

Dr. E. W. Bullinger and Universal Reconciliation.
Fact or assumption?
pp. 1 - 5

In Volume XXIII, pages 205 and 206, we gave an example of fallacious reasoning on the part of one, *Mr. W. Hoste, B.A.*, who inferred—apparently without knowledge of his writings—that the late *Dr. E. W. Bullinger* was a Universalist.

A reader in New Zealand has just sent us the following extract from the July, 1934, issue of “*Unsearchable Riches*”, from which it would appear that *Mr. A. E. Knoch* has, to say the least, made the same unwarranted inference:--

“DR. BULLINGER AND RECONCILIATION.—We have often been asked to publish Dr. Bullinger’s opinion of universal reconciliation. The temptation to do this was strong, for it would tend to break down the prejudice which he himself had created against it. But we were determined that God’s truth should not be based on any man’s opinion. Besides, he evidently did not wish to take a public stand for universal reconciliation until he had fully mastered the doctrine of the eons.”

“The matter came up in this way: I sent an advertisement of *Unsearchable Riches to Things to Come*, but he wrote back that he could not insert it. As it appeared in the next issue, I wrote him a note of thanks. He replied that he deserved no thanks, as it had been inserted by mistake. He said he had heard that I had something on the ‘aiones’, and that he would be glad to see what it was. In response I prepared the chart in which every passage containing the word is arranged in chronological order. In his last letter to me, he made the following statement: ‘It may help to a better understanding between us if you would kindly explain exactly what you mean by ‘universal reconciliation’.’ To an English ear here it savours of what is called ‘Universalism’, in which every one who ever lived will have a second chance. If it refers only to the future and not to the past I have no quarrel with it. But I should like it made clear. And I am sure you can and will do it for me.”

“I remember distinctly the satisfaction that this letter gave me. There could be no doubt whatever that he would accept the truth once he had investigated it, according to his own written statement. But this was not to be, for, soon after, he died. The chart was returned to me long afterward, when the *Companion Bible* was finished. It is easy to prove, from his published works, that Dr. Bullinger denied ‘Universalism’. But it is also true that, at the very last, only his illness and death prevented him from accepting the doctrine of the eons and the universal reconciliation” (*A.E.K.*).

In also transmitting the following extracts from “*Things to Come*”, the Journal edited by *Dr. Bullinger*, our reader, writes: “I have no intention of defending *Dr. Bullinger*. The very best thing to do is to let the lion out, and he will defend himself”:--

“C. H. C.—It is news indeed to hear that we believe in the ‘Universal Fatherhood of God’, ‘Universal restoration, and the purgatorial process’. Such charges must come, not from ignorance, but from malice; and is a clear and open breach of the ninth Commandment.”

“To such, I give no answer. To you, you have an emphatic and flat denial of the false charge. No reader of ‘*Things to Come*’ would entertain it for a moment. May we ask them to ‘nail it to the counter’ at every opportunity; though we fear the lie has got too

good a start even to be overtaken and crushed: and it is too good a weapon for our opponents, to expect them to abandon very readily'. 'The Day will declare it.'" (*Vol. XVI, July, 1910, page 84*).

"A DISCLAIMER.—Re the advertisement of 'Unsearchable Riches' in our last issue, it was entirely due to a mistake between ourselves and our advertising agent."

"Some of our friends have felt aggrieved; but we hope that both they and others will have fuller confidence in us for the future" (*Vol. XVIII, Nov., 1912, page 133*).

"QUESTION No.408. 'RECONCILIATION.'—A.S. (Scotland). Does Christ's work include the angels, *see* Col. i. 20: to reconcile all things to Himself, things on earth and things in heaven?"

"To understand this we must understand the words used. There are two words rendered reconcile."

"(1) *Katallasso*. It occurs only six times (Rom. v. 10; I Cor. vii. 11; II Cor. v. 18, 19, 20); and means conciliation by changing the relation of *one* person or thing towards another; whereas *diallassomai* means that the change is mutual with each of the two parties. This word occurs only once in the New Testament, *viz.*, Matt. v. 24."

"(2) The other word is *apokatallasso*, and denotes that this change of relationship need not affect both (of two) parties, but that the change on the part of the one is complete and absolute. This word occurs only in Eph. ii. 16; Col. i. 20, 21."

"If the word 'destruction' has any meaning (*see* Psa. cxlv. 20), how can what is destroyed be conciliated or reconciled? God can be said to have changed His relationship to the world when He has made an end of all evil. This conciliation or change is in Himself, as in Col. i. 21. The cross changes His attitude toward all things. He can now be 'just' in His judgments, and yet 'the justifier' of all who believe Him."

"'The heavens are not clean in His sight'; but, when Satan is cast out, and the earth purged of all evil, His attitude to 'the things on earth and things in heaven' will be changed, but as to the things themselves that have been destroyed and burned up, how can they be 'reconciled' in any sense of the word?"

"The conciliation is 'unto Himself', and His relation to saved sinners is changed through the death of His Son, so that He can present them holy and unblameable, and unimpeachable in His sight. It is He Who is conciliated by the atonement of Christ, and not ourselves. We are changed from enemies to friends by His grace and power."

