

# Oracles of God

*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God – 1 Peter 4:11*

## Why F. LaGard Smith and his book (*After Life*) must be rejected

By Brian Chadwick

**After Life**, written by F. LaGard Smith (Scholar-in-Residence for Christian Studies at Lipscomb University), was first introduced to me by Brother Nick Wilson (Hyvots Bank, Edinburgh) when he heartily recommended the book in his October 2004 Christian Worker book review. Nick stated:

...LaGard's view of hell is the main thrust of the book and whilst he has, as ever, presented an excellent case, I remain unconvinced...

....despite the fact that I disagree with some of his conclusions, I can heartily recommend this book.

In other words (thankfully) our brother disagrees with LaGard's view on hell, but (astonishingly) he has no problem publicly recommending the book to Christians (young and old alike) throughout the brotherhood (2 John 9-11).

With these thoughts in mind, by quoting LaGard's own words, let's take a closer look at what the book actually teaches on the all-important subjects of (1) **soul sleep** (which is what LaGard believes takes place in the intermediate realm, after physical death, but before the final judgement) and (2) **annihilation** (which is what LaGard believes will be the punishment given to the wicked at some point after the Final Judgement).

I will also include quotes from LaGard's book, which upon closer inspection, reveals that he has used very persuasive (but irrelevant) emotionally charged methods of argumentation.

Study with me. It is my aim in this article to show clearly that the teachings of F. LaGard Smith contradict and undermine the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

## The Intermediate Realm of the Dead

### Soul Sleep

For example, soul sleep (unconscious passive inactivity, no punishment and no communication) is what LaGard Smith believes takes place in the intermediate realm of the dead, after physical death, but before the Final Judgement (Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the New Testament). Here's a sample of what the book teaches:

That hades (Sheol) is a state of passive inactivity in which the soul is not conscious, but is said to be "sleeping"... (After Life page 12).

The two biblical terms for the intermediate "waiting room" of the dead, *sheol* and *hades*, indicate not so much a *place* of the dead, as the *state* of the dead. In that state, there is darkness, inactivity, and unconsciousness – most often referred to as "sleep" (After Life page 92).

There is no compelling evidence of punishment, licking flames, or gnashing of teeth for the wicked in the intermediate state of the dead (After Life p 92).

*Sheol* is the resting place of *all the dead* – the righteous and the wicked – and therefore should never be thought of as a place of punishment (After Life page 100).

In the absence of any direct, explicit teaching that the dead are, sentient, lively, and communicative, surely we must come down on the side of passive unconsciousness (After Life page 108).

... eventually one day we die, take a long nap in the cocoon of *hades*, and re-emerge at the Day of Resurrection...(After Life page 160).

According to the teachings of LaGard Smith, then, the intermediate realm of the dead is not so much a **place** of the dead but the **state** of the dead. No punishment. No communication - Just passive inactivity and unconscious sleep - until we re-emerge at the Day of Resurrection.

Is this what the Bible teaches? Please consider Luke 23:43 as a brief but effective refutation.

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Cambridge CB1 8NL

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#### Editor / Contact

Brian Chadwick  
Tel. 01223 501861

Email: [brian.p.chadwick@ntlworld.com](mailto:brian.p.chadwick@ntlworld.com)

## The Thief on the Cross Luke 23:43 (Matt.9:6)

One of the thieves being crucified at the same time as Jesus repented and asked the Lord for mercy. Jesus said to him: "Assuredly, I say to you, **today** you will be with me in paradise." Question: When Jesus and the thief died and went into the hadean realm, did they experience the paradise promised by Jesus, or did they experience the state described by LaGard and called unconscious sleep? (Acts 2:24, 27, 31).

LaGard deals with Luke 23:43 by simply ignoring the most straightforward (and natural) meaning of the text. Instead, he spends all his efforts correctly pointing out that Jesus and the thief did not go directly into heaven on that day, and then (on page 86) he cleverly sidesteps the Lord's actual words by saying:

Listen again to the conversation at the cross, and particularly to the thief's request: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." What he's asking for is not a *place* but a relationship. In his own non-theological way, he's asking for salvation. And it is that salvation, surely, which Jesus is granting him: "*the right* to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God." That day-"today"-was the day of his salvation!

