

15. American Conditionalists Begin to Appear

www.CreationismOnline.com

-I. Bird's-eye Preview of Far-flung Nineteenth-Century Awakening

It will be profitable to take a brief preview of coming spokesmen, particularly in the American line of Conditionalists, that we may grasp their sequence and relationships.

Just after the turn of the century a religious body arose, called the Christian Connection, that as a body rejected the inherent-immortality-of-the-soul position, along with its corollary the Eternal Torment of the wicked, maintaining that they would be ultimately annihilated. This was a significant group development.

Then in 1808 Elias Smith, in what he claimed to be the "first religious newspaper published to the world"—The Herald of Gospel Liberty—issued at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, maintained that immortality is God's free gift, bestowed on the righteous only, through Christ at the resurrection, that all the wicked would utterly perish and completely die in the second death. Meantime, Episcopalian bishop William White, of Pennsylvania, declared man mortal, not immortal.

Next, in 1828 Protestant Episcopal rector John Sellon, of Canandaigua, New York, issued a 106-page work maintaining the final extinction of the wicked. And in the same year Dr. Aaron Bancroft, Unitarian minister of Worcester, Massachusetts, published a volume of sermons advocating endless life alone through Christ. In 1829-1834 Walter Balfour, of Charlestown, Massachusetts, published a series of books advocating the unconscious sleep of the dead. [1] And there were others. Discussions on Conditionalism now broke out in various places.

Note one particular sequence.

1. FROM GREW TO STORRS TO ADVENT MOVEMENT.—

In the early thirties Deacon Henry Grew, of Rhode Island and Philadelphia, issued two important pamphlets on the subject.

Then George Storrs, Methodist minister of New York, had his attention called to the subject by reading Grew. After thoroughly investigating the question, Storrs completely adopted the doctrine of the mortality of man and the postulate of the destruction of the wicked—in other words, the standard Conditionalist position. In 1841 he issued his first treatise thereon, and in 1842 began to publish his famous Six Sermons, which were thereafter extensively circulated.

In 1843 Storrs started the Bible Examiner, soon devoted largely to teaching Conditionalism. Meanwhile, in 1842 Congregationalist Calvin French published a 54-page pamphlet at Boston contending for immortality only in Christ, the sleep of the dead, and the final annihilation of the wicked. And numerous individuals among the Disciples, or Campbellites, likewise adopted Conditionalism, though not the denomination as a whole. These developments in the New World as well as the Old will each be noted in their chronological sequence.

(Following 1844 the two main divisions of the Adventists embraced the doctrine of the mortality of the soul, the unconscious state of the dead, and the ultimate and utter destruction of the wicked. Those Adventists who did not adopt these views separated into splinter bodies that have dwindled to small proportions and are scarcely in the fraternity of Adventists.)

1 See Abbot, The Literature of the Doctrine of a Future Life, under Balfour.

2. PROMINENT ACCESSIONS FOLLOW MID-CENTURY.—

But back in 1828 at Buffalo, New York, came Baptist minister Jacob Blain with a 117-page book entitled Death Not Life.

It had a large sale and numerous editions. And Horace L. Hastings, of Boston, Massachusetts, issued several extensively circulated pamphlets on Conditionalism—to mention but two.

Next appeared Prof. C. F. Hudson, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, with two very important volumes, Debt and Grace, as related to the Doctrine of a Future Life, and Christ Our Life: the Scriptural Argument for Immortality Through Christ Alone. These made a deep impression in religious circles.

In 1863 Professor Hudson reported forty prominent clergymen in the larger denominations—just among his personal acquaintances—who held the Conditionalist view. And by 1860 there were at least one thousand preachers in the United States

alone now pleading the cause of Conditionalism. Prominent among men of all faiths advocating the doctrine were Dr. Charles L. Ives, of Yale, author of *Bible Doctrine of the Soul*; J. H. Pettingell, author of several able works, such as *The Unspeakable Gift* and *The Life Everlasting*. Then the names come so fast that one can scarcely keep up with them—such as J. H. Whitmore, with *Immortality*; Uriah Smith, with *Man's Nature and Destiny*; D. M. Canright, *The History of the Soul* (1870).

