepted traditions, not by authoritative scholarship, but by the only enduring fact in this shifting scene—the Word of the living God.

We have tried to present the facts so simply, yet concisely, that they may be easily grasped by those who wish certainty, yet are not able to go beyond English translations. But this pamphlet is only introductory. It is much condensed. Its appreciation will depend largely on close and careful reading, and constant reference to the chart, in order to place each passage in its proper time period, and to distinguish the process from the goal, the means from the results, the eons from the consummation.

More detailed expositions of the various themes appear in our other literature, which is advertised on the cover. Besides this theme we seek to open up the divine mysteries, the problem of evil, the present grace, and the glories of Christ and of God.

May I have the privilege of serving you, as a slave of the God of glory and of His beloved Son, Whose death on Golgotha has reconciled me with God, and made me most blessed of mortals, for I have been given grace, not only to believe Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

We must Rid Ourselves

THE PROBLEM STATED

God's goal for His creatures is clearly set forth in His holy Word. Yet men who are pious and earnest differ radically as to what the consummation will be. Those who believe in eternal torment have clear proof for their teaching in the Bible. Yet those who revel in the salvation of all have just as conclusive evidence. Both are compelled to reject some statements in the Bible. Each feels very strongly that the other side is wrong. We invite you, reader, to take a neutral position and examine the *facts* in regard to this intensely interesting theme. Do not test these facts by popular versions. We will go past translations to the original. There there are no contradictions. All is clear. All is satisfactory. All is glorious. What will God do? Will many go into "everlasting punishment" (Mat. 25:46¹¹ A.V.), or will God "reconcile all things unto Himself" (Col. 1:20c A.V.)?

Why is it that good men differ on this subject? The mass of men have departed from the faith. We have been brought up in an atmosphere of error. We read the Scriptures through glasses darkened by the "truth" we hold, much of which is not found in the Scriptures. The only escape is to go back to the microscopic exactitude of Holy Writ. The facts which follow have been found during three decades of closest contact with the original Greek and Hebrew. Let us reject every idea which we cannot express in the language of inspiration.

It will be difficult to view the facts we will present aright unless first we rid ourselves of some popular religious notions, which have no basis in God's Word. Hence we will first briefly indicate those unscriptural dogmas which will hinder us from seeing clearly.

TRADITIONAL BELIEFS NOT FOUND IN THE BIBLE

To JUDGE clearly, we must rid ourselves of the dark cloud of traditions which have accumulated, and which will darken every doctrine if we do not test them by the Word and discard them from our thoughts. The following popular but unscriptural ideas should be discarded first before we attempt the solution of our problem.

The Scriptures Reveal, not Veil, the Deity.

The general supposition that God and His plans and purpose are secrets which He has kept to Himself is utterly false. We may be sure that His ultimate is clearly revealed in His Word. The darkness is all on our side, and is due to unbelief and ignorance. We are apt to quote, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." But we fail to note the next sentence: "But God hath revealed

them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9, 10^{8 9}).

"The Immortality of the Soul."

This is not a Bible doctrine, but heathen philosophy, based on ignorance of the facts. The Scriptures distinctly declare that our Lord, Jesus Christ, *alone* has immortality (1 Ti. 6:15-16, 1 Cor. 15:23). The whole *man* dies. His spirit returns to God (Ecc. 12:7), his body to the soil and his soul, which consists in the consciousness and sensation produced by their union, returns to the imperceptible, usually called "hell". The souls of saints and sinners alike go to hades. Even Christ's soul went to "hell" (Acts 2:27⁶). Even the saints are lost if there is no rousing from the dead (1 Cor. 15:18). God will raise the bodies, rouse the souls, and vivify the spirits of all mankind (1 Cor. 15:22^{9 11}). This is the solution of the problem which Plato sought to solve by his theory of soul immortality.

Man's so-called "Free Will"

There is room for only one dominant will in the world, and that is God's. It is His intention that His will be withstood. He "locks all up together in stubbornness, that He may be merciful to all" (Rom. 11:32c). During the eons, "it is not of him who is willing, nor yet of him who is racing, but of God, the Merciful." And "to whom He is willing He is merciful, yet whom He is willing, He is hardening." "Has anyone withstood His intention?" (Rom. 9:16-18¹⁻¹²). He "is operating the universe in accord with the counsel of His will . ." (Eph. 1:11). Man does not create his own will. It is the product of his heredity and his environment. Because he is ignorant of the forces which move him he imagines he is free to will as he pleases. A child's will can be altered by a bauble. A wise mentor knows how to change a man's environment so that he wants to do the mentor's will. God alone has power over the sources that contribute to form our wills, and He can easily turn man's will against Him or for Him. Free will is a philosophical fable. Man is a creature, not a creator.

Man, ignorant of his sub-conscious processes, imagines he can will as he likes, and thinks he can carry out his intention. He wants what he wants when he wants it, but, alas, he gets what he gets when he gets it. Even a Napoleon has his Waterloo. It is our privilege, as saints, to know that God loved us and planned our end, and every step of the way to it. It is God Who is operating in us to will as well as to work for the sake of his delight (Phil. 2:13). Free will denies the deity of God and makes miniature deities of men, each one of whom is superior, in his sphere, to God Himself. Because, knowing God, those who hold man's free will do not glorify God as God, their reasonings are vain (Rom. 1:21). The key to the seeming conflict between creature "responsibility" and God's free

will lies in the fact that He is *God*, and not a man. His reply to those who question His right to judge those who have carried out His intention is another question. "Who are you?" God is the Potter. We are but clay. He must reveal Himself through condemnation and salvation in order to bless us. (Rom. 9:19-24).

Human Responsibility

The fact that the Scriptures clearly teach us that a man has no free will does not prove that he cannot be judged by God for his actions. Were this the case, then God could not judge the world. All are subject to His just verdict (Rom. 3:9-19). We are not discussing man's relation to God's judgment, but of God's absolute will to save all of His lost creatures. Because of His will, no creature has any jurisdiction over his own destiny, in order to be lost eternally and suffer endless torment. The word of our Lord to Jerusalem: "and ye would not" (Mat. 23:37), so often brought up to prove man's "free will", clearly proves the opposite, for Jerusalem shall yet receive Him, and be saved. In Romans 11:31 we are distinctly told *why* they were stubborn. It was "that He may be merciful" to them.

The theological expression "responsibility" is an attempt to remove the question from the presence of God, Who claims the right to judge the vessels which He has used, even though they have no free will, simply because He is God, and, in His love, is working for their blessing as well as His own glory.

The philosophical argument for man's free will evades God's plain declaration that God's favor "is not of him who is willing, . . . but of God, the Merciful" (Rom. 9:16). It seeks scriptural support in the first chapter of Genesis, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion . ." (Gen. 1:26). This likeness has to do with man's relation to the lower creation, not his wisdom or his knowledge, his power or his will. Besides, the theory elevates man *above* God so that it comes perilously near blasphemy. There is no question about God. He *wills* that all men be saved, but is impotent to carry out His will! But when man *wills not* to be saved he is omnipotent, and God Himself can do nothing! This is not likeness. It is superiority. It is the deification of man. It is the dethronement of God.

The ease with which God can manage men is seen in a passage in Revelation (17:17¹⁰). Everyone today knows how difficult it is to get the rulers of various nations to agree. Besides, at that time all will be openly against God and His Christ. Yet the ten kings are led by God Himself in their opposition to His will! "God imparts to their hearts to form His opinion," and to be unanimous in it. If He can do that with ten world powers in the hey-day of their might, it will be nothing at all to Him to turn human hearts toward Himself. No doubt the ten kings will *pride* themselves on carrying

Others would Damn Many

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out their "free will". No man is conscious that aught is put into his heart.

Man Changes His Will

Besides, man changes his will. Once I did not want to be saved. I escaped from an inquirer's meeting, into which I had been pushed, with great relief. Later I was glad to receive God's gift. Now men are blinded by sin and Satan. But when all veils are torn aside and they see themselves and their fellows and Christ as they actually are, before the great white throne, not a single one will will to be lost. All will want to be saved. The whole philosophy is a futile discussion based on the unscriptural theory that man fixes his eternal destiny in this life, and that this is the *only* day of salvation. This is a day of salvation, among many others. Human destiny is not settled by death, but by God.

If man had a free will, God could plan nothing, all prophecy would be guesswork, the Scriptures would be void, we would have no real God. Suppose the great actors of earth's tragedy exercise their free will in the future and refuse to play according to the program? The Antichrist might change his mind, or Satan beg to be excused. I exult in the consciousness that it is God Who is operating in me to *will* as well as to work for the sake of His delight (Phil. 2:13). Those who hold to man's free will do not glorify God as God, and become vain in their reasonings (Rom. 1:21). *God* it is Who "locks all up together in stubbornness" (Rom. 11:32). He Who locks can unlock, as He says. He it was Who invaded "the sacred precincts of man's free moral agency" when He hardened Pharaoh's heart. So, today, whom *He* is *willing*, He is hardening (Rom. 9:17-18). Whom He hardens He can soften. Those who say otherwise make Him a fearful fiend.

Does God "Will" or "Wish"?

For many years I used the *Newberry Bible*, which, I supposed, corrected inconsistencies in the margin. But, in this case, I found that he had changed the word "will" to "wish", not to make it consistent, but the reverse. He was trying to make the Bible agree with the teaching of the so-called Plymouth Brethren, with whom I worshiped at that time. Godly men do not deem it wrong to alter God's Word itself to make it conform to their ideas of "the truth"!

If we insist on man's free will we are compelled to deny that God has a will. The same word *will*, when used of the Deity's declaration that all men shall be saved, becomes a mere *wish* (1 Tim. 2:4). If *man* wills, God Himself cannot withstand him! But if *God* wills, He is helpless! I confess with shame that I accepted and taught this blasphemy, thinking I was honoring God. I have sympathy for those who do not realize how it denies the deity of God, which, after all, is the fundamental of fundamentals, for it robs the universe

of a God, and substitutes for Him an amiable adventurer, whose lack of wisdom and foresight is responsible for untold agony. Being a god of love, He suffers with those He loves, and is thus Himself doomed to eternal torment, a defeated, disappointed, despised weakling, wrecked in the ruin He has wrought.

Saul of Tarsus' conversion is the pattern of those who have since believed (1 Tim. 1:15, 16). He was the foremost sinner of his day. He deserved the direst doom and was granted the greatest grace (Acts 9:1-9). He was saved against his will.

"Heaven or Hell"

The Bible teaches that many of the saved will be on the *earth* and never "go to heaven" (Rev. 21-22¹²). The New Jerusalem comes *out of heaven* and will be on the earth. Peter and the twelve apostles will never go to heaven. Only Paul and those connected with His ministry have a celestial destiny. The souls of *all* go to "hades", the *imperceptible*, at death. Jacob went there (Gen. 37:35; 44:29, 31⁴). Our Lord's soul was there (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:27⁶). The souls of all who are roused come from there. Another "hell" of the Bible is Gehenna, which is a valley just below Jerusalem. It will be used to burn offal and the bodies of criminals in the kingdom (Mat. 5:29¹¹, etc.). These are temporary. The lake of fire is the second death and last enemy (Rev. 21:8; 1 Cor. 15:26¹²). It will be abolished at the consummation. Then the saved will be on earth as well as in heaven. Hades, Gehenna, and the lake of fire will become inoperative.

"Saved or Lost"

Everyone must first be lost before he can be saved. Being lost is a necessary requisite for salvation, not a condition beyond it. It is *God* Who has lost men (Luke 15:4, 8, 24, 32). If a man is lost he is not therefore eternally condemned, but is fitted for salvation. "God locks all up together in stubbornness", not to damn the majority, but "that He may be merciful to all." (Rom. 11:32). The popular idea that one who is lost or destroyed *cannot be saved* is an unfounded inference, based on a negative. Destruction is a salvable condition, not a state beyond hope. God seeks what He has lost "until He finds it." (Luke 15:4). Abraham was a lost man. (Deut. 26:5⁴—not *ready* to perish A.V.). One of his sons, Zaccheus, was lost (Luke 19:8-10). How can God carry out His will to save all (1 Tim. 2:4c) unless all are previously lost?

The Kingdom and Salvation

The kingdom of the heavens is only a thousand year period, not eternity. Those who are shut out of it are not eternally damned (Mat. 7:21). The sin against the holy spirit will not be pardoned in this eon or in the next . . (Mat. 12:32, Mark 3:29^{6,7}). This distinctly *limits* the time to the era of the king-

dom. Such will be saved when the eons end. The rule of Christ and the saints is not eternal. It lasts only a thousand years.

