

HELL OR ANNIHILATION.

[Brother Wakefield has been seeking to serve the truth, by the use of his pen, through the columns of the secular press. We give below an article of his which may be of interest to some TOWER readers. We commend this plan of service to those who have a clear understanding of the truth, and the talent and education needful to a clear presentation of it.]

Editor of the New York *Sun*: – You say of the "Brooklyn Conference of Baptists, who are looking for the second coming of the Lord at an early day," that "they think it vain to look for the bringing of all men to Christ before the second advent, and hence they are pre-millennialists." The Scriptures being true, they could not with any show of reason have entertained the notion of "bringing all men to Christ before the second advent" at all; but the reverse.

The Lord's own statement concerning the matter is unequivocal: "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives and were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." Also, as it was in the days of Lot and Sodom, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." (Luke 17:26-30.) Paul's testimony is equally emphatic and pointed: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, proud, boasters, blasphemers, without natural affection, incontinent, fierce, untruthful, unholy, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." – 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

Scriptures of like import might be largely quoted, but with those already before us, it is enough to say that had the Brooklyn

Conference really believed the testimony of the Lord and of his inspired apostle they could not have thought of such a thing as the conversion of the world before the second advent. But the confession of the hopelessness of human efforts being successful in the reformation of mankind before the second coming of Christ, and that he himself must appear as the personal head or leader of the grand campaign that is to culminate in the acknowledgement of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords by all the nations of the earth, is a long step forward in the cause of truth.

The language of the prophet Daniel (7:13,14) is very clear: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

But it then would seem that it is not the prevailing wickedness of the human race only that discourages these good people: the spread of Universalism is a matter of serious moment; **[R1344 : page 171]** and the effort "to abolish hell" they regret as the latest work and "one of the most dangerous artifices of the devil." Concerning Universalism I will only say that if within the next seven days the world should be converted to that faith it would still remain for the Universalists to be converted to the truth. For am I persuaded that the Universalists have no truer conception of God's plan of saving the world than the so-called "orthodox;" and they are evidently at sea without rudder or compass. If "the orthodox faith is in present peril from enemies who have arisen and are multiplying in the very citadel of its defense," it is a sure evidence that "judgment" has already "begun at the house of God," and that the Laodicean church, while **[R1344 : page 172]** she imagines herself to be rich and needing nothing, is in reality "poor

and blind and naked," and that she is shortly to be "spewed out," a "lukewarm," nauseous thing. It is another step toward the consummation.

As to the atrocious dogma of an eternal hell of inconceivable torment, does our "sensitive modern philosophy" imagine that it has outgrown the Scriptures? Do men who "could not bear to see a dog in pain," to whose enlightened reason and refined sensibilities "the goodness and loving kindness of God seems to be totally inconsistent with the torments of hell," and who therefore refuse to believe their infliction possible, still believe that this frightful hell torment is the doctrine of the Bible? Alas, that the people of this day of Gospel light should still be willing to stumble along in the darkness of the middle ages!

The Bible statement of the doctrine of future punishment is simple and straightforward, and not at all befogged with the horrible fancies which our theologians have thrown around it. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is the simple statement of God's Word. Another of equal directness is, "The wages of sin is death." "Ah, yes!" says the theologian, "but the soul is immortal and can never die, and therefore the Scriptural idea of the death of the soul is a state of endless suffering, eternal torment. And when the apostle says the wages of sin is death, he must mean eternal death, which is simply eternal life in torment!" How very plausible such reasoning seems to be, and how easily it can be shown that "the wisdom of men is foolishness with God."

There are several things that the clergy know and that the laity ought to know. The clergy, every man of them, know that the "immortality of the soul" is never once affirmed in the Bible. They know that in all the over nine hundred times that the word "soul" occurs in the Scriptures, there is never used in connection with it any word or phrase to indicate unending existence. On the contrary, they know that the "soul" is everywhere in Scripture

spoken of as being subject to death or liable to die. And they know that the same word "soul" that is applied to man is also used with reference to the creeping things and fowls and beasts of the earth. The Scriptures being true, a moment's reasoning will show the absurdity of attributing deathlessness to the soul.

Take the first text above referred to: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Consider death in any light you please, as physical, spiritual, eternal, political, or any other. Death is the opposite of life.

But, again, the penalty of sin is death. Such qualifying terms as "temporal," or "eternal" death are never used in the Scriptures. The Word of the Lord is content to say "the wages of sin is death," and such as shall not be found written in "the book of life," in the judgment day, or age, shall be the subjects of the "second death." The "punishment" of the wicked will be "everlasting," without doubt, but the terms used in Scripture to define that punishment necessarily convey the idea of extinction. Thus the "everlasting punishment" in Matt. 25:46 is "*kolasin aionion*," literally, "cutting off enduring." The righteous are received into "*zoen aionion*," life everlasting, and the wicked are punished by "*kolasin aionion*," "everlasting cutting off" from life.

Truly, "an implacable God would be a hideous monster," and the creation of men predestined to hell from before the beginning of time outrages every sense of justice as diabolic sport with helpless mortals. And "this sentiment, which was once denounced as the expression of infidelity and impiety," and is now "prevalent among Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and even Baptists," is but the beginning of the grand theological revolution which shall disrupt and utterly sweep away the present system of so-called "orthodox Christianity." It is the opening of a better, brighter day, in which, as the Apostle Paul says, God will have all men "come to a full knowledge of the truth." This will be "the day

of judgment," "the times of restitution," the times in which the Prince of Peace "shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth;" when "he shall judge the people with righteousness and the poor with judgment: he shall deliver the poor and needy and break in pieces the oppressor;" when truth "shall [R1344 : page 173] go forth as brightness, and righteousness as a lamp that burneth," "and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." This will be the day of the world's probation, after Christ has come, when the dead shall be raised; in which, with full knowledge and understanding of the truth, every man shall have privilege and opportunity to decide for himself whether he will serve and obey the King or not. If he will, he shall be promoted to the inheritance of the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world; if he will not, he shall be adjudged unworthy of life, and shall perish in that aionion fire (the fire of the age) in which sinners and sin, death, hades, the devil and all that is evil shall be destroyed together, and shall be no more forever. And so, ultimately, God will be glorified in all the works of his hands.

R. WAKEFIELD.