Writers of other Adventist bodies who embraced the Conditionalist view were John Couch, O. R. Fassett, Edwin Burnham, Albion Ross, A. A. Phelps, H. F. Carpenter, and C. R. Hendricks. And a similar list—James White, J. N. Andrews, J. H. Waggoner, J. N. Loughborough, George I. Butler, S. N. Haskell, and W. H. Littlejohn—is to be found among the early Seventh-day Adventist Conditionalist exponents. By this time there were various journals published by these groups advocating Conditionalism—*Bible Examiner*, *World's Crisis*, *Review and Herald*, *Signs of the Times*, *The Restitution*, *Herald of Life*, et cetera.

3. 1877 MARKS THE NEW PERIOD OF EXTENSION.—

An other interesting international development occurred in the fall and winter of 1877 as Conditionalism was brought prominently before the religious world on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the United States a few previously "orthodox" ministers in different parts of New England publicly rejected the doctrine of immortality of the soul, and especially the Eternal Torment of the lost. This created a tremendous stir in religious circles.

Both the religious and the secular press took up the cudgels, and expatiated upon the question, calling for a general discussion of the subject by the clergy. As a result ministers all over the United States preached simultaneously, on one Sunday, on the question of Hell. In New York City alone it was stated that one hundred ministers preached on that subject, pro and con.

Thus the issue came more and more to the forefront. Symposiums appeared in newspaper, periodical, and book form. Debates were common.

And all this, be it noted, was independent of, but simultaneous with, an even greater awakening in Britain, which is separately handled, with its essential details. 1877 was not only a notable year for fomenting interest and fostering investigation over here, but—though not so extensively or intensively—there was widespread discussion in Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Africa, Australia, India, Japan, Jamaica, and even China.

Thus independent studies were conducted, or at least repercussions were heard, in far-flung lands. It was like a wave rolling over the surface of the globe. We will now trace the various American developments, beginning with Bishop William White, about 1800. Watch for the geographical spread and the denominations involved. These will be important.

II. Anonymous (1795) Precursor of Conditionalists to Follow

Just before we cross the threshold of the nineteenth century we must pause long enough to note an anonymous 141- page work published in New York in 1795, entitled *Observation 4th. Arguments in Support of the Opinion, that the Soul is Inactive and Unconscious from Death to the Resurrection, derived from Scripture*. [2] It is consequently a fact that Conditionalism had made its appearance in America just before 1800. This treatise was a precursor of a line of vigorous Conditionalists identified by name, and very vocal, appearing as soon as we enter the new century. It would be interesting to know the identity of this unnamed harbinger of the new day.

2 Ibid., no. 2629.

III. Bishop White—Mankind Universally Mortal Through Adam

We now come to WILLIAM WHITE (1747-1836), one of the organizers of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, and first bishop of Pennsylvania. He was graduated from the College (later University) of Philadelphia in 1765, and completed his theological studies in 1770. Going to England, he was ordained an Anglican clergyman in London in 1773, and upon returning became rector of the united parishes of Christ's Church and St. Peters, Philadelphia, which post he held until death.

1. OBTAINED EPISCOPAL ORDERS FOR DAUGHTER AMERICAN CHURCH.—

White played a central part in founding the Protestant Episcopal Church of America. In fact the movement for its organization was started in White's study, where the Episcopal clergy of Philadelphia met to draw up plans for a General Convention. White was designated first bishop of Pennsylvania in 1786, being consecrated in London by the archbishops of Canterbury and York, thus obtaining Episcopal orders for the daughter American church. He presided over fifty diocesan sessions.

