**Questions and Answers**

From the [July 13, 1899 issue](https://sentinel.christianscience.com/issues/1899/7/1-46) of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

*If it be true that no one will, or can, suffer "eternal punishment," what did Jesus mean when he said: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment" ?*

An Earnest Seeker.

The literal meaning of the Greek word *aionios,* which is translated "everlasting" in the common version of the New Testament, is "age-lasting" or "age-abiding," and is so translated by Young, Rotherham, and others. The word *kolasis,* translated "punishment," also means "correction."

By substituting the literal meaning of these two words the text will read, "And these shall go away into age-lasting correction." This brings out the Scientific sense. It does not mean that the sinner will anywise escape the punishment due for his sin, but it does mean that his punishment will be effectual in correcting him. By "age-lasting correction" is meant a period, of longer or shorter duration, which will suffice to correct all that needs to be corrected. The good and true in each individual consciousness needs no correction, for it is of God; but whatever of evil is found therein must be corrected [destroyed] before the individual attains perfection.

Which is more in harmony with the declaration "God is Love," which is so beautifully portrayed in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the teaching that certain human beings will suffer punishment throughout eternity, or that suffering for sin will finally compel all mankind to turn from sin?

What is the purpose of punishment? Is it vindictive or reformatory? Surely the latter is more in harmony with the teaching that God is Love. The former might do for a personal deity whose wrath could endure throughout eternity, and who took pleasure in the suffering of others, but it is not consistent with the character of a loving Father who would have none of His children to be lost, and is patiently drawing them to Himself.

The question arises, If age-lasting punishment is not eternal, what about age-lasting, or everlasting life? Will that likewise come to an end?

By no means. The law of cause and effect is eternal, and so long as the cause exists, the effect is sure to follow. The cause of suffering is sin or error, in some form. When the cause is removed the effect ceases to be, just as the fire goes out naturally, when fuel is no longer added. Punishment endures as long as there is anything that deserves to be punished, but no longer.

God is Life and Life is eternal. God is the cause of all that is real, and the effect must of necessity remain so long as the Cause exists. Age-lasting life endures as long as there is anything that deserves to live. The good, pure, and perfect deserve to live throughout eternity, because God is their author. It follows, then, that the righteous, who because of their right doing inherit everlasting life, have gained the true sense of Life, which is eternal—without end.