



John H. Paton

(1843-1922)

John H. Paton was born on April 7, 1843 in Galston, Scotland, the fourth of twenty children, and died September 6, 1922 in Almont, Michigan. As a soldier for three years during the American Civil War he was “led to search the Scriptures for himself, and became unsettled concerning the popular church doctrine of human destiny.”

He was inclined at first to the idea of “Conditional Immortality,” and taught this view first as a Baptist pastor, then in a small church affiliated with the Advent Christian Conference of Michigan. Eventually “he grew to believe in a ‘larger gospel’ of Christ – that He is the First and the Last, the All-Comprehensive One, the Unit of the whole race; that He is therefore the Life, the Light, the Judge and the Savior of all; and that no one will be hopelessly lost.”

He wrote and published three books which upheld this position (among other topics), *Day Dawn*, *Moses and Christ*, and *The Perfect Day*, and published a magazine called *The World’s Hope*, which emphasized his views on human destiny. He also traveled as an evangelist and teacher of “The Larger Hope.”

In his magazine in early 1900 he included a discussion he had with some neighboring pastors on the question, “Is Hell Endless?” The following are his thoughts regarding the “doctrine of hopeless annihilation”:

But, if I may express my opinion concerning such a judgment, it really places the endless punishment on the righteous – those who are to live on eternally, and who alone could suffer the loss of their dear ones – and not on the wicked at all. It seems strange how any thinking person can speak of “eternal punishment” of what does not exist. I fully believe that the Christian life is by far the happiest life in the world; and if I could have my choice I had rather be snuffed out of existence at death, than to be one of the few to live eternally without the companionship of the many loved ones on earth. – *The World’s Hope* (vol. 18, p. 31)

It is on account of the oneness of Christ with the race, as its Head, that what He did, or what was done to Him, is gospel for all mankind. The apostle Paul tells us that the gospel consists in the fact that Christ died for (on account of) our sins, and was raised for (on account of) our justification (Romans 4:25; I Corinthians 15:1-4). In II Corinthians 5:14 we learn that “if one died for all, then were all dead.” Then there must have been a sense (fundamental and essential) in which all were in Him, He being their Representative. – *The Paton-Williams Debate* (February 4 and 6, 1906, p. 1)

It is doubtful that a full set of Paton’s magazine is still in existence. Even his books are difficult to find. A few years ago the *Saviour of All Fellowship* republished the portion of *Moses and Christ*

which was entitled, *The Great Revelation*, but this is also now out of print. Yet the scant records of his remarkable ministry still available make us wonder how many others through the centuries were troubled by the traditional view and similarly were led by searching the Scriptures to “a larger hope,” even a firm expectation of universal reconciliation.

Source: *Saviour of All Fellowship*

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