

Universal Salvation - Rev. Arthur Chambers
Appendix to "Our Life after Death"

21st Century Comment:

The following Appendix is in support of Universal Salvation. It is the Appendix to "Our Life After Death" by the Reverend Arthur Chambers, Vicar of Brockenhurst, Associate of King's College, London. This Appendix is a later addition not appearing in the original release of the book (1894) and it is extracted from the American Revised Edition (1902).



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THE SCHEME OF THE APPENDIX

THE subject of Future Punishments, and God's "Purpose of the ages,"

Future Punishments not hopeless and everlasting; but remedial and terminable.

The doctrine of an Everlasting Hell—what does it teach?

How came this doctrine to be engrafted on Christian teaching?

The foundation upon which this doctrine has been built,

The Translators treatment of Greek words,

Passages referring to Future Punishments, as they appear in the Greek New Testament,

Scripture shows that all Future Punishments are Fatherly and remedial,

God's Purpose of Salvation is declared to be

(a.) A "Purpose of the ages,"

(b.) A Purpose to embrace the *whole*, and not merely a *part* of the human race.

Passages in the Bible that distinctly affirm that Future Punishments will *not* be irremedial and unending,

A difficulty which presents itself to some in accepting the foregoing conclusion, considered.

APPENDIX.

**The subject of Future Punishments,
and God's "Purpose of the ages."**

THE belief that Christ's Gospel is preached in the Intermediate-Life does not involve a denial of punishment for sin and impenitence after death. It is needful to affirm this, because many earnest seekers after truth hesitate to accept the glorious hope contained in the thought of *post-mortem* evangelization, owing to the false idea that it excludes, or pares away, a truth that is very clearly revealed in the Bible, viz., that the consequences of evil will be reaped in a world beyond.

Those persons, especially, who believe in, or think they believe in, the terrible doctrine of unending suffering, but infrequently accuse us who hold what is known as "the larger hope." first, of minimizing evil, and next, of encouraging men to esteem lightly the threatened Judgments of God. We do nothing of the kind.

For one or two very strong and unanswerable reasons we reject the doctrine of an everlasting hell. We view it as the offspring of an unhealthy and distorted imagination, and as a supposition that outrages all moral instincts and ideas of goodness. In character the doctrine is such that it is impossible for it to enlist either intellectual or moral assent; and although it has commanded the *credulity* of thousands, not one has ever risen to the attitude of *faith* in regard to it.

Those who accept it, can only do so by chloroforming their mind into insensibility as to what it implies. A thorough belief in it could only land a person (as it has done hundreds) in a mad house.

Again, we account the doctrine to be an awful slander on the character of God. It represents Him whose name is "Love" as being more implacable and insensible to His creatures' tortures than the most horrible monster ever invented by pagan imagination. Lastly, we reject the doctrine, because it rests on no better foundation than a few mistranslated words in the Bible; and flatly contradicts hundreds of passages to which attention will be called in later pages.

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But while taking this position in regard to a doctrine which has been in the past considered, and is even now considered by many, to be an essential element of the Christian faith, we by no means deny that there is, in the world beyond, a very real and awful judgment upon all sin and impenitence. To us the words of Christ are too emphatic to be mistaken. He spoke of "the darkness without"; of a "weeping and gnashing of teeth"; of a "Gehenna of fire"; of an "aionial pruning" (*i.e.*, the painful discipline of an age); and of a "prison" from which should be no release until "the uttermost farthing" shall have been paid. We think that in the words—"Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap"—is proclaimed an inviolable law of God, framed and enforced for the benefit of His universe; which no person, Christian, or non-Christian, can possibly evade; and that experience and discipline, bitter and searching, must be the inevitable outcome of an earth-life of wrong-doing.

We do not *minimise* evil.

Those who hold the doctrine of an everlasting hell seem to us to commit that error.

We regard evil as being such a hateful thing in the sight of a Father-God who loves all His creatures, that we cannot believe He will tolerate a gigantic hell of it forever and ever.

Nor does our teaching encourage men to esteem lightly the threatened judgments of God.

The doctrine we oppose has had that effect, by creating in the minds of irreligious men the idea that the punishment of sin, as preached by some theologians, is so inconceivably horrible and unjust, that it cannot possibly be true. Thousands, in consequence, have gone to the extreme of not believing in any future retribution at all. Tell a disobedient boy that you will cut his head off, or burn him alive, if he persists in his wrong-doing, and the probability is he will disregard your threats, on the ground that he knows the punishment to be too atrocious ever to be inflicted. Threaten him, on the other hand, with a punishment that he knows to be reasonable and just, and he is likely to be affected thereby. Never was the doctrine of everlasting hell more vigorously set forth in all its naked repulsiveness than at the time when the Puritan influence was in the ascendancy in this country; and yet the succeeding age was characterized by the grossest irreligion, profligacy and vice. One has only to note how lightly and thoughtlessly the words "Hell" and "Damn" are used by the masses, to see

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how little the so-called "orthodox" teaching, symbolized by those words, has impressed and affected mankind.

To the men and women who show by lives of sin and indifference that they disregard the future judgments of God, we say—"There may be an excuse for you in esteeming lightly the threatenings of God, when those threatenings are made to be of such a character as to outrage your reason, shock your sense of justice, and render it impossible for you to believe them: but you have no such excuse, when we show you that all God's punishments, however severe, are yet reasonable, and compatible with His character as a God of *righteousness* and a Father of *Love*."—Thus, we do not deny a future punishment for sin; but we differ very fundamentally from those who regard it in the lurid light of the doctrine of unending woe. On this point, they and we are at the opposite poles of thought. They view it as vindictive, hopeless and everlasting; we, on the contrary, are convinced that it is *Fatherly, remedial, and terminable*. The difference is enormous. Are they, or are we, right? If the assumption be correct that the door of Divine love and mercy is forever closed and barred against the sinner when he departs this life, and that the judgment overtaking him in the world beyond will be irremedial and final, then, of course, the deduction as to *post-mortem* evangelization and recovery cannot stand. In that case, a preaching of Christ's Gospel would be useless, or worse. On the other hand, if all God's future punishments be fatherly and remedial—as we, in the light of the Scriptures correctly translated, believe them to be—then, assuredly, the thought of a preaching of the Gospel after death will commend itself to our reason as being both fitting and probable. Yes, and the thought will be as a glorious ray of Divine sunlight, dispersing that black cloud of blank hopelessness that has for centuries made gloomy and depressing the religion of Jesus. There are hundreds of thousands of Christians who cannot form any idea of future punishment, apart from its being everlasting and hopeless.

The terms "*eternal* judgment" and "*eternal* punishment," have been dinned into their ears from infancy, and they are unaware of the fact that "eternal," is not a correct translation of the original Greek word *aionios* and moreover, that this word, "eternal" denotes without beginning as well as without end, and is misapplied to anything that is not beginningless. Again, there are hosts of earnest seekers after God and truth (as numbers of letters sent to me testify), whose acceptance of the Gospel of Christ is barred by this doctrine of everlasting punishment. They suppose it to be a part of the teaching of the Saviour; and they cannot embrace a religion which requires assent to something that shocks all their moral instincts,

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for the sake of such persons, it seems only right that we should examine this doctrine; that we should show them what it really is, and upon what foundation it has been built. Thus, and only thus, will they be brought to see that this ugly human conception is not of God.

**The doctrine of an everlasting hell
—what does it teach?**

It teaches a place, or condition, of never-ending suffering and woe, into which all persons, unsaved at death, will pass either at once, or after a period of fearful anticipation; and that in that condition their misery will be of such a character that no earthly mental or physical tortures, however intense, can possibly be compared with it.

I have no wish to misrepresent the supporters of this doctrine, and so I will give one or two of the published statements of men who voiced the teaching of the Christian schools of thought to which they severally belonged.

The extracts following are from the writings of a Roman Catholic, a leading Anglican, and a distinguished Dissenting preacher.

They are but samples of hundreds of other statements of the same character. They show that these representative men were on this particular point in perfect agreement, however divergent on other points.

