

A CURE FOR INFIDELITY.

TO HELL AND BACK! WHO ARE THERE.

Hope for the Recovery of Many of Them.

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A LARGE audience listened attentively yesterday in Allegheny to Pastor C. T. Russell's anti-infidelity discourse, entitled, "To Hell and Back. Who are There? Hope for the Return of Many of Them." He said:

Although the caption of my topic has a sensational aspect, I assure you all that it is not really so, that I shall treat the subject most earnestly and prove every assertion most conclusively from the Scriptures. God forbid that I should treat lightly a subject which has caused more distress, more heartache, more sorrow of mind, than all other subjects combined—caused these distresses to the very best among the Lord's followers. I care not to specially address those who are so selfish as to regard merely themselves and their family connections, and who are quite content that all others might suffer an eternity of torture so long as their friends are saved from such a calamity. I would reach especially those whose hearts and heads have been troubled almost to the extent of distraction over this subject—those who have wept and prayed as they remembered sons and daughters, friends and neighbors, parents and children, who died without having accepted Jesus as their Savior, without having taken upon them the only name given under heaven and among men whereby we must be saved.—Acts 4:12.

I hold that it is the best of God's people, the tenderest of heart, the most Christlike, who have had trouble with the question of eternal torment. I know how to sympathize with them because once I had similar distress of mind, and, like others, was obliged to say, "If I believe this doctrine and meditate upon it, it will surely make me crazy, as it has done hundreds and thousands of others." Such loving hearts have found a palliation but not a relief, not a satisfaction, in the thought that somehow, perhaps, somewhere, at some time, God's character would be cleared of the dreadful stain cast upon it by this doctrine, which we believed to be the teaching of God's book, the Bible.

I, too, once so believed and feared, and was ashamed of my God because of the injustice, lovelessness, devilishness implied in the theory taught me from infancy, that God, knowing the end from the beginning, had created our race under conditions as we see them; that He provided a great place called hell for their torture, and created a

corps of fireproof devils to attend to the matter, and provided also fuel enough to perpetuate the torture to all eternity. I felt thankful indeed to realize myself an object of divine mercy and favor, but my heart went out for the thousands of millions of human beings of civilized as well as heathen lands who had gone down into death utterly ignorant of "the only name given under heaven and among men whereby we must be saved"—"neither is there salvation in any other."

THE PASTOR'S EARLY EFFORTS

That I thoroughly believed this doctrine you may know when I tell you that at 17 years of age it was my custom to go out at night to chalk up words of warning in conspicuous places, that peradventure I might save some from the awful doom. And the while I wondered why God, who is of infinite power, did not blazon forth some words of warning upon the sky or cause angel trumpeters to announce positively and forcefully the doom to which the world in general was, I supposed, hastening. I was an admirer of the great Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, and esteemed him very highly for the honesty and candor which made his sermons so dreadfully hot, believing as I did that he was an exceptionally honest minister, and that others who believed similarly were grossly derelict of duty in not preaching hell more strenuously.

But I am here this afternoon, dear friends, to explain to you how in great mercy God opened the eyes of my understanding to see that the doctrine of eternal torment is not the teaching of the Bible, but on the contrary is a misrepresentation and blasphemy of the great and holy name. I am here to prove to you that the doctrine of eternal torment has come down to us from the "dark ages" in the hymns and catechisms and creeds, and that it is not only contrary to reason, but also contrary to the word of God.

Demon gods—vicious, spiteful, merciless—are known to all the heathen peoples. The Bible alone of all religious books teaches a God of love, sympathy and compassion, sympathetic with His creatures and desirous of rescuing them from their fallen estate. It was during the dark ages when the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love, became so nearly extinct even among Christians, that they

What do you think of this?

thought it perfectly proper and pleasing to God that they should tear one another limb from limb on the rack, that they should burn one another at the stake, that they should torture one another with thumbscrews and fill each other's mouths and ears with molten lead—it was at that time and by those of our deluded ancestors that this doctrine of eternal torment was torn from heathendom and engrafted upon the teachings of Jesus and His apostles.