White introduced the plan of lay participation with the clergy in all legislation—a novelty in Anglicanism. He was also chiefly responsible for the American Revision of the Book of Common Prayer, which remains largely unaltered to the present. While engaged in much controversial writing, White worked closely with other Protestant groups. He was one of the first to endorse the

Sunday school, a new institution, then regarded with grave suspicion and even hostility. And he was long: chaplain of Congress (1777-1801), when it still met in Philadelphia, and was the intimate of many statesmen, some of whom were members of his congregation. He was also president of the American Bible Society.

-Bishop White was author of *Lectures on the Catechism of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (1813), *Comparative Views of the Controversy Between the Calvinists and the Armenians*, 2 vols. (1814-16), and *Memoir of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (1820).

He was therefore thoroughly and typically Episcopalian.

2. TURNED AWAY FROM CALVIN'S PREDESTINARIANISM.

White was primarily a theologian, though familiar with the arguments of philosophy and of Platonism as well as the foibles of Deism. Reason, he held, was not to be worshiped but was to serve the mind as a tool. White felt that man must face the problems of Christianity squarely. Thus he came, inevitably, to be interested in the doctrine of man. And in this he was deeply influenced by the writings of John Locke, who was a Conditionalist. [3] White held the doctrine of free will, and contended strongly against the philosophic necessity that had come to be associated with certain Calvinistic teachings, especially those expressed by Jonathan Edwards, on the Eternal Torment of the wicked.

3 See pp. 187-191.

Chrysostom and other fourth-century Fathers, White held, had considered predestination from the standpoint of questions raised by the philosophers. But Augustine introduced the next step which, still through predestination, excluded a great proportion of mankind from possibility of salvation.

Eleven hundred years later, at the Reformation, the thought of the "final perseverance of the saints" was introduced, which idea again came to be coupled with the philosophic aspect.

White's criticism of Augustine's predestination was based on the chronological lateness of its introduction and its conflict with the teaching of the earlier Fathers. In this he cites Bishop Burnet, who had said, "I follow the doctrine of the Greek Church, from which the St. Austin departed, and formed a new system." [4] White therefore favoured Luther's position rather than Calvin's teachings on the will and predestination, because it went back to the earlier Fathers. He was thus prepared for the Conditionalist position on the nature of man.

Bishop White opposed the doctrine of Hume, who believed in "the development of man from a low state," holding that "the religions of the great prehistoric civilizations were originally monotheistic and that religion, separated from revelation, had degenerated into polytheism." [5]

3. MORTALITY INHERITED BY ALL FROM ADAM.—

On the question of immortality White held that since Adam's fall immortality has been lost to mankind. He referred to "the universality of mortality through Adam." From Adam all men inherited mortality. [6] This was because in the Fall man became mortal when he was found unworthy, by Adam's sin, of immortality. He approvingly cites Bishop Wilson on this point. [7] Bishop White pressed on the fact that "as in Adam all die, so in Christ all are made alive." Through Christ "mortality was squarely met in the crucifixion and was overcome on the third day. The resurrection proved an immortality which might have been hoped for on the grounds of rational deduction, but could never have been assumed without the empirical fact." [8] This placed all men in a new relationship to God. Immortality comes through Christ.

4. FALL BROUGHT WITHDRAWAL OF PRIVILEGES.—

But White also held that when Adam broke the provisions of the original conditions it would be expected that God should withdraw the privileges. [9]

4 William White, *Comparative Views of the Controversy Between the Calvinists and the Armenians*, vol. 1, pp. 506, 507.

5 Sydney A. Temple, *The Common Sense Theology of Bishop White*, p. 34.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

"The immediate effect of the first transgression was mortality including liability to all the diseases, to all the violence and to all the other injuries on the body which may be causes of it." [10] Such were the views of America's first Episcopal bishop on the question of forfeited immortality and its restoration through Christ—evidently adopted around 1800.

