

THE NATURE AND DESTINY OF MAN

**A Refutation of the Doctrine
of the Immortality of the Soul**

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to establish the following proposition: Man is wholly mortal and at death ceases to exist. In other words, no part of man is immortal. The body consists of many parts, but none of these parts live on and have conscious existence after the death of the body. Death is cessation of life - a state of unconsciousness. All hope in life after death rests entirely in the resurrection of the body. The ultimate destiny of man promised to all who believe and obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is that they will be an immortal body; not a disembodied immortal! Immortality is a conditional gift to be bestowed at the resurrection, and is not therefore a present possession. The dead remain unconscious in the grave until the resurrection and judgement which take place at the second coming of Christ. The popular belief of departure to heaven or a place of fiery torment immediately after death in the form of a disembodied "spirit" or "soul" is not Scriptural, and contradicts and negates the teaching of Scripture concerning the nature of man, resurrection, judgement and the second coming of Jesus. It is impossible to fully understand and appreciate the "hope" of the gospel while holding to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

The proposition then, is that the normal theological view of the nature of man is astray from the teaching of Scripture. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is a false doctrine, which effectually prevents the believer of it from fully understanding and appreciating the truth concerning the work and teaching of Christ.

UNIVERSAL THEORY

The universal theory of the nature of man is that he is a "spiritual," immaterial, and immortal being living in a material body which is necessary to express and manifest his invisible and indestructible inner "self." The body is not regarded as essential to man's identity or existence. His real self is understood to exist in the immaterial entity or divine spark called the soul or spirit. The organs composing the body are looked upon as things which the man uses as a mechanic uses his tools - the external agencies by which the desires of the "inner man" are carried out. It is usually admitted that the body has a material derivation "from the dust of the ground," but the "essence" is believed to have come from God himself - to be, in fact, a part of God. In accordance with this view, death is not considered to affect man's being. It is regarded simply as a demolition of

the material organism, which liberates the deathless, intangible man from the bondage of this "mortal coil;" which having "shuffled off," he wings his way to spiritual regions, for eternal happiness or misery, according to "deeds done in the body."

In opposition to this, it shall be shown that, according to the Scriptures, man is destitute of immortality in every sense; that he is a creature consisting of flesh and blood energized by the life-power of God; which he shares in common with every living thing under the sun; that he holds this life only on the short average tenure of three-score years and ten, at the end of which he gives it up to Him from whom he received it, and returns to the ground, from which he originally came, and meanwhile ceases to exist. Such a proposition is of course contrary to Christendom's doctrine of the immortality of the soul, but is well supported by the Bible as shall be demonstrated in the following chapters.

* * * * *

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As a result of the Reformation, a number of reformers, through diligent study of the Scriptures, discovered that the Bible does not advocate the immortality of the soul. Careful research revealed that the Scriptures which were regarded as teaching the doctrine of the immortality of the soul had been taken out of context and twisted to support this false doctrine.

The writings of these reformers have been a source of great enlightenment to many in relation to this subject, both in the past and up to our present time. The exposition of John Thomas in his book "Elpis Israel" and Robert Robert's book "Christendom Astray" are particularly helpful and sections have been quoted from these books in this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE WHAT IS MAN?

This question was asked many centuries ago by the Psalmist, as recorded in Ps. 8, although not in the spirit of scientific speculation or chemical analysis. It is important however, to have a Scriptural understanding of the constitution of man as far as our present subject is concerned. The true nature of man has been revealed in the Word of God, and it is important for us to endeavour to understand it. It is useless to philosophise about our nature and constitution. Human philosophy is purely human reasoning based on uninspired feelings - assumption - conjecture - guesswork. Every man's guess is as good as another's, and for that reason philosophy presents multitudes of different and conflicting views on the nature of man. The Word of God alone provides the divinely inspired view on this subject and we turn to it as to a light shining in a dark place, and place our feet upon it as upon solid rock.

To deal with the subject properly and in the right order, we must firstly go back to the very beginning of the Bible, to the original formation of man as recorded in the early part of the book of Genesis. Before any real progress can be made, we must properly understand and fully master Gen. 2:7 which reads: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath (spirit) of life; and man became a living soul."

This first reference to the formation of man is very important. It is the springboard to our enquiries and investigation, and provides the key to a correct understanding of man's nature. The whole subject commences at, and develops from this point. It is vital to attach to all its terms the divine ideas conveyed in Scripture, and not the "vain traditions" of human philosophy.