We find indeed that the inquisitors of old justified the tortures of their fellow creatures with the very claim that they were thus copying God, and that their victims would receive still worse treatment when after death they should come into the hands of the Almighty. People will copy their conceptions of the Creator—how necessary, therefore, that we have the right conception, that we worship a God who is greater in Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power than ourselves. With such a terrible misconception of God the wonder is that Christianity made any progress at all. The only offset has probably been the thought of the love of Jesus and of His willingness and endeavor to rescue men.

INFIDELITY FOSTERED BY HELL THEORY

Intelligent people everywhere are very generally discarding the doctrine of eternal torment as being contrary to reason. But, alas, thinking that it is taught in the Scriptures these same intelligent people are rejecting the Bible, losing faith in it, drifting into unbelief in general—into Christian Science, spiritism, theosophy, etc.

If this afternoon I shall succeed in proving to you that the Scriptures do not teach this unreasonable theory of eternal torment, which is supposed to be built upon its statements—if on the contrary I shall show you that the "hell" of the Scriptures is logical and reasonable, I shall hope to have planted the feet of some upon firmer ground, to have re-established to some extent faith in the Bible as the Word of God and to have prepared your minds to see that as this error is not of Scriptural foundation, so likewise all the unreasonable teachings of the creeds of the dark ages are without foundation in the Bible. I hope thus to lay a foundation for your future growth in knowledge and in grace. I could not possibly ask for you of the Lord a greater blessing than has already come to my own heart and life through better knowledge of the Scriptures along these lines.

I will endeavor to give you Scriptural proofs that the hell of the Bible is not a place of torment at all; that the word refers to the state of death, the tomb, the grave. I shall show you that the Scriptures teach that both the good and the bad alike go to the Biblical hell, the tomb, and that their hope of salvation is a resurrection hope—to

be delivered from the power of death by the Redeemer in God's due time.

THE HELL OF THE BIBLE

You are all aware that the Old Testament portion of the Bible was written in the Hebrew language and the New Testament in the Greek. We will commence with the Old Testament. We find that the word "hell" everywhere throughout the Old Testament is a translation of the Hebrew word "sheol," which occurs altogether 66 times, and is translated three different ways in our common version; 32 times grave, 31 times hell and three times pit. It should have been translated grave or pit or tomb in every instance. Indeed, in two instances, where it is rendered hell in the common version, the marginal reading says, "Hebrew, the grave."

One of these is Jonah 2:2. Jonah is represented as telling how he prayed to God while he was in the belly of the great fish. He was buried alive, entombed. Our common version reads, "Out of the belly of hell cried I;" the literal meaning is, "Out of the grave-belly I prayed." Adding these two instances to the last we would have grave 34 times, pit three times and hell 29 times, or the word is erroneously rendered 29 times out of 66. I shall not weary you by giving you all of these 66 passages, nor is this necessary, for we have a free pamphlet to which you are all welcome on request.* It takes up every text in which the word hell occurs, from Genesis to Revelation, and every passage which in any sense of the word appears to teach an eternity of torture. It analyzes these with their context and shows what they do and what they do not mean. It will convince any fair-minded man who will give it careful reading.

In passing I remark that much of the difficulty on this subject has arisen from careless handling of the word of God, adding to its statements in our minds if not in our words. For instance, when we read in the Bible, "All the wicked shall God destroy." (Psalm 145:20,) we unwittingly said to ourselves, "Destroy must mean preserve, preserve in fire, preserve in torment, preserve with devils eternally." Thus we distorted the word of God to our own injury as well as to the injury of others. Similarly the word "die," when we read in the Scriptures, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," (Ezekiel 18:20), we perverted the word of God as we would not think of perverting any other writings and said, "Die must here mean live, live in torment eternally with devils in suffering." Similarly the word perish; on reading in the Scriptures that the "wicked shall perish" (Psalm 37:20), we turned the language upside down and said, "Perish means preserve." Thus our confusion continued; we were blinded by the Ad-

*Supplied free on postal card application to us. Ask for "Free Pamphlet on Hell."

versary on the lines on which he has blinded the entire heathen world, hindering the glorious light of the goodness of God from shining more and more into the hearts of men.—2 Corinthians 4:4.