But LaGard, why didn't you deal with the actual words of Jesus in Luke 23:43. Jesus said to the repentant thief: "... today (on the day they were talking) you will be with me in paradise" (Jesus and the thief would be in a place described as a paradise). And the only place they went **together** on that day was into the hadean realm. Did they just take a nap? Or did they go into a section of the hadean realm designated by Jesus as a place of paradise?

LaGard's nonsensical interpretation of Luke 23:43 certainly protects his unconscious soul sleep doctrine, but it doesn't in anyway whatsoever explain where Jesus and the thief actually went on the day in question. For Jesus to imply that he would be **in** the hadean realm, **with** the thief; **on that very day**, in a place he describes as a **paradise**, does not in anyway whatsoever harmonize with the teaching from LaGard's book.

In fact, in the Lord's teaching about the Rich Man and Lazarus, the same place designated by Jesus as a paradise, is also referred to as "...Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:23) and "...[a place] of comfort" (Luke 16:25).

Jesus, of course, came triumphantly out of the hadean realm (the paradise section) on the third day, but we often forget that the Thief and Lazarus still occupy this realm today as they await the Resurrection and Final Judgement. Are they waiting in paradise, or are they just taking a nap (John 5:28-29; Acts 17:31)?



## The Rich Man and Lazarus Luke 16:19-31

Perhaps one of the aspects which shocked me the most about LaGard's book is the part where he quite blatantly, criticizes, undermines – and basically removes – the very teachings of the Son of God Himself (regarding the Rich Man and Lazarus and what takes place in the hadean realm).

It disturbs me greatly to know that influential brethren will simply agree to disagree and maintain fellowship with what follows from the pen of F. LaGard Smith:

The story of the rich man and Lazarus, correctly understood in its context, was never meant to be a realistic picture or *sheol* or *hades*... (After Life Page 92).

It's a story! But, because it gives a specific name to one of the characters portrayed (and throws in Abraham, as well), we assume it somehow must be "more real" than Jesus' other parables. Indeed, some would ask why Jesus would tell such a story if it were *not* real? Or why, if it is not real, Jesus would perpetuate false ideas about *hades* (After Life page 110).

As to why Jesus would use a story so out-of-keeping with the realities of *hades*, we can only speculate. But in the "best guesses" department, the basis for the story may not have originated with Jesus. A reasonable possibility is that Jesus took a popular Jewish folktale about reversal of fortunes in the afterlife and adapted it to his own purposes (After Life Page 112)

...literature of the period, collected in what we know as the Apocrypha reflects a growing consciousness about the afterlife on the part of many Jews. Given that climate, there is reason to expect that stories of this type were floating around. Passages in Enoch and 2 Esdras, for example, contain words and concepts included here in Jesus' story (After Life page 112).

We've seen the way LaGard cleverly side stepped Luke 23:43. And now, after reading his quotes in connection with the Rich Man and Lazarus (i.e., "It's a story!...so out-of-keeping with the realities of *hades*...stories of this type were floating around ...etc."), we also see that he is even prepared to blatantly contradict, undermine and simply remove the very teachings of Jesus Christ Himself, in order to continue with his soul sleep doctrine.

On page 111 he writes:

That the story of the rich man was part of Jesus' ongoing discussion with the Pharisees - not specifically about the afterlife, but about our values in this *present* life - is seen in the ending dialogue, in which Jesus brings us full circle back to his earlier curious remarks to the Pharisees.