We will now proceed to consider what is meant in Gen. 2:7 by "man" (Adam), "dust," "breath (spirit) of life" and "soul."

MAN

The very word "man" in the Hebrew memorializes the earthly origin of human nature. The Hebrew word is "adam" and is no doubt akin to "adamah" which is translated "ground" in the expression, "dust of the ground." The word basically suggests "earth-born."

Another idea conveyed in the word is "red" or "ruddy." It may be remarked that the Hebrew word for "red" is "adom," and contains the

same letters as "adam," only differently pointed. (See the history of Esau, "Edom" in Gen. 25:30). The blood is the life of all flesh, and blood is red, so here again the word "adam" connects with the idea of the earthly origin of all flesh.

It is also quite possible that the "dust" used by God to form man was reddish in colour, as is common in many parts of the earth.

DUST OF THE GROUND

It is evident from Gen. 2:7 that man's physical nature consists of two essential elements: (1) the dust of the ground, and (2) the breath of life. The combination of the dust of the ground and the breath of life results in a living soul or person (body).

Gen. 2:7 clearly teaches that man is made of "the dust of the ground." The record does not read as though the Lord God extracted a diamond from the soil; but declares that he fashioned the dust into a man. And all the allusions of Scripture bear this out. God said to Adam: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). Abraham acknowledged in humility that he was "but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27). Job's statement in Job. 10:9 reads: "Thou has made me of clay and wilt thou bring me into dust again?" Elihu agreed with Job by saying: "I also am formed out of clay" (Job. 33:6). The same point is made twice in the book of Isaiah that man is made out of clay (Isa. 45:9. Isa. 64:8). The simple meaning of all this is, that the dust was first formed into clay, which was then modeled by the divine potter into the form called "man." David wrote: "For He knoweth our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass ..." (Psa. 103:14-16). Then came the words of Solomon: "All are from the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecc. 3:20). Jesus said: "He that is from the earth is earthly" (John. 3:31). Or, in the words of the apostle Paul: "The first man is from the earth, earthy" ("made of dust") 1Cor. 15:47.

The phrase: "the dust of the ground" refers to the chemical elements that constitute man's body. God has made all things by using various combinations of approximately 100 basic ingredients that men have named "chemical elements." A list of these chemical elements could be given but it would not make very interesting reading to most readers.

After death, man's body decomposes and the chemical elements return to the earth. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). "Man shall turn again to dust" (Job. 34:15). "His breath goes forth,

he returns to the earth" (Psa. 146:4). "Thou takest away their breath and they die, and return to their dust" (Psa. 104:29) . "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecc. 3:20). "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was" (Ecc. 12:7).

BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE

We have seen that man was made from the ground. That which was produced from the ground was the being called man. Some will object to this by saying: "But that only means his body." However, there is nothing in the passage before us, nor anything else in the Scriptures, to indicate the popular distinction between a man and his body. Gen. 2:7 clearly says that "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." That which was produced from the ground was the being called man: to say that this sentence merely relates to the body and does not affect the being, is to play with words. The same applies to Gen. 3:19 where God said to Adam: "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." To say that this sentence merely relates to the body and does not affect the being, is also to play with words. The personality expressed in the pronoun "thou" is quite distinctly applied to the physical body. "Thou art dust." What could be more emphatic? "Thou shalt return to the dust."

Abraham expressed his view in these words: "Behold now I ... who am but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27). This is Abraham's estimate of himself. Some of his modern friends would have corrected him saying: "Father Abraham, you are mistaken; you are not dust and ashes; it is only your body." Abraham's unsophisticated view however, is more reliable than "the (philosophical) wisdom of his world," which Paul pronounces to be "foolishness with God."

Paul keeps company with Abraham: "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwells no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Here, Paul speaks of himself and his flesh as being synonymous. He does not distinguish between himself and his flesh. He speaks of them as being one and the same. And, if his flesh or body housed some immortal divine entity, it is unlikely that he would say that there was no good thing in his flesh.

There is then, nothing in Gen. 2:7 or any other Scripture, to indicate the popular distinction between a man and his body. The substantial organisation in Gen. 2:7 is called "man." True, he was without life before the impartation of the breath of life, yet he was man. The life was

something super-added to give man living existence. The life was not the man; it was the principle; it was something outside of him, proceeding from a divine source, and infusing itself into the wonderful mechanism prepared for its reception. The breath of life was required to set all the parts of this exquisite mechanism called "man" into motion.

THE BREATH OF LIFE

The dust-formed man was inanimate until the Lord God breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. What then, is "the breath of life?" The Hebrew word translated "breath" is 'neshamah' and, according to most reliable concordances and lexicons, means "a puff, wind, vital breath."

