

Eternal Destruction Is Decreed Doom of Wicked

by Leroy Edwin Froom

Excerpts from *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers* - Volume 1 Chapter 7
This electronic document produced by truthaccordingtoscripture.com

A. Utter Destruction Ultimate Fate of Intractably Wicked

We now come to the final phase of the tragic episode of sin—the ultimate and utter destruction of the unrepentant sinner if he willfully clings to his sin. According to the Inspired Word all such will be destroyed "root" and "branch." This means Satan and his evil angels, together with all the incorrigibly wicked who have joined in the great rebellion against God and His government and law, and have spurned His proffered redemption and righteousness. Here is a typical passage from the last chapter of the last book of the Old Testament:

"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1).

The writers of the Old Testament seem to have exhausted the resources of the language at their command—the Hebrew tongue—to affirm the complete destruction of the intractable sinner. The major Hebrew verb roots (such as destroy, perish, consume, cut off, burn up) are literal, and are used to signify the total extinction, or excision, of such animate beings. Other expressions are figurative—couched in metaphor, simile, symbol, analogy, metonymy, synecdoche, comparison, and allegory. But they are all designed to further enforce this foundational emphasis. These must be noted in some detail, as we can only determine their real significance by surveying their over-all Biblical usage.

The Ultimate and Utter Destruction of the Wicked Will Forever End the Terrors, Sorrows, and Memories of Sin. Then the Fires Will Go Out.

1. SCORES OF OLD TESTAMENT VERBS SIGNIFY "DESTROY."

The Old Testament uses some fifty verbs (along with their Greek equivalents in the Septuagint and the New Testament), signifying different aspects of destruction when setting forth the ultimate doom of the wicked. Many of them declare absolute cessation of existence. Others point strongly in that direction, and the clear must always explain the obscure. Together they constitute overwhelming testimony. Indeed, no stronger terms are to be found in any language than those employed in both the Old and the New Testament to connote ultimate total extinction of being for the wicked. Note the scope of the terms.

2. IMPOSING ARRAY OF LITERAL ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS

In order for us to get the over-all picture, here is an imposing list of English equivalents used in translating the Old Testament terms: Destroy, end, consume, devour, take away, tread down, 1 burn, burn up, cut off, hew down, cut down, break in pieces, quench, go out, extinguish, slay, break down, overthrow, cast down, destroy utterly, sink down in a pit, beat down, melt away, die, mortify, put to death, strike, melt, pluck out, fall dash in pieces, scatter as dust, pass away, trample underfoot root out, bring to nought. No loopholes are left. Only God can dissipate the "breath," efface the personality, and destroy the sinful ego, or entity, comprising man. And He has fully and irrevocably declared the fate of the incorrigibly wicked. Such is the witness of the literal depictions.

3. GALAXY OF FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS SUPPORT THE LITERAL

And here are some of the varied figurative or proverbial expressions that harmonize with, and consistently buttress, the non figurative literal declarations concerning the ultimate, end of existence for persistent evildoers: They will be as a vessel broken to pieces, as ashes trodden underfoot, as smoke that vanishes, as chaff carried away by the wind, as tow that is burned, as bundles of dry tares, as thorns and stubble, as vine branches pruned off, as wax that is melted, as the fat of sacrifices' —all combustible and all destructible by fire. And all of these expressions, it will be observed, likewise preclude the notion of sufferings infinitely prolonged. Again, the wicked will pass like the morning cloud, like the early dew, like a dream when one awakens. Other figures in the Scripture symbolism are: the lost sheep, threatened with speedy death by hunger and thirst or the wolf's jaws; the withered tree, without root or branch; the garment that is moth-eaten; the axe and the fire, and the leprosy that consumes the tissues. Everywhere and always the concept prevails of the decomposition, of the breaking up of the organism and final cessation of the existence of being—never that of immortal life in endless suffering.