IV. Elias Smith—Emphatically Rejects Popular Concept of Hell

White was quite different from ELIAS SMITH (1769-1846), of Connecticut, schoolteacher, then Baptist minister, and one of the founders of the Christian Connection (or Connexion). [11]

10 Ibid., p. 88.

Springing largely from the Arminian Baptists, and discarding sectarian names, this group simply called themselves Christians, holding to freedom from creeds and traditions and championing not only religious liberty but the inalienable right of private judgment and individual interpretation. As a body they rejected the teachings of Innate Immortality and Eternal Torment, believing the wicked will finally be utterly destroyed. The Christian Connection should not be confused with the later Campbellite Christian Church.

He was also editor of *The Herald of Gospel Liberty*, which he started in 1808, and continued until 1815. Smith strongly defended the view that immortality is God's free gift, bestowed on the righteous only, through Christ at His second coming—the wicked utterly perishing at the time of the second death.

Thousands of Smith's followers in the Christian Connection likewise held to Conditional Immortality. This development is to be particularly noted, because it was no longer the belief of a single individual but of thousands in an entire communion. That was new in Conditionalist history.

1. REJECTS POPULAR CONCEPT OF ENDLESS HELL.—

Smith stressed the eschatological prophecies, the Second Advent, and the two resurrections—the second resurrection leading to the complete destruction of the wicked in the lake of fire at the end of the millennium. Then the new earth and the eternal kingdom of God are to be established. [12] Smith emphatically rejected the popular Hell of "everlasting torment" professed by the majority of Christians. He contended, from many passages of Scripture, that the wicked will be completely destroyed, will perish, be devoured, burned up like chaff, and pass out of being. The wicked, both soul and body, will die, and live no more. This second death, Smith averred, is in contrast with, and in opposition to, eternal life. [13]

2. FIVE "HELLS" OF POPULAR BELIEF.—

Smith's first book was *The Doctrine of the Prince of Peace and His Servants*, concerning the End of the Wicked . . . proving that the Doctrines of the Universalists [Restoration] and Calvinists [Eternal Torment] are not the Doctrine of Jesus Christ and His Apostles (1805). A second book of Sermons concerned the "Prophecies to be accomplished from the Present time, until the New Heavens and Earth are created" (1808). In this latter work Smith enumerates the five "hells" of popular belief as: "1. The Pagan's hell. 2. The Mahometan's hell. 3. The Papist's hell. 4. The Protestant's hell. 5. The Scripture hell, or that which is mentioned in the Bible." Under the latter head (Rev. 20:14, 15) Smith interestingly says:

"Hell is described as a place where the souls and bodies of the wicked will be destroyed. . . . How different is this description of hell from the other four which have been mentioned. The heathen's hell is wholly a fiction. The Mahometan's is taken from theirs and coloured with Scripture; but is evidently of the same nature. The Roman Catholics' hell is the Pagan's, revived and named from the Scripture.

"All these mention a place of purgation by fire. This, some of the Universalists hold to, proving it from the Scriptures as the Papists do, from places which say nothing about it. The fourth [or Protestants] hell described, which people in general believe in, is contrary to all the Word of God. It is the same in nature with the other three, as to the punishment being eternal existence." [14]

12 Elias Smith, *Sermons*, sermons 13, 14, 19-22.

13 *Ibid.*, sermons 15-18.

3. PROTESTANT HELL FROM PAGAN MYTHOLOGY.—

Smith then addresses himself to the "fourth," or Protestant, Hell with this elaboration:

"And it [the Protestant Hell] is taken from the Pagan mythology, not from the Word of God. If the wicked exist forever in misery, they must have both life and immortality; for they cannot exist without this in heaven, much more in hell. Life and immortality are blessings brought to light in the gospel, which none but believers will ever have.