The word "life" in the phrase "breath of life" comes from the Hebrew word "chay" and basically means "life, alive, quicken, revive."

The breath of life is therefore that vital force which enables a man's body to function. Man depends on this vital force to remain alive. Without it, he cannot live. Without it he dies, and returns to his original unconscious dust state. Consider the following passages of Scripture in which the underlined word comes from the same Hebrew "neshamah:"

Deu. 20:16: "Save alive nothing that breathes."

Jos. 10:40: "Utterly destroyed all that breathed."

Jos. 11:11-14: "There was not any left to breathe."

1Ki. 15:29: "...left not to Jeroboam any that breathed."

1Ki. 17:17: "There was no breath left in him."

Psa. 150:6: "Everything that has breath."

Isa. 2:22: "Man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

Dan. 10:17: "Neither is there breath left in me."

From these examples, it soon becomes evident that the "breath" (neshamah) of life is that vital force breathed by man which keeps him alive.

NESHAMAH AND RUACH

''**N**eshamah" is also translated "spirit" in Pro. 20:27 which reads: "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord." However, the Hebrew word normally translated "spirit" is 'ruach' which has the same basic meaning as neshamah, namely: "air, to blow, breath, wind, power, animation" etc. These two words, neshamah and ruach, are used side by side a number of times in Scripture in such a way that they are obviously very closely related to each other in meaning.

For instance: Gen. 2:7 says that 'neshamah' (breath) of life was breathed into man's nostrils, whereas Job. 27:3 speaks of the 'ruach' (spirit) of God being in his nostrils. Again, in Gen. 6:17 and Gen. 7:15 the "breath of life" which was in all flesh is 'ruach chay' in Hebrew, whereas in Gen. 7:22 it is referred to as 'neshamah chay' (n.b. the margin for Gen 7:22 suggests "the breath of the spirit of life"). In Dan. 10:17 Daniel is recorded as saying: ..."neither is there breath (neshamah) left in me." This simply means that he was "breathless - taken aback" due to the experience he had. The Queen of Sheba also had an experience which had the same effect and it is recorded in these words: "There was no more spirit (ruach) in her" (1 Kng. 10:5). In each of these examples there is obviously a very close relationship between "breath" (neshamah) and "spirit" (ruach).

We will now consider some verses in which neshamah and ruach appear side by side.

(1) Isa. 42:5: "Thus says God the Lord, He who created the heavens, and stretched them out; He who spread forth the earth, and all that comes out of it; he who gives breath (neshamah) to the people upon it, and spirit (ruach) to them that walk in it."

(2) Job. 34:14: "If God set His heart against man and gathered to Himself His spirit (ruach) and His breath (neshamah), all flesh would perish together and turn again to dust."

(3) Job. 33:4: "The spirit (ruach) of God has made me, and the breath (neshamah) of the Almighty has given me life (chay)."

(4) Psa. 104:29-30: "Thou takest away their breath (ruach) they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit (ruach) they are created." (On this occasion, the two words "breath" and "spirit" have been translated from the same Hebrew 'ruach').

From these testimonies we are able to see that it is the 'ruach' (spirit) together with the 'neshamah' (breath) which keeps all flesh from perishing, or returning to the dust. Thus: "If God set His heart against man, He will withdraw to Himself His spirit (ruach) and His breath (neshamah), and all flesh would expire and perish together, and turn again to dust." We read in Job. 37:10 that "By the breath (neshamah) of God frost is given." 2 Sam. 22:16 tells us that God makes the bed of the sea appear by "the blast (neshamah) of his nostrils." "The inspiration (neshamah) of the Almighty" gives men understanding (Job. 32:8). Speaking of reptiles, David says, as already quoted above from Psa. 104:29-30: "Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath (ruach), they die, and return to their dust. Thou (God) sends

forth Thy spirit (ruach), they are created: and Thou dost replenish the face of the earth" (with new ones).

ALL PERVADING AND ALL POWERFUL

Speaking about the spirit (ruach) of God, the Psalmist also made this declaration: "Whither shall I flee from Thy spirit? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I flew to the point of sunrise, or westward across the sea; even there shall Thy hand meet me and Thy right hand hold me" (Psa. 139:7-10).