The Romanist, the High-Churchman and the Baptist are seen to be in fellowship in a theory of horror.

The first extract is from a work, entitled, "*The Sight of Hell*," by Rev. J. Furniss, C. S. S. R.. *Permism Superiorum*. (The name of the author is suggestive.)

"Little child, if you go to hell, there will be a devil at your side to strike you. He will go on striking you every minute *forever and ever* without stopping. The first stroke will make your body as bad as the body of Job, covered from head to foot with sores and ulcers. The second stroke will make your body twice as bad as the body of Job. The third stroke will make your body three times as bad as the body of Job. The fourth stroke will make your body four times as bad as the body of Job. How, then, will your body be, after the devil has been striking it every moment, for a hundred million of years without stopping? Perhaps, at this moment,

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seven o'clock in the evening, a child is just going into hell. To-morrow evening, at seven o'clock, go and knock at the gates of hell, and ask what the child is doing. The devils will go and look. They will come back again and say—'*The child is burning.*' Go in a week and ask what the child is doing. You will get the same answer—'*It is burning.*' Go in a year and ask. The same answer comes—'*It is burning.*' Go in a million of years, and ask the same question. The answer is just the same—'*It is burning.*' So, if you go forever and ever, you will always get the same answer—'*It is burning in the fire.*'"

I make but one comment. Is it any wonder that intelligent and humane men turn shudderingly away from religion, when such a brutal conception as this is set forth in the name of Christianity, and under the sanction of the authorities in a Christian Church?

The second extract is from a sermon by the Rev. H. B. Pusey, D. D., regius professor of Hebrew, and canon of Christ Church, Oxford (quoted from "*Errors and Terrors of Blind Guides*").

"Gather in one in your mind, an assembly of all those men and women from whom, whether in history or in fiction, your memory most shrinks.

"Gather in the mind all that is most loathsome, most revolting. . . . Conceive the fierce, fiery eyes of hate, spite, frenzied rage, ever fixed on thee, looking thee through and through with hate. . . . Hear those yells of blaspheming, concentrated hate, as they echo along the lurid vault of hell; every one hating every one. . . . Yet a fixedness in that state in which the hardened malignant sinner dies, involves, without any further retribution of God, *this endless misery.*"

The third extract is from a sermon on the "Resurrection of the Dead," by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon (cited by Dean Farrar in "*Mercy and Judgment*").

"When thou diest, thy soul will be tormented alone. That will be a hell for it. But at the day of Judgment, thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin hells; thy soul sweating drops of blood, and thy body suffused with agony. In fire, exactly like that we have on earth, thy body will lie, asbestos like, forever unconsumed, al! thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string, on which the devil shall forever play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable lament."

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I will spare my reader from any more of such writing, so unutterably horrible and revolting. I have only reproduced it in order to show *what has been taught* by sincere men in the Christian Church on the subject of future punishment. The Rev. Thomas Allin, the author of an able work—"Universalism Asserted as the Hope of the Gospel"—in commenting upon the foregoing extracts, has written these pregnant words, "Awful as are these quotations, I must repeat that they give no adequate idea at all of the horrors of hell: for that which is the very sting of its terrors—their unendingness—is beyond our power really to conceive, even approximately: so totally incommensurable are the ideas of time and of eternity." In answer to the plea that many who profess to believe in everlasting suffering no longer believe in a *material* hell, Mr. Allin forcibly adds—"That plea, in mitigation of the horror the doctrine inspires, cannot be admitted; for when you offer for acceptance a spiritual, rather than a material, flame, who is there that cannot see that the real difficulty is the same, whether you suppose man's body burned, or his spirit tortured? It may even be maintained fairly, that a hell which torments the higher part is rather an aggravated than a mitigated penalty."

**How came this doctrine to be
engrafted on Christian teaching?**

Primarily, by the mistranslation of a few Greek words. With that we shall deal later. Secondly, by the influence of the Roman character upon Christian thought and ideas.

The doctrine of an everlasting hell is an error that must be traced to the Latin, or Western Church, and it is from that source it has been handed down to us. It is not a characteristic of the theology of the Eastern Schools of Christianity during the first three or four centuries after our Lord.

No contrast could be more remarkable than that presented in the writings of the fathers of the early Eastern Church and in those of the fathers of the later Western Church.

The works of the Eastern fathers are full of glowing ideas as to the universal *Fatherhood* of God; the *corrective* character of divine judgment; the complete fulfilment of the mission of Christ as the Saviour of *the world*; His triumph over all evil, and the ultimate "restitution of *all things*" to God. To them the thought appeared intolerable, that evil could be so powerful as to last forever; and God so less than omnipotent as not to

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be able to accomplish His purposes of mercy; and Christ's work to be so restricted that only a few of the creatures for whom He died will ever be saved. The writings of the Western fathers, on the other hand, from the time that North-African theology was grafted on the Roman stock, and became the parent of Latin Christianity, have not only set forth a pessimistic and attenuated "Gospel," but have tacked on to it the awful doctrine of everlasting woe. From the time of Augustine, until now, this dogma has lain as an incubus upon Western theology. The reformation cleansed Western Christendom of many doctrinal errors, but it left the worst of them all untouched. Protestant churches and sects, so loud in their denunciation of the Church of Rome for praying for the departed, which practice accords with the spirit of Christ, have found no difficulty in agreeing with that Church in unquestioningly accepting a doctrine which is directly opposite to His spirit.

The two theologies—that of the East and that of the West—are as wide apart as the poles. The difference between them finds an illustration in the creeds. The two great authoritative creeds of Christendom (the Apostles' and the Nicene) are Eastern, and they end with the words—"the life everlasting"—"the life of the world to come."

There is not a word in them that even hints at the doctrine of everlasting hell. The so-called Athanasian Creed, which is not Eastern, but Western, significantly closes with the words—"everlasting fire."

Happily for the cause of Christ in this twentieth century, there is a growing tendency on the part of thoughtful Christians to look behind the teaching of Western Christendom to the brighter and more hopeful teaching of the early Eastern Church, nearest in time and spirit to the Apostolic age!

The introduction of the doctrine we are considering into Christian teaching is, undoubtedly, to be traced to the fact that Christian thought and character were influenced and lowered by coming into contact with the Latin nation. The instincts of the Romans were hard, exclusive, warlike and cruel. They were a race, stolid, self-satisfied, self-centred, haughty and pitiless. They had schooled themselves by centuries of wars, gladiatorial contests and other degrading and brutal public spectacles, to set a small value on human life, and to view with complacency bloodshed and physical torture. Human agony was a leading characteristic of their most popular pastimes.

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For a while, the character of the Roman race had little or no deteriorating influence upon Christian thought. Christianity came to Rome with a teaching and disposition alien to Roman instincts. By persecution after persecution, that nation heaped upon the followers of Jesus every conceivable injustice and barbarity in the name of the civil power.

During that time, Christianity in its ideas contracted no contamination from the Roman world.

But the times changed. In A. D. 324, the Roman Emperor Constantine publicly professed the religion of Christ, and by an Imperial edict constituted it the religion of the state.

Hundreds of thousands of Romans, from motives of policy and expediency only, embraced the new religion; and became Christians in name, *without divesting themselves of their old character and racial instincts.*

It is not difficult to see that in these circumstances was found a congenial soil for the growth of a cruel and relentless doctrine.

A few fiery and enthusiastic leaders in the newly- established Church, possessing but an imperfect knowledge of the Greek language, and with their old instincts as yet uneradicated, found relief and satisfaction, under a sense of wrong done to their Church by unbelievers and heretics, in the thought that a awful and everlasting Divine vengeance was in store for all such offenders.

Many of the passages in the New Testament writings, grievously misunderstood, and interpreted in the light of their own instincts, appeared to favor their ideas; and thus it became possible for them to think of God as being as indifferent and pitiless in regard to human suffering as they themselves had been.

It is an illustration of the truth, that man, in his thoughts, "fashions God according to himself."