4. ITERATED AND REITERATED IN KEY CHAPTERS

A striking but typical example of Old Testament teaching is found in Psalm 37. Here are nine different expressions concentrated in the one psalm, italicized to brine out the intent:

Vs. 1, 2—"For they [workers of iniquity] shall soon be cut down like the grass."

9—"Evildoers shall be cut off."

10—"For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be."

20—"The wicked shall perish,. . . into smoke shall they consume away."

22—"They that be cursed of him shall be cut off."

28—"The seed of the wicked shall be cut off."

34—"The wicked are cut off."

36—"He passed away, and, lo, he was not: ... he could not be found."

38—"The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off."

Or take the eighteenth chapter of Job, with seven declarations:

Vs. 5—"The light of the wicked shall be put out."

6—"His candle shall be put out with him."

12—"Destruction shall be ready at his side."

- 13—" It [destruction] shall devour the strength of his skin."
 16—"His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off."
 17—"His remembrance shall perish from the earth."
 18—"He shall be ... chased out of the world."
 20:9—"The eye . . . shall see him no more."

A wide range of individual declarations of similar intent and equal intensity is scattered all the way from Genesis to Malachi.

B. Multiple Terms Signify Complete Destruction of Being

We here list alphabetically for reference some seventy variant expressions denoting the one thought of "destruction," "perishing," "consumption by fire," "turning to ashes," and "cessation of being," as portraying the fate of the wicked. Note the impressive, cumulative array:

- Ashes under soles of feet —Mal. 4:3.
 Be as though they had not been —Obadiah 16; Job 20:9; Ps. 37:10.
 Be no more —Ps. 104:35; Prov. 10:25.
 Become as nothing —Isa. 41:11, 12.
 Blossom go up as dust —Isa. 5:20-24.
 Blot out name forever —Ps. 9:5.
 Blot out of existence —Deut. 29:20; Ps. 69:28.
 Break in pieces —Job 34:24; Ps. 2:9.
 Bring down to pit of destruction —Ps. 55:23.
 Burn like tow —Isa. 1:31.
 Burn them up —Mal. 4:1.
 Burned up as cut thorns —Isa. 33:12.
 Candle of wicked put out —Job 21:17.
 Cast down to destruction —Ps. 73:18.
 Cast down, unable to rise —Ps. 36:12.
 Cast off forever —1 Chron. 28:9.
 Chaff which wind drives away —Ps. 1:4.
 Chased out of world —Job 18:18.
 Consume —Ps. 59:13; 104:35; Isa. 29:20.
 Consume away into smoke —Ps. 37:20.
 Consumed —Job 22:20.
 Consumed out of the earth —Ps. 104:35.
 Cut down like grass —Ps. 37:2.
 Cut off —Ps. 37:9, 22, 28, 34; 94:23; Prov. 2:22; Nahum 1:15.
 Cut off remembrance from earth —Ps. 34:16.
 Dash in pieces —Ps. 2:9.
 Destroy —Ps. 145:20; Prov. 13:13.
 Destroyed forever —Ps. 52:5; 92:7.
 Destroy utterly —Ex. 22:20; Ps. 21:10.
 Devour —Ps. 50:3.
 Devour as stubble —Nahum 1:10.

