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The End of the Wicked.

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[THE following pages on the End of the Wicked, present the subject in a concise and comprehensive manner. The article first appeared in the Advent Review, and having been called for by many, it is now offered to the public in this form.—PUBLISHERS.]

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” 1 Pet. iv, 17.

It is at once evident that Peter was not very well versed in modern theological phrases; for if he had been, he would have asked, not “what shall the *end*” of the wicked be, but “what shall their future life be?” for theologians now tell us that the wicked will never have an end, but will live on to all eternity. But it seems never to have entered Peter’s mind that the wicked would have no end. His only inquiry was what that end should be.

We might turn over to Heb. vi, 8, or Phil. iii, 18, 19, and answer his question directly; but would the people receive it? No; they would bolt square off and say that it was to be taken figuratively or spiritually. I am sometimes tempted to liken the people of this generation to a flock of wild sheep. If

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you boldly approach them with a basin of salt, to salt them, they will immediately become frightened and run off. You must first build a fence on two sides of a field in the form of a triangle, drive them into it and then close up behind them. Now you can feed them your salt and finally tame them. So it is with the people. It will not avail anything to come up to them squarely with a "Thus saith the Lord:" for they will spiritualize it, if you do. You must lay out your arguments so as to get them to yield point after point till they find themselves in a corner; then you can array the truth before them and they cannot dodge it. Let us try this course on the question before us. The first side of the fence which we will build is,

1. *That the wicked do not receive their punishment till the day of judgment.* Peter declares this when he says, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." 2 Pet. ii, 9. Again he states the same fact in chap. iii, 7. After saying that the old world perished by a flood, he says, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Here we learn again that at "the day of judgment" will be "the perdition of ungodly men." Job bears the same testimony. He says, "Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens, that the wicked are reserved to the day

of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." Job xxi, 29,30.

Peter and Job both agree that the wicked are "*reserved*" to the day of judgment or destruction. But where are they kept in reserve? The Catholic would answer, "In purgatory," a sort of antechamber to hell. The Protestant, ridiculing the idea of a purgatory, is compelled to contradict the Scriptures just as far, and say that the wicked are not reserved at all, but go directly into hell when they die. But we see that they are reserved, and now the question is, where are they kept? Job continues; "They shall be brought forth at the day of wrath . . . Yet shall he be brought to the grave and shall remain in the tomb, the clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him." Job. xxi, 30, 33.

Thus we see that the wicked are reserved in the tomb to be brought forth at the day of judgment. This agrees with the testimony of Jesus. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." John v, 28, 29. In Rev. xx, 12, we have a description of the judgment, and verse 13 says: "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and the grave (margin) delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works." Thus the fact is taught throughout, that the dead are in their graves till the day of judgment.

In Rev. xx, we learn that there is to be a thousand years between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked; and also that the wicked do not receive their punishment till after their resurrection at the end of the thousand years. During this thousand years the earth is desolate, Isa. xxiv, Jer. iv, 23-28, and the righteous are in Heaven, judging the wicked, or apportioning judgment to them, out of the books in which their deeds are written. Rev. xx, 4, 12. In verse 4 we read, "And I saw thrones, and they (i. e., the righteous) sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." What judgment? Let Paul answer: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" 1 Cor. vi, 2, 3. So Christ taught his apostles. "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matt. xix, 28. Thus we see that the saints are to judge the world, and in Rev. xx, 4-6, this judgment is described as going on during a thousand years, while the wicked are not yet resurrected. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast,

neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." How is it with the wicked? Where are they? The next verse tells: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Here, then, we see that the rest of the dead, i. e., the wicked, are not alive during the thousand years; but are as Job says, "remaining in the tomb." At the end of this thousand years, the judgment of the wicked is finished. Then comes their punishment. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of Heaven and devoured them." Verses 7-9.

Thus I think that we have proved conclusively that "the unjust are reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished." 2 Pet. ii, 9. Hence this part of the fence is firmly built. But if any should deem it not strong enough yet, it can be strengthened to any re-

quired degree from Matt. xiii; 2 Thess. i, and ii; Mal. iv, &c., &c.