But LaGard, how can you possibly say that Jesus' ongoing discussion is not "specifically about the afterlife." This is an extraordinary statement to make, to say the very least. Jesus was obviously (as the trend of thought and drift of ideas clearly shows) now showing to the wealthy Pharisees who derided Him (which literally means, those who turned up their noses at him - verse 14) the terrible and awful place they would go to and experience if they continued to pursue the love of money and serve self instead of God. Is it possible to read Luke 16:19-31 and then say that Jesus was not dealing, "specifically" with the afterlife? Concerning the rich man in particular, Jesus states:

The rich man died and was buried. **And being in torment** in *hades*... (Verses 22-23)

Then he said, "I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him [Lazarus] to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, **lest they also come to this place of torment**" (verses 27-28).

Did Jesus use a story which describes a place of torment for the wicked (when they die and go into the *hadean* realm) knowing full well that such a place does not exist?

Why would Jesus present the rich man as begging Abraham to send Lazarus back from the *hadean* realm (in order to warn his five brother's not to come to what he calls a place of torment) when He knew full well that there was no such thing as a place of torment?

On page 110 LaGard writes:

But just how literally are we to take this story? For instance, we immediately have a problem when the rich man asks Abraham for water to cool his tongue. What tongue? What of the rich man's physical body has survived the voracious appetite of the maggots and worms Isaiah talked about? And what water would there be in *hades*?

But LaGard, only Jesus knows the best way to describe a soul in the *hadean* realm. The rich man's request for water was not granted and may well have just been wishful thinking on his part. Perhaps Jesus was referring to parallel (but spiritual) sense organs. Who knows! We simply have no idea what the rich man or the *hadean* realm are, "made of," so we can hardly criticise and say reference to a tongue or water is not appropriate.<sup>1</sup>

It is simply inconceivable for us to even hint at the possibility of Jesus deceiving the money loving Pharisees into thinking there is a place of torment awaiting them in the *hadean* realm. It would be more appropriate, surely, for us to acknowledge that we just don't know all the ins and outs regarding what constitutes the soul and the *hadean* realm (Deut. 29:29).

## Annihilation: The Main Thrust Of the Book

LaGard's view on hell, annihilation (the idea that God's final punishment for the wicked will not be never-ending conscious torment, but complete and total annihilation out of existence) is indeed, as brother Wilson correctly pointed out in his book review, "**the main thrust of the book.**"

And as we look at LaGard's quotes (in this section) we need to be aware that LaGard uses words like "everlasting destruction" and "eternal punishment" simply to mean total and complete annihilation. The unredeemed will cease to exist. Nothing whatsoever (body **or** soul) will remain.

Please read these quotes carefully. LaGard's case for annihilation relies heavily, without any supporting Greek scholarship, on the way he cleverly re-defines the meaning of several key biblical words and phrases. Here's a sample of what he teaches:

### “Totally wiped out”

What follows is a case for understanding hell's punishment as ultimately culminating in the complete and total destruction of the wicked, body and soul. The primary scriptural corner-stone for the case is Matthew 10:28 (After Life page 167).

This is also precisely what being “saved” or “lost” is all about. The very existence of our souls is at risk (After Life page 189).

In hell, just as in the flood, those who have rejected God and have refused to believe in his son will be totally wiped out completely eradicated. Their existence will come to an abrupt end (After Life page 184).

As the greater weight of scriptural evidence indicates, the only option is eternal life versus eternal death. Blessed existence versus non-existence (After Life page 190).

### “Eternal Punishment”

“Eternal punishment” will no more be punishment throughout an endless eternity than was the immediate, devastating punishment suffered by the people of Sodom and Gomorra (After Life page 164).

And what say you, Paul? Is there such a thing as “eternal punishment”? Yes, indeed. “When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels...He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.” And how will they be punished, Paul? Will it be with ongoing, continual, everlasting torment? No, “they will be punished with *everlasting destruction* and shut out from the presence of the Lord...” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10) (After Life page 187).

According to the teachings of LaGard Smith, then (and remember, he doesn't use any supporting Greek scholarship whatsoever) the Holy Spirit used words like “**everlasting destruction**” and “**eternal punishment**” to signify, not never-ending conscious torment in hell but complete and total annihilation out of existence (at some point after the Final Judgement). Is this what the Bible teaches?

