

No. 333.

Immortality Not Conditional;

OR,

IS IT THE WILL OF GOD THAT SINNERS DE-
PARTING THIS LIFE IMPENITENT SHALL
CONTINUE TO SUFFER ENDLESSLY?

BY THE

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PHILADELPHIA :
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
No. 1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

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IMMORTALITY NOT CONDITIONAL.

Is it the will of God that sinners dying impenitent shall suffer endlessly?

1. This is a question of infinite importance to all of us. If it be true that God, who holds us in his hands, intends that all who leave this world impenitent shall suffer for ever, all men need to know it. Our safety requires that we should know as soon as possible the naked truth. Those who believe that the Bible is the only infallible source of information to us on this question must insist upon preaching the affirmative answer out of pure love for human souls. They know that the WORD OF GOD teaches it clearly. To deceive men as to the extent of the danger to which they are exposed is the height of cruelty. To teach them that they shall cease to exist as the brutes do, while God says they shall eternally suffer with the devil and his angels, is to remove one of the barriers God has graciously set up to hold men back from sinning.

2. The question is *not*, "Is man immortal?" False teachers put it so in order to deceive the people. The question as to the natural immortality

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of man, either of his soul or of his body, is a philosophical, not a religious, one, and its answer is uncertain. The only really practical question is, "Is it the WILL OF GOD that those who die impenitent shall suffer without end?" No matter what may be the truth as to the natural mortality of man, if God wills any one to suffer for ever his will shall be done.

3. The question is *not*, "What appears to be reasonable in the judgment of men?" Our reason is not competent to judge. We are not fully informed as to all the bearings of the case. We are members of a vast moral empire, of which God is absolute Sovereign and Judge. This government includes many varieties of subjects, as angels and men, and perhaps others, existing in various provinces through measureless ages. Who can comprehend the whole problem of this government? "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" Moreover, man's moral nature is corrupt. The malefactor is never the adequate judge of what justice demands in his own case. God is the party sinned against. His will is absolute, and his judgment final. The only practical question is, "What has God declared to be his purpose in this matter in his WRITTEN WORD?"

4. The presumption is ten thousand to one that the Bible does teach that God wills the finally impenitent to suffer endlessly. The Old Testament was in the hands of the Jews centuries before Christ

came. They uniformly understood these scriptures as teaching that the wicked are to suffer for ever (Josephus, *Wars*, ii. 8, 11; *Antiq.*, book 18, ch. 1, § 3; Philo Judæus, i., p. 65 and p. 1391). The New Testament has been in the hands of Christians for eighteen hundred years. All the great Church fathers, Reformers and historical churches with their recensions and translations of the sacred Scriptures, their liturgies and hymns, all the great evangelical theologians and biblical scholars with their grammars, dictionaries, commentaries and classical systems, have uniformly agreed in their understanding of the teaching of the sacred Scriptures as to the endlessness of the future sufferings of all who finally reject Christ. Differing in their interpretation of Scripture on many other points on which its teaching is less plain, they are all constrained to agree on this point. And this has come to pass against the universal and impetuous current of human fears and sympathies.

The only exception to this unanimous judgment of the Christian Church of all ages consists of a relatively few eccentric men, who, hating this doctrine, have beforehand determined that the Bible *cannot* teach it, and so easily persuade themselves afterward that it does not.

5. All human thought and language, in and out of the Bible, is based upon metaphor—*i. e.*, a material image is used to represent a spiritual idea.

"The body is developed before the mind. We

first see and hear and feel, and then think, imagine and infer. No one has any doubt that such words as 'understand,' 'imagine,' 'apprehend,' 'comprehend,' 'infer,' 'recollect,' 'aspire,' 'inspire,' etc., although originally drawn from the actions of the body, in present use express actions of the mind. The etymological and literal sense is *not* the natural and true sense. The 'breath' is the physical condition and sign of life of the body, and hence in all languages 'spirit' (from the Latin *spiro*, 'to breathe') expresses the personal immaterial essence which is the real source of that life, and which is the real man who thinks and feels and wills. 'Heart' stands continually for affection or feeling, and 'brain' for intellect. 'Stiff-necked' is obstinate. To be keen, sharp, dull, heavy, to have a long head, a thick skin, a heavy hand, a sharp tongue, a foul mouth, are designations of intellectual and moral traits. A man is broken down with sorrow, crushed with calamity, lacerated with grief, rent with anguish, melted with emotion, when every faculty of his body is sound and whole. He is prostrated with fear, is irretrievably fallen, is ruined, not in body, but in soul, when yet the substance and all the powers of his soul remain untouched. He is eaten up by avarice, devoured by ambition, consumed with lust, sunk in vice, drowned in sorrow, burned up with fierce passion.