Thus only, it seems to me, is it possible to find an explanation for the fact that a great Church has been able to accept a doctrine stamped with the characteristics of old Roman cruelty and pitilessness. We believe that under no influence, except the demoralizing one of this doctrine of

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unending pain, conceived and born from the character of the Latin race, would it ever have been possible for a religion, bearing the name of Christ, to be associated with the Inquisition, the Smithfield fires, the burning of Servetus, and the persecution of the Quakers in America by the Puritans.

Roman hardness, cruelty, and indifference to suffering had become embodied in Western theology.

Yes, and this is not only so in respect to the doctrine we are considering. It is true of other dogmas that have disfigured Western Christianity—*e. g.*, Predestination and Reprobation.

In no Church, except in one that had suffered the influence of Latin self-consciousness, pride, exclusiveness and pitilessness, would such dogmas ever have found acceptance.

Every thoughtful Anglican ought to be devoutly thankful that the Church of England, although of Western origin, exhibits throughout her Prayer-Book so little, comparatively, of the narrow theology of the West and so much that reflects the brighter and more hopeful teaching of the East.

We are proud of being a member of a Church that teaches us in her Litany to pray that God will "have mercy upon *all* men"; and that deliberately, in A. D., 1562, *expunged* from the Articles of Religion, one which had condemned the belief that *all* men would finally be saved.

**The foundation upon which the doctrine
of Everlasting Punishment has been built.**

We must look for this in the mistranslation of a few words in the Greek New Testament. These words are:—αἰὼν (aiōn); αἰώνιος (aionios); κρίμα (krima); κρίσις (krisis); κρίνω (krinein); and κατακρίνω (katakrinein).

We shall show that the translators have dealt most misleadingly and inconsistently with these words. They have translated them, in a number of passages of Scripture in which they appear, strictly in accordance with their true meanings; while into the words as they occur in other passages they have imported meanings not only exaggerated and awful, but such as to make Scripture contradictory of itself.

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For the substantiation of this serious charge, we refer the reader to the following facts concerning each of the words instanced.

- (a) The word αἰών (aiōn), and the adjective derived from it, αἰώνιος (aionios).

We place these words first, because they are the terms that have been rendered by the translators—"world without end," "forever and ever," "ever-lasting," and "eternal"; and it is upon the basis of these false renderings that the terrible doctrine of everlasting punishment has been reared.

The word αἰών in the singular, denotes an age, a period of indefinite, but *limited*, duration, which may be either long or short. In the plural, the word denotes ages, or periods, that may be extended, and even vast, but still of *limited* duration.

The word cannot denote unendingness, commonly, but erroneously, termed "eternity," by those who forget that eternity is without beginning as well as without end. Else, how could the plural of the word be used, and how could Scripture speak of "the aions" and "the aions of the aions" (*i.e.*, "the ages," and "the ages of the ages")? There can be no plural to "eternity," and it is surely an absurdity to talk about "the eternities" and "the eternities of the eternities." And yet the translators, in some instances have deliberately imported into the word αἰών the meaning of *everlastingness*, while excluding it in other instances.

Here is an example, out of many.

In Mark iii. 29, the passage, according to the Greek, is: "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath not forgiveness all through the *aion* (age), but is in danger of *aionial* judgment (*i.e.*, the judgment of an age)."

The translators have rendered this: "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath *never* forgiveness (*i.e.*, not forgiveness *forever*), but is in danger of *eternal* damnation."

In this case, it will be seen that they have imported the idea of *unendingness* into the word αἰών, and the idea of "*eternal*" into its adjective, αἰώνιος.

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In Matthew xiii. 39, the passage, according to the Greek is: "The harvest is the end of the *aion* (age)"; and in 2 Tim. iv. 10: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present *aion* (age)."

The translators have rendered these passages: "The harvest is the end of the *world*." "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present *world*." In these cases, it will be seen that they have rightly excluded the idea of unendingness from the word αἰών. But why? we ask. If it was right to include it in Mark iii. 29, it was wrong to exclude it in the two last-named passages. Then why exclude it? The answer is, that it would have been too utterly foolish to translate Matthew xiii. 39, as "The harvest is the end of the *forever*," and 2 Tim. iv. 10, as "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present *eternity*"—and so the translators in these instances gave the word its true signification.

But can it, we ask, be right to treat language in this way—to make a word mean one thing to serve the purposes of a doctrinal idea, and to make it mean something essentially opposite, when that idea is not involved? Does any one imagine that the translators would have introduced this contradiction, and have translated the Greek of Mark xiii. 29, as they have done, unless they had gone to this text with the preconceived idea that a certain sin can never be forgiven, and therefore that the passage must be strained and contorted to endorse the idea? It is an instance, not of founding theology upon Scripture, but of twisting Scripture to suit theology. One thing is quite certain it cannot be right to translate a word in some passages in one sense, and to translate it in other passages in an antagonistic sense. The word αἰών cannot denote a period of *limitation*, and also *unendingness*. If it denotes the one, it does not denote the other. The one definition excludes the other. No one, in his senses, dreams of defining a day as a period of twelve hours under one set of circumstances, and also as being the equivalent of *all* time under other circumstances. We have to determine what is the true definition of αἰών. If it can be shown that the essential meaning of the word is that of *limited* duration, then the case is very clear: the translators were not justified in foisting into it the idea of unendingness; and this being so, a huge superstructure of doctrine, reared upon the mistranslation, will totter and fall, and an awful nightmare will be lifted from the Christian religion. We shall the better understand the true meaning of the word αἰών by considering,

The word αἰώνιος (aionios).

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Being a derivative from αἰών—an adjective of the word—it cannot denote more than the word to which it owes its origin denotes. Manifestly, it is wrong to attach to it the meaning of "everlasting" and "eternal," if the word from which it comes will not sustain the sense of unendingness, or eternity. We do not define "day-long" as that which characterizes a year, or "year-long" as that which indicates the duration of a century. Let us be consistent. In spite of the liberties which the translators have taken with αἰών, in rendering it "forever," they have never had the presumption to render it as "eternity"; and yet over and over again they have translated its adjective—αἰώνιος—as "*eternal*". Is this consistent? we ask. Must there not be something radically faulty in the system (or want of system) of interpretation, which affixes to the word αἰών the meaning of "*world*" in such passages as Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 49; xxiv. 3; Mark IV. 19; Luke i. 70; xvi. 8; xx. 34; John ix. 32; Acts iii. 21; xv. 18; and in many others; and then affixes the meaning of "*everlasting*" or "*eternal*" to its adjective, αἰώνιος, in Matt., xviii. 8; xxv. 41, 46; Mark iii. 29; Luke xvi. 9; John iii. 15; and in scores of similar passages.

An adjective qualifies its noun, and we cannot import into the adjective *more* than is contained in the noun. We may speak of the race of mankind as "humanity," and describe the existence of the race as "human life," but we should not be so absurd as to define "human" in that phrase as signifying "Divine."

And yet the translators have been guilty of committing a similar error in translating the word αἰών in the passages instanced as "world," which is equivalent to an age, and expresses limitation; while translating αἰώνιος as "everlasting" and "eternal"; both of which terms exclude limitation.

We ask, does this commend itself as being a fair way of dealing with a book which contains a record of Divine truth?

It will help us considerably in arriving at the true meaning of the words αἰών and αἰώνιος, if we turn to the Septuagint, and notice their significance as they are used there. Most of my readers know that the Septuagint is the Greek Version of the Old Testament in use among the Jews in the time of our Lord.

Do the words as there used convey the sense of unendingness? On the contrary, they are applied to things and circumstances that have long since *ceased to exist*.

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For example, in Gen. xiii. 15, God is represented as saying to Abram—"All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed *so long as an age* (ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος)."

How have the translators dealt with this? Into the word αἰών they have imported the meaning of unendingness, and made the passage read—"To thee will I give it and to thy seed *forever*,"

A tremendous difference, surely! In other words, they imply by their mistranslation that God has not kept His promise. The land of Canaan does not now belong to the descendants of Abraham, nor has it been in their possession for very many centuries.