GRAY HAIRS IN HELL

The first occurrence of the word sheol is in connection with the patriarch Jacob and his 12 sons. His two youngest sons, nobler than their brethren, were most beloved by Jacob. Joseph, his favorite, clothed in his handsome coat of many colors, was sent to his brethren, who were pasturing the sheep at a distance from home, to take them delicacies and bring back word of their welfare. The brethren, moved with envy, first thought to kill him, and subsequently sold him to the Ishmaelites, who in turn sold him to the Egyptians, in whose land under God's providential care he in after years became ruler next to the king. Meantime the brethren took the peculiar coat of many colors, bedraggled it in the blood of a goat and in the dust, and sent it home to Jacob, inquiring if he recognized it. He answered, Alas, it is Joseph's coat; wild beasts have devoured him. I will go down to sheol to my son mourning. (Gen. 37:35.) What did he mean? Did he mean by sheol a place of fire and torment? Did he believe that Joseph, his best son, had gone there, and that he, Jacob, also expected to go to that place? No, we answer. He meant that evidently Joseph was dead, and that he would mourn for him the remainder of his life, until he also should go into the state of death, into sheol, into hell.

The second occurrence of the word is a little further on in the same narrative. The brethren had been to Egypt to buy corn, because of famine in Canaan. It was necessary that they should go for more, but they explained to Jacob that the Governor, whom they knew not was Joseph, had required of them that if they came again they must bring with them Benjamin, their brother, the one whom Jacob now specially loved. Jacob protested, but finding that there was no escape he finally told them to take Benjamin, but told them also that if they did not bring him back alive and safe they would bring down his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave, sheol. Jacob evidently meant not that he would go to a place of eternal torment if Benjamin did not return, but that a failure to bring Benjamin back would hasten his death through sorrow. Does any sane person have any doubt as to the meaning of sheol in these instances, the first two occurrences in the Bible? No! you have no doubt, nor reason for any. And the word has the same meaning exactly in its every occurrence throughout the Scriptures, as you will see when you read carefully our free pamphlet.

HELL IN OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

Just a word in defence of the translators of our common version, English Bible. All living lan-

guages are subject to variation in meaning, and this seems to have been particularly true of the English: To illustrate, the word hell at one time meant the grave in the English language. But gradually this meaning has been dropped out of the word, until now it is never used in ordinary conversation. As illustrations of its use in bygone times we find in ancient English literature reference to the helling of a house, meaning not the burning of the house nor the torturing of it, but the thatching of it. Similarly we read of the farmer helling his potatoes, the meaning of the expression being not the roasting of potatoes nor the torturing of them, but the putting of them into a pit for preservation from the frosts, etc., until needed for use.

As for the translators of the revised version they seem to have been too honest to use the word hell as a translation for sheol and hades, but not honest enough to tell the people the truth on the subject. Hence you will find that in the revised version no translation at all is given, but the Hebrew word sheol in the Old Testament and the Greek word hades in the New Testament are used instead of the word hell when grave is not used. The translators evidently anticipated what occurred, namely, that the public, knowing nothing about Greek and Hebrew, would esteem this as an attempt to do away with hell, whereas the real animus of the translators was to perpetuate it. The translators knew that the public would say that hell was just as hot and just as real although now called sheol and hades. They knew that the public would never suspect that the wool was being pulled over the eyes of their understanding to hinder them from seeing the plain teaching of God's Word, that sheol means the grave or tomb or death state—nothing more, nothing less.

PRAYING TO GO TO HELL

Job, one of the most prominent characters of the Old Testament, one especially mentioned as a favorite with God, made a most eloquent prayer that he might go to hell, to sheol, to the tomb. And no wonder, poor man, for surely in his case was fulfilled the statement, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." (Psa. 34:19.) Unwilling to suicide, he craved relief from his sorrows and troubles in death. Refresh your memory respecting his troubles: The Almighty, while approving him, permitted the Adversary to vex him sorely, to the extent of taking away every earthly possession except the mere thread of life itself. His children, gathered for a birthday party, were killed by a cyclone; later his flocks and herds and property in general were destroyed. Finally his health gave way, and he broke out in boils from head to foot.

To add to his sorrows his friends and neighbors, instead of consoling him, turned against him and declared that he had been acting the part of a hypocrite, and that God was now exposing him—

showing His disapproval. In vain did Job protest his innocence and appeal to the Lord, until subsequently the Lord gave His verdict in favor of Job against the friends. But as though all these trials and difficulties were not enough for the poor man, to cap the climax his wife exclaimed, "You are accursed of God and should die." Then poor Job poured forth his prayer for death, saying: "O, that Thou wouldst hide me in sheol until Thy wrath be past!"—Job 14:13.