Essentials for Salvation

As more fully explained later the essentials for salvation vary according to the administration. Now it is pure faith because there is pure grace (Rom. 4:16⁸⁹). Among the Circumcision it is a mixture of faith and works (Heb. 4:2⁸11, James 2:14⁸). When the eons are past, faith will give place to sight. Salvation by faith is a special salvation for the eons, in which the unbeliever has no part. After the eons faith will not be essential for salvation.

Will Faith Always be Necessary for Salvation?

We rely on the living God, Who is the Saviour of all mankind, especially of those who believe (1 Tim. 4:10^{1-12c}). This we are commanded to charge and teach (v. 11). How is it that practically all teaching is contrary to this? Because faith, which is supreme in this administration, is forced into the consummation, *where it has no place*. In the creation commission of Mark, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, yet he who disbelieves shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16⁷). *This was fulfilled* (v. 20) in the Pentecostal administration. Later Paul received a special revelation in which he was sent *not to baptize*, but to preach the evangel (1 Cor. 1:17). This is in the succeeding administration, which has much in common with the present. Justification must be of faith that it may accord with grace (Rom. 4:16⁸⁹). And salvation by faith is *for* grace (Eph. 2:8⁹). Now there is no salvation apart from faith.

But this is a *special* salvation, for the eons. Therefore, it is called an eonian salvation (Heb. 5:9). Those who do not believe are not saved during the eons. They have eonian judgment (Heb. 6:2). They will be saved apart from faith, when the eons are past. God's picture of redemption is the fifty-year period of the Jubilee. If a man had a Redeemer, he could be saved before the Jubilee. But, if he had none, he was saved without one, for God's law was such that automatically every fifty years he regained what he had lost. (Lev. 25). Thus God, in the lifetime of each of His people, gave them a shadowgraph of His dealings with His creatures. Redemption is only for the eons. But there is a return without redemption, through the blood of Christ's cross (Col. 1:20c).

The Climax of Revelation

The climax of God's revelation is in Paul's prison epistles. It was given to him to complete the Word of God (Col. 1:25⁹). He alone speaks of a period *before* "the eonian times" (2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 1:2b) and of the consummation (1 Cor. 15:24c), *after* all human government is at an end and death is made inopera-

tive. He alone has the evangel of the untraceable riches of Christ and enlightens all as to the present secret administration (Eph. 3:9⁹). John saw nothing beyond the last eon on the earth in the last book of the Bible (Rev. 21, 22¹²). He did not enter the third heaven as Paul did (2 Cor. 12:1-4¹²). Paul, and Paul alone, reveals the last things. His message completes the universe of space (Eph. 1:23) and spans all time. All others are practically confined to the earth and the eons.

Our Lord said, "I have much to say to you still, but you are not able to bear it at present" (John 16:12). The spirit of truth revealed his evangel direct to the apostle Paul (Gal. 1:12; Rom. 16:25⁸), and the present secret administration (Eph. 3:3⁹), as well as the *transcendent* revelation (2 Cor. 12:7⁸), which could not be made known until he wrote his prison epistles. The word *transcendent* shows that his are the highest. Hence we should not look for the final or the conclusive in the words of our Lord on earth. He ministered only to the Circumcision (Rom. 15:8⁶). He Himself said that He was not commissioned except for the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mat. 15:24⁶). Only Paul has a universal and a final outlook.

Christendom Apostate

The time is fast approaching when the nations will be hewn out of the olive tree for lack of faith (Rom. 11:22). This shows that the vast mass of Christendom, the great churches, no longer believe God. This reverses all the arguments which seek to condemn universal reconciliation because it is not "the teaching of the church". What the church teaches should be looked on with suspicion. If Christendom agreed with the Scriptures, the argument would be needless. This is especially true of that part of the Scriptures which reveals the last things. While Paul was still alive all in the province of Asia had turned from him. So long as there is no return, it will be impossible to have the truth. Men do not study medicine in a book on mathematics. But Christendom tries to get light on the consummation from Scriptures which treat of the kingdom. Therefore it is spiritually bankrupt.

"Endless Death"

All such enemies as sovereignty, authority, and power, which represent human government, will be made inoperative. In this sense the death state also, as the last enemy, will become inoperative, by means of the vivification of all (1 Cor. 15:22c).

Are We Looking for Death or for Christ?

The only hope of the believer and of the world, is the return of our Lord. So far has Christendom departed from the truth that it has taken away the blessed expectation of Christ's presence and substituted for it a fearful dread of meeting Death. By "spiritualizing" our Lord's words, to His disciples,

who would have literally remained alive if the kingdom had come, the death state has been changed into a mysterious form of life. As the actual death of the believer is thus denied, the vital truth of resurrection is practically unknown, for there is no place for it. In God's Word death is death, not another form of life. The spirit returns to God as it was. The body returns to the soil as it was. The soul returns to hades as it was. There can be no consciousness or knowledge in death. Death is an enemy, not a friend.

It gives intense relief to find that the Scriptures do not teach a conscious intermediate state. Otherwise there are many grave problems. It is utterly unjust to punish a sinner thousands of years before being judged, or even to make him wait that long. It is utterly needless to raise him from the dead if he can be judged in the death state. It is unthinkably unjust to make all suffer for many thousands of years in the lake of fire. We know that *all* the dead will stand before the great white throne, children of tender years included. Shall they be tormented millenniums for their naughtinesses?

So with believers. What is their condition "between death and resurrection"? The question is absurd. There is no intermediate state. A person is either dead or alive. The Scripture knows nothing of life in death. Many saints have wondered at this. The Word of God does not put death before the believer. His expectation is the presence of Christ. How wonderful is God's provision so that, *practically*, so far as our consciousness is concerned, the moment of death is the moment of resurrection! Death is likened to a sleep, from which we do not wake until our Lord comes for His saints. It will appear to all who believe God as if they had lived until His return. What a blessed expectation! No long, weary wait in a mythical intermediate state, but ineffable glory when He is glorified!

"No More Sacrifice for Sins"

Christ's sacrifice will never be repeated. Those who reject it will receive "judgment and fiery indignation" (Heb. 10: 26-31^{7 8 10}). They fall into the hands of the living God. But there is no indication that their judgment will be endless. Like millions more, they will be disciplined. The same God Who wrote Hebrews, and has told us of their offense, also wrote Timothy, and tells us of their subsequent salvation.

"The Letter Killeth"

Only the letter of the law of Moses (2 Cor. 3:6, 7), not the letter of the Scriptures, for these constitute the word of life.

"We Know in Part"

"We know out of an instalment . . . Now whenever maturity may be coming, that which is out of an instalment shall be abrogated" (1 Cor. 13:9-10). *Later maturity came* (Eph. 4:13,

Phil. 3:15, Col. 1:28, 3:14, 4:12⁹; *perfect*, the same Greek word. Now, since Paul revealed the secrets which complete God's revelation (Col. 1:25), we *should* see face to face.

* * * * *

If anyone thinks that these are not unscriptural traditions, let him seek to express them in the words of inspiration. We have given little more than the texts which directly teach the truth on these themes. They are further expanded in our other publications.

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE

NOT IN THE GREEK TEXT

As the Bible was turned into English by men who believed strongly in eternal torment, we must not blame them if they translated accordingly. They had no check to keep them from it. For instance, the revisers of the Chinese Bible changed "that God may be All in all" to "that God may be Lord over all," because, they say, the correct rendering teaches the salvation of all, which they deem untrue.

All must honestly acknowledge that both universal reconciliation and everlasting punishment are taught in the Bible. It is impossible to reconcile its teachings on this point, so the custom is to reject or explain away one side or the other. In either case the Bible is only partially believed. It is impossible to believe all. This is acknowledged by those who have definitely faced the issue. They cannot fully decide which is correct. So we are forced to go back of discordant translations to the inspired Scriptures, and examine the evidence afresh.

The Duration of Christ's Reign

The Bible says that our Lord Jesus Christ "shall reign over the house of Jacob *forever* (Greek, *for the eons*, Luke 1:33^{11 12}). Again we are assured that He "shall reign *forever AND ever* (Greek, *for the eons of the eons*, Rev. 11:15^{11 12}). If *forever* is endless, why add "*and ever*"? In Hebrews 1:8¹², is another measure, "Thy Throne, O God, is *for ever and ever*," but the Greek is different. Instead of "for the eons of the eons" it is in the singular, "for the *eon* of the *eon*". All of this is flatly contradicted in the only passage in the Bible which discusses the subject in detail. There we read, "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25c). "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." (1 Cor. 15:24c). What are the facts?

It were an eternal eyesore if Christ could never subdue all his enemies, so it is a shame to insist that he will reign forever. The one passage which explains the matter cannot be misunderstood. The other passages are contradictory in themselves, in the translations (*forever* needs no *and ever* to lengthen it), and they do not correspond with the sacred originals.

When free renderings contradict themselves and unmistakable facts, they must be discarded for close renderings. Our Lord will reign *for the eons, for the eons of the eons*, and in the special character of the *Son, for the eon of the eon*. See the chart and the chapter on *Time* (page 36).

The Length of Christ's Priesthood

The Bible says that Christ is a priest *continually* (Heb. 7:3) and *for ever* (Heb. 7:17). Now a priest stands between men and God. But in the new earth there is no temple (Rev. 21:22¹²) and "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3¹²). There is no place for priesthood. In the Greek the word *continually* is "through-carrying" (Heb. 7:17). Not, like the law, bringing nothing to perfection, He *carries through* his priesthood in one eon (Heb. 7:17¹¹), and reigns as Priest-King only a thousand years (Rev. 20:6¹¹), as Priest the first¹¹ of the eons^{11 12} of the eons, as Son the last eon¹² of the eons. See the chart.

DISCORDANT TRANSLATIONS

Scholars insist that we must translate "according to the sense." This has been done, and what confusion it has created! The fact is that this is not translation at all but interpretation, and it reflects the mind of the translator, his training, his times, his religious associations, and especially Christendom's apostasy, rather than God's revelation. An intense concordant study of the vocabulary of the Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek, during several decades, has shown that as a rule, each word in these languages (unlike our modern tongues), has one central *meaning*. This is usually confounded with its *usage*, which may be as varied as its occurrences, and which may call for as many different renderings in an idiomatic translation. Only by following definite laws of language and by publishing all of the evidence, can a translator keep himself from injecting his own ideas into his translation. This is possible only by the concordant method. As further fruit, much marvelous truth is made manifest.

The Meaning of Words

The exact sense of any word is determined by its usage in the original, supplemented, in some cases, by an analysis of its elements. An exhaustive investigation has shown that the central *meaning* of each word in Scripture never changes, however varied its *usage*, and the number of words needed to express it in another tongue. It never takes on a sense which is expressed by another word. A failure to grant this central significance has led some to doubt this fact. A single example will suffice to show how words which seem to cover two opposite ideas are really one. We are often told that the Hebrew

word *holy* also means *unholy* (harlot, Gen. 38:21). But the central thought of holiness is not personal purity. That is only a secondary result of holiness when consecrated to the *true God*. *Things* were "holy". Impure priests were "holy" on account of their office. Women who dedicated themselves to the impure worship of *Venus* were considered "holy". Thus it is that the word only *seems* to have two antithetical meanings. So it will be found with all others, also. All else practically sets aside *God's Word* for man's interpretations.

The International Concordant Method

An international method of translation used in many tongues, helps us to see things as they are, and not through the spectacles of a single language. Thus, a Greek word which needs eight different English words to render it idiomatically, may be translated into German by means of only one, and vice versa. An inquiry into the whole vocabulary of the Greek Scriptures has revealed the fact that each word of the original has only one central and basic significance, in the inspired text. It does not take on the various ideas of profane Greek, but has been purified for its divine purpose. Nor is it ever used in the special sense given it by heathen philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato. It is from these that the idea of eternity has crept into the church. Theologians should have taken its meaning from the Greek version of the Hebrew instead of going to the darkness of Greek philosophy. Yet the *usages* of a word are in reality as many as the varieties of its occurrences. It is found to adapt itself somewhat to its surroundings. This may call for a varied rendering in one language, but not in another. This is usually confounded with its meaning. Since, in the wisdom of God, He has so written His Book, there is no reason why we should not understand Him. Otherwise there would be no hope. We would be entirely dependent on human "authority," as, indeed, the saints now are—to their distress.

Idiomatic, or According to God's Pattern?