Again, in Num. xxv. 15, God promises to Phineas, the grandson of Aaron, and to his seed after him an *age-long* (αἰώνιος) covenant of priesthood.

What have the translators done here? They have imported the sense of "everlasting" into the word αἰώνιος, and again represented God as being unfaithful. The Aaronic priesthood was not an *everlasting* one. The office has long ago ceased, and if the Christian religion is true it will never be revived.

Again, in Joshua xiv. 9, Caleb is most solemnly promised that certain land in Palestine shall be his and his children's for *an age* (αἰών).

How has this passage been treated by the translators? Just in the same way. An exaggerated meaning has been thrust into αἰών, and the statement has been made untrue, by their rendering the passage—"Thine inheritance and thy children's *forever*." Neither that part nor any other part of Palestine has belonged to Caleb's descendants for dozens of centuries.

I could multiply instances such as these, but will take but one more.

In Psalm xxiv. 7, 9, the splendid Temple once at Jerusalem is referred to in the words—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye *age-lasting* (αἰώνιος) doors." The passage is sensible enough as it stands in the original and in the Septuagint; but it expresses an untruth as the translators have rendered it—"ye *everlasting* doors.' What! the doors of the Temple everlasting! when it is an historical fact that that Temple was burnt and razed to the ground ages ago.

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In the Revised Version of the Bible, the translators evidently saw the inconsistency of describing as "*everlasting*" the doors of a building that no longer exists, and so they have given "*ancient*" as a marginal reading. But why do that, and at the same time leave standing the words "forever" in Gen. xiii. 15, and Joshua xiv. 9, and "everlasting" in Numbers xxv. 13? Is this consistent? we ask again. The Greek word is the same in all these passages. If αἰώνιος can be rendered "ancient," it certainly cannot be correctly rendered "everlasting." Everlastingness is *not* implied by the word "ancient"; and therefore we are very grateful to the revisers for having admitted by their marginal note that αἰώνιος may mean something very different from "everlasting." In Deut xxiii. is a passage which ought to have been sufficient to open the eyes of the translators as to the real meaning of αἰών,—An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their *tenth generation* shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for *the aion* (*i.e.*, the age, or epoch).

Here the *aion* is actually defined as being equivalent to a period of ten generations, and the translators by rendering it as "forever," have committed themselves to the astounding statement that ten generations constitute unendingness. We could smile at this inconsistency and inaccuracy, did we not know that it is from such that a monstrous doctrine has arisen, which has overshadowed and oppressed for centuries the religion of Jesus.

What sort of assurance can we have of the truthfulness of the dogma of unending punishment, when we know that these two Greek words, αἰών and αἰώνιος, have been juggled with in passages of Scripture supposed to support that dogma, in precisely the same way as in the passages just adduced; and that the words "everlasting," and "eternal"—of such awful and appalling import when placed before "fire," "judgment" and "damnation," etc.—are only mistranslations of the word αἰώνιος (age long)—a word that has been applied to a host of things that have no existence now!

We pass on to the brief consideration of a few other words that have been dealt with unfairly, in order, if not to found, at all events to buttress, this doctrine of everlasting punishment.

(b) The word κρίμα (krima).

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The word denotes *judgment*; the sentence pronounced. As such the translators of the Authorised Version rightly rendered it in many passages of the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles (*e. g.*, Matt. vii. 2; John ix. 39; Acts xxiv. 25; and Rom. ii. 2). But here is the inconsistency. In Matt, xxiii. 14; Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47; Rom. iii. 8; xiii. 2; I Cor. xi. 29; and I Tim. v. 12, they substituted the word "*damnation*" for it. We will say nothing about this word "damnation." except that it is an evil-sounding word, whose original meaning has been exaggerated and perverted; and a word that more than any other has been employed to support the awful doctrine we are opposing.

But why did the translators alter the reading? Why render κρίμα as "judgment" in some places, and as "damnation" in others? The answer is—These last named passages were viewed as pointing to future punishment; the translators' idea of future punishment was that of endless suffering and misery; and the word "damnation" was considered to be better suited to the popular theological error than the proper and milder word, "judgment." Our contention is, if the word "damnation" be right in one passage, it is right in another. Why for example—did they not translate John ix. 30, so as to represent our Lord as saying—"For *damnation* (κρίμα) I came into this world"? They gave the true rendering in this and other passages, because it would have been too absurd not to do so.

That these criticisms are not unjustified is seen in the fact that the New Testament revisers have discarded the word "damnation" in the above passages, and in Rom. xiii. 2 and I Cor. xi. 29, have correctly rendered κρίμα as "judgment."

We are thankful to them for this service in the interests of truth.

We must briefly consider —

(c) The word κρίσις (krisis).

It also denotes *judgment. i.e.*, the process of judging; and in forty-one passages of the New Testament the translators so rendered it. But in iV.att. xxiii. 33; Mark iii. 29; and John v. 29, they deliberately substituted the word "*damnation*" for "judgment." With what object? Plainly to add emphasis to their preconceived idea of an endless hell. But does this commend itself as being a fair and consistent way of dealing with Scripture?

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Why,—except that it was too utterly foolish,—not have rendered the following passages as they did the three just instanced?

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye . . . pass over damnation (κρίσις) and the love of God" (Luke xi. 42).

"As I hear, I judge, and My *damnation* (κρίσις) is just" (John v. 30).

"So opened He not His mouth; in His humiliation His damnation (κρίσις) was taken away" (Acts viii. 32, 33).

Seeing that the Greek word is the same in every one of these passages, is it not very wrong to give it an improper and grossly exaggerated significance in three texts, while translating it correctly in forty-one other instances?

Again, it is suggestive that the revisers of the New Testament, in Matt, xxiii. 33 and John v. 29, have flung away the word "*damnation*," and in its place put "judgment" as the proper rendering of κρίσις. If the translators of the Authorized Version had done this, one of the supports of an ancient error would have been knocked down.

(d) The word κρίνω (krinein).

The word denotes—to *judge*; and eighty-one times in the New Testament the translators so rendered it. And yet in regard to the same Greek word which occurs in 2 Thess. ii. 12, they made the translation run:—"That they all might be *damned* who believed not the truth."

But why not have been consistent? Why not have rendered I Cor. vi. 2, in this way; since in both passages the verb (κρίνω) is the same,—"*Do ye not know that the saints shall damn the world? and if the world shall be damned by you, are ye unworthy to damn the smallest matters?*"

I will trouble the reader with only one other word.

(e) The word κατακρίνω (katakrinein).

Its meaning is—to *condemn*. It is a stronger word than κρίνω, to judge, but there is nothing in it that corresponds to that awful meaning

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supposed to re-side in the word "damn." And yet the translators did not hesitate to give it that meaning.

How did they treat this verb, κατακρίνω? Just as they treated other verbs and nouns, when they wished to bolster their theological idea. In seventeen instances in the New Testament they translated it rightly as "*condemn*," but in Mark xvi. 16 and Rom. xiv. 23, doctrinal preconceptions prevailed, and so these two passages were rendered—"He that believeth not shall be *damned*." "He that doubteth is *damned* if he eat."

And for centuries, an everlasting hell-fire has been read unto the mistranslated word.

Again we say,—Why not have been consistent, and have translated Matt, xxvii. 3 and John viii. 10, 11 (where the verb is the same) as follows,—"Then Judas, when he saw that he (Christ) was *damned*, etc." "Hath no man *damned* thee? . . . Neither do I *damn* thee."

We venture to say that the translators would have rendered these passages in this way, if they had borne any reference to punishment after death. But can it be right to invest, in one case, a Greek word with a certain meaning, so as to make it a prop for a horrible doctrine, and to divest it of that meaning, in another case, because the word when so invested would assert too much, and reduce the statement to absurdity?

Surely that cannot be an honest way of dealing with Scripture. Such a method of interpretation would not be tolerated for a moment outside the domain of theology.