The second line of fence that we shall build is,

2. *That the wicked shall receive their punishment on this earth.* Those who hold the doctrine of an eternal hell, are never able to give its location. Their idea of it is, however, that it is a vast bottomless lake of fire, somewhere on the outskirts of all creation, where the damned writhe in torment and misery to all eternity, gnashing their teeth, cursing God, and sending up hollow groans and wailings amid the shouts and horrid yells of devils and demons. But does the Bible leave us in all this uncertainty on so important a point as this? We think not. Thus we read in Prov. xi, 31, "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner."

Universalists grasp at this text and say to the orthodox, "If the wicked receive their punishment on the earth, they will certainly be on an equal footing with the righteous, when they leave this earth." With the theory that the wicked receive no punishment on the earth except what they receive in this life, I know not how this conclusion can be avoided; for there is not one scrap of evidence that they will ever receive any punishment any where else.

But the statement is plain and explicit that the wicked shall be recompensed in the earth. Here we observe the same principle of justice that is carried out in worldly governments.

If a man commits a crime in the State of Michigan, he is not sent to Maine or California to be punished; but receives his punishment where he committed his crime. So with the wicked: *The earth has beheld their crimes: it must also behold their reward.* Peter bears decisive testimony on this point in 2 Pet. iii, 7-12: "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Here we see that Peter designates the day of judgment as the time, and the earth as the place for the perdition (destruction, *Web.*) of ungodly men. In verses 10-12, he describes the condition of the earth at that time. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" Will the reader try to comprehend the scene here described? The heavens are in flames, the whole earth is one vast lake of liquid fire, the rocks are melting with intense heat, the mountains run down, and all the elements of the earth are dissolved like lead. Everything that fire can consume is burned

up. Paul, speaking of this event in Heb. xii, 25, 29, says that those things which can be shaken are removed, but those which cannot will remain.

The question may be asked how this fire can be formed. In Isa. xxxiv, we have a description of the day of the Lord. Verse 4 says that "all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll." Verse 8 says that "it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." The next verse describes the condition of the earth at that time. It says, "And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch." Rev. xx, 9, tells us how this will be ignited, that is, "fire comes down from God out of Heaven." That this is correct is proved from the following verse which immediately brings to view the "lake of fire and brimstone." Remember that we are now trying to prove that the wicked will be punished on the earth. Isa. lxvi, 24, says, "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." All orthodox are ready to acknowledge that this is a description of their hell, for here is the worm that never dies and the fire that shall never be quenched. Very well: verses 22, 23 locate it on the earth.

Rev. xx, also locates the place of the punishment of the wicked on the earth. As we have already shown, verses 4-6 speak of the first resurrection and the judgment of the wicked by the saints during the thousand years. At the end of this time the "Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all." Jude 14, 15. See also 2 Thess. i, 7-10.

Rev. xx, 7-10, gives the result: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are (where? mark the answer) in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up (where?) on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of Heaven and devoured them. And 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 forever and ever."

All are ready to acknowledge that the "lake of fire and brimstone" here mentioned into which "the Devil is cast," is the same as the "everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels," mentioned in Matt. xxv, 41. Then if we can locate the lake of fire, we shall have found the place of the punishment of the wicked.

John says, "The Devil that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,

where the beast and the false prophet are." ("Are" is a supplied word. "Were cast" would be better words to supply according to the construction of the language.) The question, then, is, Where are the beast and the false prophet cast? In Rev. xiii, 1-10, we have a description of the beast. All Protestants agree that the beast represents Papal Rome which is located on the Eastern continent. The false prophet, as we learn from Rev. xix, 20, is the same as the two-horned beast of Rev. xiii, 11-18. The two-horned beast, or false prophet, has been conclusively proved to represent the United States, the ruling power of the western continent. Thus we see that the two beasts together constitute the leading influence of both continents. Now if the lake of fire is where the beast and false prophet were cast, where is it? Ans. *On the earth.*

