

**ENDLESS PUNISHMENT:
SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT FOR
AND REASONABLENESS OF
FUTURE ENDLESS PUNISHMENT**

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Endless Punishment: Scriptural Argument for and Reasonableness of Future Endless Punishment by Nehemiah Adams

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BY

NEHEMIAH ADAMS, D. D.,

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REV. S. COBB, *Editor of the Christian Freeman.*

Dear Sir: I have received your printed note in your paper of the 25th ult., in which you say:

“And now I respectfully invite you, and proffer you the columns of the *Christian Freeman* for the work, to show the *Scripturalness* of future, endless punishment. This will afford you an opportunity to carry your strongest reasons into several thousands of Universalist families; and I earnestly hope that you will accept my proposition.”

The form in which you propose that I should do this, viz., by an exposition of isolated proof texts, each to be debated by you before I proceed to another, does not strike me favorably. I will comply with your invitation, if you will allow me to do it in my own way, — upon one condition, that there shall be no notes or comments on what I write in the number or numbers of your paper containing my communication.

Very respectfully yours,

N. ADAMS.

Representations have been made in some of the public prints respecting the nature and intention of the following article, which are wholly at variance with my design. I am

entering into no controversy, — this being the only article which I have at any time expected to prepare for the paper. Having been invited to preach in Hollis Street Church a sermon, prepared for my own congregation, on the Reasonableness of Endless Punishment, I was not at liberty, of course, to present any other view than that which the sermon contained, incomplete as all such presentations must be without a scriptural argument. While I was purposing to make, on some future occasion, a statement of the scriptural view, both of the nature and extent, of future retribution, an invitation to write on that subject in this paper unexpectedly occurred. I proceed, therefore, to fulfil my original purpose, and respectfully submit the following statement, with no thought of continuing the discussion.

N. A.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE invitation from the editor of this paper to make a statement of views which the "several thousands of families" who, it is said, will read this paper, repudiate, imposes a responsible, yet, for some reasons, a gratifying task. The names of not a few among my ministerial brethren occur to me, in whose able and more competent hands I would gladly place this labor, both for the gratification of the reader, and, as I view it, for the truth's sake. I feel encouraged in this work by the comparative regard which many in this denomination profess for the Bible. They do not assail it, as the manner of some is who differ from us; but their desire to make it speak in their favor secures for it an acknowledgment of its authority. As an illustration of this remark, I refer to a Review of Rev. T. S. King's "Two Discourses," by Rev. Dr. Thomas Whittemore, in the *Universalist Quarterly and General Review*, October, 1858. Dr. W. says: "It seems to us impossible to preserve the public reverence for the Bible, if we suffer ourselves to speak about it as Mr. King has done." "The four Gospels, according to Mr. K., are mere shreds and

tatters of what Christ taught. His manner of teaching was so peculiar, and so poetical and fanciful, that it is quite a wonder that we have even those tatters." "He (Mr. K.) speaks of God choosing to instruct the Church through a few fragmentary flashes of poetry. Good God! What an idea of revelation! What an idea of Jesus as a teacher! He has lost sight of 'the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'" (p. 377.)

Inasmuch as nothing but the clearest conviction that this doctrine of endless retribution is revealed in the Bible would allow us for a moment to believe and inculcate the fearful truth, which all who believe it receive with the most solemn awe, it awakens confidence and friendly feeling to think that the most of those who will read this article, thus regard the testimony of Scripture, explained by the ordinary rules of language, to be of binding authority.

I have also been led to think of this denomination as including many who are much exercised in their minds on the subject of future punishment. It is a welcome effort to show such individuals that some of their thoughts with regard to this subject and its advocates, are, perhaps, disproportioned and exaggerated. The most of those who believe in future, endless punishment, have far more peace of mind with regard to it than they appear to have who deny it; for with evangelical believers it sinks into its just proportion in the universal government of God, as the State's Prison, Courts of Law, Offices of Justice, blend, like the tonic element of iron in the blood, into the life of a commonwealth with its virtuous and happy homes, its hundreds of thousands of joyous children, its churches, its products, its whole prosperous tide of affairs. Though hell is not the central figure in the religious ideas of

evangelical Christians, the belief in future, endless retribution does exert its powerful influence upon us. We know that it is capable of vast abuse, as we see illustrated in the direful influence of its perversion by the Church of Rome. But we find it explicitly revealed, and "knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." If it were preached still more affectionately and plainly by us, conscious of our ill desert and of our obligations to redeeming love, there would be a nearer approach to the apostolic model. Our prevailing associations with this doctrine, we are happy to say, are those of deliverance, through the atoning death of the Son of God. It is in connection with his sacrifice for us that we always endeavor to preach it; so that we trust we may say concerning our system of faith, as it is said of heaven, "the Lamb is the light thereof." While we believe that the contemplation of future misery, apart from the cross of Christ, would be hurtful to the mind and heart, we also feel that it cannot be of healthful tendency with our moral natures to base our religious associations mainly on the one idea of opposition to endless punishment. An evil thing, real or imaginary, which we inordinately, or upon wrong principles, oppose, has a retroactive influence on our minds and hearts, corresponding to its own baleful nature.

It is with such views that I now write, — not, principally, with antagonists in my mind, though my statements will meet with antagonism, — so that if any are persuaded by counter statements that these views are unscriptural, they will do me the favor, at least, to think of me as their sincere well-wisher and friend, and as one who has the same eternal interests embarked in this question as themselves. Let us also keep in mind that mere argumentation never convinces men of