For starters, it is significant to point out, that approximately 150 of the world's greatest and most seasoned Greek scholars, those who translated the New Testament from Greek into English (in the King James and American Standard 1901 versions of the Bible) never once translated any Greek word as annihilate or cease to exist.

And as one author correctly pointed out, everlasting annihilation is a very unlikely and odd meaning for the words everlasting destruction. Think about it - **everlasting** - annihilation!<sup>3</sup>

On page 167, LaGard declares that Matthew 10:28 is his, “**primary scriptural cornerstone**,” for proving his case for annihilation, and on page 186 concerning Matthew 10:28, he states:

How can one possibly miss the plain meaning of Matthew 10:28 which derives from the contrast between the power of man and the power of God? Jesus is saying that *man* cannot kill the soul, but *God* can!

But LaGard, where in Matthew 10:28 does Jesus say that God can: “**kill the soul**”? LaGard states: “Jesus is saying that *man* cannot kill the soul, but *God* can!” This is not what is stated in this passage. Didn't LaGard notice that Jesus changed words in Matthew 10:28? Jesus used one Greek word (**apokteina**) for what man can do (kill the body) and another Greek word (**apollumi**) for what God will eventually do (destroy both soul and body in hell). Here's how the passage reads with the important Greek words added for emphasis:

And do not fear those who **kill** (apokteino) the body, but are unable to **kill** (apokteino) the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to **destroy** (apollumi) both soul and body in hell.

The parallel passage in Luke 12:4-5 is also significant and helpful. It shows clearly that God is going to do something to a person *after* the physical body has been killed. Once again there is no mention of God killing or annihilating the soul out of existence; only casting **into** hell:

And I say to you, my friends do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and **after that** have no more that they can do.

But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast **into** hell; I say to you, fear Him!

And when we remember, as we determine the meaning of “destroy both soul and body in hell” that the bodies of **all** the dead (prior to the fulfillment of Matthew 10:28) will already have been resurrected into a state of “**incorruption**” (Gk word 861: *aphtharsia*; which according to Strong's means “unending existence”):

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in **incorruption** (1 Corinthians 15:42).

When we remember these very important scriptural facts, then we can know for sure that it is simply not possible for the words “destroy both soul and body in hell” to mean that God will annihilate the wicked out of existence. Think about it. What would a person who has been annihilated have to fear?

If the bodies of **all** men, both the just and the unjust, are going to be raised immortal, and they are (for this is what unending existence is), then it is simply impossible, if words have meaning, for the doctrine of annihilation to be true (cf Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:52-53).

Indeed, as Paul says, “If the dead (and, in particular, the wicked dead) do not rise (and do not have unending existence) “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor. 15:32).

This is exactly what people can say if the doctrine of annihilation is true. In other words, **Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are annihilated out of existence.** In fact, isn't that what the world *already* believes and practices: what the world is hoping for?

### Greek Scholarship

Consider also the testimony of noted Greek Scholarship. Various forms of the word “destroy” or “destruction” appears 512 times in the New King James version and none of them have the lexicographical meaning of “annihilation” or “to cause something to pass into nonexistence.”<sup>2</sup>

This is very important because lexicographers (those who painstakingly compile and edit the vocabularies of the Greek and Hebrew language) lean heavily on how a particular word has been used in ancient secular history. But it is the significance given to that word by the Holy Spirit in the actual Bible passages themselves which is their primary and ultimate concern.<sup>3</sup>

With these thoughts in mind, and at the same remembering once again that LaGard's book offers no lexicographical evidence whatsoever to support his annihilation view, here's what some of the most respected and widely used scholars say about the Greek word **apollumi** (translated destroy in Matthew 10:28).