Die —Eze. 18:4, 20.
 Dissolved —Ps. 75:3.
 Driven away like chaff —Ps. 1:4.
 Eaten up like garment —Isa. 51:8.
 Fire shall devour them —Ps. 21:9.
 Lamp of wicked put out —Prov. 13:9; 24:20.
 Leave neither root nor branch —Mal. 4:1.
 Light of wicked be put out —Job 18:5.
 Melt away as waters —Ps. 58:7.
 Melt like wax —Ps. 68:2.
 Name put out forever —Ps. 9:5.
 Not be —Ps. 37:10; Prov. 12:7.
 Overthrown —Prov. 12:7.
 Perish —Ps. 37:20; 49:20; Isa. 41:11, 12.
 Perish forever —Job 20:7.
 Pluck thee out —Ps. 52:5.
 Put away like dross —Ps. 119:119.
 Put out light —Job 18:5, 6.
 Put out name forever —Ps. 9:5.
 Put to death —Lev. 27:29.
 Quenched as fire of thorns —Ps. 118:12.
 Quenched as tow —Isa. 43:17.
 Rain of fire and brimstone —Ps. 11:6.
 Return to dust —Gen. 3:19; Ps. 104:29.
 Root out —Ps. 52:5; Prov. 2:22.
 Roots dried up —Job 18:16.
 Scattered —Ps. 92:9.
 See him no more —Job 20:9.
 Shall not be —Ps. 37:10.
 Slay —Ps. 34:21; 62:3; 139:19; Isa. 11:4.
 Stubble taken away by whirlwind —Isa. 40:24.
 Swallow them up —Ps. 21:9.
 Tear ... in pieces —Ps. 50:22.
 Tread down —Ps. 60:12.
 Turned into hell [she'ol or grave] —Ps. 9:17.
 Utterly consumed —Ps. 37:20 (LXX 72:19).
 Whirlwind passes, wicked no more —Prov. 10:25.
 Wither as green herb —Ps. 37:2.

Such an array is overwhelming. But one conclusion can be drawn. It is to be particularly noted that all these variant terms are simply an unfolding or expansion of the original penalty threatened in Eden—death, or returning to the dust (Gen. 2:17; 3:19). They simply indicate the mode of destruction and the results. Summarizing, these multiple terms fall under four general categories. Anglican Vicar R. S. Callander, of Gloucester, England, has accurately analyzed and summarized them as indicating: Death by fire, or burning, set forth as the designated MODE of final punishment¹ (Ps. 21:9; Mal. 4:1, 3; cf. Rev. 20:14, 15; Matt. 13:40, 42; 25:41, 46).

Perishing as the RESULT of such punishment (Ps. 37:28; cf. 2 Peter 2:12; John 3:14, 15). Death, or cessation of being, as the END of such punishment (Eze. 18:4, 20; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8). Utter destruction is the permanent EFFECT of such punishment (Ps. 55:23; 92:7; 145:20; cf. Matt. 7:13; 10:28). And in support of these conclusions the New Testament confirms, adds to, and gives precision—such as specifying the "second death," of Revelation 20:6 and 21:8, by destruction in the lake of fire.

C. Eternal Torment No Part of Death Penalty

It will be observed that in this vast array of Scripture passages there is uniform testimony as to utter destruction—without a single statement implying Eternal Torment for the finally impenitent wicked. And even if a few perplexing texts are found they could not reasonably be allowed to reverse the preponderant emphasis of Scripture or nullify its over whelming testimony. The notion of Eternal Torment came out of paganism, as a corollary to the postulate of the universal Innate Immortality of the soul. But that presumption did not penetrate Jewry until about 150 BC, or begin to infiltrate the Christian church until nearly A.D. 200.

This may be checked by scanning the following passages from nearly a score of Old Testament books and a few New Testament examples, as showing beyond peradventure the uniform testimony of Scripture to fire as God's designated mode of destruction for the wicked.

(Old Testament) Gen. 19:24, 25; Ex. 32:10; Lev. 10:2; Num. 11:1; 16:35; Deut. 32:22, 24; 2 Kings 1:12; Ps. 21:9; 97:3; 140:10; Isa. 1:28, 31; 9:18, 19; 10:16-18; 30:33; 33:11, 12; 47:14; 66:15, 16, 24; Jer. 4:4; 21:12; Lam. 2:3, 4; Eze. 15:6, 7; 21:31, 32; 22:21, 22, 31; 28:18; Amos 5:6; Nahum 1:5, 6; Mal. 4:1. (New Testament) Matt. 3:10, 12; 13:49, 50; 25:41; Luke 17:29, 30; Heb. 6:4-8; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 1:7. Rev. 20:9, 10, 15. Our God is a consuming fire to the wicked. Heb. 12:29; Ex. 24:17; Deut. 4:24, 9:3; Isa. 33:14). See Outline Chart A, page 522, and pertinent chapters in Parts III and IV.