Having now considered a few of those Greek words, upon the mistranslation of which the doctrine of everlasting punishment has been made to rest, we are in a position to estimate the *true* signification of the words themselves, and further, to judge whether certain passages of Scripture, alleged to teach that doctrine really do so or not.

It is a principle of the Church of England, as expressed in Article VI., that whatsoever may not be proved by Holy Scripture, "is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith."

We claim that this doctrine is not only *not proved* by Holy Scripture, when correctly translated, but is absolutely *disproved* by it.

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We have seen that the true meanings of the Greek words in question are as follows:

αἰών (aion, or æon)—an age; a period long, or short, but of *limited* duration.

αἰώνιος (aionios)—an adjective derived from αἰών, denoting, that which pertains to an aion, or æon; rightly translated by such terms as: "aionial," "age-long," or "age-lasting," which denote limitation; but wrongly translated by "everlasting, and "eternal," which exclude limitation.

κρίμα (krima)—judgment, *i.e.*, the sentence pronounced.

κρίσις (krisis)—judgment, *i.e.*, the process of judging.

κρίνω (krinein)—to judge (not necessarily to *condemn*).

κατακρίνω (katakrinein)—to condemn.

We now give *correct* translations of the most important of those passages in the Bible which refer to future punishment, in which one or more of these Greek words appear.

We would suggest that the reader should refer to each of the passages in the Authorized Version of the Bible, in order to better realize the vital contrast that is presented.

**Passages referring to Future Punishments,
as they appear in the Greek New Testament.**

Matt, xviii. 8, "To be cast into the fire which is *aionial*, or *age-long* (αἰώνιος)."

Matt xxiii I4, "Ye shall receive a greater *judgment* (κρίμα)."

Matt, xxiii. 33, "How can ye escape the *judgment* (κρίσις) of Gehenna?"

Matt xxv. 46, "These shall go away into an *age-long* (αἰώνιος) pruning," (*i.e.*, the *remedial* discipline pertaining to an age, or æon).

Mark iii. 29, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath not forgiveness all through the age (αἰών), but is in danger of an age-long

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(αἰώνιος) *judgment* (κρίσις)" (or an age-long *sin*, as another reading of the text gives it).

Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth not shall be *condemned* (κατακρίνω)."

Luke xx 47, "The same shall receive a greater *judgment* (κρίμα)."

John v. 29, "Unto a resurrection of *judgment* (κρίσις)."

Rom. iii. 8, "Whose *judgment* (κρίμα) is just."

Rom. xiii. 2, "They that resist (the powers that be) shall receive to themselves *judgment*" (κρίμα) *i.e.*, the judgment of the civil magistrate; not future punishment, as the translators implied by the word "damnation").

I Cor. xi. 29, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh *judgment* (κρίμα) to himself."

2 Thess. i. 9, "Who shall be punished (lit. who shall pay justice), viz., an *age-long* (αἰώνιος) destruction from the presence of the Lord."

2 Thess. ii. 12, "That they all might be *judged* (κρίνω) who believed not the truth."

I Tim. v. 12, "Having *judgment* (κρίμα) because they have cast off their first faith."

Heb. vi. 2, "The doctrine of . . . an *aionial*, (αἰώνιος) or *age-long*, judgment."

2 Peter ii. 17, "To whom the gloom of darkness all through an *age* (αἰών) has been reserved."

Jude i. 7, "Suffering the justice of an *aionial*, or *age-long*, fire."

Jude i. 13, "To whom the gloom of darkness all through the *age* has been reserved."

Rev. xiv. 11, "The smoke of their testing goeth up all through *ages* of *ages* (αἰών)."

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Rev. xix. 3, "Her smoke goeth up all through the *ages* of the *ages* (αἰών)."

Rev. xx. 10, "They shall be tested (or tried) day and night all through the *ages* of the *ages* (αἰών)."

There are a few passages in the New Testament, which are supposed, by those who have not examined them, to especially support the doctrine of unending torment and woe.

"Three of them appear in the list given above: Rev. xiv. II; xix. 3 and xx. 10.

"Surely," says the supporter of the so-called "orthodox" dogma—"the words—'Her smoke goeth up all through the ages of the ages'—teach everlasting suffering! If the phrase—'Forever and ever'—be discarded and the words—'all through the ages of ages'—be substituted, does it not amount to the same thing—*unendingness*?" We answer—No. It simply points to a long and indefinite, but *terminable*, period. An *aion*, or age, is a *terminable* period, however long it may last; and if you add any number of *aions* or ages together they will not represent *unendingness*, or a million-millionth fraction of it. That being so, it is illogical to account anything *everlasting*, because it may last for ages of ages.

But consider for a moment these three passages in the Revelation, to which such an immense amount of undue importance has been attached.

In the first place, they appear in a book of the Bible, which, although ultimately admitted into the canon of Holy Scripture, was for a long time excluded from it. During the early centuries of the Christian Church, the Book of the Revelation was viewed with much suspicion, and there were many who considered that it should not be numbered among the canonical books on account of the essentially Jewish tone of thought pervading it. Certainly, it is a book wholly unlike the other books of the New Testament. It is full of extraordinary imagery, curious metaphor and hyperbole, mysterious visions, "the kabbalism of numbers and the symbolism of strange figures." To turn from the gospel and epistles of St. John to the Revelation, is (as Dr. Farrar has pointed out) to pass "from the most ethereal regions of Christian thought to scarlet dragons and hell-born frogs; from realms of spiritual assurance, in which the pure azure of contemplation seems to be unstained by any earthly cloud, to dim images

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of plague and war, in which cries of vengeance ring through an atmosphere which is lurid with fire and blood."

To treat a book of this character as if its utterances were the language of scientific theology is absurd, and worse than absurd. And yet this has been done. Again, why read into these three passages a *literal* interpretation, when at the same time no one would dream of doing this in regard to Isaiah xxxiv. 9, 10—the passage by which, undoubtedly, they were suggested? The prophet, in impassioned Oriental language, was describing the temporal calamities that should befall the land of Idumea. He writes (we quote from the Septuagint)—The land thereof shall become burning pitch, and it shall not be quenched, night and day, all through the age of time (lit. the *aion-time*; a phrase which the translators have taken the liberty of rendering as "forever").

Are we, from this statement, prepared to argue that the land of Idumea is still burning, and will continue to burn to the end of time, or forever? If not, why attach a literal meaning to figurative texts in the Book of Revelation, in order to make them props for a horrible doctrine, and not attach it to this statement of Isaiah?

Does any one imagine that the moon is literally "turned into blood," because the writers of the Bible describe the redness of a lunar eclipse in those terms? So then, we contend that these three particular passages, taken as they stand in the original, do not give the slightest intimation of unending punishment. At most, they do but point to a prolonged, but *terminable*, judgment.

In Mark ix. 43 to 48, there occurs a passage, supposed by many to clearly support the doctrine we are opposing—"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The following is a fair representation of how the passage has been handled by commentators, credited with some knowledge of logic.

"The worm is *undying*; therefore its prey, and the pains it inflicts upon it must last *forever*. The fire, too, is unquenchable; therefore its victim must always continue to be forever burning, although never consumed."

Sense, common sense! is all we ask for. The passage is a quotation from Isaiah lxvi. 24. The prophet had not the glimmer of an idea of "eternal torment" in his mind when he penned those words. He is referring

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to the valley of Hinnom—a spot outside Jerusalem—where great fires were constantly kept burning to consume the offal and refuse of the city. The undying worm was not its prey; nor was the unquenchable fire that which it consumed. The victims of both were not *living* things at all, but *dead*, insensible bodies;—the "*carcasses* of the men, the transgressed against God."

The punishment is no longer being inflicted; the worm in that valley is no longer living, and the fires, having served their purpose, have ages ago gone out. And yet, forsooth, this has been one of the principal stock-passages adduced in support of the theory of endless suffering.

What our Lord intended to teach, when He quoted this text from Isaiah, was, that there is in the universe of God a principle—symbolized by the worm and the fire—which will remove and consume all that is corrupt and worthless; that this principle is an undying one; and that no soul can escape the action of this principle until the last vestige of dross in him shall have disappeared, and the evil in his nature shall have been consumed. "*Every one*" (not some only) said Jesus, in connection with this particular passage, shall be salted with fire" (Mark ix. 49).