"It would be idle to explain to any man that in the phrases above cited the words 'crushed,' 'ruined,'

'consumed,' 'devoured,' 'eaten up,' 'drowned,' do not imply extinction of being."*

6. The words "life" and "death" do *not*, either in the Bible or out of it, generally mean existence or non-existence. "Life" is a condition of being distinguished by the possession of certain attributes and the exercise of certain functions. Death is the negation of life, and is a condition distinguished by the absence of vital attributes and the non-exercise of vital functions. A dead tree continues to exist just as truly as a living one, but is in a different condition. So we speak of a dead capital and of a lifeless poem; of a live man and of an orator or a publication falling dead; of lifeless wine or yeast.* So, in the Bible, "life" does *not* mean existence, but a mode of well-being and of activity: "Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened *except it die*" (1 Cor. xv. 36); "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground *and die*, it abideth alone, but if *it die*, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). Abraham's body "*now dead*" and "*the deadness* of Sarah's womb" express merely the loss of the generative function (Rom. iv. 19). So we read of "dead works" and of "dead faith" (James ii. 17, 20, 26; Heb. vi. 1; ix. 14); "Follow me and let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. viii. 22); "I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that

* *Life and Death Eternal*, by President S. C. Bartlett, D. D. (American Tract Society)—the best book on this subject, to which the writer of this tract is much indebted.

thou livest, and art dead" (Rev. iii. 11); "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1-6); "And you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. ii. 13); "For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3); "But she that *liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth*" (1 Tim. v. 6); "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me *shall never die*;" "Verily I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he *shall never see death*" (John viii. 51 and xi. 26); "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, *ye have no life in you*. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood *hath eternal life*" (John vi. 47-54); "For I through the law am *dead to the law*, that I might *live unto God*. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless *I live*; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and *the life which I now live* in the flesh; I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. ii. 19, 20); "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise *from the dead*, and Christ shall give thee *life*" (Eph. v. 14); "And this is *life eternal*, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3; Rom. vi. 13; Luke xii. 4-6); "The beggar (Lazarus) *died*, and was carried by angels to Abraham's

bosom; the rich man also *died and was buried*, and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke xvi. 19-31).

7. The words "destruction," "perdition," "burning," etc., used to express the doom of the wicked, do *not* signify cessation of being, but always a continued condition of privation or of suffering. A sinner alienated from God is already "lost," "destroyed," "ruined," but he has *not* ceased to exist: "O Israel, thou hast *destroyed* thyself: but in me is thy help" (Hos. xiii. 9); "My people are *destroyed* for lack of knowledge" (Hos. iv. 6); "Mine eye is *consumed* with grief, my bones are *consumed*" (Ps. xxxix. 10); "They (the wicked) are utterly consumed with terrors" (Ps. lxxiii. 19); "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up" (consumed me) (Ps. lxix. 9); "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. v. 15).

8. Is it reasonable, is it right, to insist that the common usage of human language, alike within and without the Scriptures, shall be reversed, when applied to the future of impenitent sinners, for no other reason than that we are *unwilling to receive the testimony of God* on this subject?

IN EVERY WAY THAT HUMAN LANGUAGE ADMITS, THE WORD OF GOD ASSERTS THAT ALL WHO DIE UNRECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH HIS SON SHALL CONTINUE TO SUFFER WITHOUT END.

9. Death is *not* final. The death of the body does *not* exhaust the punishment to which sinners are exposed: "It is appointed to all men once to die, and *after this* the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27); "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which, *after he hath killed*, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear him" (Luke xii. 4, 5).

10. The WORD OF GOD in many ways *implies* the continued existence and suffering of the finally impenitent. They are to continue until they have paid "the uttermost farthing." Christ does not speak of their ceasing to be, but of their "coming out thence" (Matt. v. 25, 26). "And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So *likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if,*" etc. (Matt. xviii. 34, 35). This implies continued suffering until the strict rigor of justice is satisfied, and after that, if it could be satisfied within the limits of finite duration, the passage implies release from prison, certainly not annihilation.

The same is implied by what the Saviour says as to the sin against the Holy Ghost: "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. xii. 31, 32). "This world" and "the world to come" cover all present and

future duration. If sinners are to "cease to exist" in the future, what is the meaning of declaring that their guilt continues to shut them out from forgiveness for ever?