### Word 622 – apollumi

...from 575 and the base of 3639; to *destroy* fully (reflex. To *perish* or *lose*), lit. or fig. : - destroy, die, lose, mar, perish (**Strong's** page 14).<sup>4</sup>

The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being. This is clear from its use (**W.E.Vine** page 302).<sup>5</sup>

Metaphorically, to devote or give over to eternal misery: Mt. 10:28 (**J.H. Thayer** page 64).<sup>6</sup>

Destroy here is not annihilation, but eternal punishment (**A.T. Robertson** page 183).<sup>7</sup>

*The fundamental thought is not annihilation, but ruin, loss (as sheep, Matt. 10:6; 15:24, etc.; Luke 15:4, 6, lost to the fold and to the shepherd; so the lost son, Luke 15:24)... (E.W. Bullinger* page 220).<sup>8</sup>

In Matthew 8:25, when the disciples were fearful of drowning in a storm on the Sea of Galilee, they awoke the sleeping Lord Jesus and said: “Lord, save us! We are **perishing!**” (present tense form of *apollumi*). Surely they were not saying: “Lord, we are in the process of going out of existence.”<sup>9</sup>

Consider also the context and historical setting of Jesus' statements about *destruction* in hell. The Pharisees, the largest and most popular Jewish sect in first-century Palestine (the ones who Jesus said, “sit in Moses' seat,” Matthew 23:2) taught that the lost soul suffered eternal conscious punishment:<sup>10</sup>

So when Jesus talked about the destruction of the wicked in hell and referred to their weeping and suffering, the Pharisaic crowds would have understood him to mean endless sufferings, unless he specified that the punishment was annihilation (which of course he never did).<sup>11</sup>

And as for the wicked who died in the flood and in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, let's not forget or conveniently overlook the fact that they only experienced the killing of their bodies at this time. They were not annihilated out of existence. Absolutely not! The Bible teaches clearly that the wicked are cast down into the hades realm where they are humbled and bear shame as they await the Resurrection and the Final Judgement (Matt. 11:23-24; Luke 10:10-15; Ezekiel 32:17-32; Isaiah 14:3-11; Luke 16:19-31; Job 21:30; John 5:28-29).

## Thus Saith the Lord – Matthew 25:46

And finally, in this section, the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ, the genius of anticipating and defeating the strong and fierce attacks which He knew would be made upon His teachings by false teachers throughout the Gospel age, in a verse consisting of only 14 English words, made an argument for believing in never-ending conscious punishment / torment which is simply impregnable and devastating towards those who hold the doctrine of annihilation (Matt. 7:28-29).

In Matthew 25:46, in the context of the Final Judgement scene, Jesus makes the following parallel (antithetical) statements:

“And these will go away into everlasting (**aionios**) punishment, but the righteous into eternal (**aionios**) life.”

In the style of Nehemiah 8:8, Adam Clarke, in his commentary on Matthew 25:46, makes the following comments regarding Jesus' use of the Greek word *aionios*:

But some are of the opinion that this punishment shall have an end: this is as likely as that the glory of the righteous shall have an end; for the same word is used to express the duration of the punishment, **kolasin aionion**, as is used to express the duration of the state of glory: **zoen aionion**.

It needs to be made perfectly clear. It is the punishment itself which is described as eternal, not merely the results. One can exist and not be punished; but no one can be punished and not exist. Annihilation avoids punishment, rather than encountering it.<sup>12</sup>

### Irrelevant Methods of Argumentation

Another aspect of LaGard's book – which is worthy of closer inspection and critical exposure. Is the fact that he presents the doctrine of everlasting conscious torment as unfavorably and unfairly as possible. Question: Did LaGard, purposely and strategically, use the following, irrelevant, **poisoning the well**, type arguments, in order to misrepresent the God of the Bible and gain an unfair emotionally charged advantage?

#### Emotionally Charged

Here are some of LaGard's emotionally charged methods of argumentation. They are not biblical, but they are very persuasive because they bring about (in the unsuspecting reader) an attitude of disapproval towards the God who would carry out such a punishment:

No, not a twisted, cruel God who tortures the wicked, over licking flames... (After Life page 183).