Does anyone of sane mind think that poor Job, after passing through all these afflictions, was in these words praying to God to cast him into a place of eternal torment, to be the sport of devils? No; such a supposition would be irrational. Very evidently Job meant that, if God were willing, he would be glad to die, to go into sheol, the tomb, the state of death.

SHEOL NOT DESIRABLE FOREVER

But Job had a hope for the future—he was not desirous of being annihilated; hence his prayer is, "O, that Thou wouldst hide me in sheol [hell, the tomb] until Thy wrath be past." The "wrath" here mentioned is elsewhere called the "curse." Back in Eden, when our first parents were perfect, by disobedience they brought upon themselves the divine sentence of "curse" or "wrath"—the death sentence, which includes all mental, moral and physical degeneracy known to our race, and which has been afflicting us as a whole for now 6,000 years. Job was looking beyond the period of the permission of this "curse" or "wrath" to a time future, when the "curse" would be removed, and instead of it a "blessing" would come to every member of the race, himself included. As a prophet he recorded his hope of a coming Redeemer: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth." Through this Redeemer's work he realized that the "curse" would be abolished, and his prayer to be hid in sheol, the grave, the tomb, was merely until the "curse" the "wrath" would be over—until the great blessing time, the millennial reign, should begin. His prayer continuing shows his hope of a resurrection, "that Thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me." Then particularly referring to the resurrection, he says, "Thou shalt call and I will answer Thee, for Thou wilt have regard unto the work of Thy hands."—Job 14:15.

We remember also the Prophet David's prayer for deliverance from death. He said, "O, save me for Thy mercies' sake. For in death there is no remembrance of Thee; in sheol [hell, the tomb] who shall give Thee thanks?" (Psa. 6:4-5.) We remember the good King Hezekiah also, whose life was spared 15 years in answer to prayer. In thanking the Lord for this he said, "Death cannot celebrate Thee; sheol [the tomb] cannot praise Thee."—Isa. 38:18.

QUOTE THE ENTIRE PROVERB

One of Solomon's inspired proverbs much quoted is, "Do with thy might what thy hand findeth to do," but very rarely do we ever hear the remainder of the quotation, namely, "because there is neither wisdom nor knowledge nor device in sheol [the grave] whither thou goest." (Eccl. 9:10.) How reasonable is this statement, rightly understood—there is no wisdom nor knowledge nor work in the hell to which the good and the bad, all mankind, have been going for the past six thousand years. The dead are really dead, extinct, except as God has provided for them a resurrection from the dead, a reawakening to sentient being. The very moment of their awakening will seem to each to be the next moment to the one in which he died, because there is no wisdom or knowledge in the tomb, in sheol, in hell. How wonderful the goodness and mercy of God will appear to the great mass of our race when they are awakened from the sleep of death and learn for the first time of the goodness of God, that instead of having provided devils and torture, He has provided through His Son an opening of the prison doors of the tomb and a setting at liberty of the captives of death, providing also for their future uplift out of sin and degradation under the favorable conditions of the millennial kingdom of God's dear Son.

SHEOL IS IN THE GREEK HADES

We now call your attention to the fact that the word sheol in the Old Testament, which we have shown means merely tomb, the death state, is the exact equivalent of the word hades in the New Testament Greek, which likewise means the tomb, the state of death. For instance, in Psalm 16:10 we read, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol" (hell, the tomb), and we find St. Peter quoting this on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:27-31), "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades," hell, the grave. St. Peter proceeds to explain that David spoke this not respecting his own soul, but the soul of Jesus, and thus foretold our Lord's resurrection from the dead on the third day. How simple, how plain the entire matter is from this the Scriptural standpoint.

Take another illustration: the prophet Hosea declares, "I will ransom them from the power of sheol [the grave, hell], I will redeem them from death: O death where is thy sting? O sheol [grave, hell], I will be thy destruction." The Apostle Paul quotes this passage in his great discourse on the resurrection, saying, "O death where is thy sting? O hades [grave], where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55.) What could be simpler, plainer? All that we need is to get the smoke of the dark ages out of the eyes of our understanding, and to allow the true light from the inspired Word of God to speak to us plainly and be its own interpreter.

You must not fail to read this!