We ask which is the more reasonable interpretation of this text; that, as we have given it, or that which, in a futile attempt to make the passage fit in with a theological preconception, confounds the *agent* with the *object* of judgment, and views the man as if he were the same as the worm and the fire.

Matt. xxvi. 24, and the corresponding verse in Mark xiv. 21, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! *It had been good for that man if he had not been born*"—has been so dealt with by the translators as to make it appear a prep for the doctrine of irremedial punishment in the world beyond. By confusing the pronouns—that which refers to our Lord, and that which refers to Judas,—and by substituting the words "*that man*" for "*Him*," they have made the passage read as if it were a declaration that Judas was hopelessly and finally lost.

Christ did not say that it had been a good thing for *Judas*, if Judas had not been born; but that it would have been a good thing for Himself, from His standpoint as the Son of Man,—if His betrayer had not been born. An ingredient in the Saviour's cup of bitterness would not have been there.

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We give the words as they stand in the Greek of both passages and leave the reader to draw his own inference.

"The Son of Man goeth, as it has been written concerning Him (**αὐτοῦ**), *i.e.*, the Son of Man): but woe to that man (**ἐκεῖνω**, *i.e.*, Judas) through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! A good thing were it for Him (**αὐτῷ**, *i.e.*, the Son of Man, not Judas) if that man (**ἐκεῖνος** *i.e.*, Judas) had not been born."

The pronoun **αὐτός** refers to Christ, and the pronoun **ἐκεῖνος** to Judas.

Thus, from our examination of the foregoing passages which have formed the basis of the doctrine of unending suffering, we see that not one of them is capable of sustaining the strain placed upon them. Strip these few Greek words of the false and exaggerated meanings arbitrarily imported into them, and these passages not only negative the doctrine we have mentioned, but point to an absolutely opposite conclusion, *viz.*:—*That all future punishments are fatherly, remedial and terminable.*

Let us, in as few words as possible, try to grasp the glorious truth expressed in this statement. Manifestly, we cannot believe that God's judgments are remedial—*i.e.*, that they are means for the recovery of sinners—without enlarging our ideas as to God Himself, and as to the character and scope of His great purpose of salvation,

If we believe that, after some future æons of judgment and discipline, sinners, humbled and repentant, will find their way back to God, then, necessarily, we shall discard the popular notion that the great Father will save only a few comparatively out of earth's teeming millions; and we shall not believe that this earth-life, this æon of time, is the only period in which He will work out His beneficent purpose.

**What do we gather from Scripture on this
subject of God's great purpose of salvation?**

First, that it is a purpose, the working out of which is not restricted to this world-son, or age. or to any of those "æons-times" (as St. Paul calls them in 2 Tim. i. 9), Which come within the compass of this world's history, and are called by us "dispensations"; but that it is a purpose that

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will continue to be worked out in æons or ages *after* the present world-æons shall have ceased to exist.

Accordingly, St. Paul in Eph. iii II, describes it as God's "Purpose of *the æons*." The translators obscured the meaning of this passage, by treating the noun in it as if it were an adjective, and making it read "*eternal* purpose."

Now, when we turn to the Greek New Testament, we find that in speaking of the redeeming plan of God a constant reference is made to these "æons"—these succeeding and limitable ages or epochs.

St. Paul, in speaking of God's "Purpose of the æons," makes two statements respecting it.

He declares, that as regards its conception it is antecedent to this world-æon, with its dispensations, or æons-times; and moreover that in scope and operation it extends beyond it.

That purpose of salvation he asserts, in I Cor. ii. 7, was ordained "*before the æons* unto our glory." In Eph. iii. 9, 10, 21, he refers to it as a mystery hidden in God from the æons, although now made known; and declares that a glory will accrue to God from it "*through all the generations of the æons of the æons*."

This latter phrase is a very remarkable one. The translators evidently did not perceive its meaning and so rendered the passage—"throughout all ages, world without end." But again we must point out that such a rendering is a contradiction in terms. An age is a *limitable* period, and no number of ages can be the equivalent of "world *without end*." We might just as well say—"Throughout all the days of one particular month of the months, year without end."

There is no difficulty at all in this phrase of St Paul—"Through all the generations of the æons of the æons." The apostle clearly intimates that there is one vast epoch, which he calls "*the æon* of the æons," so vast that its generations cover the whole course of time, as well as æons after this world-æons,—and that during this epoch the "Purpose of the æons," *i.e.*, the redemption of the whole human race, will be worked out to the glory of God.

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The popular idea is, that when the end of this world shall come, all ages and dispensations will cease, and eternity begin.

The Scripture most certainly does not teach this. It asserts that there will be *limitable* ages beyond this present world age. In Eph. I. 21, Christ is said to be set "far above all principality and power . . . not only in *this æon*, but also in that (an æon) *which is to come*." Here, at all events, the idea is negated that the end of this age is the end of all ages.

In Eph. ii. 4-7, St. Paul affirms that God's display of love and mercy towards us was for a particular purpose, viz., "that in the *æons to come* He might show the exceeding riches of His grace towards us."

There is no sense in speaking of "æons to come," if this æon is the last of limitable periods, and all beyond is that illimitable duration, unmarked by time and epochs—viz., everlastingness.

Then again we gather from Scripture, rightly translated, that our Lord's work of saving souls will not cease when this world-age and its dispensations shall terminate.

In Heb. xiii, 8, Christ is declared to be the "*same*, yesterday, and to-day, and *all through the æons*." We know what he was in the past—a Saviour. We know what he is to-day—the same. Will He not be a Saviour all through those æons? If not, He is other than He was and is, and consequently the statement regarding Him is untrue.

Moreover, in Rev. i. 18, our Lord Himself is represented as saying—"Behold, I am living *all through the æons of the æons*; and have the keys of Hades and of death." We ask—Did He mean by this that He, "the Saviour of all men," would merely act as the jailor of ruined souls; or did He mean that all through those æons of the æons His saving work would be continued, and that he would open the doors of Hades and death to set the prisoners, after their remedial discipline, free?

One thing is very certain. The latter supposition is in harmony with the assertion that he will be "the same" all through the ages as He was and is. The jailor-theory does not agree with it.

Further, scripture also distinctly teaches that all the æons are no more than *limitable* periods; inasmuch as it asserts that they will come to an end. In I Cor, xv. 24, St. Paul writes—"Then (or afterwards) *cometh the*

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end" (*i.e.*, the end of all these æons); when with death and every other enemy overcome, and with *all* things (not *some* only) subdued unto Christ, Christ Himself shall deliver up the kingdom to God "so that God may be all in *all*" (v. 28).

What do we gather from the foregoing, and from a great deal more in the Bible of the same character? That God's grand purpose of saving the human race is a beneficent scheme, whose working is not restricted (as some have thought) to a moment of duration—the Earth-life, in the case of individuals; or to a world-age, in the case of the race of mankind; but that it is a purpose whose accomplishment will be worked out in ages yet to come.

God's intentions of goodness and mercy towards individual man will not disappear when he shall have lived out his little span of earthly existence; nor will the destiny of the race have been fulfilled, when this planet shall have ceased to be the abode of human life, and the world æon shall be no more.

Man was made to live on, and so was God's grand purpose of salvation in regard to him.

This age will close, and still the purpose of God towards the race will be unaccomplished. Another age will dawn. It will start with a manifestation of Christ from the spiritual world. During that epoch of Christ-manifestation the purpose of God will work on. Christ's faithful servants will commence a dispensation of dignity and service for others as "the Bride of the Lamb," and the "foolish virgins will be shut out of that dignity and service; but not to be "damned for all eternity," as some tract-writers say. Still, the purpose of God towards the race will be unaccomplished. Another age will dawn—an age of perfecting for some; an age of judgment, of painful disciplining and pruning, and of awakening, for others.