Hell's everlasting destruction won't be at all like the cartoon cliché, with a red-suited devil, pitch fork in hand, grinning sadistically as creatures around him roast forever amid leaping flames and curling smoke (After Life page 187).

...why would a loving God subject any of his creatures to endless torment, fully aware that we are as weak as “dust”? (After Life page 191).

And how could heaven be heaven if just of the back porch of heaven is a fiery pit of screaming souls! (After Life p 180).

However, contrary to what has been presented here (the colourful but unbiblical imaginations of LaGard Smith & Dante Alighieri notwithstanding), the Bible's **true** exposition of the torments of hell keeps in the foreground the fact of divine moral judgment, and does not in any way offer a lurid (sensational) portrayal of torture.<sup>13</sup>

Acknowledging the horribleness of eternal hellfire does not reduce God to some sort of monster running His own Auschwitz! <sup>14</sup> God will never exceed what is right and just *and* deserved (Genesis 18:25; Psalm 98:9; Romans 2:6 -11).

#### Logically Irrelevant

Here are a couple of LaGard's logically irrelevant methods of argumentation (Bold emp. Mine):

Are we forced to assume from this comparison (Matt. 8:29; 18:23-35, BC) that God will employ actual agonizing torture; **or might we more reasonably understand** the intent of the passage to be that God will *punish harshly* in the same way that torture is harsh? (After Life page 180).

...the souls of the wicked would have no place to exist except in the presence of God. Unless, that is, they are extinguished forever. **Seen in this light, God's consuming wrath is not vindictiveness**, but moral outrage against all that is unholy (After Life page 196).

The implication of the first statement is that the reader would be **unreasonable** (irrational, illogical) to believe that God will employ actual everlasting conscious torment as a punishment.

The implication of the second statement is that God's consuming wrath would be viewed in a bad light as being **vindictive** (vengeful in a bad way) if the doctrine of everlasting conscious torment was the correct view.

By arguing in these ways. LaGard persuades (intentionally or unintentionally) by evoking in the unsuspecting reader attitudes which are likely to cause the acceptance of annihilation and the rejection and disapproval of conscious torment.

Instead of trying to disprove the reader's position with a "thus saith the Lord," this type of argument influences the reader's mind to believe that conscious torment for the wicked is (1) unreasonable and (2) makes God appear in a bad (sinful) light as vindictive.

Concerning this type of argument, in his book *Introduction To Logic*, Irving M. Copi states:

How they succeed in being persuasive despite their logical incorrectness is in some cases to be explained by their expressive function of evoking attitudes likely to cause the acceptance of, rather than supplying the grounds for the truth of, the conclusions they urge.<sup>15</sup>

And how do we guard ourselves against this type of unsound but persuasive mode of argument? We simply remember that we "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7) and "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It is God, through the words of the Bible, not emotional man, who defines and sets the standards for what is just and unjust:

I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right (Isaiah 45:19).

... the judgment of God is according to truth... (Romans 2:2).

The scriptures reveal what that measure is, and therefore an explanation of what the inspired words of the Bible actually teach, not a philosophical approach, is the only one that will yield satisfactory answers.<sup>16</sup>

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isaiah 8:20).

If any one speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11).

For example, from a **human perspective**, the sufferings of Job (Job 1-2) were not deserved, but God allowed them; the sin of Achan (Joshua 6:18; 7:1-26) did not seem to deserve death but God demanded it both of him and his family; remember also the death penalty imposed upon the one caught gathering sticks on the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-36); and the punishment for Uzzah when he put out his hand to steady the Ark (2 Sam.6:6-7; Num.4:15; 1Chron.15:13).

None of these examples, apart from divine revelation, seem to square with the character of God as **humanly** or **emotionally** defined, yet scripture authenticates them all as being true and perfectly consistent with a Holy and Righteous and Just God<sup>17</sup> (Deut.32:3-4; Nah.1:3).

