



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume X  
Issue 230

### Letter to an Annihilationist

by – A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

Dear Brother:

I wish to thank you for your courtesy and kindness in sending us a copy of the publication dealing with the subjects of death, hell and everlasting punishment. As we believe that death is death and not life, that “hell” is simply the unseen, there is much indeed in which we are quite agreed on in these subjects. Besides this we have also received from a friend your reply to our position on the universal reconciliation.

We have carefully considered what you have to say on this subject and trust that we can count on your careful reconsideration of universal reconciliation because, almost without exception, your objections are based on a misunderstanding of what that doctrine really teaches.

We, too, insist that Jehovah will destroy all the lawless (Psalms 145:20); that those who do not obey the gospel will incur the justice of eonian (or age-lasting) ruin (II Thessalonians 1:9); that those who will not hear the Prophet Whom Moses foretold shall be destroyed from among the people (Deuteronomy 18:19; Acts 3:23); that it is impossible to renew those mentioned in Hebrews 6 and 10 to repentance; that there is a sin unto death (I John 5:16); and that those represented by the goats go away into eonian (or age-lasting) correction. There is absolutely nothing in any of these Scriptures which conflicts with the universal reconciliation. Not one of these passages deals with the final outcome of God’s dealings. They all are concerned with His ways in bringing about His ultimate purpose.

Let me suggest that both of us add to the truth contained in these texts. You add the thought of finality. You express that thought in one instance when you say “there is to be no redemption from the second death.”

For this no Scripture is given, and indeed where can one be found? And what do we add to these verities? Such further verities as these: that God will *reconcile all* to Himself through the cross of His beloved Son (Colossians 1:20); that God *will* (not *desires*) *all* men to be saved and to come to the appreciation (acknowledgment) of the truth (I Timothy 2:4; II Timothy 1:25); that He is the Savior of *all* men, especially of those who believe (II Timothy 4:10); that as in Adam *all* are dying, so in Christ shall *all* be made alive (I Corinthians 15:22) – an expression which means more than resurrection, for it involves a part in the resurrection of *life*, not judgment (John 5:29); that the free gift came upon *all* men unto justification of *life* (Romans 5:18); that God has locked *all* in unbelief that He might have mercy upon *all* (Romans 11:32); and that *all* is of *Him* and *through Him* and *for Him* (Romans 11:36). This then, is our difference: while we both believe the passages you quote, you add a thought for which we find no warrant in God’s

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with
  - ... total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

Local: (814) 701-0063

bsn@studysshelf.com

www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor  
(clyde@studysshelf.com)

André Sneider – Managing Editor

Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

### Department Managers

Clyde L. Pilkington, III – Office

Nathan H. Pilkington – Shipping

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**LETTER** (continued from page 2177)

Word: we believe other Scriptures which speak of a time and a condition *after* the judgments to which you draw attention, for God locks up all in unbelief *that He may have mercy on all*. In other words, you believe the passages concerning God's ways at present, to the exclusion of those passages which set forth His ultimate purpose: we believe both.

The point of difference lies in the element of *time*. Should you be able to show that the passages you deduce really record the end and consummation of God's plan for His creatures, then there would still remain the necessity of reconciling them with the Scriptures which I have suggested. Two of the Scriptures you have proposed have definite marks of time. In one case we have "everlasting" ruin (II Thessalonians 1:9) and in another "everlasting" punishment (Matthew 25:46). I note that you consistently change this word to "lasting" with *aionios* in parenthesis. This shows that there is some doubt in your mind as to whether the word really means "everlasting." As you know, the word is formed from *aion*, an eon or age, which is a limited period of time. Hence *aionios* means eonian or age-lasting – not ever-lasting. In one of the pamphlets which we have sent you – "**All in All**"<sup>1</sup> – there is a study of this word along the same lines as your study of the words for "hell" etc. Every occurrence of the word is given careful consideration, and it is worth every effort, for all who take pains to examine this are forced to the conclusion that there was a time *before* the ages (II Timothy 1:9) and that the ages have an end (Hebrews 9:26). Since the ages are confined within finite bounds, that which is eonian or age-lasting, *cannot* be eternal. It will be useless for me however, to go into the matter here, as it is fully set forth in the book referred to.