We learn from this that the 'ruach' or 'spirit' of God is all pervading. It is in heaven, in hell, or the dust of the deepest hollow, in the uttermost depths of the sea, in the darkness, in the light, and in all things animate, and without life. As one writer has expressed it: "It is the substance of all motion, whether manifested in the diurnal, and ellipsoidal revolutions of the planets, in the flux and reflux of the sea, in the storms and tempests of the expanse, or in the organism of reptiles, cattle, beasts, fish, fowl, vegetables, or men. The atmospheric air is charged with it; but it is not the air; plants and animals of all species breathe it; but it is not their breath: yet without it, though filled with air, they would die" (John Thomas).

When all that the Scriptures say concerning the spirit of God is gathered together, it becomes evident that it relates to the radiant invisible power or energy of the Father. It fills universal space and forms the medium of His omniscient perceptions and the instrument of His omnipotent behests, whether in creation or inspiration. The spirit of God is, in short, divine energy and power by which all things are created and sustained. It is the life-force of all creation. Significantly enough, one of the Greek words used in the New Testament to describe the spirit-power of God is 'energeo' from which our English word "energy" has been derived. It is now an accepted scientific fact that energy is the basis of all matter. In other words, all matter is compact energy. God did not make everything out of nothing! His energy-power or spirit which proceeds forth from him formed the basis of all created matter. Thus, we read in 1 Cor. 8:6 that all things came out of the Father. Or, as we read in Jeremiah: "He has made the earth by his power" (Jer. 10:12. 27:5. 32:17. 51:15).

Ruach then, is an all pervading energy-force; the invisible power of the Almighty which fills heaven and earth. But Scripture does not present 'neshamah' in quite the same all pervading terms. The neshamah (breath) of life seems to be more closely associated with the oxygen that man inhales. Oxygen is indispensable to animal and human life. Without it man

cannot live. Oxygen enters the blood stream through his lungs. The blood stream constantly circulated by the beating of his heart carries oxygen to every cell in his body. One is not surprised to read therefore, that "the life of the flesh is in the blood."

When man dies his lungs cease to function, his heart stops beating, his blood is no longer circulated. The breath of life and spirit has left his body. His brain and nervous system are unable to work, He is without consciousness. He is dead.

The atmospheric air or "firmament" then, which provides the oxygen necessary for life, seems to be what is referred to by the "breath (neshamah) of life." It was created by the "spirit" (ruach) of God, and is continually penetrated and charged with the spirit-power and energy of the Almighty.

Together, the air and the spirit constitute the "breath" and "spirit" of all flesh. Both combined are required to support life on earth as at present constituted. Air or "breath" without God's spirit would not sustain life in its present form. Therefore, God is "not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Act. 17:27-28). We are not sustained in life merely by oxygen or air!

The "breath of life" then, which sustains man, is air or oxygen charged with the life-giving energy-force of God's spirit. In the words of Gen 7:22: "The breath of the spirit of life."

"Neshamah" occurs 24 times in Scripture and is translated "breath" 12 times; "breathe" 5 times; "blast" 3 times; "spirit" two times; "inspiration" once; "souls" once.

"Ruach" occurs around 400 times and in a great variety of ways. At the moment, as far as the present aspect of our subject is concerned, it should be pointed out that it is translated "wind" 90 times; "breath" 28 times; "blast" 4 times; "air" once; "windy" once; and "tempest." Other ways in which ruach is used will be considered in a later section.

As far as our study of Gen. 2:7 is concerned, it should be self-evident that the "breath (neshamah) of life" breathed into Adam's nostrils was the oxygen, charged with spirit power and energy. Until Adam received this "blast" or "gust" from God, he was inanimate - lifeless - dead. It was not until the divine breath was breathed into his nostrils and filled his lungs that he became a living conscious being.

Death is obviously the same process in reverse! The spirit ("breath of life") must depart before a man can die. And, if God gave it in order that we might live, He must take it away before we can die. And if God takes it away, then it must return to Him. This is precisely what the

Scriptures teach: "His (man's) breath (ruach - spirit) goes forth, he returns to the earth" (Psa. 146:4). "Thou (God) takest away their breath (ruach - spirit) they die, and return to their dust" (Psa. 104:29). "If He (God) gather to Himself his spirit (ruach) and his breath (neshamah), all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again to the dust" (Job.34:14-15). "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (ruach) shall return to God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). "There is no man who has power over the spirit (ruach) to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death ..." (Ecc. 8:8).

When man dies he expires. He breathes his last. His "breath of life" or "spirit" "goes forth" and "returns" to God who gave it. No man in his present mortal state has power in the day of death to "retain the spirit." When the time to die has arrived, God "takes away" and "gathers to Himself" the spirit of life. Therefore, when the time had arrived for Jesus to die, he committed his spirit into God's hands. Stephen did likewise (Act. 7:59).