God's blessings in this life extend to a "thousand generations" of those who love Him and keep His commandments, while He punishes only to the "third and fourth generation" of those who hate Him (Ex. 20:5, 6; Deut. 7:9) The punishments of the future life were to go on forever, paralleling the bliss of the righteous, it would logically follow that God would likewise punish to the thousandth generation. But even here there is intimation that the wicked are doomed to ultimate and utter extinction.

1. TORTURE NO PART OF JEWISH SACRIFICIAL RITE

As previously pointed out, in the Levitical sacrificial offerings the victim in the 5m offering stood for the sinner— It typified Christ, atoning vicariously for the guilt of man's sin—Christ bearing our sins and standing in our place and stead. Those who offered the sin offering were neither required nor allowed to inflict prolonged torture upon the sacrificial offering—be it lamb, goat, bullock, or turtle dove—but simply to impose death. In the burnt offerings the animal was already dead before it was burned upon the altar, where it was wholly consumed (Lev. 4-7). The rite, therefore, was not based on extended suffering but on the suppression of the life. In Jewish

practice, if the execution was prolonged the sacrifice had to be rejected. **2. TORTURE NO PART OF MOSAIC PENAL CODE**

Likewise in the penal code of the Mosaic theocracy the heaviest punishment prescribed was the imposition of the death of the offender (Lev. 20:2; 24:14-16; Num. 15:33-36; Deut. 17:5; 22:21). Long-continued torture was foreign to Old Testament legislation. The odious practice of torture, so common in ancient pagan civilizations, had no equivalent in the code of Israel. (Crucifixion, it should be noted, was of Roman origin.) In case of stoning; under Israel, care was taken that the first stone cast should be large enough to crush the victim's chest, resulting in death.

Death, not torture, as the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23), is consistently set forth in Scripture. The punishment fitted the crime.

D. Eternal Destiny Revolves Around Intent of "Life" and "Death"

1. LIFE AND DEATH—KEYS THAT UNLOCK INSPIRED INTENT

The issues of eternal destiny turn on the intent of Holy Scripture, as seen in the prologue (of Genesis) and in the epilogue (of the Revelation). The terms "life" and "death" are the dual keys that unlock the Biblical intent as to the destiny of man. Everything turns upon these two antithetical expressions.

As mentioned, life and death are ever set forth as opposites, like black and white. For one to say that death is simply another kind or state of life is like insisting that black is only a variation of white. But if death were a certain state of life, it would simply be a continued manifestation of that same life. The usage of Biblical language protests such violence. To die is to cease to live, or exist, not to suffer on forever, simply away from the presence of God, but to keep on living.

2. PLATONIC PERVERSION OF DEATH AS PERPETUAL LIFE

When man is under consideration, life—in the historical and grammatical sense—refers to his existence as manifested through animation, action, and sensation. Death, on the contrary, is the end of that existence, the termination of all action and sensation. But under the Platonic influence, with its notion of the absolute and indefeasible immortality of the human soul, and the consequent flaunting of the total testimony of Scripture, the traditionalist took his stand on the premise that the inherent life of the soul cannot cease. As a result the death of the soul inevitably came to signify its perpetual life in the midst of sin and suffering— without any possible end. Ever dying, the soul nevertheless could never die. Death was consequently replaced by pain that is interminable, while life was made synonymous merely with holiness and blessedness in that existence. It was a travesty of truth both in word and in intent.

3. INNATE IMMORTALITY POSTULATE REVERSES TRUE EXEGESIS

But the postulate of the Innate Immortality of all soul involves an inescapably unnatural and arbitrary interpretation of Scripture—a reversal of true exegesis—so that instead of death being the penalty for the unrepentant sinner, with unending life solely for the righteous, eternal life is

instead asserted to be the final destiny of both righteous and wicked—only with the one class in bliss and the other in torment. But such a procedure is undeniable eisegesis—a reading into the text of what is not there, and of what is, moreover, fundamentally contrary to the uniform, overwhelming testimony of Scripture.