Since, then, the *eonian* ruin of those who do not obey the gospel is confined to the eons or ages, what will hinder God saving them *after* the eons – as He has declared He will do? Those who believe now receive salvation with eonian or age-lasting

1. *All in All: The Goal of the Universe* (#6269) – This monumental work is the place to start in Knoch's rich works. A must read! 222 page PB \$10.95 (+ \$3.99 s&h) available from [www.StudyShelf.com](http://www.StudyShelf.com), 1-800-784-6010.

glory. Those who are not saved until after the eons or ages do not participate in eonian or age-lasting (everlasting) glory. Thus God is the Savior of all men and especially of those that believe. Once we see that what is called "ever" lasting is limited to the "eons" or ages and is not endless, the way is clear to believe all the passages which you have produced. That destruction does not necessitate annihilation is evident both from the way this word is used in other passages (the lost – destroyed – sheep of the house of Israel to whom the Lord was sent, for example) and the fact that those who have been destroyed will all stand before the great white throne. There could be no resurrection if they had been annihilated. An examination of the original Hebrew will show that the passage "*they shall be as though they had not been*" (Obadiah 1:16) is mistranslated. The verb is the same in both parts of the sentence. It should read "*they shall be as though they shall not be.*" This, instead of suggesting annihilation, refutes the idea altogether. Besides, the reference is not to mankind as a whole, but only to the nations in the day of the Lord. In that same day the proud and lawless shall be burned up, leaving neither root nor branch (Malachi 4:1); but even these must be included in "*the dead*" who stand before God at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:12). While we may reject as unscriptural the orthodox intermediate state and "hell," why should we go to the equally unscriptural extreme of annihilation, which, we must admit, precludes the fulfillment of God's great oath that every knee shall bow to Him (Romans 14:11)?

I am strongly inclined to the opinion that you do not hold that death is annihilation. Now the lake of fire is explained to us as being death. What scriptural grounds is there for believing that it is not death at all but annihilation? As resurrection was a possibility with the first death so it is with the second. This is put beyond question by the fact that at the consummation, when the Son hands over the kingdom to God the Father – long after death has been cast into the lake of fire, when there is no death but the second death – this is the death which is abolished by means of vivification, a resurrection of life. All are made alive at that

(see **LETTER**, last page)

# *Eden's Religion*

by – Steve McVey

Like many Christians are, I was a religious person for many years. I'm not anymore. It shocked me years ago when, for the first time, I saw plainly from the Bible that neither was Jesus. In fact, it was religious people who were His strongest opponents.

The word "religion" finds its origin in the Latin word, *religare*. It means "to bind," as in the sense of placing an obligation on somebody (*World Book Dictionary*). That's exactly what religion always does. It focuses on behavioral mandates that are supposedly necessary to satisfy what God expects from us, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The roots of religion go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. There were two trees in the Garden of Eden that were right in the center. One was the *Tree of Life* and the other was the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*. The latter was "the religion tree." Why would I suggest that? It's because it provided knowledge about what is good and what is evil – the cornerstone of all religion. Eating from that tree brings a person into the religious world of discerning right from wrong in an attempt to do the first and avoid the latter.

Isn't that what religion still does today? It tells us the things we ought to be doing and the things we ought to be avoiding. There's just one problem with the religious approach. God told us to avoid it altogether.

Note carefully in the Genesis narrative that our Creator didn't say eat from the good fruit on the tree but avoid the evil. He said not to eat

from that tree at all. His desire for you is that you live in union with Him, not out of religion. Morality isn't an issue at all when our actions flow from His indwelling Life. At that point, our behavior transcends morality. In fact, it is miraculous.

The sad reality in the modern church world is that the religious world of "Christianity" is unwittingly promoting the fruit of the forbidden tree as though it were the answer to our needs. We may say that we are defenders and proclaimers of the gospel, but in reality we are often peddling the poisonous, albeit good fruit the Serpent himself deceived Eve into eating.