That age, too, will have its end; and the Christ, amid all these changes, will remain unchangeable—the same as of old, the *saving* One.

Another and, perhaps, another age will dawn and close, and still the great Father of love will be found to be working out His great project of love.

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And so on, and so on, until the last of the æons shall have run its course; and then—"then cometh the end," when the magnificent purpose of God shall have been achieved, and He shall be "all things in *all* men."

Has not Scripture called God's plan of redemption—"the Purpose of the ages?"

When we have grasped the truth expressed above, how significant become such passages as these—

Heb. v. 9, "*aionian* salvation," *i.e.*, the salvation of the ages; Heb. ix. 12, "*aionian* redemption," *i.e.*, the redemption of the ages; Heb. xiii. 20, "the (*aionian* covenant," *i.e.*, the covenant pertaining to the ages during which the purpose of God will be worked out. The adjective in all three of these passages is the same—αἰώνιος, and yet in two instances the translators rendered it as "eternal," and in one instance as "everlasting."

In enlarging our ideas, therefore, as to the periods through which God's purpose of salvation will be worked out, we take the first step towards realizing the true character of future punishments. They are not vindictive and endless; but remedial and terminable. They are not monuments of perpetuated evil, but instruments in the hands of God for good.

There will be a disciplinary fire which is age-long (Matt, xviii. 8); there will be a painful "pruning" which is age-long (Matt. xxv. 46); there will be a "judgment" which is age-long (Mark iii. 29); and a "destruction from the presence of the Lord" which is age-long (2 Thess. i. 9); and a "gloom of darkness" for impenitent sinners all through an age (2 Pet. ii. 17); but all these things are the characteristics *only of an age*. The purpose of God will outlive and work through the epoch of judgment, because it is a purpose not of one æon, but "of the æons." Yes, and it is a purpose that contemplates *salvation*, not ruin.

We pass on to consider another very important point in regard to God's "Purpose of the ages."

Secondly. God's purpose of saving mankind is declared by Scripture to embrace the *whole* and not merely a *part* of the human race.

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The early Eastern Church grasped this magnificent gospel-truth; but the later Western Church, after coming into contact with the proud and exclusive Latin nation, failed to do so.

The mental attitude of a great number of Christians, in regard to the purpose of God, is as illogical as it is possible for it to be. They will start by most solemnly assuring you that they accept certain statements of the Bible as the words of truth, and end by professing their belief in a doctrine of future punishment, which flatly contradicts every one of those statements.

Take an illustration of what I mean. Ask any of those Christians who do not accept the "larger hope"—"Do you believe the following passages?"

"God was in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19).

"God sent His Son, that *the world* through Him *might be saved*" (John iii. 17).

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto Me" (John xii. 32).

"God our Saviour, who willeth that *all men* should *be saved*" (I Tim. ii. 3, 4).

"God—who is *the Saviour of all men*, specially of those that believe" (I Tim. iv. 10).

The answer will be—"Most certainly; we account them Divinely inspired utterances."

"Do you, then, acknowledge that one day God will have completely triumphed over all sin and evil, that the *whole* race of mankind will have been brought into union with Himself through the saving work of Christ?"

"Oh! dear no," is replied. "We view that as a dreadfully heretical notion. It would do away with hell and punishment." "Precisely so," we answer, "and that is exactly what these passages declare: viz., that hell and punishment, when they shall have served their purpose, will one day disappear from the universe of God, because ultimately the Christ will draw *all men*, and God the Saviour, will save *all*."

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We see, therefore, the illogical manner in which these passages are treated: they are read and interpreted as if the words we have italicized were not in them at all. They are explained in such a way that the reader must understand that the word "*world*" only means "*part of the world*" and the word "*all*" signifies no more than "*some*." In other words—not one of these passages is true, if future punishment be either everlasting or irremedial. If, at the great consummation—"the restitution of *all* things" (Acts iii. 21), a hundred souls, or even one soul, be finally and irretrievably lost, it will not be a fact that the crucified Lord will have drawn *all* men unto Himself, nor will it be true that God is "the Saviour of *all* men". Now, there is a whole host of passages—hundreds of them—in the Bible, similar to those just adduced. They all emphatically declare that God's purpose of saving mankind will embrace not merely a *part* of the race, but the *whole* of it. How have these passages been treated by the majority of Christian teachers? Practically, as if they had had no existence. Their plain, unequivocal, affirmative declarations as to the *universal* scope of God's redemptive plan have been quietly ignored, and a theory of future punishment has been propounded of such a character that no one can accept it without first rejecting the declarations of those passages. We ask the reader to forget for a moment all he has been taught; to read the following passages of Scripture; and then to honestly ask himself—What do they teach?

"Unto Thee shall *all flesh* come" (Ps. lxxv. 2).

"I have sworn by Myself . . . That unto Me *every* knee shall bow, *every* tongue shall swear" (Is. xlv. 23).

"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and *shall be satisfied*" (Is. liii. II).

"And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out My spirit upon *all* flesh (Joel ii. 28).

"The son of man came to save *that which is lost* (Matt, xviii. II).

"All flesh *shall* see the *salvation* of God (Luke iii. 6).

"And go after that which is lost, *until he find it*" (Luke xv. 4).

"The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of *the world*" (John i. 29).

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"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given *all things* into His hand. . . And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of *all* which He hath given Me *I should lose nothing*" (John iii. 35; vi. 39).

"I came not to judge the world, but *to save the world*" (John xii. 47).

"The times of restitution of *all things* (Acts iii. 21).

"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon *all*" (Rom. xi. 32).

"For of Him, and through Him, and *unto Him* are *all things*" (Rom. xi. 36).

"As I live, saith the Lord, *every* knee shall bow to Me, and *every* tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. xiv. II).

"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive" (I Cor. xv. 22).

"That God may be all in *all*" (I Cor. xv 28).

"That in the dispensation of the completing of the times, He might gather together in one *all things* in Christ, both which are in the heavens, and which are on the earth; even in Him" (Eph. i. I0).

"According to the working whereby He is able even to subdue *all things* unto Himself" (Phil, iii. 2I).

"By Him (Christ) to reconcile *all things* unto Himself; by Him. whether they be things on the earth, or whether they be things III the heavens" (Col. i. 20).

"God our Saviour, who willeth that *all men should be saved*" (I Tim. ii. 3, 4).

"Who (Christ) gave Himself a ransom for *all*, the testimony (of this) to be borne in its own times" (I Tim. ii. 6).

"The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish, but that *all should advance unto repentance*" (2 Pet. iii. 9).

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"He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world*" (I John ii. 2).

"The Father sent the Son, *the Saviour of the world*" (I John iv. 14).

To this list we could add scores and scores of passages both from the Old and New Testaments, all of the same purport. What do they mean; what do they teach? Do they not affirm, as plainly and emphatically as any words can possibly do, the magnificent truth which was preached by Christ and apostles, viz., that God's saving of mankind will not be a saving of merely a *part* of the race, but of the *whole* of it?

Those passages tell us that, when God's great "Purpose of the ages" shall have been worked out, He will be what every good and thoughtful mind would wish He should be—the conqueror of evil; the focus of the love and devotion of His creature man; the "all in *all*."

And it is upon this truth, so plainly declared in the pages of Scripture, that we ground our belief that all the future punishments of God are fatherly, remedial, and terminable. If the final outcome of God's purpose is—as the Bible declares—the salvation of *all*, then it must follow that no judgment nor punishment, be it ever so prolonged or ever so painful, can be anything else than a discipline of mercy; a means to an end, and that end—good.

A thousand and one difficulties confront those who contend that future punishments are *not* fatherly, remedial and terminable. How, for instance, can they answer such questions as follows:

- (a) Christ is to see of the travail of His soul and to be satisfied. Will He be *satisfied*, if numbers of those whom He loved, and for whom He died, shall be finally and irretrievably lost? If at the end there shall be but one wretched straggler who has not been found, do they think He will be *satisfied*? He will not be, if He meant what he said about going after lost sheep.
- (b) God has declared that by Christ He will reconcile *all* things unto Himself. If any at the last shall be irrecoverably lost, those souls will *not* have been reconciled. Will God, then, not do that which He declares it is His will to do? Is this, we ask, compatible with any idea of sovereign will?