4. CHRIST'S DEATH, NOT SUFFERINGS, CONSTITUTED ATONING SACRIFICE

There is often, of course, intense suffering with death—but always ending in destruction. However, it is not the suffering but the destruction that is the ultimate. Suffering precedes it. Thus it was with the death of Christ, if we are to consider this point at the highest level. There is frequent allusion to His "sufferings" in our behalf. But, dreadful as these were, Christ's sufferings alone did not constitute His atoning death. They were only the accompaniments thereof. Death is ceasing to live.

The fundamental point is that Christ did not endure Eternal Torment. He paid the designated penalty due to Adam and the race—which was death. The death of Christ on Calvary, though including fearful mental and bodily suffering, required the extinction of His life. This principle was illustrated back in the case of Old Testament Israel:

"If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord Thy God; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses. . . . Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed. . . . And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought" (Deut. 28:58-63).

Thus all suffering terminates in final destruction, and comes to nought. That is the over-all Bible evidence.

5. DESTRUCTION, NOT ETERNAL TORMENT, THE PUNISHMENT

Man was placed in the Garden of Eden with the explicit warning that "in the day that thou eats thereof [of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Should he disobey he would be subject to capital punishment—death, by forfeiting his life. There is nothing in the language employed that conveys any concept other than utter destruction as punishment for transgression. There is no intimation of a prolonged, much less endless, existence in torment. Life and death must have appeared as opposites to Adam—the threat of "death" being the opposite of "living forever." We must therefore repeat that there was absolutely no Biblical declaration of death as an endless life in interminable misery as the penalty for sin.

E. Stock Objections Invoked Collapse Under Scrutiny

In both Testaments there are certain stock-objection texts that are always invoked. Three such passages in the Old Testament—Isaiah 33:14; Isaiah 66:24; and Daniel 12:2—are pressed into service by those contending for the Eternal Torment of the wicked.

1. ISAIAH 33:14—CONTENTION COLLAPSES UNDER SCRUTINY

The first of the three texts reads: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with, everlasting burnings?"

These words are often brought forth by Immortal-Soulists as describing the torments of the lost, and to impress one with the torrid glare of the pitiless prospect of eternal misery. But even a cursory glance at the context will show that the future state is not under discussion in this text. It is simply a portrayal of the insufferable temporal miseries being inflicted upon Israel by her enemies and by God's threatened retribution. It is an exclamatory expression to the effect that no one can endure such burnings—a strong negative, to indicate that what is doomed to fire cannot continue to exist; that none can dwell with such devouring flames.

The passage has no relation to the fate of the lost, but rather to the desolation of Palestine by the Assyrians. Verses 10-12 describe Sennacherib's invading army, even threatening Jerusalem itself but nevertheless awaiting sudden and utter destruction, as already foretold in chapter 27:4—when the Lord would "go through them" and "burn them together." And the fulfillment is portrayed in chapter 37:36, when the angel of the Lord "smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they [the Israelites] arose early in the morning, behold, they [the Assyrians] were all dead corpses." That is a simple statement of historical fact. According to the ancient custom of the Eastern nations these bodies were to be burned. The effect of this display of divine power was to alarm those who had not trusted in God, and so lead them to exclaim, "Who among us shall dwell with this devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with these ever lasting burnings?"

These words have not the remotest reference to future retribution in Gehenna, only to present punishments on earth. They echo the outcries of terrified sinners in Jerusalem who feared that the perpetual conflagrations of war and the devastations of fire and sword by the invader—and God's wrath—would end in their own destruction, for "who can dwell in these perpetual burnings?" In verses 10 to 12 of Isaiah 33 the Lord addresses them:

"Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted. Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime [fuel for lime-kilns]: as thorns cut up [common Palestinian fuel for such] shall they be burned in the fire."

