

In June of 2011, a majority of representatives to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, agreed to a Resolution “On the Reality of Hell”. (The text of which can be found at <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1214>)

Shortly afterward, Jason Pratt, a Southern Baptist theologian and apologist for trinitarian and historical Christianity, invited SBC members to consider supporting an alternate resolution:

On The Reality Of The Victory Of The Love And Justice Of God
June 2011

WHEREAS, representatives of the Southern Baptist Convention, in a June 2011 meeting, dedicated a Resolution to address the publication in 2011 of the book “Love Wins” by Rob Bell; and

WHEREAS, at no point in this Resolution did the framers show the slightest evidence of having even read the book, much less of responding to Rob Bell’s arguments and claims per se; and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches that God will judge the lost at the end of the age (Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Peter 2:9; Revelation 20:11-15); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus explicitly does not consider the “last state worse than the first” (2 Peter 2:20) of even those who “return to their own vomit” or who “after washing return to the mire” (2 Peter 2:22) to be beyond His express mercy and salvation (Matthew 9:32-34, 12:22-24, 43-45); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus spoke the strongest possible rebuke against those who regarded as Satanic His salvation of such whose last state was worse than the first, even of those who having been saved fell back into even worse sin (Matthew 12:30-32; Mark 3:28-30); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches that in repeating this rebuke later (as reported in Luke 12:10) Jesus did so in the context of warning His disciples to reject the leaven of the Pharisees, which was hypocrisy (Luke 12:1); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches not only that Jesus warned of a sin that would not be forgiven either in this age or the age to come (Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10), but also that Jesus exactly at the same time emphatically declared that all sins whatever no matter how great would be forgiven (Mark 3:28, the emphasis in Greek of which is sometimes muffled in English translation); and

WHEREAS, disciples of God are thus required to limit the salvation in favor of hopelessness or limit the punishment in favor of hope (interpreting one verse in light of the other, either way around); and

WHEREAS, those very words were spoken against teachers and leaders who were supposed to be disciples of God, leading the people of God thereby, when they insisted against limiting the punishment in favor of hope; therefore let all Christians be

INVITED to search into these matters for themselves, rather than be led even by accident into siding with the Pharisees against whom Christ spoke this rebuke.

Similarly,

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches (Matthew 25:31-46) that the baby-goats (in Greek, the original language of the scriptures), the least of Christ's flock who believe they are the first and are surprised to find they have not been serving Christ (Matt 7:21-23), shall be sent into imprisonment (2 Peter 2:9) even into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15), where they shall be thirsting (Luke 16:22-25), and hungering while the mature flock from the east and the west who will be surprised to find they have been serving Christ (Matthew 25:37-39) are feasting (Luke 13:28-30; Matthew 8:10-12, 19:30, 20:16; Mark 10:31), and shall be treated as strangers (Matthew 10:14-15; 18:17; 25:12), and shall be naked and filthy (too many OT references to count!); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus shall send these baby-goats, the least of His flock, into this eonian kolasis because they refused to give water to those who are thirsty, and to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked, and to invite in the stranger, and to visit the sick and those in prison, even to those who are the least belonging to Christ; therefore, let all Christians be

INVITED to decide if they shall be of the mature flock who as the Bride of Christ shall, as part of the "eonian gospel" (Revelation 14:6-7), be following the Spirit in inviting the filthy outside the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:11, 15) to slake their thirst in the water of life without cost (Revelation 22:17) flowing (Revelation 22:1-2) out from the throne of God and of the Lamb, out of the city (Ezekiel 47:1-12), out of the never-closed gates (Revelation 21:25), even unto the great sea which shall thus be made fresh water (Ezekiel 47:8-12), and thus to invite those outside the gates to wash their robes that they may have the right to enter by the gates of the city to eat of the tree of life (Revelation 22:14), the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations who formerly rebelled against God (Revelation 22:1-2), thus inviting even the kings of the nations to no longer be strangers (Revelation 21:24) but to walk by the light of Christ and bring their glory into the City (Revelation 21:26) into which nothing unclean may come unless their names have been thus written into the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27); or otherwise be

INVITED to decide if they shall refuse such an "eonian gospel" for others under Christ, even for hopeful brisk cleaning from God (as "eonian kolasis") treating this as hopeless punishment instead for the least of all those who belong to Christ--as the baby-goats most clearly are being sent into "eonian kolasis" for refusing in regard to those they regarded as unworthy of salvation. Thus as our Lord warned, even to His own apostles, "the last

shall be first and first the last” (Luke 9:48), and to His other rebel servants who insisted on hopelessness over against the salvation of God, “Whoever does not gather with Me scatters” (Luke 11:23).