There are idiomatic expressions in all languages. Under cover of these scholars wish us to translate according to our light (or rather darkness), and never by any means by the use of a "stencil". But this is just the opposite of Paul's exhortation to Timothy: "Have a *pattern* (or stencil) of *sound words*." The only way to learn the true sense, force, color, and nuances of a word is to study it in all of its contexts. Scholars have robbed their followers of this privilege by disdaining a pattern. Four different Hebrew names they translate "adder". These probably are the *asp*, the *cobra*, the *yellow viper*, and the *horned snake*. Does not this show the trail of the serpent? They translate one word *dragon*, *sea monster*, *serpent*, *whale*. This may be according to the sense, but to a schoolboy it is nonsense. Not even a scholar can transmute

Must we be Idio[ma]tic?

19

a whale into a serpent. Sound sense says, God says *eon*, and He means *eon*. *That is the pattern He has given us.* Let us not dare to depart from it.

Scholars have tried to insist that "the eon of the eons" is not "idiomatic". They stake their reputations on the assertion that "ever and ever" is an idiomatic rendering of the Greek. The facts are that "eon of the eons", like "holy of holies" is just as good English as it is Greek. It is *unusual*, not unidiomatic. "Ever and ever" is not translation at all. It is a self-contradictory interpretation, without any support in fact, depending entirely on prejudice and superstition for its acceptance. It is idiotic, not idiomatic.

The translations forever, everlasting, eternal, for ever and ever, are contrary to the idiomatic usage of the Hebrew and Greek. There the holy of holies, is the holiest of all, not a holy place of infinite extent. It is sheer interpretation, and it ignores the idiom of the original. If the holy of holies does not include all space neither does the eon of the eons include all time. They ought to call in the holy place of holy places, "for universe and universe". That is just as idio[ma]tic as "for ever and ever". The idiom of the English is just the same as the Hebrew and the Greek in such phrases. "The holy of holies" gives precisely the same impression as in the original tongues. So with "the eon of the eons." "For ever and ever" is not idiomatic. It is contrary to Scripture. It is undiluted error which men seek to force upon God's revelation by a pretense of scholarship.

Idiomatic or Idiotic?

ORIGINAL	ENGLISHED	STULTIFIED
[The Bible is the] [The Lord's Coming is the]	book of books	book and book
<i>shir eshirim</i>	day of days	day and day
<i>qdsh equdshim</i>	song of songs	song and song
<i>kurios kuriōn</i>	holy of holies	holy and holy
<i>basileus basileōn</i>	Lord of lords	Lord and lord
<i>aiōnos tōn aiōnōn</i>	King of kings	King and king
	eon of eons	ever and ever (R.V.)
<i>throughout all ages, world without end. (A.V.)</i>		

We have taken the Revised Version rendering for comparison because it is at least consistent, and like the other renderings. The A.V. is too ridiculous to discuss, in view of its own translation "end of the world" (Mat. 13:39). Here we have an example of the kind of scholarship which, like the priesthood of Rome, seeks to stand between us and God. It leaves the *ma* out of idiomatic. This one utterly ridiculous rendering is really responsible for the awful doctrine of eternal torment. It is not merely heresy. It is blasphemy.

Do not judge the language of the people in the Scriptures by your own. Theirs may seem silly, but it is you who are

unwise. When I was in Palestine I heard of a man who was put "on his feet". I was glad for him, until I was told that the expression indicated that he was so impoverished that he no longer had shoes to wear! So no English speaking person would say "From out of the eon it is not heard that anyone opens the eyes of one having been born blind." (John 9:32). He might say "At no time." People in the East do speak like that. The blind man was not an Englishman.

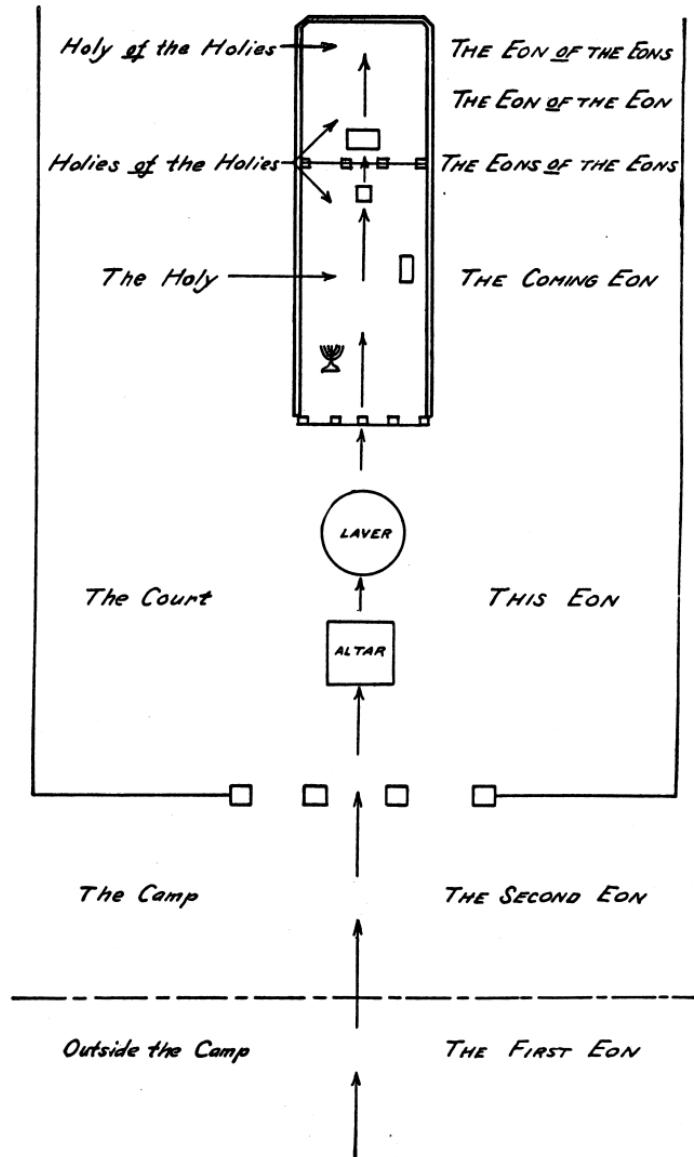
The Eonian Times

The Scriptures never mention "eternity", an idea which cannot be grasped by human hearts. Instead, they deal with a definite period of time, which some *think* will be about twenty-four thousand years in duration—we do not know. Eternity cannot have a beginning (*b*) or an end (*c*), but the eonian times have both. In these times God proposes to reveal Himself. It is these eons which were made through the Son, not "the worlds" (Heb. 1:2*b*). There was a time *before* the eons (1 Cor. 2:7, 2 Tim. 1:9, Titus 1:2*b*). It would be silly to make this before "eternal", or eternity. The Scriptures also speak of the consummations of the eons (1 Cor. 10:11), to which the Corinthians had attained, in spirit, because they were a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17^a^b).

Five eons can be found by careful search. The eons and the worlds synchronize (Eph. 2:2). The first two eons are not mentioned, but their corresponding worlds are. The third is our evil eon, lasting from the deluge to the day of wrath, now ready to burst upon the world. The last two are the scenes of Christ's future public glories. The eons correspond to the tabernacle in the wilderness, where also are five divisions: (1) without the camp, (2) in the camp, (3) in the court, (4) in the holy place, (5) in the holy of holies. The last eon is similarly called "the eon of the eons," (Eph. 3:21) because it, like the holy of holies, is the climax of all the rest. Just as the two holy places are called the holies of the holies (Heb. 9:25) so the last two eons are often called "the eons of the eons", and are usually translated "for ever and ever".

The accompanying diagram will help the unlearned reader to grasp the meaning of the various phrases used of the eons. The tabernacle was a picture of man's approach to the Deity, so corresponds closely with the eonian times, which also bring him to God. There are five divisions in each, in which the last and highest is called the holy of holies and the eon of the eons respectively. The two apartments in the tabernacle are called "the holies of the holies". So the last two eons are called the "eons of the eons". The "holy" place in the tabernacle corresponds to "the eon". This shows clearly the force of the various phrases used of the eons to come.

In the original the relation between the eons is not indicated by "and", as in our "for ever and ever". It is the



genitive, our *of*. If we use the word "ever", we should translate "the ever of the evers". The plea that "and" is an "idiomatic" translation of "of" is sheer recklessness. None of the other phrases of the same construction can be so mutilated. How would "the holy *and* holies" do for "the holy *of* holies"? The mere fact that the relation is that of the genitive, which shows that one is a superior example of the same kind, as "King of kings", absolutely precludes the idea of endlessness. Let no one deceive you by misusing the term "idiomatic". It certainly looks suspicious that *all* the other phrases of this kind, as "Lord of lords", are considered idiomatic English. No one should presume to teach concerning this unless he can first explain the difference between

the eon of the eon
the eon of the eons
the eons of the eons

Any scholar who evades this acknowledges his own incompetence. Who can unlock the subject with this key is deserving of attention.

Translators show their ignorance of the eonian times when they translate by means of the self-contradictory phrase, "for ever and ever". The first ever cannot mean endless, or the second could not be added to it. If the first is not endless, the second is also limited. Its incorrectness is also shown by the failure to distinguish differences in the original thus:

The eon of the eon == for ever and ever
The eon of the eons == world without end
The eons of the eons == for ever and ever

This is not translation. It is the most flagrant, dubious interpretation. It is true that we are not accustomed to these phrases, and a correct translation sometimes appears ridiculous at first, because we ourselves are queer and foreign in our modes of thought.

The mistranslation "for ever and ever", which is supposed to be the strongest of all expressions to denote eternity, *never* denotes endlessness. That is expressed in Greek, as in most other languages, by the negative, "of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33 A.V.). The kingdom itself ends not, but the reign of Christ, though "for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15¹¹ 12) will definitely end when He delivers up the kingdom (1 Cor. 15:24c). Hence "for ever and ever" is *not* endless.

The passages usually adduced as proof are those which speak of the life of God. That He lives "for ever and ever" which must mean endless, is based on fallacious reasoning, a false background, and ignorance of the grammar of the Greek. In every case it should be translated *He is living* (not *He lives*). When the fact of indissoluble life is stated, in contrast with death, the other form is used, as "Who became dead, and *lives*". (Rev. 2:8). The matter of the term of God's life is

not in question. If it were, then God's life could only *begin* when the eons of the eons begin, for Christ's reign and the eonian life of the saints does not begin until these eons commence. Reasoning to the negative is not logical. If I should say that I was living during the great war, only a theologian would infer that I am now dead. It would be most stupid to ascribe life to God in the consummation, after the eons of the eons, *when there is no death*. It would be like carrying a pail of water to moisten the ocean. The book of the unveiling of Jesus Christ is confined to these eons^{11 12}. We do not reason thus in regard to space. God can be the Lord of all the earth without being a slave in the rest of the universe. It is of tremendous import that He is living for the eons of the eons, for all His enemies will be destroyed in these time periods.

The Eonian God

The one passage where *eonian* is applied to God has been given as a conclusive proof of its infinite range. The passage reads: "the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began (*in times eonian*), but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting (*eonian*) God, made known..." (Rom. 16: 25-26). *Eonian* occurs twice in this passage, as indicated. Once it is rendered *world*, and once *everlasting*. In the first instance it *cannot* be everlasting, for the period has already come to an end. But God can and does live during the eons. The false implication that this limits His life to the eons is groundless. This evangel has no application outside the eons. Hence the God Who proclaims it is related to the eons in a way quite unknown in the consummation. He is also called the God of Israel, the eonian nation. Is He therefore not the God of all the nations? He is God of all. He is the God of the eonian times and of all time. But He will not be the eonian God when the eons are past.

The Ever in Everlasting

Although the parts which make up the word *aiōn* (translated *eternal* and *everlasting*) are not a proof of its meaning, it is helpful to know that they are not adverse to the true sense, as established by usage. It is made up of *a-[e]i-ōn*, *UN-IF-BEING*. The first two elements, *aei*, *UN-IF*, have the sense of *ever*. This never means time without *end*, but time without *fail*. This is evident from its usage in its eight occurrences (Mark 15:8, Acts 7:51, 2 Cor. 4:11, 6:10, Titus 1:12, Heb. 3:10, 1 Pet. 3:15, 2 Pet. 1:12). How terrible it would be if "we who live are always (throughout eternity!) delivered unto death for Jesus' sake..."!

Things Seen, Temporal; Unseen, Eternal.