If the wicked die in their sins, they die without any part in Christ: dying thus, they will never see life nor immortality, and will die the SECOND DEATH, being burnt up like the chaff, like the stubble, like the tares, like the tree twice dead." [15]

4. THREE ALTERNATIVES AS TO FATE OF WICKED.—

In sermon sixteen, Smith puts forth the three alternatives held by Christians pertaining to the death the disobedient will experience. They are listed as follows:

"1. A state of miserable existence without end; 2. A state of misery for a while and then to be made happy for ever; or 3. An end of their existence after they are raised out of their graves at the last day, and judged according to their works." [16] He then says:

"The last of these three, I believe, is the truth which Christ and the Apostles preached, and to which the testimony of the prophets agree. This I shall prove from the New Testament; viz., That at the day of judgment, all who are found enemies of Christ, will be destroyed both soul and body, and be no more." [17]

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., sermon 16, prop. ii.

5. INDEFEASIBLE IMMORTALITY DERIVED FROM PLATONISM.—

After enumerating a dozen familiar New Testament terms used to describe the fate of the wicked—death, second death, destroy, destruction, perish, perdition, damnation, condemnation, vengeance, wrath, consume, devour, burn up, ground to powder—Smith categorically states:

"There is not one place in the Bible which says the soul is immortal."

"This notion that there is life in the soul of the wicked, or a principle that cannot die, was taken from the Platonic Philosophers, and was introduced as Scripture doctrine in the third century, and is exactly contrary to what Christ preached." John 5.11-12." [18]

-Such were Smith's positions in 1808, and those of the Christian Connection.

6. ALERTED BY BOOK ON "OBSTRUCTIONISM."—

It may be of interest to know how Smith was alerted to the error of ever lasting torment. This he states in his Autobiography:

"This year my attention was called to think of the real state of the -wicked after the last judgment. Before this time, I had taken for truth the old pagan doctrine of eternal misery for the wicked. In June, 1804, -being in Mr. Holmes' book store, in Boston, I asked him if he had any -new publications. He handed me Evan's Sketch. [19] On opening the book my eyes first fixed on the word, 'destructionists.' I read one page, and concluded people who held that the wicked should be destroyed fire in a strange error as no such thing ever before entered my mind.

"I bought the book. Often after that the destruction of the wicked would pass through my mind, though I supposed eternal misery was recorded in the Bible. In April, 1805, I concluded one day to take my Bible and Concordance, and find eternal misery, and not have my mind any longer troubled about destruction.

"I examined the words, misery, miserable, miserably; and found that there was not one place in the Bible where the word was used to describe the state of man beyond death. I then looked at the words destroy, destruction, death, second death, perish, consumed, perdition, -^ -burnt up, etc., I examined the similitudes used to describe the end of the wicked such as chaff and stubble burnt up; dry trees cast into the fire, and tares burnt; the fat of lambs consumed, whirlwinds, a dream, and a noise. All these things proved to me that at the last judgment, the wicked would be punished with everlasting destruction, which would be their end." [20] That started Smith on his Conditionalist way—in 1804.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 John Evans, A Sketch of the Denominations in Which the Christian World Is Divided, p. 117. This passage refers by name to certain recent British Conditionalists; namely, John Taylor (1787—on the Future State), Samuel Bourn, of Norwich (1759—on Future Punishment), and John Marsom (1794—Universal Restoration Examined).

It is therefore evident that Smith received his Conditionalist seed thought from England, not from any antecedent Americans. The three British writers mentioned in Evans' book all held to "everlasting destruction" as indicating "eternal death," for no infliction of death is for a "limited period." [21] It will be remembered, of course, that Joseph Priestley had been in this country, and held that the soul slept until the resurrection, though he was not strictly a Conditionalist. And he held to the destruction of many of the wicked. But apparently he made no open converts to his view in America.

V. Sellon—Impelled to Declare Conditionalist Convictions

JOHN SELLON (d. 1830), scholarly minister of St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church, Canandaigua, New York, preached an important "Series of Sermons, on the Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment," soon published in seventy-five-page book form, with preface dated "June 23, 1828." Refreshingly clear, logical, and Biblical., they were quite comprehensive, and evidently created a deep impression. Their repercussions extended far beyond the confines of the local community, as they were widely noted. Their early date, near the beginning of the century, calls for a survey of the high lights.