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- (c) God, it is declared, shall be, when the end cometh, "all in *all*."
Will those who differ from us explain how this can possibly be, if any, or even one, of the human race be ever finally, hopelessly and everlastingly ruined and lost?

Lastly, there are passages in the Bible that distinctly affirm that future punishments will not be irremedial and unending.

In Ps. ciii. 9, "He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger all through the age (αἰών)."

In Ps. cxxxvi. there are 26 verses which refer to various judgments of God on sinners, and each verse ends with the words:—"For His mercy endureth all through the age (αἰών)."

In Ps. lvii. I6. "For I will not contend all through the age (αἰών), neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before Me, the souls which I have made."

In Jer. iii. I2, "I will not keep anger all through the age (αἰών)."

In Lam. iii. 3I, "The Lord will not cast off all through the age (αἰών)."

The translators rendered this phrase—"all through the age" (which is as it stands in the Septuagint)—by the words "*forever*", thereby strengthening the case against themselves. Where is the sense in saying in one breath that God will not keep His anger or cast off *forever*, and in asserting in the next breath that His wrath and judgments and punishments are *everlasting*? They have made Scripture self-contradictory.

On the other hand, there is no contradiction, and a beautiful Gospel-truth comes into view, if the word "αἰών" be translated rightly.

"His mercy endureth all through the *age*."

"The Lord will not cast off all through the *age*."

What age? Why, the age of judgment, punishment and pruning. But the mercy of God will not fail during it; His anger will not be kept throughout it, the age will run its course, but it will not involve His casting

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off of souls whom He judges and prunes. Yes, and is not this exactly what we should expect in regard to a Heavenly Father, concerning whom Jesus said that, "To such an extent he loved the world"?

He is "Love"; He is better and nobler than any good, but imperfectly loving, earthly father can be. We who are good fathers can be angry with our sons for their wrong-doing, and we may inflict upon them—and rightly too—a severe, and, if the case demand it, even prolonged punishment for their welfare. For weeks, or months, or more, our wilful boy may be made to suffer the disciplining of our love and concern for him.

But does our righteous anger not abate; do we cast off and disown the boy, during that period of discipline? Nay, not if we be true fathers.

For the boy's good, we make the discipline last until the purpose of fatherly love be accomplished; but the anger is gone. By the punishment we inflict, we may suffer more than the lad himself.

For his good, not a whit of that punishment can we remit; but he is no castaway because of that. Is the great Father as good as we are?

Oh! read this thought into the verses instanced above, and how luminous, how gloriously pregnant with Divine meaning, they become!

We turn to other passages. In Matt. v. 26, our Lord in referring to future punishment as "a prison," asserts, "Thou shalt by no means come out thence, *till* thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." Could He have said this if the prison-doors were never to be thrown open? These words are in agreement with the truth that future punishment is remedial and terminable; they are certainly hostile to the idea that it is hopeless and unending.

In Matt. xii 32, our Lord's comment upon the sin against the Holy Spirit is—"It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age (αἰῶν) neither in the one to come." That is, Christ declares this particular sin to be so great, that for two æons forgiveness will be withheld. But there will be ages, after this present one and the next one shall have passed away. Will there be no forgiveness *then*? His words imply that there will be. When we tell a bad child that he will be punished this week and next week, we do not proclaim that his punishment will never come to an end.

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In Luke vi 27-35, our Lord says,—"Love your enemies; do good to them which hate you; bless them that curse you," etc., etc., and adds, "And ye shall be the children of the Highest for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

Is this true of God, if future punishment be hopeless and everlasting? In that case, is He kind and merciful to the evil? And are we to act toward our enemies in the implacable and remorseless spirit in which, as some theologians have said, God will act toward His enemies?

In I John iii. 8, it is declared that the son of God "was manifested that he *might destroy* the works of the devil."

All are agreed that sin and alienation from God are included in that definition of evil. But if sin be incurable, and alienation perpetual, will this prophecy concerning the Son of God ever be fulfilled? What, therefore, is the conclusion at which we arrive, when we have stripped certain passages of Scripture of the false meaning imported into them by mistranslation, and have considered those many other passages whose magnificent import has been ignored?

This—that the Future Punishment of God will not be what Western Christendom for centuries has declared they will be; but that they will be Fatherly, remedial and terminable.

**A difficulty, which presents itself to
some, in accepting the foregoing conclusion.**

This difficulty is expressed in some such way as follows:

If the Greek word αἰώνιος, when applied to terms which refer to Future Punishment, does not mean "eternal" or "everlasting" but "aional," or that which pertains to a limitable age, then the same word cannot mean "eternal" or "everlasting" when applied to such terms as "life," "glory," "redemption," and "salvation." Consequently, what guarantee have we that the life, the glory, and salvation bestowed through Christ will be *everlasting*? "You tell me," says the objector, "that the judgments and punishments of God are terminable, because they are described by the word αἰώνιος and that word does *not* mean '*everlasting*'. Then is not the life and salvation, described by the same word, also terminable?" This, at first sight, appears a very formidable question; but the answer is a very simple one. The word αἰώνιος does not, in regard to either set of passages,

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denote "everlasting" or "eternal." When our Lord said,—"He believing on the Son hath *aionial* (αἰώνιος) life" (John iii. 36); and "I give unto them *aionial* (αἰώνιος) life" (John x. 28)—He did not promise an *everlasting* life in those words, but the life pertaining to an age, or æon.

The reader will remember that St. Paul, in Eph. iii. 21, speaks of "all the generations of *the æon* of the æons."

Our Lord was referring to this; and the life He promised was "the life of this æon"—*i.e.*, the life characterizing that vast age with all its generations or epochs, during which the great purpose of God will be worked out. He declared that those who accepted Him would be in a condition of life and blessedness all through this *aionial* period.

In Heb. v. 9, salvation is described as αἰώνιος; *i.e.*, a salvation which is the characteristic "of the ages."

In Heb. ix. 12, redemption, too, is described by the same adjective, because it is a redemption which will be worked out during those ages.

The life given by Christ will continue when "the life of the æons" shall have ended. We shall live on and be blessed, when that vast epoch in which God will have worked out His purpose of saving mankind shall have melted into the infinite past.

But the guarantee of our everlastingness is not to be found in that oft-repeated promise of the Saviour—to give *aionial* life to His faithful servants.

We should be in a sorry plight had we to base our hopes of immortality on the meaning of a Greek word (αἰώνιος), which word has been applied to the doors of a Temple no longer in existence.

Oh! no; the guarantee that the life imparted by Christ will be an unending one, and that the glory that will accrue to us as redeemed souls will be an everlasting glory, rests upon a far securer basis than that. It is founded on the fact that man by Christ is brought into close and vital relationship with God. Associated with Him, he is associated with a Being who possesses an *indestructible* life—a God-life; and this indestructible life is imparted, and will be imparted, to every member of the human race as soon as he is, or shall be, united to Him.

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"As in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive," wrote the Apostle. Yes, and the "all" who shall be made alive by the living Christ, shall never cease to live, because the eternal Son of God from whom they shall draw their life is the deathless Head of the race.

So, then, not upon the words αἰὼν and αἰώνιος, so perplexingly and arbitrarily treated by translators, do we ground our hope of immortality, but upon such declarations in the Word of God as these:

"Because *I* live, *ye* shall live also" (John xiv. 19);

"Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3);

"In Him was life . . . and of *His fulness have we all received*" (John i. 4, 16);

"As I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he *shall live by Me*" (John vi. 57);

"I am come that they might have life, and *that they might have it above measure*" (John x. 10);

"The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me *free from the law of sin and death*" (Rom. viii. 2).

And, surely, the eternal fitness of things suggests that the everlastingness of the saved must be, and will be, the grand consummation of the great All-Father's "Purpose of the ages"!

THE END.