



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XIX  
Issue 451

## *A Reply to R.A. Torrey's*

### *The Exact Truth Regarding an Eternal Hell*

Part 1 of 4

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

**T**he glorious truth that God, through the death of His Son, will reconcile the universe to Himself (Colossians 1:20), has been attacked by one who is considered by many to be the foremost advocate of eternal torment as a Scriptural doctrine. His sermons assailing this gracious truth have been issued in pamphlet form under the title *The Exact Truth Regarding an Eternal Hell*.



We have one disadvantage which we desire to remove at the outset. The pamphlet deals with the subject in a very general way. We do not wish it understood that we hold every position which is attacked. We fully agree that annihilation is not taught in the Scriptures, and that the restoration spoken of by Peter (Acts 3:19-21) is confined to that spoken of in the prophets.

#### AN OUTLINE OF THE "EXACT TRUTH"

We hold the position that an exact inquiry into the Scriptures on this subject is sure to lead to the conviction that they teach a universal reconciliation. Here, however, is a pamphlet which claims accuracy as its chief argument in favor of the very opposite.

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

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

We wish only to uphold the triple truth of the salvation and vivification of all mankind and the reconciliation of all creation.

*We both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, **Who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe** (I Timothy 4:10).*

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

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

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

That we may the better understand the pamphlet and its argument, a brief outline will be helpful. There are

(see *REPLY*, page 4011) ↗

## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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*REPLY (continued from front page)*

two sermons, one answering the question “Is There a Literal Hell?” the other “Is Future Punishment Endless?” The first fixes the term “hell” on both Gehenna and the lake of fire and seeks to show that the devil, the beast and the false prophet and the worshipers of the beast suffer consciously in it. The Lord’s warnings against Gehenna are quoted. The inference is that hell is a place of conscious torment for all mankind forever.

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

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

Finally four passages (II Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27; John 5:28-29; 8:21) are given, “any one of which settles the question.”

The conclusion is personal.

### **GOD WISHES IT WERE NOT TRUE!**

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

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

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

The passage as quoted by Mr. Torrey for this depressing doctrine is II Peter 3:9.

*The Lord is longsuffering to usward, not “wishing” that any perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

If we wish the exact truth, we will confine the state-

ment and the import of this Scripture to the “*usward*” of whom Peter speaks. Peter is writing to the dispersed of Israel (I Peter 1:1). God’s counsel for that nation is salvation. His counsel for the nation will be fulfilled, even though some among them apostatize.

The inaccuracy here lies in substituting a “*wish*” for *all mankind* in place of His *counsel* for the *one nation* of His choice. Such looseness is sure to lead to conclusions that dishonor Him.

The reason assigned for God’s impotence is man’s so-called free moral agency. Salvation depends upon man’s choice. The human will is the determining factor. What say the Scriptures?

*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy (Romans 9:15-16).*

And again,

*Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth (Romans 9:18).*

An accurate survey of the Scriptures will bear out the wise man’s proverb:

*A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps (Proverbs 16:9).*

Many other passages (e.g. Proverbs 16:33; 19:21; 20:24; 21:1; Acts 17:26; Revelation 17:17) show clearly that man may choose and will as freely as he wishes, but he cannot carry out his will. His acts are not free; they are entirely under God’s control. The book of Esther is written to teach us this truth.

God alone works all things according to the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11). He is able to subdue all things to Himself (Philippians 3:21). Who hath resisted His will (Romans 9:19)?

### **GOD WILLS ALL TO BE SAVED**

“But,” we will be asked, “what of those who choose to trample God’s saving love under foot?” Let us take God’s own answer to this question:

God locks up all in stubbornness in order that  
He may be merciful to all.

If even the crucifixion was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23), why should we hesitate to bow our heads to this truth? God locks up all in stubbornness. Why? To send them to an “eternal hell”? No! *That He may be merciful to all!* (Romans 11:32).

Well may we lift our hearts in unison with the apostle and exclaim,

*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!* (Romans 11:33).

Well may we bow in adoration and worship as we repeat the grandest and most comprehensive and enlightening doxology of all:

*For out of Him, and through Him and for Him are all things: to Him be glory for the eons! Amen!* (Romans 11:36).

No Scripture is given for the supremacy of man’s will over the wishes of God, except that He “has made us in His own image.” Yet if man is made in the image of a god who has no power to carry out *his* wishes, why should man be so highly endowed?

If that god is not a free moral agent, why should men be free to do as they choose? In effect, we are told that man is greater than God; but Scripture tells us that,

God is greater than man (Job 33:12).

We are heartily in accord with much that follows and will endorse it by transcribing a few salient statements:

Majorities are not always right.

We cannot settle the question by reasoning as to what such a Being as God must do ...

There is only one way to settle this question right. That is by going to the Bible and finding out what it says, and taking our stand firmly and unhesitatingly upon that.

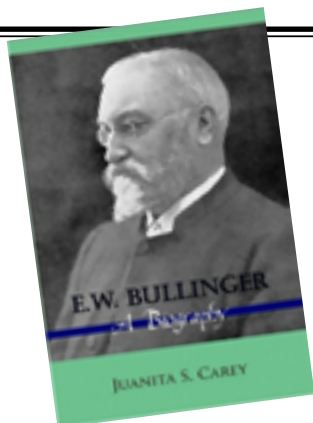
All we know about the future is what the Bible tells us.

Another point is well taken. The word *hades* is used in place of “hell” as in the *Revised Version*.