1. PUNISHMENT WOULD NOT EXCEED SENTENCE.—

Sermon I dealt with the original sentence imposed by the Creator for Adam's disobedience—"to return to the state from whence he was taken." [22] Sellon then declares that God "would surely not extend the punishment beyond the penalty which he had declared should accompany the transgression of his laws"—namely, death. [23] Then he observes that there is not "one word in the law, the penalty, or the sentence" that could "possibly be construed" to mean endless punishing. [24]

2. GEHENNA DENOTES "TOTAL AND UTTER DESTRUCTION."—

Declaring that there is no probation beyond this life, and that man was made "a free and accountable agent," [25] Sellon next turns, in Sermon II, to the intent of hades, as the "state of the dead, or a state of death, without reference to endless duration." [26] Gehenna, on the contrary, conveys the "idea of total and utter destruction after death; where all that -remained of the dead carcass was totally and entirely destroyed and consumed." This he repeats for emphasis—"utter and entire consumption, and as it were annihilation," "total and endless destruction," [27] destruction of "both body and soul in Gehenna." That, Sellon says, is the "everlasting destruction of both body and soul, after death." [28] This is "at the final judgment." [29] And this he supports from both Old and New Testament texts.

20 Elias Smith, Autobiography, pp. 347, 348.

21 Ibid.

22 J. Sellon, A Series of Sermons, on the Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, p. 8.

3. SOULS OF UNBELIEVERS ARE NOT IMMORTAL.—

Then comes a crucial question and an explicit answer on the immortality of the soul: "But it may be said, if the soul is immortal, how then can it die? What evidence have we, my brethren, that the soul of the unbeliever is immortal? I know indeed, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and I know likewise, that that life is in his Son; and I have therefore yet to learn, that the soul which is not in Christ, is immortal; for we are assured, that to be carnally minded is death, and that God is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell; and that life and immortality were brought to light through the Gospel. That the soul only is immortal then, which lives in Christ; and every soul which does not live in Christ, shall die forever." [30] -This is really the key paragraph of the treatise.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., p. 9.

25 Ibid., p. 15.

26 Ibid., p. 22.

27 Ibid., p. 23.

28 Ibid., p. 24.

29 Ibid., p. 25.

30 Ibid., p. 26.

4. SINNER FREE TO CHOOSE DESTRUCTION RATHER THAN LIFE.—

In Sermon III Sellon recognizes that such preaching will be "new" to some and in "opposition perhaps to commonly received opinions." But he feels impelled to declare his convictions as in the "immediate presence of my Maker." This statement is made because he conscientiously believed his position "to be the truth of God," not the "opinions of men, which have no foundation" in "Divine Revelation." Otherwise he would be "unworthy of your confidence, as a minister of the Gospel of our Saviour." [31] He warns against the "dictates and opinions of mere human authority" as the "most dangerous to all the arts of priest craft." Wicked man, he holds, as a free moral agent may "choose annihilation, in preference to all the joys of heaven."

The sinner, may make his "own wilful and determined choice," and "choose everlasting destruction, in preference to eternal life." [32]

5. ETERNAL TORTURE INCONSISTENT WITH GOD'S CHARACTER.—

Eternal "living torture," Sellon maintains, is inconsistent with the character of God—His "omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, justice, mercy, love, truth, and sacred word." The popular concept of the "tortures of the damned" is a "human invention." Then he prays: "O heavenly Father, cleanse the hearts of all thy faithful children, from such polluting thoughts/1 Such a word as "torture, or any derivative from it, or any word synonymous with it, never once occurs in the whole of the sacred writings." Thus he bases his "arguments" on the "nature of man and the attributes of God." [33]

6. ETERNAL TORMENT NOT SCRIPTURAL, THEREFORE FALSE.—

Sermon VII (Matt. 25:46—"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.") opens with the truism: "If any doctrine is taught of man, and not to be found clearly revealed in the holy Scriptures, that doctrine is false." [34] Then he declares:

"Now, I say, that the doctrine of eternal torture, is not to be found in the Scriptures, and therefore it is false. But, that the doctrine of the everlasting destruction of the wicked, is clearly and distinctly, and expressly revealed in the Scriptures, and therefore it is true." [35]

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 29.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 71.