The breath of life or "spirit" is lent to all the creatures of the natural world for the appointed period of their living existence. But, though lent to them it is still God's breath, and God's spirit. Nevertheless, because every living creature breathes and partakes of the spirit, and depends upon it for his existence, it is sometimes called "the spirit of man," and "the spirit of the beast," or collectively, "the spirits of all flesh," and "their breath." Thus, it is written: "They (man and animals) have all one spirit (ruach); so that man hath no pre-eminence over a beast ... all go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Ecc. 3:19-20). And in the sense of supplying spirit to every living creature, Num. 27:16 refers to the Lord as "God of the spirits of all flesh."

MAN'S BREATH AND SPIRIT - NOT A BEING IN ITSELF

Man's breath and spirit of life is not a being or an entity in itself. The neshamah and ruach which sustains man in life is not some special immortal entity which is capable of personal, conscious, disembodied existence. It enables man's mind to work, but it does not possess a mind independent of man's brain. The breath of life causes the brain and nervous system to function, but without it, man would have no ability to think, feel, or will. The breath of life or spirit is not some separate and detached part of man that has consciousness from man's body at death. The breath of life leaves man's body at death. "His breath (ruach-spirit) goes forth, he returns to his earth, in that very day his thoughts

perish" (Psa. 146:4).

The "spirit" that departs from man and returns to God at death is the same spirit that entered him at birth, and is as devoid of consciousness, personality and character after death as it was prior to birth. If our "spirit" were some immortal entity from God Himself and constituted our real personality and consciousness, and has conscious existence when life in the flesh ends, why are we not aware of the consciousness prior to life in the flesh?

If cases could be cited in which identity survived the destruction of the brain, the case would stand differently; but as a fact, it is only to be found in connection with a perpetuated brain organisation. Let the brain be injured, and the mind vanishes altogether. The following extract illustrates:

"Richmond mentions the case of a woman whose brain was exposed in consequence of the removal of a considerable part of its bony covering by disease. He says, 'I repeatedly made a pressure on the brain, and each time suspended all feeling and all intellect, which were immediately restored when the pressure was withdrawn.' The same writer mentions another case. He says, 'There was a man who had to be trepanned, and who perceived his intellectual faculties failing, and his existence drawing to a close, every time the effused blood collected upon the brain so as to produce pressure.'"

Professor Chapman, in one of his letters says: "I saw an individual with his skull perforated and the brain exposed, who was accustomed to submit his brain to be experimented upon by pressure, and who was exhibited by the late Prof. Weston to his class. His intellect and moral faculties disappeared on the application of pressure to the brain. They were held under the thumb, as it were, and restored at pleasure to their full activity by discontinuing the pressure."

But of all facts, the following related by Sir Astley Cooper, in his surgical lectures, is the most remarkable: "A man of the name of Jones received an injury on his head while on board a vessel in the Mediterranean, which rendered him insensible. The vessel soon after made for Gibraltar, where Jones was placed in the hospital, and remained several months in the same insensible state. He was carried on board the Dolphin frigate to Deptford, and from there was sent to St Thomas's Hospital, London. He lay constantly on his back, and breathed with difficulty. When hungry or thirsty he moved his lips or tongue. Mr Clyne, the surgeon, found a portion of the skull depressed, trepanned him, and removed the depressed portion. Immediately after this operation, the

motion of his fingers, occasioned by the beating of the pulse, ceased, and in three hours he sat up in bed, sensation and volition returned and in four days he got up out of his bed and conversed. The last thing he remembered was the occurrence of taking a prize in the Mediterranean. From the moment of the accident, 13 months and a few days before, oblivion had come over him and all recollection ceased. Yet, on removing a small portion of bone which pressed upon the brain, he was restored in full possession of the powers of his mind and body."

These cases are not in accordance with the popular theory of the mind. Here is suspension of mental action on the derangement of the material organisation. Obviously the mind is not the attribute of a principle existing independently of that organisation. The facts show that thinking is dependent upon the action of the brain, and not therefore, by the action of any immaterial principle, which could never be affected by any material condition.

OTHER DIFFICULTIES

There are other difficulties. If the mind be a spark from God - if it be a part of Deity Himself as commonly supposed, transfused into material organisations, our faculties ought to spring forth in full maturity at birth. Instead of that, as everybody knows, a new-born babe has not a spark of intellect or a glimmer of consciousness. According to the popular belief, it ought to possess both in full measure, because of the immaterial thinking principle. No one can carry his memory back to his birth. He can remember when he was three years old, perhaps; only in few cases can he recall an earlier date. Yet, if the popular belief were correct, memory ought to be contemporaneous with life from its very first moment.