## HADES

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

Is this the “exact truth” as found in the Bible? If so, where is it found? Is the *spirit* ever associated with *sheol* or *hades*?



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by — Juanita S. Carey

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## CONFUSION CONCERNING SPIRIT AND SOUL

We know that, at death, the spirit returns to God Who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). We know that our Lord commended His spirit to the Father. His soul, however, was left in *hades* (Acts 2:27) or the unseen. So everywhere, at death, the soul, which is the seat of sensation, not the spirit, returns to *hades*, just as the spirit returns to God Who gave it and the man returns to the soil out of which he was taken (Genesis 3:19).

Yet we must not infer from this that *hades* harbors only the souls of the dead. It is a general term for that which is *unseen*, whether the unseen state or the unseen world.

The gates of *hades* (Matthew 16:18) cannot be the hosts of departed souls marshaled against that church, but the unseen powers of wickedness which will assail it during the great tribulation. The *hades* which is cast into the lake of fire had been emptied of the dead which it contained. The devil and his angels are all a part of the unseen – *hades*.

After the usual explanation that *hades*, before the ascension of Christ, was divided into two sections,

Paradise for the blessed and *Tartarus* for the wicked dead, and that He emptied the Paradise and took it up to heaven with Him (Ephesians 4:8), we are told,

No blessed dead are now left in Hades ... all that are dead who have not yet been raised, or caught up into the Celestial Paradise, all who are still in *Hades*, shall be “cast into the Lake of Fire” (Revelation 20:14).

It must be noted that none of this is Scripture. It is merely inference from the Bible. We are nowhere told that Paradise was in *hades* or will ever be in heaven. We know that it was in Eden and will be on the new earth (Revelation 2:7; 22:2). There is no warrant in the Word of God for placing a garden in the bowels of the earth or in the celestial sphere. *Tartarus* is never connected with the dead but with the wicked spirits (II Peter 2:4).

To go beyond this is not faith, but fancy. That Christ at His ascension emptied Paradise cannot legitimately be deduced from the fact that “*He led captivity captive*,” when the context in neither Psalm nor epistle bears the slightest relation to the dead other than Christ Himself (Psalm 68:18; Ephesians 4:8). ▶

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## DAVID IS NOT ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN

If the blessed dead were all caught up into a celestial paradise, then David certainly must be there. Then David has ascended into the heavens. Yet,

*David is not ascended into the heavens* (Acts 2:34).

This settles the matter. David is not ascended, neither have all the blessed dead ascended. Leading “*captivity captive*” (Ephesians 4:8) means just that, and not the inmates of *hades*. Why should they be called “*captivity*,” and why should they still be termed captives in Paradise? One fact destroys all of this inference: “*David is not ascended.*”

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

## “HELL” IS UNSCRIPTURAL AND MISLEADING

When a series of inferences or a line of reasoning leads directly counter to a Scripture, it is time we took the advice of our pamphlet: “We cannot settle this question by reasoning.” For accuracy’s sake, let us note that we are nowhere told that the dying thief went down into Paradise, nor did our Lord teach that “He [Himself] went down into the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). The Lord is answering his appeal, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.” That kingdom will not be in the heart of the earth. It is called a paradise in the Septuagint, the version used by the Jews in our Lord’s day (Isaiah 51:3). The Lord assures the malefactor (not the “thief”) that he will be with Him in Paradise (Luke 23:43).

## GEHENNA AND THE LAKE OF FIRE

The use of “hell” for both *Gehenna* and the Lake of Fire makes distinction between them difficult. To get the “exact truth” with this handicap is impossible. To call *Gehenna* “hell,” a word associated with much which


cannot be true of *Gehenna*, is itself a cause of confusion. To use “hell” of the Lake of Fire is inexcusable. It is never so called in the versions. It is misleading.

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

The same lack of exactitude which confuses all judgment into one “general” judgment makes men mis-mate *Gehenna* and the Lake of Fire under the one unscriptural term “hell.”

The same lack of accuracy which leads many to “apply” the Sermon on the Mount to the present grace is more glaringly evident in others who know that it applies to the kingdom, yet persist in clinging to those portions of it which give us the place of judgment in that age. If the meek do not inherit the earth now, neither are the wicked cast into *Gehenna*. Let us be consistent!

(To be continued.)



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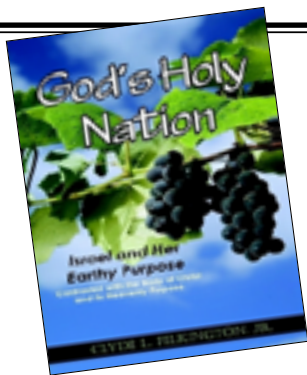


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## ***God's Holy Nation – Israel and Her Earthly Purpose*** Contrasted with the Body of Christ and Its Heavenly Purpose

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Israel plays a key role in God's plan of the ages. Though currently she has been set aside "*until the times of the nations be fulfilled,*" He is by no means done with her.

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Today, God is operating His purpose in the ecclesia – the Church, the Body of Christ. The Scriptures provide us with the clear, critical distinction between God's *earthly* nation and Christ's *celestial* body.

Christendom, however, has diminished Israel's divine significance in an attempt to advance their artificial homogenization of Scripture's grand theme, thus obscuring the glorious evangel of our day – "*the Good News of the Happy God*" committed to the trust of Paul, our Apostle.

This work highlights some of the more prominent distinctions which belong to God's literal, physical, earthly nation. In so doing, it is our desire to allow the reader to see more clearly God's dealings with God's favored nation, so that they may in turn embrace a *far greater* calling and purpose.