33 *ibid.*, pp. 72, 73.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

He then proceeds to examine "every important passage which occurs in the sacred writings, having reference to the eternal punishment of the wicked." And he comments "none of which can possibly be construed to imply those eternal tortures." Speaking of Revelation 14:8 torment "in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb"—he asserts that such a Hell would have to be "in heaven." And in Revelation 20:13. on the "lake of fire," which is the "second death," Sellon comments, "We cannot imagine that Death and Hell are cast there, to be tortured." Rather the "passage implies the utter destruction of them all." [36]

7. GEHENNA TOTAL DESTRUCTION AFTER DEATH.—

All other passages may be divided into "three separate classes"—(1) punishment by "being cast into hell, or everlasting fire"; -(2) the "effect of fire," without reference to "Hell"; and (3) those involving the words "death, destruction, or everlasting destruction." As to the first, Gehenna (Hebrew) was the valley near Jerusalem "where the dead carcasses were brought out from Jerusalem to be consumed in this fire." It can therefore "convey to their minds no other idea, than that of total destruction after death," and "never as a place of torture." [37]

8. FIRE INDICATES TOTAL CONSUMPTION, NOT ETERNAL TORTURE.—

The second category deals with the "effect of fire" as with the "tares" of Matthew 13, "burned" in the "end of the world." Then he asks "whether the tares were cast into the fire to be tortured, or to be destroyed?" And as to the bad fish cast away—cast into "a furnace of fire"—did the casting away of the bad fish imply "torture or destruction"? Likewise with the chaff of Matthew 3—to be burned with "unquenchable fire"—he again asks "whether the idea of chaff burnt up, can possibly imply eternal torture." Was it to be "tortured, or to be consumed"? Similarly with the branches of John 15 cast into the fire to be "burned." Here he asserts, "It cannot imply any other idea than destruction." [38]

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 74-77.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 78.

9. ETERNAL TORTURE Is "INVENTION OF MAN."—

As to the expression "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12), Sellon inquires, "Does this expression imply a fire which does not consume?" The "instrument" is the means of "entire destruction." Then as to the words "death," "die," "destroy," "destruction," "consume," "perish," "utterly perish," "the doctrine of eternal torture, is not to be found there." [39] Finally he says: "I conclude, then, that the doctrine of eternal torture is not to be found in the holy Scriptures, and therefore it is false; it is the invention of man." [40]

10. FOUR FALSEHOODS INVOLVED IN ETERNAL TORMENT.

—Appealing to men to "search the Scripture" for truth, Sellon concludes with this summarizing statement:

"There are four contradictions which must be got over before we can even form an idea of eternal torture. First: everlasting fire which does not consume. Second: Eternal pain without destruction. Third: continued life, although utterly cut off from the only source and cause of all life. And fourth: present existence, though driven from the presence of the omnipresent God.—Let the mind endeavour to realize any ones of these ideas, and it will find that each implies a palpable contradiction; yet they must all combine, to form the idea of eternal torture." [41] He again appeals to men to "search the Scripture for themselves," for they vindicate the justice, mercy, and love of God, and "his truth and his consistency." [42] This was an Episcopalian rector in 1828.

As far south as Fayetteville, North Carolina, a tractate appeared in 1844, written by JOHN H. PEARCE, titled *An Attempt to answer the Question, Has Man a Conscious State of Existence after Death, and previous to the Resurrection?* [43] maintaining the "sleep of the soul" position. So there were little stirrings in various sections, as well as major contributions.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 79.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 81.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

43 *Abbot, op. cit., no. 2631.*

www.CreationismOnline.com