

Fire is God's great antiseptic, and His use of it to destroy evil at the last day is not because He is vindictive, spiteful or cruel, but for surgical or cleansing purposes.

Rev. 21 : 27: Nothing that defileth can enter the New Jerusalem.

I John 3 : 8: God's object is to destroy the works of the Devil.

Rev. 5 : 13: God will eventually have a clean universe, in which every rational creature will praise and bless Him.

### 3.—HOW CAN WE RECONCILE THE BIBLE'S PICTURE OF HELL WITH THE LOVE AND JUSTICE OF GOD?

This reconciliation is not difficult if we keep three facts in mind:

(a) God does not arbitrarily consign anyone to Hell. He does not shut the door of Heaven against anyone. He wants all men to be saved, and has made abundant provision for this. But some people shut the door of Heaven against themselves! By persistently choosing evil they exclude themselves from Heaven and consign themselves to Hell. They are shut out from Heaven by their own unfitness for its society. Each man finally casts his own vote, either for Heaven or Hell. God simply endorses the sinner's own choice.

Ezek. 18 : 30-32; 33 : 11: "God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

II Peter 3 : 9: "He is not willing that any should perish."

John 3 : 16: His love provides a way for all to be saved—if they choose.

Isa. 28 : 21: Punishment is God's "strange act"—something that His whole nature recoils from.

(b) God's withdrawal of the gift of life from the wicked is in kindness to them. They would not be happy in a clean and sinless universe, any more than germs would be happy in sunlight, or in a strong antiseptic solution. They would welcome destruction in preference to the society of God and angels.

"The sinner could not be happy in God's presence. He would shrink from the companionship of holy beings. Could he be permitted to enter Heaven, it would have no joy for him. His thoughts, his interests, his motives, would be alien to those that actuate the sinless dwellers there. Heaven would be to him a place of torture. He would long to be hidden from Him who is its light, and the centre of its joy" (Steps to Christ, pp 17, 18).

Prov. 8 : 36: "All they that hate Me love death."

Rev. 22 : 11: "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still."

(c) God's withdrawal of the gift of life from the wicked is in kindness to the universe as a whole. God must safeguard the happiness and well-being of the universe at large—like a surgeon who cuts out a diseased organ, or amputates a poisoned limb, in order to "disinfect" the rest of the body, and set it free from the risk of disease or death.

It would not be love or justice for God to allow the cancer of evil to go on growing and spreading contamination forever, any more than it would be kindness for a doctor to spare a patient's gangrened foot or finger. The admission of one incorrigible sinner into heaven would expose the whole universe to the threat of evil developing a second time!

### 4.—ARE THE FIRES OF HELL BURNING NOW?

Matt. 13 : 40-42: The wicked will be cast into a furnace of fire at "the end of the world".

II Peter 2 : 9: The unjust are "reserved" unto the day of judgment to be punished.

### 5.—WHERE IN THE UNIVERSE WILL HELL BE LOCATED?

Rev. 20 : 7-9: "They went up on the breadth of the earth. Fire came down from God out of Heaven and devoured them."

Prov. 11 : 31: Sinners shall be recompensed "in the earth".