

**A DISCUSSION ON THE DOCTRINE OF
ETERNAL SALVATION: QUESTION:
DO THE HOLY SCRIPTURES TEACH
THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS MISERY?
AFFIRMATIVE, NEGATIVE**

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A Discussion on the Doctrine of Eternal Salvation: Question: Do the Holy Scriptures Teach the Doctrine of Endless Misery? Affirmative, Negative by Isaac Wescott & T. J. Sawyer

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ISAAC WESCOTT & T. J. SAWYER

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AFFIRMATIVE.

REV. ISAAC WESCOTT.

NEGATIVE.

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DISCUSSION
ON THE
DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL SALVATION.

"DO THE HOLY SCRIPTURES TEACH THE DOCTRINE
OF ENDLESS MISERY?"

AFFIRMATIVE.
Rev. ISAAC WESCOTT.

NEGATIVE.
Rev. T. J. SAWYER, D.D.

FIRST EVENING.

Prayer having been offered by the Rev. Dr. NYE, of Brooklyn,

Rev. Mr. Wescott spoke as follows :—It will be remembered by those of the congregation who were in attendance last spring, that, near the close of our discussion, my brother challenged me, publicly, in this place, to discuss with him, at some suitable time, and in some suitable place, the following question: "Do the Holy Scriptures teach the doctrine of endless misery?" Regard to what I deem to be truth required my acceptance of the challenge. It was, in some respects, desirable that the discussion should immediately have followed that in which we were then engaged. Then our arguments were fresh in the memories of the assembly, and would not need to have been repeated; and so far as we ourselves were concerned, it was our wish that it might have been so arranged; but this building could not be ob-

tained, having been engaged to other parties, until too late in the season. Under these circumstances, it was decided to defer our discussion until the present time.

Although many of our former arguments may now have to be repeated, in order that they may be remembered by the assembly, and their connection with the present question seen; and although more time may be required now than would have been necessary then, yet we trust that the discussion will afford you some agreeable entertainment, as well as promote the cause of truth, and the eternal welfare of souls.

We trust that some things were demonstrated by our discussion, last April, and among them the two following, namely: That religious discussion can be conducted in a gentlemanly and Christian spirit, and without engendering personal ill-feeling; also, that the prejudice of the community, and, among others, of some excellent men, both in the ministry and among the laity, against religious discussion, is without support, either from the Scriptures, or from the practical results of such debates. Surely, when we have for this practice the example of such men as Stephen, Peter, and Paul, it ill becomes us to cry out against it; more especially when one of those apostles was so thoroughly impressed with the propriety of continual oral discussion on the subject of religion as to continue it for the space of two whole years, disputing daily in the school of Tyrannus.

The question to be discussed is of vast importance, and comes home to each of us, involving the highest interests of time and of eternity. It not only involves our highest interests, but it involves our brightest hopes, our deepest concerns, and the purest joys of our souls during the whole space of their entire endless existence. If there were a doubt about the title by which you held your property, how anxiously would you examine the whole question until no

doubt remained on the subject ! What an excitement has been produced in the public mind by a few frauds upon our railroad stocks ! What anxiety has been sent through the whole public breast by the pressure in the money-market !

These topics are worthy of consideration. The excitement which they have occasioned is justifiable, for the temporal welfare of thousands is involved. But, in our question the interests are eternal—the endless interests of untold millions ! In a few years it will make no difference to us whether we were rich or poor, moved in the most splendid walks of worldly glory, or dwelt among the humble shadows of obscurity ; but the time will never come when it will make no difference whether we have embraced the truth involved in this discussion, when the principle involved in it will have no bearing upon our welfare. When sun, and moon, and stars, shall have ceased to rise and set, still the salvation of the soul, and the subject of future misery, will be ever, ever, interesting to us.

I don't mean that the mere belief in the affirmative of this question will, without corresponding principles and actions, secure everlasting life. But, believing this, we shall be far more likely to embrace these principles, and this truth, and to put forth those efforts with which our salvation is connected ; while denying the doctrine of endless misery, and embracing that of the final salvation of all men, is a course calculated, in its very nature, to make us careless, inattentive to the warnings of Holy Scripture, and liable, by this neglect, to incur the doom of those " who obey not the gospel," and who are to " be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power."

We pray you, therefore, to give the more earnest heed to this subject, listening attentively to the arguments that may

be offered, for the sake of ascertaining the truth, and reducing the truth to practice in our hearts and lives.

Do not, I beseech you, misunderstand the question. Let it be clearly defined and well fastened in your minds. It is not, Can we by our finite reason, harmonize the attributes of God with the doctrines of endless misery? But it is, "Do the *Holy Scriptures* teach the doctrine of endless misery?" If we can ascertain what the Bible teaches upon this or any other subject, we can be certain of having found the truth, and, most certainly, God's attributes will harmonize with it, whether we can, or cannot, perceive how. Nor is the question to be decided by the sympathy of our nature. The question is not, Does the sympathy of our hearts teach the doctrine of endless misery? but, Do the *Holy Scriptures* teach it? The best of men are imperfect, and their feelings must, of necessity, partake of the general imperfection of their nature. They are, therefore, liable to be wrong upon any subject which interests them. The sympathy of our nature would have shrunk from the destruction of the Old World, in which the comparatively innocent child of a few months, was destroyed with the hardened and incorrigible sinner of a hundred years old. But, did God do any wrong in sending the flood upon the earth? Who will charge Jehovah with injustice? Our sympathy would not harmonize with the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and we should have charged any *man* with iniquity who should have set these cities on fire; but, did the Judge of all the earth do wrong in destroying the cities of the plain? Let it be remembered that the exciting of our sympathies by those judgments by no means proves that we are better than Jehovah. But it does prove that Jehovah is wiser than we are, and that he sees judgments to be just which our finite reason cannot grasp or fathom. We cannot judge God by our perverted feelings and darkened reason.

Neither is the question, What must have been the design of God in the creation of man? It does not ask, Can we make the design of Jehovah consistent with the endless misery of any of his creatures? We may make a mistake with regard to his design in the creation of man; or, if we conclude that the declaration, "for his own glory he made them," is sufficiently indicative of his purpose, even this would not prove the endless happiness of the human family; for it is to be seen that the glory of Jehovah is to be promoted by the endless misery of the incorrigible contemner of his law and disturber of the peace of his universe. Let us, then, search the Scriptures, and see what they teach. Let us be careful with regard to the spirit in which we refer to the Bible. Much as to correct information, will depend on our frame of spirit. Let us not first determine what the Bible *ought* to teach, and then read it, to try and make it so speak. The prejudiced mind can make almost any book speak a very different sentiment from what its author ever intended; in this way men have wrested the Scriptures to their own destruction, once and again. Let us then come to the Bible with one faith. *This is the Word of God.* Let us come with one simple desire, namely, to know just what this Word teaches—with one single purpose—to believe just what it teaches, and do just what it requires.

Coming to the Scriptures of Divine Truth, with feelings like these, can we mistake? Then, if we speak not according to this book, it is because there is no light in us. Let us not ask what our darkest reason, embellished by sophistry, teaches—let us not ask what our perverted feelings may desire to be true—but, what do the Holy Scriptures say touching this question?

If it can be shown from the sacred oracles that sin is of so great magnitude as to *deserve* endless misery, then it will be clear that God is under no obligation to deliver man