The answer for us all isn't to improve our behavior. It's not to stop doing bad things and start doing good things. The fact is, even if we could eliminate all evil behavior and replace it with nothing but good behavior, we'd still have the same problem. We would still be up the wrong tree.

Our Father is calling us to abandon the fruit from the poisonous tree of religious behavioral modification. He is inviting us to partake [as it were] the Fruit of the *Tree of Life* every day. He invites us to find our Sustenance in the living Christ, Who said, "*Take, eat. This is My body which is broken for you.*" Because of His grace we are able to eat freely from the finished work on another tree that stood on Golgotha two thousand years ago. Eating from *that tree*, we will never hunger again.

*GraceVine*  
January, 2010

# Is the “New Birth” for Us?

by – A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

Now we are introduced to an ignorant teacher! Intense application to a single textbook for a whole life had not taught him the elements of the truth! Nicodemus, however, was impressed with the Lord’s works, little as he understood His words. Like the rest, he takes literally what is figurative. He should have known from Ezekiel, the prophet, that Israel could not enter the kingdom without a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). Spiritual regeneration, the one imperative condition, apart from which the kingdom cannot be entered, is utterly beyond his erudition. All that he considered vital was a physical relationship with the favored nation.

The Lord did not give out regeneration as good news, but as bad news. This is not the gospel, even for the Circumcision. The evangel is always concerned with God and His Christ, never with man and his needs or efforts. Of the latter nothing good can be said, no evangel can be formulated. The new birth is not an evangel in any sense. It makes a demand he has no means of meeting.

For one like Nicodemus, expecting to enter the kingdom by physical generation, it would be quite

a blow to demand spiritual regeneration. Men are utterly helpless in regard to their physical generation. They can do no more to accomplish their spiritual regeneration. It is the sovereign work of God’s spirit.

Searching as the figure is, it does not probe nearly so deeply into human helplessness as the truth for the present economy of God’s grace. Now, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17). In spirit, we skip the era of the kingdom, the renascence, and enter the new creation, over a thousand years later. A new birth will fit them for a life on earth during the millennial eon. The new creation fits us for our celestial destiny. They will receive a rejuvenation of the faculties, we will be changed at the resurrection and receive powers and capacities far beyond our present possibilities. Regeneration keeps company with repentance and baptism. The new creation accompanies the dispensation of the conciliation (II Corinthians 5:18).

*Concordant Commentary on the New Testament,*  
p. 143

## Re-Adjustment

by – E.A. Larsen 1884-?)

There is everywhere, on the part of believers, a sickish tendency to perceive of themselves as needing no re-adjustment in doctrine when once they have become settled in certain self-satisfying forms which they have been persuaded to be pure divine truth. They lose the mental and spiritual elasticity which is an imperative pre-requisite for continuous acquirement of truth. Our love dies in the cages of fixed forms and customs. Stagnation and petrification sets in. Before it is realized we have been made mummies in petrified dogmatism. What we then consider progress and growth consists of being “indoctrinated” and “established” in the forms. We lose the ability and the

desire to test and try what is, and what is not of God. An almost unavoidable consequence of such attitude is *man-worship*, and that even without being aware of it. We look to the teachers who have established our particular “system” to which we are attached, and dare not, or cannot, think for ourselves. We have become prisoners – slaves. We get into doctrinal ruts and grooves, and dare not (or are too lazy) to even try to get out of them. *We are out of adjustment.*

*The Differentiator*  
Vol. 12, No. 5  
September-October, 1950

# A Personal Prayer of Faith

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

God works to bring us to a place of weakness, so that we might be totally abandoned to Christ alone as our life. On *many* such occasions the Father has so moved in my life as to pray a faith-emboldened prayer similar to what I will now share with you. I do so for the encouragement of our many dear readers who have experienced this same working of Dad in their hearts and lives as well.