Furthermore,

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches that the day of repentance was not only Moses’ day (Hebrews 4:7; Psalm 95); and not only David’s day but the day of the Hebraist (Hebrews 3:13); and not only the day of the Hebraist but our day today (unless salvation of sinners is supposed to have ceased after the day of the Hebraist!); and not only our day today but for day after day “as long as it is called ‘Today’” (Hebrews 4:13), even into the Day of the Lord to come as prophesized by Moses in Moses’ day (“For the Lord will vindicate His people and will have compassion on His servants when He sees that their strength is gone, and there is not even any remaining slave or free”, Deuteronomy 32:35-36, among numerous other Hebrew scriptures); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches that even Moses, by his sin, did not come into God’s rest in the day of Moses, but died outside the promised land (Deuteronomy 32:50-52), nor did even Jesus lead the people into rest when He led them into the promised land (Hebrews 4:8); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly teaches that as Christ having died once to bear the sins of many shall not die again but live unto salvation from sin to those who eagerly await Him (Hebrews 9:28), so it is likewise appointed for men to die once and after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27) when all shall be raised by Christ, the good to a resurrection of life and the evil to a resurrection of judgment (John 5:25-29); and

WHEREAS, the Bible thus clearly precludes a second death for even those resurrected to judgment, and yet there is a second death for those thrown into the lake of fire with Hades and Death (Revelation 20:13-15), and yet at some time after this, when the old things have passed away and there is a new heaven and a new earth, there shall be no more death and no more curse but Christ shall make all things new (Revelation 21:3-5); and

WHEREAS, the Bible also clearly states that in the declaration of the making of all things new, Christ our Lord, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, shall give to the one who thirsts water from the spring of life without cost so that those who thirst and drink shall overcome to inherit these things (Revelation 21: 5-7); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly goes on to portray those whose part is in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8) outside the never-closed gates (Revelation 21:25; Isaiah 60:11) of the New Jerusalem descended from heaven (Revelation 22:15) being evangelized by the Spirit and the Bride to accept Christ and drink of the water of life given freely without cost (Revelation 22:17), thus obtaining permission to enter the city and eat of the tree of

life (Revelation 22:14) the leaves of which are for the healing of the rebel nations (Revelation 22:2); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly states that this shall happen in Jerusalem's favor after God has struck her in wrath for her idolatries, desolating her to the death (Isaiah 59), yet God shall have compassion on her and raise her far beyond her former glories, so that the nations shall bow to the soles of her feet and shall joyfully worship God in her (Isaiah 60) despite having been covered in darkness (Isaiah 60:2); and

WHEREAS, the Bible clearly states that in the final days the kings of the nations shall lead their people astray and make war even against the second coming of Christ until our Lord scatters their bodies for the birds of the air to eat (Revelation 19); yet

WHEREAS, the Bible also clearly states that Christ shall thus be shepherding them (although this is often obscured in English translation) with His rod of iron in overthrowing them in pursuit as a king against rebel armies (Revelation 19:15-21), as Christians regularly pray should happen for us unto our salvation (Psalm 23); and

WHEREAS, the Bible afterward very obviously shows the kings of the earth bringing their glory into the New Jerusalem in the Day of the New Heaven and New Earth, and leading their people in as well by following the light of Christ, where none may enter unless they have had their names written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:22-27); then Christians everywhere are

INVITED to search the scriptures for themselves and see if the Bible precludes any opportunity of salvation after death, or whether instead the Day of Repentance shall indeed continue "for as long as it is called Today", even into the Day of the Lord to come, although surely it is better to avoid the Day of Judgment at all, and not be found to be a baby-goat, fondling our sins impenitently. For "how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3) that even the rebel angels shall repent to worship the First-Born Son when the Father leads Him again into the world (Hebrews 1:6; Psalm 97:3-7) so that those who worship idols will be ashamed to see their idols worshipping God Most High?!--so that even "the king over all the sons of pride", figured as Leviathan, shall be drawn out of the swirling depths and be taken as a covenant servant forever? (Job 41)

Moreover,

WHEREAS, Christians are required to preach an invitation to all the world to rejoice in the fair and righteous judgments of God, and indeed to proclaim that all creation shall sing to Him a new song (a song of repentance and reconciliation out of the pit of destruction, Psalm 40:2-3 among very many others) praising Him in joy (Psalm 96:1-13; 98:1-9), even coming out in victory from the beast and from the number of his name and from the idolatry of his image, standing upon the sea of glass mixed with fire (Revelation 15:2-4) as all the nations will come and worship before Him (Psalm 86:9) once the wrath

of God Who lives into the eons of the eons is finished and worshipers can come into the Temple (Revelation 15:1, 8); and

WHEREAS, all nations, whether or not they know the Law, shall be judged by the Law written into their hearts by God, defended as well as accused on the day when God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus (Rom 2:13-16), so that there will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, both Jew and Gentile, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, both the Jew and the Gentile, as there is no partiality with God (Rom 2:9-11), so that God shall render life eonian to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, and shall render wrath and indignation to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness (Rom 2:5-8); then,