11. There is to be in the future a general resurrection and judgment of the wicked as well as of the good. A man who believes Christ cannot doubt this fact: "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John v. 28, 29; Rev. xx. 11-15; Acts xxiv. 15); "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10, 11; Matt. xxv. 31-46).

All this is plain and consistent if the common faith of the Church is true. If the souls of the wicked are ever continuing to exist under penal suffering, through the crisis of death and through the intermediate state, then the resurrection of their bodies and the judgment of their entire persons, and their condemnation to a part with the ceaseless and endless sufferings of the devil and his angels, are consistent. But on the theory of those who hold death to be extinction of existence, why are the then non-existent sinners brought back into existence for the bare purpose of being put out of exist-

ence again? How can a non-existent be brought back to existence? In what sense will the non-existent be the same person with the old existent? Is not "the foolishness of God" wiser than the wisdom of *such* men as these?

12. Wicked men are to share the fate of lost angels: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand; Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matt. xxv. 41). The devils sinned before Adam fell. Ever since, for many thousand years, they have been "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). They are punished for sin, yet have for many thousand years not ceased to exist. Many of them, doing their evil work among men on earth, prove their conscious activity under a state of penalty (Matt. xii. 43). Moreover, Satan is to be bound (during the millennium) for a thousand years, and cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up and sealed "that he may deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled," and after that he shall be loosed to do his old work for a little season (Rev. xx. 2, 3). *Afterward* "the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and *shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*" (Rev. xx. 10). No possible language can more explicitly declare that the devil shall be *tormented* (*βασανισθήσονται*), *kept in con-*

scious suffering, ceaseless and endless. And into the same "*everlasting fire prepared for the devil*" are wicked men to be sent from the left hand of the Judge (Matt. xxv. 41).

13. Precisely the same *ceaseless and endless suffering* is declared to be the portion of those men who "worship the beast and receive his mark in their foreheads or in their hands:" "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever*. And they shall have *no rest day nor night*" (Rev. xiv. 10, 11).

14. The WORD OF GOD explicitly declares that the sufferings of the wicked shall have no end. In the *first* place, it is said that their tortures *shall not cease*: "This fire is not quenched and shall never be quenched," and "their worm dieth not" (Mark ix. 44-46), because "the fire is unquenchable" (Matt. iii. 12); "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever," and they "have no rest day nor night" (Rev. xiv. 11).

In the *second* place, the WORD OF GOD affirms that this suffering shall *last, endure, for ever*: "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. viii. 12). Jude, in verse 13, says the

wicked and "wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (*εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*). And Peter (2 Pet. ii. 17) says, "To whom the mist of darkness is reserved *for ever*." The fire (which is the metaphor expressing their torment) is declared to be "everlasting," and the "punishment" is declared to be "everlasting" (Matt. xxv. 41-46). "Hell-fire" is "everlasting fire" (Matt. xviii. 8, 9), and the wicked are declared "to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). And "eternal judgment" comes *after* the resurrection of the dead (Heb. vi. 1, 2). Those who obey not the gospel "shall be punished with an everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. i. 9): "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. xii. 2).

It is never said that the "effects" of this punishment are everlasting, but that the "condemnation," "the punishment," the "contempt," the "torment," the "fire," the "worm," the "chains," are everlasting. *What is the sense of "everlasting," "torment," "chains," "fire," "worm," of "no rest day nor night for ever," if the sinner himself has ceased to exist?*

15. The Greek words and phrases in the New Testament (*αἰών, αἰώνιος, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, αἰδιος*) translated "eternal," "everlasting," "for ever and ever," and applied to the never-ceasing sufferings of the lost, mean in the

usage of the Greek language precisely what their English representatives mean in the usage of the English language. No honest man not a fool can mistake their meaning in either language. They are, moreover, the very words used in the New Testament to express the eternal duration of God (Rom. i. 20; 1 Tim. i. 17; Rom. xvi. 26; Heb. ix. 14), and the endless reign of Christ (Rev. i. 18), and the unending duration of the happiness of the redeemed (Matt. xix. 29; xxv. 46; Mark x. 30; John iii. 15; vi. 57, 58; Rom. ii. 7; 2 Cor. ix. 9), as well as the unending duration of the miseries of the lost.