Again, if all men alike partake of the same divine thinking essence from God, they ought to manifest the same degree of intelligence, and show the same disposition. Instead of that there is infinite diversity among men. One man is shrewd and another dull - one vicious and depraved; and another high-souled and virtuous; one good and gentle, another harsh and inconsiderate, and so on. There ought to be uniformity of manifestation if there be uniformity of power.

These are some of the many natural obstacles in the way of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. They disprove that man is an immaterial entity, capable of disembodied existence. They show him to be a compound - a creature of material organisation - endowed with life from God, and ennobled with qualities which constitute him "the image of

God," but nevertheless mortal in constitution. Why so much opposition? All natural evidence is in its favour. If there are mysteries in it, there is none the less obviousness. Mystery is no ground for disbelief. This is shown by the universal belief in the immortality of the soul. Surely this is "mysterious" enough. If it comes to that, we are surrounded with mystery. We can only approximate to truth; the how of any organic process is beyond comprehension; we can but note the facts, and bow in the presence of undeniable phenomena. Though we are unable to understand the mode in which nerve communicates sensation, muscle generates strength, blood supplies life, etc, we cannot deny that these agencies are the proximate causes of the results developed, whether in man or animals.

Why should there be an exception in the case of thought? What we know of it, is all connected with physical organisation. We have no experience of human mind apart from human brain. In fact, we have no experience of any human faculty apart from its material manifestation; and in ordinary sensible thinking, the various living powers of man are practically acknowledged to be the properties of the numerous organs which collectively compose himself. If he sees, it is recognised as the function of the eye; if he hears, that it is with the ear; and that without these organs, he can neither see nor hear. In proportion as these organs are perfectly formed, there is perfect sight or hearing. Why should this principle not be applied to the mind? The parallel is complete. Man thinks and he has a brain to think with; and in proportion as the brain is properly organised and developed, he thinks well. If it is large, there is power and scope of mind; if small, there is mediocrity; if below par, there is intellectual deficiency, and idiocy. These are facts apart from theory of any kind; and they prove the connection of mind with living brain substance, however mysterious that connection may be.

OBJECTION

Some say "No" to all this; "The brain is simply the medium of the soul's manifestation: deficiency of intellect and other mental irregularities are the result of imperfection in the mediumship." But this begs the question. It assumes the very point at issue, i.e. the existence of a thinking abstraction to manifest itself. But even supposing we accept the explanation, what does it avail for popular theory? If the soul cannot manifest itself - cannot reason, cannot reflect, be conscious, love, hate, etc - without a material "medium," what is its value as a thinking agent when

without that medium; that is, when the body is in the grave? The explanation however, cannot be accepted. It is the ingenious suggestion of a philosophy which is in straits to preserve itself from confusion. How much wiser to recognise the fact which presents itself to our actual experience, namely, that all our conscious; as well as unconscious powers as living beings are the result of a conjunction between the life-power of God (ruach-neshamah) and the substance of our organisation, (dust-formed body), and do not exist apart from that connection in which they are developed.

TWO DISTINCT PRINCIPLES

A person consists of two substances - body and brain, and although the manner of their conjunction and the nature of their mutual influence may be difficult to define, they should not be regarded as distinct substances. Together, they form a unit - a person - man. Each human being is composed of both body and mind. The body and mind however, are incomplete until they form a unity called a person. Man is a single composite substance made up of two distinct principles. It is the person who thinks and remembers, not the mind, and not the body. The body, severed from the mind, cannot think. The mind, severed from the body cannot think. And, a body and mind without the breath (spirit) of life cannot think either! A combination of body, mind and spirit is required to produce a living thinking person, called "man."

The mind and body clearly have a definite influence on each other. They are not separate departments, independent of each other. Both exist and interact. Events in the mind are correlated with events in the body, and vice versa, in such a manner that mind and body appear as two parallel series of events which correspond in a peculiarly intimate way with each other. A practical separation between mind and body is impossible. Both science and common sense support the interaction principle that mental states cause and are caused by bodily states.

Mental states such as fear cause shivering, perspiration or other bodily states. Physicians tell us that mental states can actually produce heart disease, ulcer of the stomach, kidney trouble, and other diseases. The mind can move the body as when a man decides to flex his muscles. Almost any human reaction has both physical and mental sides, so that men smile with pleasure, frown in anger, or quiver with fear.