Father,

I seem so lost most of the time. My life and heart appear to be such a big mess. I have no idea what I am doing or where I am going, let alone what I should be doing, or where I should be going, or even who I really am. My heart aches and is so heavy. I give up!

After all: it's not about me anyway, right? I can't live the Christian life. I never could. I never will. It's You or nothing – but, the mess of my life is You working in me. You said so! You said that I was Your workmanship; You started me, You will complete and finish me. I am the workmanship, You are the worker. I am the clay, You are the potter.

I know that You know what You are doing, and Your Word is true. So, if You want to make a complete mess out of my life – have at it. I am Yours, and I am Your work. So I quit. If anything is going to get done then You'll have to be the one Who does it. After all, that's what YOU said, right? So, You must want this mess. Therefore by faith I will quit and let You do whatever You want with me.

You said that You work in me to “will” and to “do.” So, I don't “want-to” anymore. So, I quit. All I know to “do” anyway is what I have been taught all my life to “do” from the religious system; and if I know anything, that is all empty and vain, and it doesn't even work. Yet it is all I have known. So, I quit – and since You work in me to “will,” I am not going to “do” anything else with my spiritual life unless I “want” to, and right now I don't “want” to do anything. My heart is so heavy, it is so empty,

and You are responsible. After all, *You* are God, not me. *You* are the Potter, not me. *You* are the Father, not me; and God, the Potter, and the Father are all responsible agents!

So, if You do give me a “will” to do what You want, You also are just as responsible to “do” it in me. You said so! Then even if You work the “will” in me, I will make a mess out of everything, because even if I have the “want-to” I can't “do” it either. I don't even know how. So, You'll have to do both parts, just like You said you would do. Therefore if I don't “want” to do anything, and nothing gets “done” then it will just be Your fault, because I am just a creature – You're the One Who is the Creator. So there. I quit. Now it's all up to You. I am just going to trust You; You are all that I have, and I am going to rest in You. My quitting is going to be, for me, an act of faith. I am going to rest in this quitting, because my quitting is trusting You. I am *NOT* trusting You to *help* me; I just quit. I am trusting *You* to do it all *Yourself*. After all, You are God, and You're responsible.

If by chance You don't follow through with what You said, I am going to hold You responsible on the Day of Jesus Christ. When I stand before You You'll see what You made, and if You don't like it – well, I'm Your workmanship, I'm Your creation, so you can't blame me. If my life is just a big mess, it will be Your big mess, because I am just Your creature, and You made me weak and subject to vanity. I am a product of Your Own making. It all happened on Your watch. If You expected anything different out of me – in the weakness of who I am without You – then You were supposed to provide the “will” and the “do.” You said so!



I have believed for several years in *the salvation of all*. I have had a chance to read some of your blogs and the titles of your books. I will be ordering some of those. I am so happy to have this information. – **PA**

Loved it [*Daily Email Goody #2278*], Thanks. I look forward to these. They make my day. – **AR**

I was certainly blind to the truth of the salvation of all and I have NO doubt that I would be in a mental hospital today if I had not found the truth that God plans to bring everyone back to Himself through the cross of Christ. I became very grieved at the thought of any of my family going to Hell for eternity. I am so thankful that God locked us all up in unbelief that He may have mercy on us all. That is good news!!! – **MS**

Your book *The Church in Ruins* is both comforting and sobering because I work for a non-profit ministry. My days are numbered with this organization. This will put me in the very heart of living out Paul's evangel, but it must be done. God will see me through just like always. – **OR**

Love and appreciate all you're doing and the very gentle spirit you're doing it in. – **FL**

I just finished reading *The Church in Ruins*. It's very powerful. I ordered a few more copies of it from you to pass out to some friends ... I think it has a very important message and I'd like to enlarge the scope of its audience as much as possible. – **CA**

You have such a gift to put into words the simple truth. Thanks. I hope the Lord will lay on your heart to address some of the "hell passages" in that same simple sweet spirit that rob most otherwise sincere believers in our traditional churches of the joy we have come to know. – **OK**