Having translated *eonian* incorrectly "eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18), our translators found themselves obliged to translate *proskairo*

THE DIVINE CALENDAR

THE CHART displays the principal time periods of the Scriptures and their relation to one another. Failure to distinguish the various time periods has resulted in great confusion as to the ultimate destiny of God's creation. A fuller presentation of the subject is contained in our booklet, "The Divine Calendar".

As in the affairs of daily life we need the kindly offices of a calendar to tell us the day, or week, or month, or year, even so has God given us a Divine Calendar, that we may be up to date in the grand affairs which He has undertaken, from their beginning to their consummation.

We work a week and stop. So God does, too, when He restores the earth. For legal business we divide the year into twelve months. He, too, administers the cycles of human affairs in twelve administrations. Still longer periods we group in five and its multiples, a decade or a century. So He has given us five eons or ages.

The history of the universe may be considered from various viewpoints. Its divisions vary according to the special aspect. It is characterized by

THREE HEAVENS AND EARTHS

The original creation, which, according to Peter, was destroyed by water; the present heavens and earth, which are stored with fire for their future dissolution; and the new or third heaven and the new earth or paradise, which John saw in the vision of Christ's unveiling, and to which in spirit Paul was snatched away.

TWO GRAND CREATIONS

The old, created perfect, but disrupted by the entrance of sin; and the new creation, in which "the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind".

FIVE WORLDS

The first has its beginning in the original creation, and its conclusion is spoken of under the term "disruption" (generally translated "foundation"). The second world was destroyed by the flood. The third, or "this world", ends with the Day of Wrath. In the regenerated earth the fourth world begins with the thousand-year reign of Christ; and the fifth, or new world, with the new heaven and the new earth.

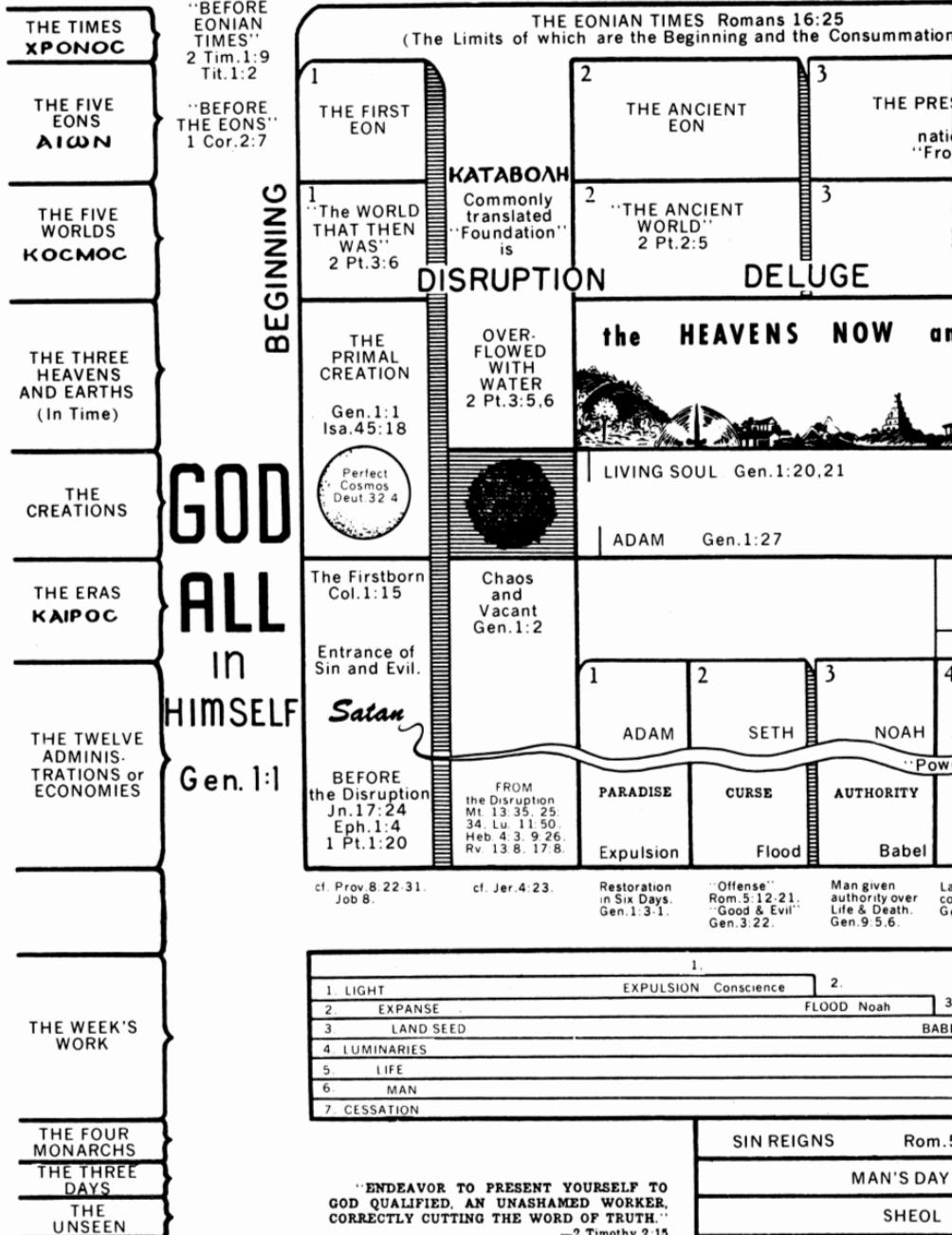
FIVE EONS, OR AGES

The worlds and the eons synchronize. They are but different aspects of the same thing. A world recognizes the *constitution* of affairs while an *eon* is concerned with the *effects* of such a system and its *duration*.

The Divine Cal

ALL OUT OF GOD ROM. II:36

ALL TH



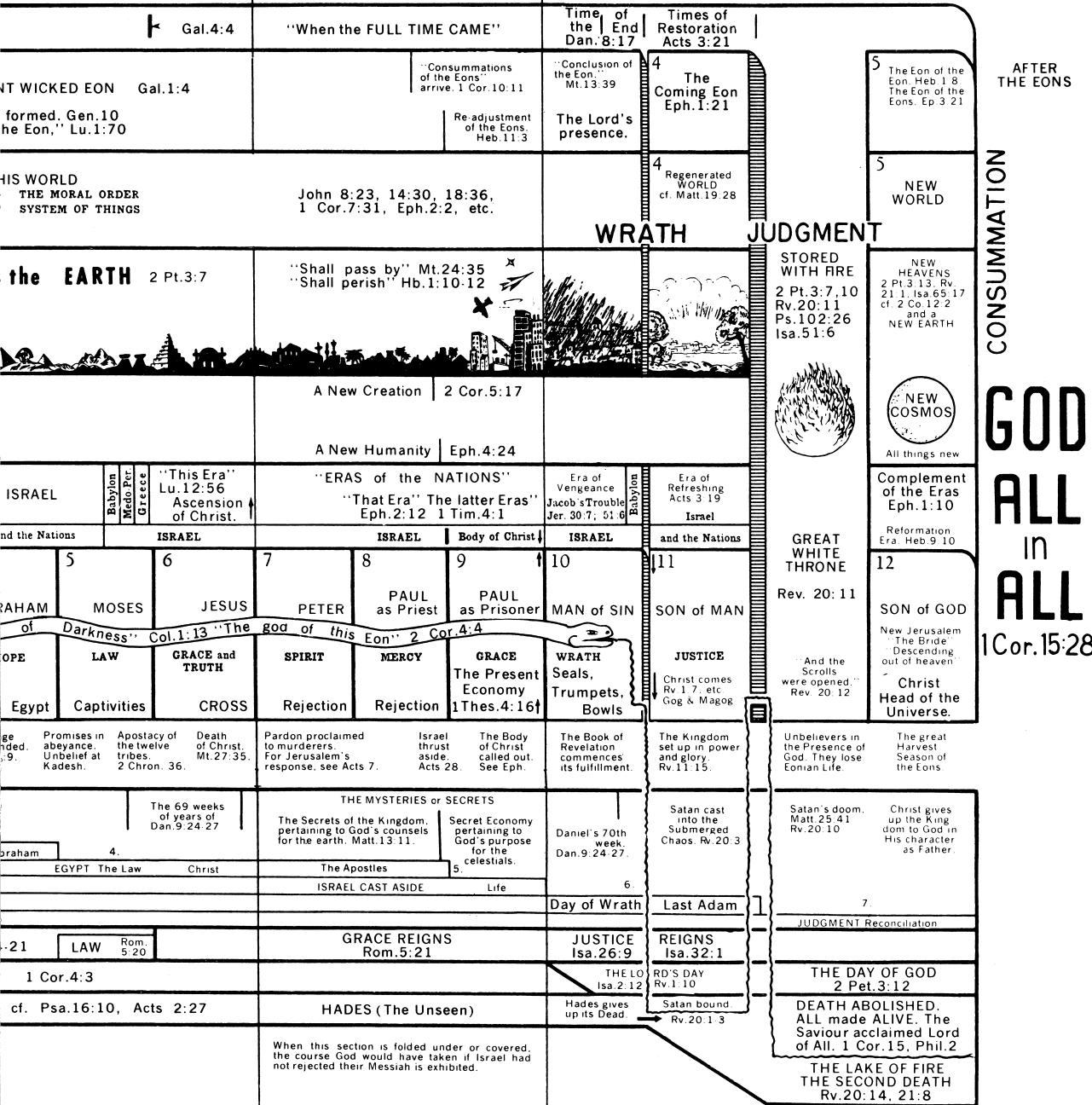
endar

OUGH GOD ROM.

This section of the Calendar covering panels number 7, 8, and 9, exhibits the course God has taken as a result of Israel's blindness.

11:36

ALL FOR GOD ROM. 11:36



TWELVE ADMINISTRATIONS

These begin first with the creation of Adam, and detail God's dealings with mankind in twelve different phases. After the time of Innocence¹ follows the next, in which man is guided only by the light of Conscience², and which the flood brings to a conclusion. Then comes Noah and human Government³, the calling out of a people through Jehovah's unconditional Promise⁴, the Law⁵, and finally the Incarnation⁶ of the Son of God. During the Pentecostal⁷ Economy the Kingdom is again proclaimed and again refused. Then comes the Transition⁸. Israel is set aside, and the nations brought nigh. Paul acts as steward of the Mystery, the present Secret⁹ Administration. Judgment¹⁰, the Kingdom¹¹ of the Son of Mankind, and the complement, or Fulness¹² of the eras, complete the list.

A WEEK'S WORK

God worked six days in making or restoring the ruin of the original earthly creation, and ceased on the seventh. These correspond to the seven phases of the divine activities in the moral history of mankind during the eons up to the Consumption^c.

FOUR MONARCHS

Four great monarchs follow one another on earth: Sin, Law, Grace, and Justice. Sin and Law are inexorable tyrants, dealing out death, but at present we bow to the matchless sway of Grace, which is absolutely just, yet transcends Justice and grants life. *Grace Reigns!*

THREE DAYS

Three radically distinct periods follow man's failure: Man's Day, now nearing its close, in which Man shows what he can do, while God restrains His hand; Jehovah's Day, or the Day of the Lord, the time of Christ's reign, when man is abased; and finally the Day of God, when He tabernacles again with mankind.

* * * * *

A perpendicular line drawn at any point on the chart will touch the same time in all. Thus, the present Secret Economy (under the fold) is in the second heaven and earth, the first creation, the third world and eon, and under the reign of grace.

All beneath the fold belongs to the secrets which were not made known until Israel was set aside for their rejection of Christ. Blessing comes because of their apostasy. Closed, blessing comes through their restoration.

"temporal", as nowhere else. It means *temporary*. They render it for a while (margin *temporary* Mat. 13:21), for a time (Mark 4:17), for a season (margin *temporary* Heb. 11:25). And now scholars gleefully point us to this mistranslation to prove the correctness of their former error! Our Lord compared *temporary* with a single season—less than a year. A season is much shorter than the eons. The ratio was less than one to twenty-five. "What is observed is temporary, yet what is not observed is eonian." If a saint lives a hundred years that will be far less than a hundredth part of his eonian life. The contrast between the time periods is much greater than that used by our Lord.

Eonian is Not Endless

Every passage in which *eonian* appears is listed on the page headed "The Eonian Times". In every case the sense is clear. It denotes that which pertains to one or all of the eons. This always gives a far more vigorous sense than mere endlessness. Many things commonly supposed to be eternal are clearly confined to the eons. If all rule retires (1 Cor. 15:24c) then no nation is eternal and Israel is an *eonian* nation, with an *eonian* kingdom, and an *eonian* salvation and redemption. As in the jubilee, where all went free, even if not redeemed, so at the consummation all will be reconciled, even if not redeemed before. Redemption is only for the eons, which are figured by the fifty years.