If a further application is desired, it is well to remember that "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). He is the Sun of Righteousness whose brightness glorifies the saints but is a fire of vengeance that burns up the worthless (Mal. 4:2, 3; Heb. 6:8; Rev. 20:9).

Then the text in question (verse 14) follows immediately. We would simply add that indifference to the sense of Scripture in an attempt to establish a predetermined point is unworthy of hermeneutics and is fatal to sound conclusions. The "fire" of verse 14 is manifestly the same as that of verse 12—the flame of war kindled in Palestine by the Assyrians, and God's predicted retribution. So the first contention collapses.

2. ISAIAH 66:24—CARCASSES, UNDYING WORM, UNQUENCHABLE FIRE

We next scrutinize Isaiah 66:24: "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." The scene is set in verses 22, 23: "For as the new heavens and new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me," and "all flesh" shall come to worship before the Lord. Then follows the declaration of the verse quoted. The "worm" and the "fire" in this passage can only legitimately symbolize the utter destruction of dead and insensible carcasses or corpses, as expressly stated. The text does not therefore support the theory of an eternal, conscious suffering of sentient, disembodied souls of the living damned, which have been consigned to an everburning hell.

Any attempt to deduce the immortality of the lost from this text must first assume the indestructibility of "carcasses." But an unquenchable fire is not necessarily one that will not ultimately go out. Rather, it is one that must consume and destroy until nothing remains (cf. Jer. 7:20).

The clause, "their worm shall not die," unquestionably signifies that the worms shall not cease to be until their sordid mission has been accomplished. The contention of eternal, conscious, human suffering could be sustained only by taking out the word "die," in the sense of ceasing to live, because only as so taken, with a negation, could the passage be construed to speak of eternal suffering.

And it is of course obvious that such "worms" are not endowed with immortality, or with powers of continuous reproduction throughout eternity in a blazing fire. We repeat that a "fire" that never shall be "quenched" does not necessarily mean it must burn forever. Jude, in verse seven, declares that Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth as examples of eternal fire. But Peter tells us that they were turned into ashes, "condemned . . . with an overthrow [Gr. katastrophe]" (2 [^]Peter 2:6). Thus Jude's "eternal fire" is equivalent to Peter's "ashes." It signifies ultimate extinction.

"Unquenchable fire" is therefore a fire that is destined ultimately to go out, but that cannot be put out until it has consumed all upon which it feeds. It thus denotes inevitable and utter destruction, and the eternal results of such awesome punishment. With this agrees Christ's solemn New Testament declaration that He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43, 45).

The "abhorring" clearly refers to the nauseous spectacle of the putrefying "carcasses." The reference to the "worm" is not to the remorse of a tormented conscience as some contend, but to literal maggots (Heb. *tola'*), bred in putrid substances (Ex. 16:20; Deut. 28:39; Isa. 14:11). And it is to be noted that the "worm" is distinct from that upon which it feeds. The allusion is unmistakably to the ghastly scenes of the ancient Valley of Hinnom, or Tophet, with its flames and its worms—where those permitted to walk over the fields of the slain could see the vast number of the dead and putrefying bodies of their former enemies. And the case in point, in "Isaiah's time, was the 185,000 slain of Sennacherib's host. So it is not the immortal soul but the multitude of the dead who perished that engages the unquenchable fire and the insatiable worm. That was the Old Testament type. And in the final, antitypical fulfillment, and the punitive

destruction of the wicked, there is depicted the feast for these worms at the "supper of the great God," to which the fowls of heaven are invited (Rev. 19:17, 18) Allusions to the "worm" that feeds upon the "carcasses," or dead bodies, appear frequently in the Old Testament, and are actually used to exclude all hope of restoration, and to declare that the punishment is eternal and without hope. (See Job 17:14; 19:26; 24:20; Isa. 14:11.)