But says one, "I thought that the wicked were cast into the bottomless pit." Very well, let us see where that is. In Rev. ix, 1-3, we read, "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven (where to?) unto the earth; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and (mark the location) the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit." The sun is above the earth; smoke ascending from the earth of course darkens it. Air extends only about 45 miles above the earth. So in order that it may be darkened

by *ascending* smoke, the smoke must arise from the earth. "And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth." By this and what follows, it is clear that the earth is the place of its location. But Rev. xx, makes this subject definite. In verses 1-3, we read: "And I saw an angel come down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit." Here it is said that "Satan is cast into the bottomless pit." In verse 10, it is said that he is "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are." Then the bottomless pit and the lake of fire are the same. The lake of fire we have already shown to be on the earth; and that it is formed when "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also," and "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved."

Thus we think that we have proved beyond a doubt that the wicked will receive their punishment on the earth, where they have committed their crimes. If further testimony is demanded on this point, see Matt. xiii, 30, 40-43; Mal. iv; Dan. ii, 35, &c.

Now we have finished the second side of our fence. Let us see what we have accomplished by it. By the first we have demonstrated that the wicked cannot be in hell till the day of judgment; by the second we have got the wicked confined to a definite spot

where we can see what will be done with them.

3. The third and connecting fence that we shall build is; *That the wicked shall be burned up, entirely consumed, by fire.* In Matt. iii, 12, we read, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Here we see that fire is introduced as the destroying agent. In Matt. xxv, 41, Jesus says, "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." Here it is definitely stated that the wicked will go into "fire." Again, "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Mark ix, 43-46.

It is not only to be fire, but it will be a *lake of fire.* "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and the grave (margin) delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not

found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Rev. xx, 13-15. In chap. xxi, 8, we read, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Chap. xx, 10, also declares that "the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are." This lake of fire we have before proved to be on the earth. How and when this lake of fire is formed, we learn from 2 Peter, iii, 10, 12. It is in the "day of the Lord," and by the melting of the earth and elements by fervent heat. Query: If the lake of fire, commonly called hell-fire, into which the wicked are cast, is not formed till the day of judgment, can the wicked be in hell now? They cannot. Thus we see the idea that the fire is the "remorse of conscience," is flatly contradicted by the Bible. It is a fire that "consumes," "devours," "burns up," &c.

With these facts before us, let us now ascertain whether this fire that is hot enough to melt the earth, will burn up, consume, and devour, the wicked; or whether it will preserve them to all eternity. If the latter is to be the case, we shall expect to find the wicked compared to diamonds, gold, silver, and other substances, which will endure heat the longest. But what must be our conclusion if, on the contrary, we find them compared to the most

combustible materials? Certainly we cannot conclude that they will exist in a lake of fire eternally.

1. We find the wicked compared to chaff. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the *chaff* with unquenchable fire." Matt. iii, 12. Now if you want to know whether the wicked will be burned up or not, try an experiment according to the illustration here used; that is, take a bundle of dry chaff and cast it into a hot fire. What is the result? I think that I hear you answer, "It is burned up, certainly." Very well. Now if the language in the Bible means anything, we have here a perfect illustration of the end of the wicked.

2. They are compared to stubble. In Nahum i, 10, we read: "For while they be folded together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry." Here we have another illustration of the end of sinners. Go and set fire in your wheat stubble when it is "fully dry," and tell me the result. You say it is entirely burned up—reduced to ashes. Then I answer in the words of the Bible, that the wicked "shall be devoured as (or in like manner to) stubble fully dry."

3. They are compared to tares. In Matt. xiii, we have the parable of the wheat and tares. Verse 30 says, "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in

bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." In the explanation, Jesus says, "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Verses 40-42.

4. The wicked are compared to dried branches. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." John xv, 6. Here Jesus uses the illustration of a man pruning a vine, and burning up the limbs after they are dry. This certainly conveys to our minds anything but the idea of eternal existence.