Endlessness in Greek

To express endlessness the Greek says, *ouk estai telos*, NOT WILL-BE FINISH (Luke 1:33). An endless life is *akatalutos*, UN-DOWN-LOOSED, indissoluble (Heb. 7:17). Endless life is ours because we have *aphtharsia*, UN-CORRUPTION, incorruption (1 Cor. 15:42) and *athanasia*, UN-DEATH, deathlessness or immortality (1 Cor. 15:53). Endlessness is expressed by negatives (not, un-, in-, -less), and in no other way.

The advocates of eternal torment always allow that the terms for endlessness may have a limited meaning also, though, of course, never when it conflicts with God's plain declarations concerning the destiny of His creatures. We declare that each of these words has only one meaning, hence we are not compelled to ask our readers to accept our interpretation in each passage. It is urged that the context should decide each case, but, in reality, the context is the theological bias of the interpreter. We need never interpret. We ask you to believe God. They *must* interpret. And you *must* believe them. Whom will you believe, man or God? Believe man and you land in eternal torment, which is quite fitting. Believe God and you arrive at His most glorious goal.

Those unacquainted with the languages of inspiration may ask, "What shall we, what can we do, as we do not understand the Hebrew and Greek?" The scholar would say, "Just

"Unorthodox" Passages

accept the simple, clear wording of the Holy [falsified] Bible." In other words, "You need not worry. We know. We are the people." And what do we say? Scholars have no more monopoly of God's mind than priests have of His grace. We provide you with the *facts*, which you can test by means of a concordance of the original. We give you translations made after God's pattern, not after our misunderstanding. You need not rely on us at all in your conclusions. We publish *all* of the evidence. The scholars do not allow you to believe some passages in the Bible. We urge you to believe *all*. Their ultimate would rend your heart and drive you insane if you really realized its force. It leads men to hate God. But ours leads you to adoration and praise of His power, wisdom, and love.

Test the duration indicated by the word *eon* ("ever"), not by your own selfishness and prejudice, but by actual examples, such as the length of Christ's reign, as fully set forth in the Scriptures.

Pay special attention to so-called "obscure" passages in the Word of God, such as Romans 5:12-19c; 1 Cor. 15:20-28c; Col. 1:13-20c, for their alleged obscurity consists in the fact that they are contrary to orthodoxy, and disclose God's glory in a light too bright for hearts hardened by the horrible heresies of Christendom.

The saints have suffered from priests who have claimed dominion over their faith. Their place is now taken by professors, who demand that we bow to their superior wisdom. Thank God for the real scholars who give us the *evidence*, and do not appeal to prejudice or their own learning! We might claim to have devoted more labor to the systematic investigation of Greek grammar than anyone else. We might insist that we have done it in a more thorough and scientific manner, and produce our apparatus as proof. We might set ourselves up as "authorities" with far more right than those who have never examined every word and grammatical form in God's revelation. But we refuse to have dominion over the faith of our fellow saints.

Do not believe us. But we do claim that our protracted and methodical labors give us a right to be heard. We do ask you to examine the *evidence* we produce in *God's Word itself*, so that you may intelligently believe God for yourself. God has not spoken in riddles. Christ is the only Mediator between God and man. Allow no pope, Protestant or Catholic, suffer no priest or professor to do more than to direct you to Him. Refuse their learned phrases. Under the camouflage of "idiom" they are seeking to change God's holy Word so as to support their philosophies and unbeliefs. "For the eons of the eons" is unusual idiomatic English which expresses God's thought exactly. "For ever and ever" is the traditional idiotic phrase which has been inserted to corrupt God's truth and give divine sanction to the most horrible heresy which has ever sullied the character of the Deity.

For Ever and Ever in the Hebrew Scriptures

In Hebrew the two *evers* are not the same word. It is *oulm vod*, in which the *l* is equivalent to *for* and the *v* stands for *and*. The word *oulm* means OBSCURE, and *od* means FURTHER. Anyone can confirm this with a Hebrew concordance. Hence the phrase should read, *for [the] obscure and further*, or, as it is sometimes worded, *for the eon and still*. The *obscure* was a name given to a hazy conception of a great Messianic age in the future. It is clarified in the later Scriptures, so that we know that it is used to refer to the kingdom eon. But what of *and still*? I once formed the theory that *oulm* goes to the time of the new earth and *vod* goes *beyond*. I had an assistant test this. It was found that, in three cases, such things as priesthood were said to be "for ever and ever." Before giving up my theory I checked the three passages by the Hebrew, and found that these three *and these only* were mistranslations! (Psalm 148:6, Isa. 30:8, Jer. 7:7). In each case the translators had confused "for the future, for the eon" with *the eon and still!* My theory was proven true, for nothing but the truth could have picked out the only three mistranslated passages without reference to the Hebrew text. When used of the past, of men, "from *oulm*" never denotes endlessness, for men are not eternal in the past.

The Hebrew word ntzch

Another term translated "for ever" is the Hebrew *ntzch*. It occurs frequently in the Psalm titles, and is rendered "the chief Musician". This, of course, is a wild guess of the scholars. The word is really an endorsement, marking the Psalm as "permanent". The idea comes from the root GLAZED, for glazing assured permanence. The LXX renders it *eis telos*, for the consummations. Its usage is seen in Jeremiah 8:5. "Why is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a *perpetual* back-sliding?" That certainly is not endless. So in Psalm 16:11, "At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." The LXX renders this *eis telos*, which reads "to the end" in the Authorized Version in Matthew 10:22. That certainly is not endless! In *no* passage can its endlessness be proven.

Believe God, not Men!

Do not seek truth from the old Hebrew rabbis whom Christ Himself denounced (Mat. 15:6) or from the so-called Church fathers, who brought on the dark ages, or from books and lexicons based on them. Search the Scriptures themselves, by means of a concordance, that you may be "sound in the faith, not heeding Jewish myths and precepts of men who are turning from the truth." (Titus 1:14). Test the truth by the facts in God's Word. Psalm 45:7 reads literally *oulm vod, eon and still*. The Greek quotation of it in Hebrews 1:8¹² is *for the eon*

of the eon. This is the limit of "for ever and ever". 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 is God's explicit explanation of the length of this period. "He must be reigning *until*" (not eternally). When the Hebrew *od* occurs before *oulm* it has the sense of *till*. Thus Isaiah 32:14 "for *dens till the eon*", not *forever*, for verse 15 says "until". As a noun, *od* simply means *future*. Thus Psalm 148:6 reads "and He causes them to stand for the future, for the eon." (*lod loulm*).

The Aorist, or Indefinite

Many false conclusions can be avoided if attention is given to the accuracies of the original Greek, which are not carried over in the common translations. Greek grammar distinguishes between what is a timeless fact, as "God *loves* the world" (John 3:16) and an uncompleted action, the time of which is limited, according to the immediate or distant context. Thus "should [not] be perishing", in the latter part of the same verse, speaks, not of an abiding fact, but of a process going on at a given time. It may be difficult for those unacquainted with the Greek to grasp this, so we will establish it by means of examples, which will be clear to all. The tragic fact is that our Authorized Version reversed the grammar of John 3:16, for it makes God's love a thing of the past and puts "perish" as a timeless future fact. Instead of *loved* and *perish* it should be *loves* and *perishing*.

In preparing for the translation of the CONCORDANT VERSION, it was found that Greek grammar was in considerable confusion on some points. So a complete card index was made, consisting of every form of every word, all distributed according to their form. Several important matters were cleared up, especially the force of the so-called "aorist". The astonishing thing is that the Greek word itself means *indefinite* yet all the grammars agree that it denotes a *definite* past act, "a *point* in the *expanses of time*," "a *definite, completed action*," etc. It was found that this confusion arose from the fact that another form, the so-called "second aorist," has been mixed with it. This is past in form and in fact, so it gave the real aorists a false force. By keeping all of the forms separate, it was found that the actual aorists, which, in the indicative, have the sign of both past and future, were really *aorist*, that is, un-horizoned (*horizon* comes from the same root), or *indefinite*.

This is of immense value in the study of God's gracious Word. God's love to the world was not a definite, past, completed action, as the scholars wish us to believe (John 3:16). He *loves* it, without regard to time. The abolition of death (2 Tim. 1:10) is not a definite, completed action in the past. It is a fact which will not be fulfilled until the consummation. By means of the aorist we are able to distinguish the great, timeless truths of God's Word from those actions which are connected with the process, not the goal. That God *lives* with-

out regard to time is true, but it becomes a stumbling block if we force His endless life into passages where His *living for the eons* is emphasized. The form *living* is not indefinite, or aorist, hence speaks of a special phase of His life, which is definitely limited in time to the eons.

"The Natural Man"

The *soulish* (not the *natural*) man is not receiving that which is of the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Human nature and conscience are in accord with God (Rom. 2:14-15).

The Case of Judas

A footnote in the Revised Version says that the Greek of Mark 14:21 reads: "good were it for him if that man", not "good were it for that man if he". Our Lord never said that it were good for Judas if Judas had never been born. That is not the Greek, but the mistranslation of many modern versions.

Since the Concordant Version has been criticized we have examined other versions, which translate the passage correctly. Van Ess, a scholarly German translation reads: "it were better for Him, if this human had never been born". The Murphy edition of the Douay Version reads: "It were better for him, if that man had not been born". Joseph B. Rotherham's critically emphasized translation, which is of special weight in such a matter because it does not attempt to make idiomatic English, but aims only to give the exact force of the Greek, renders it: "well had it been for him, if that man had not been born." We give these examples simply to break down prejudice, not to prove the point. Everyone who will investigate the Greek will immediately be convinced that the popular rendering has no support in God's Word.

We all are prejudiced and may as well admit it. Nevertheless candor demands that we acknowledge that, in most cases, the prejudice is in favor of eternal damnation, for this is the popular, orthodox belief. Few suffer for believing it. On the other hand it is almost always unpopular to speak of universal reconciliation. Many shudder at the very thought, and some have forfeited all their worldly prospects on account of it. I can certify to the truth of the inspired statement that a belief in the salvation of all is a reproach—even to Paul, the apostle (1 Tim. 4:10).

We must be fair, however, and acknowledge that eternal damnation is the orthodox and accepted view, which most of us have unconsciously imbibed from our youth. It is upheld by almost all translations and churches. Therefore the teaching of universal reconciliation is under an enormous handicap. It should be allowed every possible concession in our estimate of the two. If this pamphlet merely gives a conviction of its possibility, the chances are that it is true.

The Word of God records a long, varied *process*, in which there are many judgments and salvations, which may easily be confused with the final consummation, hence the need of examining each text microscopically to determine if an action is for a time or unlimited, as well as *when* it occurs, and *to whom* it applies. We must never confuse the *process* with the *goal*. We must never take what belongs in one eon or administration and wrongly place it in another. To help the reader, we publish a chart in the center of the pamphlet, on which the administrations are numbered, and put a small superior figure where needed, showing to which administration the text belongs; *b* indicates the beginning, and *c* the consummation, of the eons.

The Indefinite and Incomplete Verbs

A distinction of very great value is found in the grammar of the Greek. One form is the Greek *aorist*, which means *indefinite*, as "Thus God *loves* the world." (John 3:16). It is a *fact* apart from time. The other form is called the *incomplete*, because the action is in progress at the time indicated. Thus, "the indignation of God *is remaining* on him" (A.V. "the wrath of God *abideth* on him," John 3:36^a). Exactly the same form of this Greek word (*menei*) occurs in John 1:39: "they perceived where He *is remaining*" (A.V. "saw where He *dwell*"). How long did He remain there? He certainly is not there now! The next day He left for Galilee (v. 43). The wrath of God is not remaining on unbelievers in this administration. Since our Lord spoke these words He has been crucified, and God has conciliated the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them (2 Cor. 5:19^b).

This is so important that we will give a few more examples, simply noting the verbs which do *not* speak of facts, but of processes whose duration is limited, giving the appropriate literal rendering.

John 3:36 he who is stubborn as to the Son, shall not *be seeing* life, but the indignation of God *is remaining* on him

3:16 For thus God *loves* the world, so that He gives His only begotten Son, that everyone who *is believing* into Him should not *be perishing*, but *may be having* eonian life.