Such insight and clarity. I have two sons who are atheists... I am relieved to know that they will eventually be saved in God's timing. I think a lot of their hostility to religion is well founded based on the things they were taught in the church and in school about God damning most of His creation to torment for eternity. I've also been depressed most of my life because of that teaching and being very upset for the fate of my sons. Now I have peace but I still wish they believed now and still pray that they will be granted the gift of faith in this present age. Thanks again for your teachings. I'm blessed that I can now read what you write. – **PA**

I always love finding a kindred heart! I sure am enjoying what you have been sharing. – **TN**

It is important to my walk with Christ to have friends that are like minded, and have come to understand the extent of God's grace. – **MO**

Glory be to God, just discovered your website... You are now on my Favorites list and look forward to future visits. I am especially impressed with the wide range of offerings by other Universalists than yourself. Magnanimous spirit, a good sign of fruits of the spirit! – **KS**

You always seem to hit the nail on the head, so to speak. – **CO**

I appreciate you for instructing and edifying the Body of Christ. – **PA**

(see **MAIL**, next page)

MAIL (continued from previous page)

Your book on *The Church in Ruins* is the best I have ever read. THE BEST ... I can't say enough about it ... You are one of the few I know of who see so clearly the sin of religiosity, and the treachery of modern "church." ...

Fantastic, fantastic job. The book is an atom bomb, in the best possible sense. Grace and peace to you, and thanks for your continual labors on behalf of the Body of Christ ... - **OH**

I hope this finds you and yours well ... I know ya'll are happy!! ... I do not want to miss one BSN ... What a blessing you are. - **AL** ■

LETTER (continued from page 2179)

time, fulfilling the grand promise that, "as in Adam all are dying, so in Christ all shall be made alive." If, at the consummation there is nothing but life, the apparent difficulty of limiting the "everlasting" life of the believer vanishes, he has life as long as there is any such thing as death, and when there is nothing but life – what else can he have? So that eonian or age-abiding life, for all practical purposes, amounts to "everlasting" life. Yet the destruction (or restraint as you suggest) lasts only for the eons or ages because, in the consummation there will be no death and no sin or restraint, for so perfectly will the Son have subdued all to God that He will hand the kingdom over to God as Father and God will become "All in all." Not "All in a few," as orthodoxy teaches, or "All in many," but "ALL in all." May His grace constrain you to consider this transcendent truth.

#### About the author:

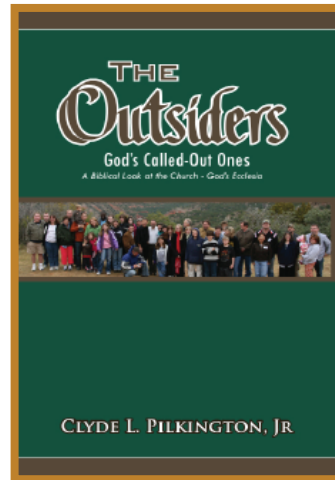
Born in St. Louis, he moved to Los Angeles at the age of ten. After salvation he became acquainted with, and later associated with, the Plymouth Brethren.

Knoch, a printer by trade, was a great student of the Scriptures. He published a series of articles "On Baptism" which appeared in the pages of E.W. Bullinger's magazine, *Things to Come* in 1907. In 1909, with Vladimir Gelesnoff, he began publication of the Bible study magazine, *Unsearchable Riches*, and founded the *Concordant Publishing Concern*.

Throughout his adult life he was a prolific author, continuing his work as editor of *Unsearchable Riches*, translating the *Concordant Version*, and authoring many rich Bible study publications.

# THE Outsiders

## God's Called-Out Ones



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This is an opportunity to explain why some who love the Lord no longer "go to church." It does not seek to persuade others to **do** something different; but rather to simply **be** who and what they already are "in Him." This is an uncovering of the truth of the church, and an encouragement for the members of His Body to enjoy the position and standing "in Christ" that they already possess, realizing that they are truly "complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10), that He alone is their Life (Colossians 3:4), and that His Life is full of freedom (Galatians 5:1).

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