5. They are compared to fat of lambs. "But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." Ps. xxxvii, 20. The illustration that David here employs is that of a burning candle. It sits on the table—go light it—it gradually "consumes away" till it is gone. Not a particle of the "fat" is left. So will the wicked perish. In Zech. xiv, 12, their destruction is described without any figure.

6. The wicked are compared to thorns, briars, hay, wood, &c. "But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

Heb. vi, 8. "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." 1 Cor. iii, 12, 13. If you can tell what will be the end of hay, wood, stubble, &c., when tried by fire, you can also tell what will be the end of the wicked; for both will be the same, or else the figure is not a good one.

To sum up all these declarations and illustrations, we have the wicked compared to "chaff," "hay," "wood," "stubble fully dry," "withered branches," &c., with the positive statement every where made that they shall be burned up in fire. Now the question is, Do the comparisons and illustrations mean any thing, or do they not? Were they given to instruct us, or to deceive us? If the wicked are to burn eternally in hell-fire, then these comparisons certainly deceive us, as no such idea can be drawn from them. But if the wicked are really to be burned up, then all these illustrations are true to the life, instructive, and forcible. Look forward to the time when the earth is one vast lake of fire: behold the wicked in all their natural corruption cast into this burning mass. Now answer me if they will not be burned up as chaff in a furnace? Prejudice may, with a blush for a reason, venture to assert, "No I don't believe they will;" but inborn common sense will promptly answer, "Yes, they will."

We will now examine Mal. iv, and see what it teaches. "For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven." What "day" is here referred to? It is a day that shall "burn as an oven." Has the Bible any where else spoken of such a day? It has, and calls it the "day of the Lord," "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Pet. iii, 10. When this takes place, will it not burn as an oven? Most assuredly it will.

We have now learned that the day spoken of by Malachi, is the day of the Lord; and that the scenes referred to, will transpire on the earth. Now what is to happen at that time? We will read on. "And all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." Here the wicked are again compared to stubble. Now what will be done with this stubble? Will it be preserved eternally? Ans. "And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Verse 1. Thus we see that they are to be burned up root and branch, or as Isaiah says, "both soul and body." Chap. x, 18. Peter says that when the earth shall melt with heat "the works that are therein shall be burned up." Malachi tells us that wicked men also shall be burned up. Rev. xx, 9, declares the same thing. "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compass-

ed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of Heaven, and devoured them."

Now what is the condition of the wicked after they are "burned up root and branch?" Ans. "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." Mal. iv, 3. Here we see that the burning up mentioned, reduces the wicked to ashes. This is neither a figure, an illustration, nor a comparison, but a positive declaration of the end of the wicked. Now we can comprehend what the Bible means when it declares that the wicked shall "die," "perish," "be destroyed," &c., &c.

Who in the face of all these facts, can doubt that the wicked will come to an end? In other words, who can break through the enclosure that we have here built? But lest some shall endeavor to climb out we will now cover it with timbers which cannot be raised.

The covering which we shall use is,

4. *That, after the wicked are burned up, the earth will be purified and restored to the righteous.*

Having proved that the wicked are burned on the earth at the day of judgment, if we can now show that the earth will be restored to, and inhabited by, the people of God, we shall have demonstrated that the wicked must cease to exist even though the Bible had not declared it. For if the very place where the wicked are punished, is finally occupied by

the people of God, how can the former exist? We think Obadiah must have it right, that they shall be as though they had not been." Verse 16.

There are but two opinions concerning the destiny of this earth. One is that it will be the final abode of the saints: the other is that it will be burned up—entirely consumed, and cease to exist. It will be seen at once that either theory is equally fatal to the doctrine of eternal misery: for if the earth ceases to exist, the wicked must come to an end with it; as we have already seen that they will never leave this earth. And if the earth is inhabited by the saints, then again we must see that the wicked must cease to exist, as they cannot both occupy it at the same time.