The body also affects the mind. Everyone can note for himself the difference in his mental state when he is hungry or well-fed, cold, or

warm, sick or well. It is known also that certain glands have a profound effect upon emotions, attitudes and behaviour. Also the bodily event of stubbing one's toe, for example, is accompanied by a pain in the series of mental events.

DETACHMENT IMPOSSIBLE

Man's brain and nervous system are parts of man's body. The mind is located in the body. It is not a loose ethereal thing, capable of detachment from the material person. Certainly, through its ability to "imagine," the mental faculty can form images of external objects that are in some far distant place, and not present to the senses, but it is still inexorably fixed in the bodily framework, and never leaves it while life continues. The ability of the mind to form pictures in the imagination is so real, particularly in vivid dreams that when dreams or deep meditation projects our thoughts to some far off place, the experience feels as if we have left our body. It is through this same faculty that the Lord, by His Holy Spirit is able to quicken our mind and thoughts either by dream or vision, and show us things and take us to places that are far removed from our senses. Visions of the Lord can be so real that it is difficult to tell whether or not it was experienced in person or just a projection of the mind beyond the senses of the body. The apostle Paul expressed it in these words: "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows" (2 Cor. 12:2).

Sometimes it is argued that the power of the mind to "travel" while the body remains quiescent, is proof of its immaterial, and therefore immortal nature. Let us consider this. What is this "travelling" of the mind? Does the mind traverse actual space and witness realities? A man has been to America, and has seen many sights, and returns home; occasionally he sees those sights over again; the impressions made on the sensorium of the brain through the organ of sight and hearing, while in America, are revived so distinctly that he can actually fancy and imagine himself in the place he has left so many thousands of miles behind. Surely no one will contend that each time this reverie comes upon him, his mind actually goes out of his body, and transfers itself to the place thought of! If this is contended, it ought also to be allowed that man, when so spiritually transferred, should witness what is actually transpiring in the country at the time of his spiritual presence, and that therefore, we might dispense with the post and telegraph as clumsy contrivances for getting the news, compared with the facility and dispatch of soulography. But this will not

be contended. As well might we say that the places and persons we see in our dreams have a real existence. In both cases, the phenomenon is the result of a process that takes place within the brain - in the "spirit of the mind." Memory treasures impressions, and reproduces them as occasion occurs - clear and coherent, if the brain is in a healthy condition; but confused, disjointed, and aberrated, if the brain be disordered, whether in sleep or out of it.

In no case does reverie involve an actual transit of the mind from one place to another; and hence the "travelling" argument falls to the ground. God of course, by His Holy Spirit, is able to quicken the spirit of the mind to see things in another country or future things that are non-existent at the time, but this does not prove the immortality of the soul. All it proves is the marvellous construction of the brain and the wonderful working of His Holy Spirit which is able to project our thoughts into areas far removed from our present senses. The natural man is governed by his five senses. His life is controlled by what he sees, hears, smells, tastes and touches. All of these things pertain to the "body" or "flesh." To live a life governed by these senses of the body is to live by sight and not faith. (2 Cor. 5:7). When we walk by sight, "we are at home in the body" as we read in 2 Cor.5:6: i.e. we are self-centred, "living unto ourselves" (2 Cor. 5:15), being earthbound in our thinking and meditation. Or, as other Scriptures put it: "in the flesh:" "So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8).

The reason why we cannot please God when we are "in the flesh" is because "while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:6). It is impossible to draw near to the Lord and have His presence in our life when we "are at home in the body" or "live in the flesh." If our mind is centred on self, seeking to please self and gratify fleshly desires, we are "carnally minded," and, as we read in Rom. 8:7: "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

The Christian is called to "mind the things of the Spirit" and not to mind the things of the flesh. In other words, to be "spiritually minded" (Rom. 8:5-6); he is required to serve God with his mind (Rom. 7:25). In other words, he is called to get his mind off himself and the five senses and fleshly desires of his body, and get in touch and tune with God. The true Christian attitude is expressed by Paul in these words: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). Or, as expressed in 1 Pet. 4:2: "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh (body) to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

God has created the mind of man with the unique ability to project itself in its thoughts and imaginations beyond the present senses and environment of the body, to higher and more noble things pertaining to the Spirit. This requires living by faith instead of sight: "Looking not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ..." (2 Cor. 4:18). The spiritual man is governed, not by what his natural eyes see, but by "the eyes of your understanding" which the Holy Spirit enlightens (Eph. 1:17). We therefore "seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set our affections (minds) on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). That is, in the words of 2 Cor. 5:8 quoted before: "absent from the body and present with the Lord."