The same is true concerning the doctrine of everlasting conscious torment. If the words of the Bible teach it, and they most certainly and emphatically do, then the doctrine should be received and accepted as being true and perfectly consistent with a Holy and Righteous and Just God (Rom. 2:2-9<sup>18</sup>; John 3:36<sup>19</sup>).

### In Conclusion

Is there not a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing (Ecclesiastes 3:5; Ephesians 5:11; Romans 16:17)?

The apostle Paul said, "the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37), and in 1 Corinthians 1:10 he pleaded with the church for unity:

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **that you all speak the same thing**, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

The idea that we can agree to disagree on such significant matters makes the words of the Bible in 1 Corinthians 1:10 meaningless. Have we reached the stage where influential preachers and elders are basically saying to God, "**we will not speak the same thing**" (cf Jer. 6:16; 44:16).

LaGard Smith and his book must be rejected, not heartily recommended throughout the brotherhood to Christians young and old alike (Mark 9:42).

We should be warning and persuading those who have not obeyed the Gospel about their **continued** existence throughout eternity, not proclaiming LaGard's false hope of their eventual **extinction**. "For God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33; John 17:20-21).

### End Notes

1. James Patrick Holding, *Bedtime for Spirits*, internet article, page 11.
2. Robert Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), page 108.
3. George Wigram, *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (Baker Book House Grand Rapids, Michigan 1989) page IX.
4. James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible* (Hendrickson Publishers Peabody, Massachusetts) page 14.
5. W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Fleming H. Revell Company Old Tappan, New Jersey 1981), page 302.

6. J.H. Thayer, *The New Thayer's Greek – English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Hendrickson Publishers Peabody, Massachusetts), page 64.
7. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Baker Book House Grand Rapids, Michigan) Volume 1 Matthew, page 83.
8. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* (Zondervan Publishing House Grand Rapids, Michigan), page 220.
9. Wayne Jackson, *Will Wicked People Be Annihilated in Hell?* (Christian Courier Website: Questions Tuesday, August 29, 2000), page 2-3.
10. Pharisees, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Fully Revised* (W.B. Eerdmans Publishers Grand Rapids, Michigan), Volume: K-P, page 823.
11. William V. Crocket, *Four Views On Hell* (Zondervan Grand Rapids, Michigan), page 172.
12. Gerstner, *The Bible and Hell*, (Internet) part 1, page 38.
13. Trevor P. Craigen, *Eternal Punishment in John's Revelation* (The Master's Seminary Journal, Fall 1998, Internet article), page 202.
14. David Moore, *The Battle For Hell: A Survey And Evaluation Of Evangelicals Growing Attraction To The Doctrine Of Annihilationism* (Lanham, md.: University Press of America, 1995), page 28.
15. Irving M. Copi, *Introduction To Logic Fourth Edition* (Macmillan Publishing Co., INC New York. 1972), page 72-75.
16. Richard L. Mayhue, *Hell: Never, Forever, Or Just For A While?* (The Master's Seminary Journal, Int.), page 140.
17. Ibid. page 147.
18. Romans 2:8-9 says there will be “**indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil.**” It is impossible to see how these promises can be harmonized with cessation of existence.
19. With parallelism much like that in Matthew 25:46, the verse declares that the true believer has eternal life and the unbeliever has God's **wrath abiding**, with the sense of continuation, on him. The concept of annihilationism would contradict the biblical sense of “continued abiding” (Mayhue, page 144).

With the oracles of God the Author is present. You cannot avoid this power. It will make the Word either "a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death." 4. They make all other oracles vocal. (1) Nature has its solemn voice, but it is not heard where the gospel is not. In heathendom the very heavens are turned into idols, and God is excluded from the thoughts of men. The Oracle of Athens was one of the many inhabitants of Athens, and assisted Kratos in his quest to defeat Ares. At the ancient Greek city of Delphi, there was a priestess known as the Pythia, who lived at the Delphic Oracle, a site where prophecies from the gods were received by mortals. Many people would consult her for various information, though her predictions were almost always vague about its true nature. Often the temples would be constructed in a manner that a second person would hide in