But, as there is plenty of evidence on this point, we will now proceed to show that the fire which burns up the wicked will purify the earth and restore it to its primitive beauty. Peter says in 2 Pet. iii, 7, that the earth is "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." In verses 10-12, he says that the heavens and the earth shall melt with fervent heat, and the works in the earth shall be burned up. Then what? Answer. "Nevertheless we according to his promise, look for a new (or renewed) heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Verse 13. John describes the same scene in Rev. xx, 13-15; xxi, 1-5. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hell deliver-

ed up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

Here we first see the lake of fire formed by the melting of the earth; and the next thing is, a new earth comes forth from the purifying fires. Verse 5 says, "Behold, I make all things new," not all new things, as some would have it. This old earth is to be made over new again, just as a founder would cast a new stove from the iron of an old one re-melted. In Isa. xxiv, we have a description of the same event. First is a description of the earth in its desolate and dissolved state, verses 1-20, then the glorious reign of the Messiah. Verse 23. In chapters xxxiv and xxxv, the same event is spoken of. Chap. xxiv describes the dissolving of the heavens, the melting of the earth, and forming of the lake of fire and brimstone. See especially verses 4, 8-10. Chap. xxxv opens with a description of the new earth. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," &c. Please read the whole chapter.

The testimony in Mal. iv, which we have before read, first speaks of the "day that shall burn as an oven," and declares that it will

burn up the wicked; then he says that the righteous shall go forth and tread upon the ashes of the wicked. Thus he introduces the righteous as dwelling on the earth immediately after the wicked are destroyed. To the same purpose, see Matt. xiii, 37-43; Heb. xii, 26-29. I would especially call attention to Ps. xxxvii. Here David is speaking of the time when the wicked receive their reward, that is, are burned up on the earth, and contrasts this with the inheritance of the saints. We see by this that as soon as the wicked are consumed the saints possess the earth.

"Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." Verses 1, 2. When they are withered, where will the righteous be? Ans. "Trust in the Lord and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Verse 3. Again, "For evil doers shall be cut off; (then where will the righteous go? Ans.) but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." Verse 9.

In verses 10, 11, he draws another comparison. "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." As soon as "the wicked shall not be," "the meek shall inherit the earth."

Once more. "But the wicked shall perish,

and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. . . . For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth." Verses 20-22. Here we learn that as soon as "the enemies of the Lord shall consume into smoke," "such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth." So in verses 28, 29. "The seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever."

We have a similar comparison in verse 34. "Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it."

But the subject is not yet exhausted, for he continues, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet, he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Verses 35, 36. When the wicked "are not," then "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Verse 37.

In verses 38, 39, for the eighth time, he draws a comparison between the end of the wicked, and the end of the righteous. Here, as if to cover all possible cases, he makes the sweeping declaration that "the transgressors shall be destroyed together." And then as though he would silence the last objection, he exclaims that even "the end of the wicked shall be cut off."

"But the salvation of the righteous is of the

Lord: he is their strength in time of trouble."

In this Psalm it is declared of the wicked that "they shall wither as the green herb," "shall be cut off," "shall not be," "shall consume into smoke," "shall perish," "shall be destroyed," "end shall be cut off," &c., &c. But of the righteous it is declared three times that "they shall inherit the earth," three times that "they shall dwell in the land," that "their salvation is of the Lord," and "their end peace." In Ps. civ, 35, David, while contemplating the time when "the sinners shall be consumed out of the earth, and the wicked shall be no more," when all shall be peaceful and righteous, exclaims, "Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord." Then will be fulfilled Rev. v, 13: "And every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."

Thus we see that the Bible contemplates the time when God's universe will be free from sin and sinners. Who, as he looks forward to this glorious event, can refrain from joining with David in saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

To recapitulate: We see that the Bible not only declares that the wicked shall be burned up, consumed, devoured, &c., &c., but that the time and place of their destruction is so

defined as to demonstrate that they can have no existence after it is accomplished.

Now what answer shall we return to Peter's question, "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" I am satisfied with Paul's answer in Heb. vi, 8, "Whose end is to be burned;" or in Phil. iii, 19, "Whose end is destruction." Amen.



From STATISTICAL VAULT

(TNA)