They are never used in the Scriptures to express the sense of "finality," but, on the contrary, they are in every case used to express the idea of "unending continuance." The existence of God, the glory of God, the reign of Christ (Gal. i. 5; Eph. iii. 21; Rev. i. 18; iv. 9, 10; x. 6; xv. 7); the blessedness of the saints (Rev. xxii. 5), all continue for ever. So will the suffering of the impenitent continue for ever (Rev. xiv. 11; xix. 3; xx. 10). Eternity, when predicated of God, means existence without beginning and without end; eternity, when predicated of the life or the enjoyment of the creature, means that which is to continue without end. "To know God" is said to be "eternal life" (John xvii. 3), because it secures for the person knowing God such a union with him that he participates in the life of God, which is essentially eternal—*i. e.*, self-originant

in God and enduring without end both in God and in the man who participates in it.

That these terms express unending duration is also plain from the fact that they are opposed to the present life as passing away, ceasing to be (Luke xviii. 30), and are used as synonymous with ἀφθαρτος, *incorruptible*, immortal, that which never ceases to be (Rom. i. 23; 1 Tim. i. 17; 1 Cor. ix. 25; 1 Pet. i. 4), and with ἀκατάλυτος, *indissoluble*, and hence with endless, enduring for ever (Heb. vii. 16).

16. THE WORD OF GOD always sets forth the miseries of the wicked as contemporaneous with and equal in duration to the blessed existence of the redeemed. Christ teaches that the one endures contemporaneously with the other during the intermediate state after death and before the resurrection: "And the rich man died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes; being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and Abraham said, Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed" (Luke xvi. 19-31); "And these shall go away into everlasting (αἰώνιον) punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (αἰώνιον) (Matt. xxv. 46); the wicked "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever, and they shall have no rest day nor night" (Rev. xiv. 10, 11).

After the final judgment they are represented in

GOD'S WORD 'as continuing to exist contemporaneously within and without the heavenly city: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. xxii. 14, 15). Neither of these is a transient state *through* which men pass or *to* which they advance. Christ does *not* say that either the wicked or the righteous shall pass away *to* (πρός) everlasting punishment, nor *to* (πρός) eternal life; he says of each that they shall pass away *into* (εἰς) a punishment or into (εἰς) a life which are equally everlasting (αἰώνιον)—*i. e.*, duration without end.

17. THE WORD OF GOD clearly teaches that there are to be degrees in punishment, as there are in this world degrees of guilt: "That servant that knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (Luke xii. 47, 48); "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matt. xxiii. 14); "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matt. x. 15). There

can be no degrees in annihilation. *Degrees* of punishment necessarily imply *continued existence*.

18. All these representations of GOD'S WORD hang together consistently. The natural meaning of each agrees easily with all the rest. Together they make one whole. The conscious suffering condition of the devil and his angels through many thousand years past; their torment without rest day or night for ever and ever; the conscious existence of the souls of men during the intermediate state; the resurrection of the bodies and the judgment of all men; the condemnation of the wicked to endless suffering in the companionship of the devil and his angels,—all this is consistent.

But the view of the annihilationists, on the other hand, requires a taking of most of the terms employed in a non-natural sense, a perversion of the clear statements and evident intention of many passages of Scripture and the absolute rejection of others, and a resulting chain of inferences all of which are inconsistent with the WORD OF GOD, with one another and with the historic faith of the Church of Christ.

19. The real meaning of the WORD OF GOD on this subject is as clear as light and as certain as human language is capable of making any affirmation. The only honest and manly course open to us is either to accept and submit to its plain teaching on this subject or to reject its authority utterly on every subject. If it is the WORD OF GOD, it is

infallible on every subject; if it is not the WORD OF GOD, it is of no special authority whatsoever. Remember the solemn warning with which the sacred volume closes: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. For I testify unto every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues, that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book" (Rev. xxii. 16-19). Let false teachers BEWARE!

In this age of license is it not both madness and cruelty to hide the warnings and remove the restraints which God in his great mercy, as well as in his holy justice, has set up to hold men back from sin and endless ruin, and to urge them to repentance before it be for ever too late?

It was the "Lamb of God"—the tender and compassionate Saviour who gave himself to die for the sins of men—who taught the most frequent and the most terrible lessons on this subject. He addressed the common people, and they must have understood him in the common meaning of his terms as then understood. Josephus (*Antiq.*, xviii., ch. 2; *Bell. Jud.*, ii., ch. 7) says that the Pharisees of that day taught that the souls of the wicked after death were consigned to an everlasting impris-

onment (*εἰργμὸν αἰδίου*) and were to be punished with eternal vengeance (*αἰδίου τιμωρία καὶ ἀλέξεσθαι*). Christ knew well, therefore, what they would understand by his frequently repeated "Gehenna of fire" (Matt. v. 22, 29, 30; x. 28; xviii. 9; xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; Luke xii. 5).