It is an error to reason as if all the verbs were grammatically alike in this verse. It is a timeless *fact* that God *loves* and *gives*. But *believing* refers to a transient activity. Faith will not abide in the glory. Eonian life is still future and will last only during the eons, when there will be no death. We

can live after the eons, but not have *eternal* life. *Perishing* is also a transient thing, confined to the eons, like the life.

John 6:58¹¹ He who is *masticating* this Bread *shall be living* for the eon.

Those who ate are *dead*. They did not live "for ever". They *will live* for the eon. Eonian life is a present possession but not a present experience. It begins at the resurrection.

John 8:51¹¹ if anyone should be keeping My Word, he should under no circumstances *be tasting* death for the eon.

They are dead. Their life did not continue for ever.

This grammatical distinction, which is of immense value in the study of God's Word, is not based on traditional Greek grammars, but upon an examination of every single occurrence in the inspired Scriptures. Therefore we warn our readers not to test it by the works of men but by the actual text itself. The indefinite form is confined to the *first* aorist (which means "indefinite" in Greek), where the indicative has the signs of both past and future or some equivalent. Thus John 3:16 is *ēgapešen*, in which the first *ē*— indicates the past, and the —*s*— the future. It is really a past future, so includes all time, and thus indicates a fact.

God IS Spirit, and LIKE Light and Love

In Greek a literal statement does not need this verb *IS*, but it must be used in a figure of speech.

spirit the God (without *IS*, John 4:24)
 the God Light *IS* (1 John 1:5)
 the God Love *IS* (1 John 4:8)
 [this *IS* the body My (Mat. 26:26)]

God HAS (not IS) Attributes

The divine attributes are expressed by means of adjectives, *holy* (not *holiness*), *righteous* (not *righteousness*), etc.

Of God—Not of God

What is literally out of God lacks the verb *to be*. What is figurative *has* the verb, thus in the Greek we read:

Ye not are hearing, seeing that out of the God not
 YE ARE (John 8:47).

The yet one doing the missing out of the Slanderer *IS*
 (1 John 3:8)

Every the one no doing justice not *IS* out of the God
 (1 John 3:10)

Cain out of the wicked one *WAS* (1 John 3:12)

These are figurative. This is true of them only in a sec-

The Time is Important

ondary sense. The following are literal statements of fact:

the yet all out of the God (1 Cor. 11:12).
 the yet all out of the God (2 Cor. 5:18).
 out of Him .. the all (Rom. 11:36).

Therefore all is *literally* out of God, and some things are in an accommodated, figurative sense, not of God.

The Tense is Important

Especially in the closing scenes of Christ's Unveiling, where John often returns, in spirit, to Patmos, the tense is important, thus 21:6-8 changes to the *future* tense, because the outlook is no longer the time of the vision, but the time of writing. "The abominable, murderers," and the other undeserving will not live in the new earth. They will have died long before, and are judged at the great white throne, and go into the lake of fire.

DISTINCTIONS OF TIME

The Divine Calendar

In order to give a clear and comprehensive grasp of the time periods of Scripture we publish herewith the chart from The Divine Calendar, which is more fully explained in the pamphlet of that name. All is based on the Greek text, and is so arranged that a vertical line will indicate the same relative time in the three Heavens and Earths, the Creations, the Times, the five Worlds and Eons, and the twelve Economies. The last two are of especial importance in the study before us. The reader is entreated to turn to the chart and note the administration in which each passage occurs, as it is indicated by a small superior figure to the right of the verse number. When eons are mentioned, he is urged to see which one is in view, especially in regard to the last two. To further aid in the study of the eons we publish a page giving each occurrence, so placed that its relation to the whole course of the eonian times is apparent.

The time *when* a scripture applies is as vital to its understanding as care in confining it to the proper persons. Many passages adduced to prove universal reconciliation are limited both in time and in scope.

Eph. 1:10¹² "to head up the universe in the Christ" limits the time to Christ's *headship*, in the last eon, *before* the consummation.

Phil. 2:10-11^{11 12} "that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord, for the glory of God, the Father" is also *prior* to the consummation, when the Son Himself is subject.

Acts 3:21¹¹

"the times of the restoration of all which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets from the eon" is confined to the kingdom in the coming eon, *long before* the consummation.

The Various Administrations

Distinguish the different administrations and numberless difficulties will disappear. The present is a *secret* administration of which our Lord gave no hint (Eph. 3:9⁹). Our Lord spoke mostly of the next administration of Judgment¹⁰ which will introduce the Kingdom¹¹. God now dispenses *grace*⁹, then He will dispense *wrath*¹⁰ and *justice*¹¹. It will amply repay the reader to orient himself by the chart every time the number of an administration is given.

Conciliation and Reconciliation

God, before Israel was cast away (Rom. 11:15⁷), kept the nations afar off (Eph. 2:13), but now He is conciliated and friendly toward them (2 Co. 5:18,19^{8,9}), so that the invitation of the evangel for today is "Be conciliated to God!" (2 Co. 5:20). When we obtain the conciliation, and are conciliated to God (Rom. 5:10,11) then we are reconciled, that is, not only is God kindly disposed to us, as He is to all the world in this administration of His grace, but we are no longer at enmity with Him, and there is mutual reconciliation. The Colossians were reconciled (Col. 1:21⁹). The universe will be thus reconciled at the consummation (Col. 1:20c). Only a concordant version distinguishes between these important terms.

The Time of Reconciliation

Some have insisted that reconciliation is a thing of the past. The verb *apokatallaxai*, to-reconcile, which is here used is not in the past tense. It lacks the sign of the past, but has the sign of the future. Nevertheless it is indefinite, and cannot be limited to any time. This chapter contains five other verbs which are in precisely the same grammatical form. These will show the unlearned that it cannot be confined to the past. We quote from the Revised Version to avoid prejudice.

Col. 1:10 *to walk* worthily of the Lord
 19 *in him* should all the fulness *dwell*
 20 *through him* *to reconcile* all things unto himself
 22 *to present* you holy and without blemish
 25 *to fulfil* the word of God

None of this is confined to the past. Much of it finds its fulfillment in the future.

DISTINCTIONS OF SCOPE

The question, *to whom does it apply?* is no less important than *when*. The salvation (1 Tim. 2:4, 4:10c) justification (Rom. 5:18c) and vivification (1 Cor. 15:22c) of *all*, sometimes applied to all beings in the universe, is confined to *mankind* in these passages. The salvation of "all Israel" (Rom. 11:26¹¹) is limited to those descendants of Jacob who have faith, and because of it either enter the kingdom alive or are made alive in the former resurrection. No unbelievers are included. "The times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21¹¹) is specifically limited to that which had been spoken by God through the prophets. These said nothing concerning the destiny of all mankind or all creation. This will be fulfilled in the kingdom¹¹ (not at the consummation *c.*).

The Outlook of the Hebrew Scriptures

The original germ of all prophecy is the promise that the head of the serpent should be bruised by the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15¹). The scope of Israel's prophets was gradually enlarged. The pre-exile prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah) included simply a future Messianic kingdom. The post-exile prophets see Israel's dispersion before the kingdom. Ezekiel sees beyond the kingdom. But none of them sees the consummation. Hence it is futile to go to these immature revelations for light on the final issue.

The Scope of the Word "All"

The word "all" is seldom, if ever, used in its absolute sense. Invariably there are limitations imposed by the context. God has explained this to us in connection with the theme we are studying. Before He can be All in all, the universe must be subject to Him (1 Cor. 15:28c). Even God's Son is included in this subjection. But there is one exception—God Himself! Since the Scriptures make only this one exception, the meaning of *ta panta* (*the all or the universe*) in which God will be All, *can have no other limitation*. This shows what this phrase embraces elsewhere. The following are passages in which this phrase occurs:

ta panta the universe

1 Co. 15:27 Him Who is subjecting *the universe* to Him
 28 whenever *the universe* may be subjected to Him
 — Him Who subjects *the universe* to Him

Eph. 1:10 *the universe* is to be headed up in the Christ
 11 the One Who is operating *the universe* in accord
 with the counsel of His will

3: 9 God, Who creates *the universe*
 4:10 that He should complete *the universe*

Phil. 3:21 to subject even *the universe* to Himself

Col. 1:16 seeing that *the universe* in the heavens and on the earth is created in Him
the *universe* has been created through Him and for Him

20 to reconcile *the universe* to Him

Heb. 1: 3 carrying on *the universe* by His powerful declaration

2: 8 For in the subjection of *all* to Him

Rev. 4:11 For *the universe* Thou dost create

The word *all*, being in the indefinite (so-called neuter) gender, is used freely of both persons and things. Even in creation God did not create Himself. In the consummation, with which we are concerned, we may be sure that *all* will be subject, even His Son. *There will be no insubjection at all* in the universe. As to reconciliation, that must be limited from the nature of the case, for only that which is at enmity is capable of being reconciled. The Son does not need to be reconciled. I know of no other exception. "Unfallen angels" are a figment of theology. However, all *enemies* will not only be *subjected* (1 Cor. 15:28c), but *reconciled* (Col. 1:20c). The subjection will be accomplished by the power and glory of His reign. The reconciliation will come through the weakness and shame of His cross.

Creation and Reconciliation have the Same Scope

As the scope of the reconciliation is vital to our study, let us compare it with the same phrase in verse sixteen of the same chapter. "[The Son of His love] . . . the universe in the heavens and on the earth is created in Him" (Col. 1:14, 16b). Here we have the beginning. In verse twenty is the consummation of the same universe. In both cases the "all" is amplified by the phrase, "in the heavens or on the earth." In verse twenty it is introduced by "whether" (*eite*), which never limits, but always amplifies (1 Thes. 5:10, 2 Thes. 2:15, etc.). The reference seems limited, however, to intelligent beings, not the material universe, for this is not in view. It is absolutely incontestable that the Son reconciles all He creates. *Hence any attempt to limit universal reconciliation also limits universal creation.* Let all who attempt the former beware, for apart from the Word "not one thing came into being which has come into being" (John 1:3b).

Both creation and reconciliation are "the all", "in the heavens or on the earth" (Gen. 1:1b; Col. 1:16b). Why not include the sea and underneath the earth (Rev. 5:13¹⁰), called the "subterranean" by the apostle in Philippians 2:10¹¹? Did not God create these, through the Son of His Love? Or did Satan do part of the work of creation? The answer is simple. There was no sea on the earth as created at first. It came later, in the first great catastrophe. Neither will there be any sea on the new earth (Rev. 21:1¹²). Why reconcile that which

does not exist? The writer of Colossians was not a short sighted man but an inspired seer. Paul had been in the third heavens and in the paradise of the third earth (2 Cor. 12:3-4¹²). He knew that there will be no subterranean creatures then, so he did not make the stupid blunder of including this realm in universal reconciliation.

All forms of government in heaven as well as on earth, and those who administer them, are classed as enemies which Christ will put out of commission before He hands over the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28c). When He came in humiliation He was subject to the powers that be, and they were always against Him. But after His crucifixion, where the spirit powers combined with earth's authorities to do Him to death, He threw off their authority as one strips off a garment, and triumphed over them (Col. 2:15). He will make them all a footstool for His feet (Heb. 1:13). But it is quite possible to be reconciled with a defeated foe. But this will occur long after He has ruled them with iron in the millennium, and with love in the last eon.

The Blood of the Cross is for all Creation

It is generally supposed, without warrant, that the blood of the cross is confined to mankind. In the Unveiling the enthroned elders declare that the Lambkin had bought them for God by His blood (Rev. 5:9). They are representatives of all celestial creatures, as the four animals are of earth. In Colossians, where the scope of His creative work is given (Col. 1:16) we are distinctly told that the blood of His cross avails to reconcile all that He created. The Bible knows nothing of "unfallen angels". Our Lord was not merely a Man when He was made sin on the cross. That which is in the heavens is cleansed by His sacrifice (Heb. 9:23). The statement that "he took not on him the nature of angels" should read "it [death] is not taking hold of messengers" (Heb. 2:16). This means simply that they are not dying now. Even if we put "He" in place of "it", "taking hold," a passing action, proves nothing as to final destiny.

"All" is Limited by the Context

We subjoin briefly a few cases where the context limits the word "all":

- Mat. 13:31 . . . the kernel of mustard, which a man getting, sows in his field, which, indeed, is smaller than all the seeds [which a man sows in his *field*], yet, whenever it may be grown, is greater than greens
- 17:11 Elijah is indeed coming, and will be restoring all [which was written of him (Mal. 4:5-6¹⁰)].
- 19:26 with God all is possible [with reference to *salvation*, not lying (Heb. 6:8)].

