

ETERNAL TORMENT.

Many Christians there are, both in and out of the Churches, who cannot endorse the doctrine of eternal torment. They reason, if God, as the Scriptures teach, is the source or fountain of love; if love is his chief characteristic, he little shows it by consigning thousands to endless pain, and thus exercising his unlimited power over helpless humanity. The doctrine, too, though formerly, and even yet by many, considered fundamental, is quite neglected in the pulpit, there being comparatively few who now defend it. Nevertheless, there are some apparently direct assertions of the Word of God which somewhat stagger earnest seekers after truth. A few of these passages will engage our attention at this time.

Among the most prominent, cited in support of this doctrine, is Mark 9:43-50. We think our Lord had in mind, while speaking these words, the literal Hell or Gehenna, which was located in one of the valleys near Jerusalem. Into this were cast all kinds of refuse and unburied bodies of animals and criminals. This mass was consumed by fires which were kept burning continually. It does not require a very vivid imagination to picture the place as one to be shunned. The ignominious end of the wicked is likened to this place of destruction. The language here used is figurative. A literal eye, or hand, or foot could not cause one to stumble in such a way as to affect his eternal welfare. Christ was addressing his disciples, not the world, and when they covenanted to follow him they were to have an eye to his glory, to the coming of his kingdom. There are eyes of the understanding as well as natural eyes. Eye is used as a representative of design or purpose – "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" – "If, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

The eye is the director of the hand and foot, and whatever these latter represent, is under the control of the former. It is not an uncommon thing for many who have professed to have an eye for the glory of God, to have a much larger eye for business, for literature, for fame, etc. This larger eye is causing many to stumble, and the consequence will be, loss of the prize, the God-life. Better, indeed, would it be for such were they to pluck this eye out entirely, that they might have a single eye to the glory. Christ sought to teach his disciples that things most highly esteemed, those thought by mankind to be necessary, should be given up if they in the least hindered our progress. Paul echoed the same spirit when he said, "I count all things but loss," etc. "Let us lay aside every weight – and run."

Another scripture, misunderstood by many, is Matt. 25:46. A proper understanding of this is dependent, we think, upon the context. When the event occurs is all important. In verse 31 we are told, it is "When the Son of man shall come in his glory." This is at the coming of Christ, after the exaltation of the Church, when the glory reign has begun. During that reign those who have suffered with him in this age are to sit with him in his throne, while the sheep and the goats represent the world – the nations – whose trial will then be due. With us in this age the test is faith, but with them the test will be works. "Inasmuch as ye have done," or "have not done." The separation of men into the two classes, symbolized by sheep and goats, will be the work of that age, and, by its close, all shall have come to a knowledge of truth, and had opportunity to come to favor, or right hand position, as sheep. Those wilfully wicked, represented by the goats, will go down into destruction, symbolized by fire. All should see that fire is as **[R487 : page 8]** much a figure as sheep and goats. The interest centres in verse 46. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The words everlasting and eternal here are the same in the original, and are used to express the continuousness of both reward and

punishment. The reward is life, and will continue forever; the punishment is what – torment? No, it does not mention here what the punishment is, except in the symbol fire, which represents destruction. Other scriptures inform us that "the wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." This is everlasting destruction, or a destruction or death from which there shall be no resurrection. Thus, we see, the reward and punishment are opposites – life or death, and the trial being over, these conditions are endless or everlasting.

Again, Rev. 14:10,11 is a cause of stumbling. In the study of Revelation we should always bear in mind that it is a book of symbols. The "things which were shortly to come to pass" were signified unto John. A red light on a railroad is not in its self dangerous, but it is the signal of danger, and so of the signals in Revelation. The smoke and noise, the fire and water, etc., are not dangers but indicators. In the passage under consideration fire and brimstone signify destruction. It is no secret that the fumes of brimstone are destructive to life. It is frequently used as a disinfectant. The mention of it here, in connection with fire, is positive proof of utter destruction.

But "the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever." Anything annoying is tormenting. Individuals, with a desire to cling to the "traditions of the elders," are to-day annoyed by unfolding truth, and the same is true of all systems of religion. The confusion already existing in and among these systems and individuals, because of their departure from truth, is well symbolized by smoke which will become more and more dense. All those who are finally brought out of these systems will forever remember how they (the systems – "Beast," etc.) were tormented.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, recorded in Luke 15, may be thought by some to have a bearing upon this subject. Our

Lord spake in parables, "that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." Had they understood them his design would have been frustrated. If a literal interpretation were allowed it would not have been difficult for those who heard to understand, and Christ would have had no occasion to explain even the few that he did.