DO WE WHO ARE CHRISTIANS SUPPOSE, that when we pass judgment on those who practice sin, and yet do the same ourselves, thinking lightly either way of the richness of God's kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the mercy of God leads to repentance, that we shall escape the judgment of God!!--or do we think that we Christians have some excuse, every one of us who passes judgment on others who are sinners, even when those others have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, so that although we also are sinners with them we are not condemning ourselves in insisting upon the judgment of God falling upon those who practice such things which are worthy of death? (Romans 1:18-32, 2:1-2) Or shall our insistence on the eonian whole-ruination of sinners from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (Romans 2:7-10), not also be our own ruination? Shall we, if we refuse mercy even in that whole-ruination, be shown mercy? (Luke 6:36-42) Or shall we, being given God's mercy unto salvation, yet insisting on others being thrown into torment without forgiveness, precluding any opportunity of salvation after a certain point, be given over into imprisonment and torment ourselves until we have paid the uttermost farthing? (Matthew 18:21-35)

So then,

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ and the apostles, out of their love for lost people, affirmed the reality of Hell in their own preaching to urge sinners to receive the grace of God, to repent of their sins, and to believe the gospel, and thereby to enter into abundance of eternal life (Matthew 10:28; John 10:10; Acts 17:30-31); and

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ taught His apostles to teach that, if we are to fear the One Who can destroy both body and soul in hades (Matthew 10:28), namely Himself, we should also not fear, for even we of little faith are of more value than flowers which are arrayed as Solomon for a day and then are cast into the fire (Matthew 10:31; Luke 12:27-28); and

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ affirmed that it is the thief who comes to kill and destroy, but that He comes to lay down His life for His sheep, those in His fold and those outside His fold, so that they may live and may have it abundantly (John 10:7-18); and

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ and His apostles taught that He God, fairly overlooking times of ignorance, expects men to repent of their sins, for He has fixed a day in which He will judge the inhabited earth into {dikaiousune} or “fair-togetherness” (typically translated in English as “righteousness”) through a Man He has appointed and raised from the dead (Acts 17:30-31), against which merciful and loving resurrection judgment we should not sneer but should listen concerning this (Acts 17:32); and

WHEREAS, the prospect of fellow human beings, created in the image of God, spending eternity in Hell grieves us deeply; and

WHEREAS, The Scriptures exhort the church to hold fast to and proclaim the “faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) and to “guard the good deposit” of truth the Lord has entrusted to us in His Word (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:14), including difficult truths; and

WHEREAS, the church has addressed this issue throughout her history, with orthodox Christians having affirmed consistently and resoundingly the reality of a literal Hell, yet with some orthodox Christians (even great defenders of the Trinity) also affirming the hope of God over and beyond Hell; and with many otherwise orthodox Christians affirming that where grace exceeds sin superexceeds for not as the grace is the sin; yet with some orthodox Christians managing to affirm that where sin exceeds grace superexceeds for not as the sin is the grace; and

WHEREAS, Baptists throughout our history even from the early days in Europe, unto the 17th and 18th and early 19th centuries in England and America, and in some cases even unto now in Appalachian America, occasionally have not rested satisfied with only this or that half of the gospel but insisting instead on the maximum gospel; and

WHEREAS, in the Southern Baptist Convention today, there are Calvinists who affirm and insist on the Biblical doctrine of the original (not subsequent) persistence of God’s salvation from sin to completion; and

WHEREAS, in the Southern Baptist Convention today, there are Arminians who affirm and insist on the Biblical doctrine of the total scope of God’s intention and action to save sinners from sin; and

WHEREAS these parties are encouraged to respect one another in our Convention, even if they disagree with one another as heretical on each of these points; and

WHEREAS there are even some Baptists in the Southern Baptist Convention who agree with the Calvinists and with the Arminians, that both are correct on what they affirm, namely that God shall persist to completion in acting to save all sinners from sin, being pleased to reconcile to Himself all things--whether in the heavens or on the earth--through the blood of His cross; and

WHEREAS it is incumbent on Christians, no less than on anyone else, not to bear false witness against our neighbor, especially unto condemnation; and

WHEREAS the recent Southern Baptist Resolution “On The Reality Of Hell” implies that Rob Bell does not “proclaim faithfully the depth and gravity of sin against a holy God, the reality of Hell, and the salvation of sinners by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone, to the glory of God alone”; and

WHEREAS it can be proven by anyone who bothers to read his book, “Love Wins”, that Rob Bell in fact faithfully proclaims each of those positions; then let it be

RESOLVED, by anyone who reads this resolution, not to bear false witness against Rob Bell, nor to tolerate your representatives doing so; and let it be

RESOLVED, by anyone who reads this resolution, to discuss and disagree respectfully among ourselves, whether Calvinistic, Arminianistic, or Universalistic, the scope and/or the persistence of God’s great salvation of sinners from sin, for which the Father sent the Son in the Spirit to live, to die, and to rise again victorious; and let it be

RESOLVED, by anyone who reads this resolution, especially within the Southern Baptist Convention, to search the scriptures for themselves and see if indeed when all other things pass away these three things shall be remaining, faith and hope and love--the greatest of which is love; or whether hatred and rebellion shall also be always remaining, too, never to pass away into confession of God’s great saving victories in Christ, so that all things shall not submit to Christ in the end as Christ submits to the Father: God being not finally altogether in all!