"We are convinced that the interpretation of the word 'reconciliation', which connects it with two parties, is a misunderstanding; just as the word 'accept' is almost universally misunderstood and misused. It is God who accepts Christ as the sinners' substitute, as He accepted Abel's lamb (Gen. iv. 4; Heb. xi. 4)."

"He accepted it by consuming it with 'fire from heaven' (Psa. xx. 3) as He accepted all sacrifices (*see* Lev. ix. 24; vi. 12, 13; I Kings viii. 64; xviii. 38; II Chron. vii. 1, etc.). And yet, to-day, sinners are everywhere exhorted to 'accept Christ' for themselves, instead of being exhorted to believe God that He has accepted Christ as His provided substitute for everyone who believes what He has revealed as to their guilt, and as to their need of a Saviour."

"So with what is spoken of as 'reconciliation'. There is no such thing as regards the sinner. There is conciliation on God's part toward the sinner in virtue of the substitute which He has provided and accepted, but there is an 'everlasting destruction', not some future reconciliation, for those who refuse to believe Him" (*Vol. XIX, Jan., 1913, p. 11*).

"QUESTION No.414. 'RECONCILIATION.'—D.J. (Middlesex). What is the force of the preposition *apo* in *apokatallasso*? Does it, as some say, describe the change in us, from enmity to love?"

"In our answer to Question No.408 in the January Number, we gave all the references where the words *katallasso* and *apokatallasso* occur. We add here the occurrences of the noun *katallage*; Rom. v. 11 (translated atonement); xi. 15; II Cor. v. 18, 19. A consideration of all these passages will show that there is no idea in any one of them of

the reconciliation being mutual. In that case, as we pointed out, the word used would have been *diallassomai*, as in Matt. v. 24, which its only occurrence in the New Testament.”

“Mutual reconciliation can only be where each party has wronged the other. What injury has God done to us, that we have to forgive?”

“The enmity in the heart of man against God is due to the fact that man has wronged God, and anyone with a knowledge of human nature will admit that it is the one who has done wrong who seeks to justify his position by blackening the character of him he has wronged. This is one of the awful consequences of man’s fall. Because of sin man is under the wrath of God (Rom. i. 18; Eph. ii. 3; Col. iii. 6). By the death of Christ this wrath is appeased, and God can ‘be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus’ (Rom. iii. 26). Those who receive this reconciliation (or atonement) (Rom. v. 11) are removed from (*apo*) a condition of being under wrath and condemnation (Rom. viii. 1), to one of acceptance and peace with God. The change is one of position or standing, not of character. That comes afterwards.”

“And here is the mistake that so many make. They are looking for acceptance because of some change in themselves, instead of believing God, and accepting His statement as to reconciliation (II Cor. v. 18-20). Not until the sinner believes in the love of God, does any love to God spring up in his heart (I John iv. 10, 19), driving out the enmity which is there by nature. Reconciliation is a question of pure grace or favour on God’s part, and we are conformed to the image of His Son, by contemplating Him and becoming more and more acquainted with the prefectness of His work. To grow in grace is to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Pet. iii. 18, R.V.).”

“Any other view of ‘Reconciliation’ (such as universal reconciliation) does away entirely with the Bible word ‘destruction’, and deprives it of any meaning that can be given to it. There is no place for the two. As ‘destruction’ is a Bible word, and ‘universal reconciliation’ is a human formula, the latter must be abandoned” (*Vol. XIX, April, 1913, page 46*).

“S.S. (Lanarkshire). Of the resurrections in I Cor. xv. 23, 24, the resurrection of Rev. xx. 12, 13, is, as you say, implied in I Cor. xv. 24. When the Son delivers up the kingdom to the Father He will have put down all rule and authority and power. This must be after the judgment of the great white throne, for that deals with some rebellious ones whose doom is to be cast into the lake of fire. This is called the second death, and there is no hint of any resurrection from it. Those who claim that there is should be prepared with some Scripture to that effect. The first death comes to righteous and unrighteous alike, and Scripture is full of testimony to the resurrection from it. The second death comes only to the ungodly, and while it is frequently spoken of as their end (Psa. xxxvii. 38; Prov. xiv. 12; Rom. vi. 21; II Cor. xi. 15; Phil. iii. 19; Heb. vi. 8; I Pet. iv. 17), we are not acquainted with a single passage that speaks of a resurrection from that” (*Vol. XIX, May, 1913, page 60*).

The foregoing extracts—the last of which it will be noted is dated May 1913—and *Dr. Bullinger died but a month later, viz., on 6th June, 1913*—speak for themselves, and inasmuch as the teaching concerning “universal reconciliation” does, of necessity, refer “to the past”, it is pure assumption (to put it mildly) to state that “*only his illness and death prevented him from accepting the doctrine of the eons and the universal reconciliation*”.

We may say that in reply to a recent enquiry of *Dr. Bullinger’s* niece (*Miss E. Dodson*), who was in close attendance on him until the date of his death, she writes:--

“I have never heard my uncle say one word in favour of universal reconciliation.”

Our own personal contact with the late Doctor enables us to most definitely confirm this.

It will be apparent that the statements made in the above quotation from "*Unsearchable Riches*" are pure assumption, and they prompt the pertinent question as to whether the one who dares to make them without a real shred of evidence is a safe guide in things eschatological, for with such individuals there is ever the danger that they will (maybe unconsciously) see things through media of their own colouring. "*The day will declare it.*"