The general view of this parable breathes so much of the spirit of his satanic majesty that we would marvel at its almost universal acceptance, were it not for the fact that he who was a liar from the beginning remains so to this day, and seeks above all things to deceive the very elect. We think the proper view of this parable is that found in "Food," page 154, to which we refer any who may desire information. The above selections are probably the strongest cited in defense of this doctrine of eternal torment. Others there are, of similar import, to which the foregoing can be applied.

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THE MOSLEM UPRISING.

A telegram from London says: "The report of the capture of El Obeid excites uneasiness here. The fall of that post will probably be followed by an attack on Khartoum, and as the Egyptian government has neither money nor men for carrying hostilities on a large scale in the Soudan, it is feared that England may find herself drawn into an expedition to save Southern Egypt from being overrun."

The Editor of the Boston Herald, in commenting upon the news, says: "There is good reason for apprehension. If El Obeid has really fallen, the false prophet is master of the province of Kordofan. Only a few days back the capture of Bara by his forces was reported. The surrender of Bara and El Obeid is a heavy blow to Egypt, for the garrisons of the two posts numbered 5,000 men. Nor is that the worst

of the situation. There is another Egyptian force, some 4,000 strong, in Darfur, to the west of Kordofan and, as the victorious army of the false prophet commands the communications between Darfur and Khartoum, it appears probable that this body will also be compelled to surrender. In that event the Egyptians may count upon having to fight, not for the reconquest of Kordofan, but for the maintenance of the Soudan."

Why does this news produce a sensation in London? Because the English government has undertaken to support the feeble and bankrupt government of Egypt; and if the Egyptian forces in Upper Egypt are not able to stop the onward march of the false prophet in Soudan, it is perfectly evident that he intends to march his army into Lower Egypt, where it is known that a large majority of the people are Moslems and would be ready under favorable circumstances to join the prophet's forces and fight the English as infidel invaders of their country. But this is not the most alarming feature of the subject to England. She understands that, if her army is brought into collision with the army of the false prophet, all the Moslem world will be excited to mortal revenge; for it would be considered a direct war between the Mohammedans and Christians.

Such a conflict coming at this particular time, when all the Moslem nations, according to their accredited prophecy, are looking for just such a war, could not, we think, fail to produce more religious antagonism than any which has been experienced for a thousand years. It would doubtless produce a formidable uprising in India, and would so involve Turkey as to cause the Christian nations of Europe to strike for a partition and final settlement of the "sick man's" estates.

The present position of all the Great Powers is certainly very ominous, and indicative of a rapid progress towards a final collapse, when Christ will appear on the scene to grind into powder human

kingdoms and establish his glorious eternal kingdom under the whole heaven. This is heart-cheering news to all the followers of the adorable Jesus. Our heart cries out Come, blessed Saviour! Come and stop this cruel strife! Come and gather thy lambs to thy bosom, and let thy Bride stand at thy side in thy heavenly palace!

The entire Roman Catholic world has been taught that the present period is the time especially designed by God for that Church to crush all obstacles to its triumph and full restitution of the Papal prerogatives. The Russian nation and entire Greek Church also have been in high expectation since the predictions of Peter the Great, that about the present time the Russian sword will drive the Grand Turk from St. Sophia, and give the Greek High Priest once more the opportunity to celebrate mass at the ancient Christian altar.

It is no secret that the Republicans of all nations believe that the present period is the fore-ordained time for monarchical governments to give place to universal republics. Communists declare that the set time has come for all governments, civil and religious, to fall before the imperious demands of Communism.

The Protestant pulpit and press publishes the tidings that the prophetic time has come for the evangelization of the nations and the commencement of a "golden age." The Atheistical world adds its testimony to the universal proclamation that this is a specific transition period, during which the Bible and religion must cease to be, and the godship of nature and man must henceforth rule the universe.

Amidst these varied expectations of coming change the Hebrew proclaims the present time as the period for the appearing of his Messiah.

Among the loud voices of this jargon surpassing Babel, a shrill voice is heard from the Arabian deserts and African wilds, from the

Turk's dominions and the vast fields of India, sounding a fearfully prophetic note, commanding the millions of Islam to rally to the standard of their coming prophet, who, according to their faith, will appear at the head of a conquering army the present calendar year. This announcement is produced by an interpretation of a prediction of the Koran, and contains no divine authority, and is unimportant only as it is believed by a hundred and seventy-five millions of Mohammedans. This faith is certainly likely, and has already commenced to produce a formidable movement, which certainly is very threatening to the peace of the world.

Prophetic Times.

The latest news from Mehdi is that he has been defeated in battle and is a prisoner.