Mark 9:23 all is possible to him who is believing [what God has said, not what he imagines in his own heart].

Luke 2: 1 a decree came out from Cæsar Augustus that the entire inhabited earth be registered. [This was Cæsar's decree, for it was a Roman state fiction that Rome ruled the entire earth.]

John 1: 7 that all *should* be believing [not *will be* believing].

6:45 And they shall all [restored Israel, Isa. 54:13] be taught of God

17: 2 . . . everyone *whom Thou hast given to Him*, to them He should be giving eonian life.

False Limitations of "All"

The Word of God shall be fulfilled to the smallest letter (Mat. 5:18). In Mark 16:15^{7,8} our Lord said, "proclaim the evangel to the entire *creation*". This must *not* be limited to human beings, because of our ignorance of the animal creation. It seems that Eve could converse with the animals before sin entered. They understand many things even today, though under the slavery of corruption (Rom. 8:21). The evangel to them (and to us, as animals) is the freedom which will be theirs in the kingdom ¹¹. In Christ's Unveiling (Rev. 5:13¹⁰) we read that every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and underneath the earth and on the sea, and all those in them, glorified the Lambkin. Mark's evangel was to all *creation*. It was proclaimed everywhere (Mark 16:20). Let us not allow our ignorance to make us unbelieving!

Luke 9:1⁶ He gives them power and authority over *all* the demons . . . [though, later, they could not cast out a demon (Mark 9:29)]. This failure was necessary in order to form a prophetic picture of Israel's future. Yet the Lord explains that *they also had power* to cast it out, through prayer].

"Offer" is Unscriptural

The suggestion is often made that salvation, justification, vivification, and reconciliation are merely *offered* to all, but not accepted by all. This is contrary to every context. It is not God's will to *offer* salvation to all (1 Tim. 2:4c) but He is the Saviour of all (1 Tim. 4:10c), those who believe during the eons, with an eonian salvation, and those who do not believe, thereafter. The condemnation which has come to all mankind was not *offered* to them. It was theirs without choice. *Even so* is the justification of all mankind (Rom. 5:18c). As in Adam all are dying, is not left to each one to accept or reject. *Even so* in Christ shall all be made alive locks out all choice on our part. The human will has nothing to do with this, for God can change a man's will just as easily as He can save him.

TIME AND SCOPE

As most passages which are used in discussing this theme need to be carefully considered from both standpoints, we will view them from both angles at once.

The Divine Judgments

It is excessively important that we limit each judgment to the ones affected, and not, as is usually done, apply all to everyone. As is fitting, *only* the greatest of God's enemies, Satan, the wild beast, and the false prophet (Rev. 20:10^{11 12}) are tormented for the eons of the eons. *Only* those who worship the wild beast and its image endure the somewhat milder and gradually abating fate that the fumes of their torment are ascending for the eons of the eons (Rev. 14:11). It is unjust and absurd to apply the severest sentence to every criminal. These *alone* are not judged, for their awful treason is manifest to the universe. We warn those who apply these statements to all men that they are adding to the words of God's book (Rev. 22:18).

The judgment period of the unbeliever commences with his resurrection and ends with his second death. It takes place before the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15^{11 12}). All are condemned according to their acts. *There and then* God pays each one according to his acts, indignation and fury, affliction and distress on every human soul which is effecting evil (Rom. 2:9). So that, with few exceptions, the time of judgment for mankind is a period adapted to each case, both in length and severity. It is not in the lake of fire. Thus the judgment of everyone is just. It may range from a light sentence, for those who had no opportunity of knowing God and who, nevertheless, by instinct, fulfilled some of His laws (Rom. 2:14) to the most fearful torment for a long term, for His greatest enemies. Such are the righteous judgments of our God.

All unbelievers except those already mentioned appear before the great white throne and are then judged for their sins, even if they have been judged before on other grounds. They are not tormented in the lake of fire, for for these it is the second *death* (Rev. 20:14¹²). Judgment is impossible in death, for the spirit is with God, the body has returned to soil, so that there is no means of sensation. Hence the unbeliever is *raised* from the dead in the resurrection of judgment (John 5:29^{11 12}) in order to be judged. After his judgment he is returned to death, to be made alive at the consummation. For those who have died before, the lake of fire is not a means of punishment or correction, for their judgment is accomplished before the great white throne. To them it is a second death.

Special Judgments

Beside this last judgment between the last two eons, there are many in the preceding eons, all of which vary in time and

scope. "Everlasting punishment" and "life eternal" (Mat. 25:46¹¹) apply to less than a millionth of mankind, at the time when the Son of Mankind comes in His glory, and judges the living nations, not for their individual sins, but according to their treatment of Israel during their time of tribulation. If they succored them they will enjoy an allotment in the kingdom for the millennium. If they did not they will come away into eonian chastening. The judgment is by nations, not individuals, but the individuals who compose these nations must answer for their sins before the great white throne. The "eonian chastening" (not punishment) continues only during the duration of the kingdom, which they had failed to support. The "eonian life" (not life eternal) is the portion of the nations who favor the Jews during their great affliction. It is the same judgment as that described in Joel 3. The individuals constituting these nations will be judged elsewhere. If they are saved they enter the new earth, where there will be no more dying, and live until the consummation, when death is abolished. Hence they really do receive "eternal" life, yet the enemy nations do not get "eternal" punishment. The words "everlasting" and "eternal" here, are confined to the one kingdom eon.

The same time and action is in view in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when . . ." It has no bearing on the million times greater number of other men.

One of the most repulsive and un-Christlike exhibitions of selfishness lies in the reasoning that, since the duration of the life of the righteous is the same as the "punishment" of the unrighteous, both being eonian, the doom of the lost must be everlasting (Mat. 25:46¹¹). The fact is that the believer's life lasts only until there is no more death! It would be foolish to predicate mere endlessness to the believer's life, for that is true of all. When death is abolished, all will have endless life. Up to that time, the saint has eonian life and the sinner eonian condemnation. But this passage must not be applied to all. It deals only with a very small fraction of living nations, at the beginning of the kingdom. They are not judged for their sins, but for their treatment of our Lord's brethren according to the flesh.

Figurative Fire

All Scripture should be interpreted literally, when possible. It is only when a passage is clearly figurative that we may seek to explain its terms. The judgment of "the sheep and the goats" (Mat. 25:31-46¹¹) cannot be literal. The nations are figured by animals. Is the fire also figurative? I have hitherto

supposed it to be identical with the *lake* of fire. But no lake is mentioned. I must retract that. The language is that of the Hebrew prophets. How do they use fire? Israel in Egypt is figured as a burning thorn bush (Exodus 3:2⁵). They were in an iron furnace or crucible (Deut. 4:20; 1 Kings 8:51; Jer. 11:4⁵). Isaiah (48:10) explains it as a furnace of *affliction*. Jerusalem has been melted in the crucible of affliction. Jehovah blew upon her in the fire of His wrath (Eze. 22:18-22). See Malachi 3:2 and Obadiah 18.

The judgments of the nations during the day of Jehovah are spoken of in the prophets under the figure of fire. God will send a fire on Magog and the isles (Eze. 38:22; 39:6). Jehovah will set a fire in Egypt in the day of Jehovah (Eze. 30:8, 16). He will blow against the Ammonites with the fire of His wrath (Eze. 21:31). If all the nations hostile to Israel were actually consumed or cast into the lake of fire, what need for the iron club, with which He will rule the nations in that day? They will be afflicted and forced to obey, as Israel in Egypt. This will be their corrective chastening (Mat. 25:46¹¹). All agree that the word here used is disciplinary, but other interpretations have forced an unnatural meaning upon it.

But this fire was prepared for "the devil and his angels". I have often wondered why God made the mistake of preparing this fire for the "devil" and then changed His mind and shut him up in the abyss (Rev. 20:3¹¹) for the thousand years. He seems, according to this, to be feeling His way, experimenting in methods of torture, as it were. My God knows the end from the beginning. The fire was prepared for the slanderer and his messengers, that is, these very nations. The term slanderer is not confined to Satan. (1 Tim. 3:11, 2 Tim. 3:3, Titus 2:3). These nations had spoken against Israel, hence will suffer for it during the day of Jehovah. They will be the tail, Israel the head. This interpretation is suggested because it harmonizes our Lord's sayings with the prophets. It does not affect the final issue.

Fire is often used in temporary judgments (Mat. 3:10, 12¹⁰; 7:19¹⁰; 13:40¹⁰; 18:8¹¹, Mark 9:43-49¹¹, Luke 3:9, 17¹⁰, John 15:6). Though this is the severest destruction of matter we know, it has no real bearing on the final state. Even saints, and the best of them, are burned to ashes. God will raise their bodies, no matter how they returned to the soil. The greatest of all conflagrations, when the whole earth will be dissolved, only eventuates in a new and better earth (2 Pet. 3:7, 10; Rev. 21:1^{11,12}). Even the saints will be saved so as through fire (1 Cor. 3:15).

Other Judgments

Adam and Eve were judged and became mortal (not merely capable of death, but actually dying) on the very day they disobeyed God (Gen. 3:16-19¹). Their sentence affected the whole race (Rom. 5:12). All sin because they are mortal. Mortality, not sin, is transmitted. God judged the ancient

world by means of water (2 Pet. 2:5²; Gen. 6:11—8:14²). All of mankind but eight souls were drowned.

Sodom and Gomorrah

The judgment of the cities of the plain (Gen. 19:23-25⁴) is given as a specimen, hence should receive special attention. (Jude 7⁴). I have stood near Bethel whence Lot saw the plain of Jordan, and have been down in it, to make sure of the facts in this judgment. There is no fire. There are no people. It is, as Zephaniah (2:9) says, "a place for the prickly acanthus and salt diggings and a desolation for the eon." Yet Ezekiel (16:46-56) insists that Jerusalem was more corrupt than Sodom and that Sodom's captivity will end, and it shall be restored as formerly. This is the divine, visible specimen which exhibits what God means by "the vengeance of eternal fire" (A. V.) i. e., "the justice of eonian fire" (C. V.). It is evident that the *effects* of the fire are still with us. For those who believe the prophets it is further evident that the "eternal" *will end* when Jerusalem is restored (Eze. 16:55¹¹). It lasts less than one eon.

It will take too much space to discuss all the judgments of old, of Egypt and the nations of Canaan, and of Israel herself, to this very day. All are temporary afflictions, not final adjudications. All, without exception, prepare for the revelation of His mercy, and the glorious display of His all-embracing love. So it is that mercy will vaunt against judgment (James 2:13), on the basis of Christ's death.

Judgments Spoken of by our Lord: Gehenna

I have personally walked the whole length of Gehenna, to check up the Scriptures concerning it. It is a vale on the southwest of Jerusalem, not the least like "hell", as it is always erroneously translated. (Mat. 5:22, 29, 30¹¹; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33, Mark 9:43, 45, 47, Luke 12:5, James 3:6). In olden times the city offal and the bodies of criminals were thrown there as food for worms. A fire was continually burning to consume the rubbish. So it will be again, in the kingdom. Not one of these passages has reference to the final state. All whose bodies are destroyed in Gehenna are raised to be judged at the great white throne, and go into the lake of fire. Gehenna is the capital punishment of the kingdom, without burial.

A careful examination of the contexts will show that Gehenna is not for the living, but for a corpse or dead members of a body. The fire that does not go out and the undying worm get the carcasses of criminals who have already been put to death. The "weeping and gnashing of teeth" which are usually associated with it have no connection whatever with Gehenna. This is usually in outer darkness, quite the opposite of the lurid flames of Gehenna.

The length of time is never stated. The lifetime of the

worms and the fact that the fire is not put out, have no bearing on the ultimate destiny of the criminal whose body is cast into it. The dread word *asbestos*, translated "unquenchable", and "never shall be quenched", is used merely to indicate its continuous burning during the kingdom. We often use it of a fire of short duration, as, the fire could not be extinguished until all had been consumed.

The Undying Worm

The miracle of a fire-proof worm with eternal life has puzzled even those who wish to have one to torture the damned in the flames of a mythical hell. The word *die* is not the usual one. The root means FINISH. The sense is simply that there will be no end of worms in Gehenna, to feed on the corpses of the criminals cast into it. The point is not the torment of the victim, but the loathsome disgrace which attends his death.

Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth
Outer Darkness

This fearful phrase is so often predicated of the final condition of the damned, that it will be worth while to put it where it belongs. In Matthew 8:12¹¹, our Lord, commenting on the faith of the centurion, said "the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". The kingdom is likened to a wedding (Mat. 2:12¹¹). The children are Israelites after the flesh. Just as an unfit guest would be thrust out into the dark night, while within the marriage feast was being enjoyed in brilliant light, so it will be for Israelites who seek to enter the kingdom on earth. So also in Matthew 22:11-13; 25:30, Luke 13:28. There is no reference to their final destiny.

The Furnace of Fire

At the conclusion of this eon the Son of Mankind will send His messengers to clear out what is offensive out of His kingdom and "shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Mat. 13:41-42^{10 11}). The figure is that of clearing a field for planting. Many will be destroyed, some by literal fire (Rev. 9:17-18; 16:8; 18:8, 18¹⁰). Matthew 13:49¹⁰ limits this judgment to the conclusion of this eon.

Cutting Asunder at His Coming

This also takes place at the coming of Messiah to Israel, and refers exclusively to the Circumcision, not to us, for His coming for us is in purest grace, whether we are watching or drowsing (not *wake* or *sleep*, 1 Thes. 5:10). Our bad *works* will be burned, but *we* shall be saved, yet so as by fire (1 Cor. 3:13, 15⁹).

The Ten Virgins

The following parable of the ten virgins is concerned only with the marriage dinner of the Lambkin (Rev. 19:7¹¹) and is confined to the kingdom of the heavens, the thousand years (Mat. 25:1-10). The five stupid virgins are to be locked out of millennial bliss. Their further fate is beyond the scope of this passage.

Hades, the Imperceptible

I have gone along the northwestern shore of lake Galilee to assure myself of the reality of the judgment of Capernaum, which is now "brought down to hell". (Mat. 11:23). Having been there, I can have no doubt as to the meaning of the word *hades*, usually translated "hell" in our versions. Although I am sure I was there, I could not see a vestige of Capernaum. The restored ruins do not date back to the time of our Lord. It has literally subsided to the *imperceptible*, for such is the real meaning of the term. There are three "hells" in our Bibles, *hades*, *Gehenna* and *Tartarus*. The latter is not for mankind. I have been in the other two—Capernaum and Gehenna. It is not the place where men's bodies go at death. Only men's souls go to *hades*. That is, they lose all sensation. Our Lord's soul was in this "hell" (Acts 2:27,31). All souls come from the imperceptible. The wicked will return there while the righteous will enjoy the kingdom (Psa. 9:17).

The Rich Man and Lazarus

We must be consistent in our interpretations. In Luke 15—16 we have a five-fold parable, in which that of the Prodigal Son corresponds with that of the Rich Man and Lazarus. No one takes the Prodigal Son literally. "He spake this parable unto them" (Luke 15:3), includes all of the stories of Luke 15—16. "This my son was dead" refers to the time when he was in a far country filling his belly with swine's food. It is a picture of Israel at the present time, away from God, defiled among the nations. Just so also the rich man portrays Israel as descendants of the Pharisees, enduring persecutions, while the poor publicans, who once were glad to get a little of *their* spiritual wealth, are comforted by faith—in Abraham's bosom. The death is figurative. Here we have the flames of anti-Semitism, not the so-called "hell" or the lake of fire. It is impossible to take such figures as Abraham's bosom literally. How unwise to use a misunderstood parable to contradict all that God had previously said concerning the death state! This has no bearing on the final state, even if taken literally, for *hades* is cast into the lake of fire long before the consummation (Rev. 20:14^{11 12}).

He that Believeth Not shall be Damned

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16^{7 8}). The con-

text shows that this applies only to the creation commission, which *has been proclaimed everywhere* (v. 20), and which is followed by signs. If everyone who will not drink any poison (v. 18) is condemned, very few will be saved! This test will damn all who use it to contradict Colossians 1:20. We must carefully distinguish between the first kingdom commission (Mat. 10:5-8⁶), the second kingdom commission (Mat. 28: 16-20¹¹), the creation commission (Mark 16:14-20^{7 8}), the commission for mankind (Luke 24:46-49^{7 8}), Peter's kingdom commission (Mat. 16:15-19⁷), his shepherd commission (John 21: 15-19⁷), John's commission (John 21:20-23^{10 11}) and Paul's four ministries (Acts 9:1-30⁸; 13:1-4⁸; 2 Cor. 5:16-21⁸; Eph. 3:1-9⁹). If these are all mixed into a confused mass, they become riddles in place of revelations. The time and scope of each is distinct. Mark alone speaks of the creation, as such.

"It is Appointed unto Men Once to Die"

A text usually given a false scope follows. Hebrews 9:27 refers to the death of the high priests in Israel, not all mankind. The "once" does *not* mean once for all. Many men will die twice (Rev. 20:14).

The unbeliever is born, sins, dies, is roused at the great white throne and judged, dies again, and is vivified and saved and reconciled with God at the consummation.

THE PROBLEM SOLVED

We have now presented the facts and the problem has dissolved. God will do what He has declared and what we so earnestly desire. Those parts of His Word which seemed to contradict His glorious goal do not refer to it at all, but to the rigorous process by which it is reached. His Word is not concerned with eternity, but with the revelation of Himself during definite time periods, as a preparation for eternity. As Adam in Eden knew no good and could not appreciate God's love until he had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good, so it is impossible for the whole race to realize God's love and revel in it until they also taste its fruit. The tree was the knowledge of good *and* evil. In the nature of things, these cannot be separated. We must experience evil to appreciate good. This God gives us during the eons, so that we may enjoy His love in eternity. Even His saints are not spared this salutary testing. This is the purpose of evil. If it were eternal, that would defeat the end of its existence. It is only a black background for the high lights of God's love.

We have considered the traditions of Christendom which darken this subject and have found them unscriptural. The Scriptures really reveal God. Men's souls are not immortal. God's wisdom is fully equal to man's "free" will. Many of the saved will live on earth, and never "go to heaven". All must

be lost before they can be saved. Those who are "lost" are not hopeless. They are in the proper place for salvation. God's revelation has been gradual. More light has come with each addition to His Book. Its highest point is Paul's epistles. Here is the proper place to inquire as to His ultimate. And here it is revealed—the justification, vivification and salvation of all mankind (Rom. 5:18c; 1 Cor. 15:22c; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10c), and the reconciliation of the universe (Col. 1:20c). By this revelation partial knowledge has been replaced by fullest light.

We have found that terms which speak of endlessness in our Bibles contradict plain statements. All agree that, in some passages, they are limited in time. While others ask us to give the word *eon* two different meanings, which differ infinitely, we have found that it has only one, which is always sane and satisfactory. Indeed, instead of being idiomatic, as is claimed, we have found current translations idiotic.

Further investigations have shown us that the grammar of the Greek has put the stamp of eternity on God's reconciliation, but withheld it from His rage. It makes His love timeless, but His wrath *eonian*.

Finally, by observing neglected distinctions, we have seen the remaining difficulties vanish as mists before the noonday sun. By noting the time and scope of each opposing passage it was found to apply to a part, not the whole; the process, not the goal. Only one passage unveils to us God's ultimate, and that applies to the consummation and has the same scope as creation (Col. 1:16b, 20c). Mankind will not only be saved itself but it will be used of God in reconciling the universe to Him. Israel will be God's channel to bless the earth. The ecclesia, the body of Christ, will be the means of spreading the love of God from the north star to the southern cross. Through His elect God will reach every heart He has created. He will become All in all (1 Cor. 15:28c).

THE UNLIMITED LOVE OF GOD

Not being of a very affectionate disposition, I know but little of love. But that minute measure makes me shudder to think of anyone I love in eternal torment. God is not limited in His love as I am. Years of reflection have convinced my heart that, if His creatures are tortured in hell, God Himself will be eternally tormented in heaven. This is not the sentimental idea of a man of the world, but the cold, calculated conviction of one who has been in close and constant touch with God's revelation longer than the ordinary span of life. I know that my love to Him and my admiration have increased unutterably since I have seen that He is not the defeated fiend of Christendom, but is fully able to cope with evil and sin, and bind them all to the chariot wheels of love. All His attributes, including holiness, and righteousness, serve in the livery of love. Adored be His name!

THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP

Doctrine is not the divine basis of fellowship. That is life and conduct. Those in Corinth who held fundamental error, denying the resurrection, were *not* excluded (1 Cor. 15:12). But the morally unclean person *was* expelled (1 Cor. 5). We implore everyone who revels in the great truth of universal reconciliation not to make it the basis of schism among God's beloved saints. Few are able to get beyond the mis-translations and the traditions which they have been taught. Be careful not to give them offense. But if you are cast out, remember that it must needs be "that there are sects among you, that those also who are qualified may be becoming apparent among you". (1 Cor. 11:19). This doctrine will distinguish between those who really are able to get God's truth, and those who are held by human tradition. The spirit of eternal damnation is condemnation, but the spirit of universal reconciliation is conciliation. Let us live what we teach.

DOES THE TRUTH HINDER THE EVANGEL ?

There may be cases where those who claim to believe God's great ultimate are not zealous in the evangel. They are insignificant compared with the criminal indifference of the masses who hold eternal torment as a doctrine yet seem unstirred by the unspeakably horrible fate which awaits their fellow men. It ought to drive them crazy. I know of one honest young believer who took it seriously and his mind was permanently deranged by the contemplation of the endless suffering, shrieking, wailing, and gnashing of teeth of the great mass of mankind in the lurid flames of hell. It is because men's hearts are hard that they are not utterly demented by the prospect. This was not a part of the evangel delivered to the apostle Paul. God's just judgments are severe and awful enough without the devilish additions of human superstition. Let us proclaim God's just judgments, not the preposterous and insane exaggerations of theology.

The head of the China Inland Mission is reported as saying that my friend, Stanley Smith, was the best gospel preacher in China. Yet he had been forced out of the mission because he believed God concerning the salvation of all. Another friend, a missionary, James McGillivray, though forsaken by his home friends because he believed God on this subject, went into the wilds of Thibet and laid down his life for the evangel. A famous Bible teacher had a large family, all of whom were saved but one. This young man could not give his faith to a God Who would torment His creatures eternally. On this account he turned against all who taught the Bible. When I came to visit, he rushed out lest I should speak to him, as he had heard that I was a Bible teacher. Later, hearing that I did not teach eternal torment, he read my writings and was

blessedly saved. The relief to the mother and the family was great, for soon afterward he died. Yet they keep it a profound secret, for it would ruin their reputation to reveal the facts.

When sinners become concerned they are apt to turn from themselves and question the righteousness of God. This is good. Such should be answered. The woman at Sychar's well turned from her sins to a question of theology. The Lord did not rebuke her. He took up her problem and answered it. *God's* righteousness is the first thing to be settled in a sinner's salvation. Orthodoxy cannot do this. It makes God a monstrous fiend, far worse than its mythical "devil". God is all-powerful, they tell us, yet He sits in the heavens and laughs while His impotent creatures suffer. He will perform a greater miracle than any our Lord ever wrought, in the case of each unbeliever, for He will keep him alive forever in flames which would otherwise consume him. It is a marvel that anyone should believe in such a Deity. I did, and I am bowed in shame that I could ever accept such a caricature of the Blessed One.

CREATION AND RECONCILIATION

Colossians One is the only Scripture which treats our subject directly and fully. There all is created in the Son of God's *love*. Creation is the work of a love-hungry God. That alone is a guaranty that He obeys His own precept and does all in love (1 Cor. 16:14). Apart from evil and sin He could never bare His heart. These are justified from His standpoint, for they will bring untold blessing to His creatures, through the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, in the same passage, He tells us of the outcome, a complete reconciliation, which will be ineffably sweeter than if there had never been any estrangement. But it demands that *all who have been estranged be reconciled*. He will not need to force anyone. His wisdom will find a way to win their hearts. This is a goal worthy of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the sacrifice of our Saviour, none of God's attributes is compromised. He is Light as well as Love. His justice and holiness are all vindicated while His heart will be satiated by the love which His redeemed and reconciled creation will lay at His feet (Col. 1:13-20).

To sum up: Though the Bible and the various views are contradictory on this subject, an accurate inquiry into the grammar, the scope, and the application of each text shows us that most of them refer to the process, not the goal; they are temporary, not eternal; they include few, not all. Therefore we can believe *all* that God has said. The last and highest revelation through the apostle Paul stands, as it is written, that *all mankind* shall be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10c), justified (Rom. 5:18c), vivified (1 Cor. 15:22c), and the *universe* (Col. 1:20c), in heaven as well as on earth, will be reconciled with God *through the blood of His Beloved's cross*.

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