3. DEPRIVED OF LIFE, NOT CONSIGNED TO MISERY

It is further argued that in Mark 9:43-48 Christ quotes the last two clauses of Isaiah 66:24 in proof of the eternal sufferings of the wicked in Gehenna, and thus gives divine support to the contention. But both the premise and the conclusion must be denied. Christ was not uttering words in proof of eternal suffering. Not a syllable did He express to that effect. He was warning the disciples that it is better to enter into life halt or maimed rather than having two hands or feet to be cast into the unquenchable fire of Gehenna—for it is better that one of the members should perish than the whole body be cast into Gehenna (Mark 9:43).

Cf. Isa. 66:15, 16—"Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. . . . And the slain of the Lord shall be many." In Mark 9, Christ contrasts the living and the perishing. But the perishing of one member, by its being cut off, is to deprive it of life, not to consign it to endless misery. It therefore follows that the perishing of the whole body likewise results in similar but total destruction. Consequently, the persons whose worm shall not die are those who have been reduced to peger (dead corpses). So the second citation, from Isaiah 66:24, obviously does not apply to Eternal Torment.

The ancient fire of Gehenna was not a fire into which living persons were cast, to be kept alive under torture, but one into which corpses were cast to be consumed. It was not fire designed to prey upon living beings, but upon the "carcasses" of animals, and the dead bodies of malefactors, hence the consistency of associating fire and worm together. What portion of the dead body the fire failed to consume, the worm would seize upon and devour. Even if one were cast alive into such a fiery place (as the wicked will be cast into the coming Gehenna), his life would soon become extinct, and his lifeless remains would soon be utterly consumed by these agents of destruction. So this contention likewise collapses.

4. DANIEL 12:2—RESURRECTIONS TO LIFE AND TO JUDGMENT

The third text, often cited, reads: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth [the inspired depiction of death] shall awake [in the resurrection], so me to everlasting life, and some to, shame and everlasting contempt [thrusting away]."

The awakening of "some" clearly applies to the resurrection of the righteous, destined to eternal life. As has been shown, those doomed to shame and "everlasting contempt" are excluded from eternal life. Their brief awakening is but for the execution of the judgment. The contempt is felt by the righteous survivors after the judgment and destruction of the contemptible have been meted out.

Thus the "everlasting" applies to the righteous, and the "contempt"—or more accurately "abhorrence"—is that of the righteous over the incorrigibly wicked, who perish. This text affords one of the clearer Old Testament fore gleams of the two fold resurrection—one group to life, and the other to judgment—expressly stated in the New Testament (Luke 14:14; John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:23; Rev. 20:4, 5).

Some assert that the everlasting contempt involves the continued conscious existence of those who are the recipients of the contempt referred to. But the epithet "everlasting" is not applied to the word "shame" ("abhorrence," R.V., margin)—the same Hebrew *dera'on* used in Isaiah 66:24 in referring to the corpses of the slain that lie unburied. *Dera'on* means "an object of abhorrence." Hence it is not the subjective consciousness of the guilty, but the objective abhorrence in which their memory is held by others, that is declared to be everlasting, (cf. Jer. 20:11, R.V.; 23:40).

5. CONCLUSION: CONTENTIONS OF THREE CITATIONS COLLAPSE

These are the stock Old Testament passages frequently cited in support of the Platonic postulate of the Eternal Torment of the wicked. But such an interpretation is in direct conflict with the prophet's own position and testimony elsewhere. Furthermore, these three texts are declared by many of the most competent Bible scholars to have no relevancy to a supposed unending torment.

Obviously, they are "theologizing hand-downs" from Neo-platonic Christian philosophers of the third and fourth centuries. They came from men steeped in the theory of the universal, Innate Immortality of the soul, and its corresponding corollary, the Eternal Torment of the wicked. They are unworthy of valid Christian exegesis. All three contentions collapse under scrutiny.