It is not natural for the mind of man to operate and think this way. Man's mind prefers to stay at home in the body, dwelling upon, and revolving around self, projecting itself only to those things which benefit and give pleasure to self. Becoming a Christian necessitates a change of outlook - a transformation and renewal of mind and thinking processes. Rom. 12:2 puts it like this: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Again we read in Eph. 4:23: "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind." When this takes place, we are able to fulfil the request of Jesus who said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth - but in heaven ... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Once we have been converted and "born again" our heart and mind are no longer at home in the body, but projected beyond to the presence of the Lord. We are with Him "in the spirit of our mind." Although absent in body, we are present in heart, mind and spirit.

It is according to this same principle that the apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, said: "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart ..." (1 Thes. 2:17). Although absent physically as far as the body was concerned, the apostle Paul was nevertheless with them in "heart" or "spirit" or "mind." Thus, when writing to other churches he said: "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit" (Col. 2:5. 1 Cor. 5:3). Most people have had practical experience of the kind of thing Paul is speaking about, and it hardly needs further comment. If Paul's "spirit" literally left his body and travelled over to Corinth he would be dead and unable to write to them!

The power of dreaming is sometimes cited as another fact favourable to the popular doctrine of the immortality of the soul. But here again the argument fails, because dreaming is invariably connected with the living brain. Beside, who ever dreams a sensible dream? Dreams in general, are a confused and illogical jumble of facts which have at one

time or other been stowed away in the storehouse of the brain; and if they prove anything concerning a thinking immaterial spirit, independent of the body, they prove that the spirit loses its power in exact proportion to its separation from the assistance of the body; and that, therefore, without the body it would presumably be powerless.

Man's brain then, and nervous system are parts of man's body. The mind is located in the body. It is not a loose ethereal thing, capable of detachment from the material person. It is inexorably fixed in the bodily framework, and never leaves it while life continues. Its thoughts and affections and imaginations can be vividly exercised in things that are far away from the body in time or space, but nothing becomes detached and departs from the brain system itself. If we enquire in what portion of the body the thinking processes and consciousness are specially located, we instinctively answer that it is not in the hand, nor in the foot, nor in the stomach, nor in the heart, nor in any part of the trunk. Our consciousness unerringly tells us that it is in the head. We feel, as a matter of experience, whatever our theory may be, that the mind cohabits with the substance of the brain.

Extending our observation externally, we never discover mind without a corresponding development of brain. "Mind" is clearly the product of "brain," and it is not only unscriptural but also unscientific to bring an alleged immaterial entity to explain the thinking. Deficient brain is always found to manifest deficient reason, and vice versa. If the common theory were correct, that the real consciousness and personality of a man was some immortal, supernatural, immortal entity within, then surely mind ought to be exhibited independently of either quantity or quality of brain organisation.

Again, if the mind were some supernatural, immortal divine entity given to us direct from God, its functions would surely be unaffected by the conditions of the body. Thinking and feeling would never abate in vigour or vivacity. We should always be serene and clear-headed - always ready to "study," whatever might be the state of the bodily machinery; whereas we know that the opposite is the case. Sickness or over-work will exhaust the mental energies, and make the mind a blank. Languor and dullness of spirits are of common experience. We can all testify to days of "ennui" in which the mind has refused to perform its office. This never happens in a good state of health, but always when the material organisation is weak or out of order. How is this? Does it not tell against the theory which represents the mind as an imperishable, immortal, immaterial thing? The mind is the offspring of the brain, and is therefore

affected by all its passing disorders.

Man's consciousness and personality clearly stems from the brain. His brain and nervous system are parts of the body and are buried in the grave and return to dust. When he dies, his spirit or "breath of life" leaves his body and joins the free-flowing, all-pervading stream of God's spirit which fills heaven and earth. When man's brain and nervous system are separated from that power of life which caused them to function, he becomes unconscious; "In that very day his thoughts perish." As stated before: what happens to man at death is the reverse of what took place when he was first made alive. To be made alive, the breath of life and spirit was breathed into his nostrils. When he dies, the same breath of life and spirit departs from his nostrils. He "gives up the spirit" i.e. "expires" or "breathes his last." He had no separate, personal existence or consciousness before the breath of life was breathed into his nostrils at birth, and he equally has no consciousness when the same breath and spirit departs at death.

Man is as useless without "life" as would be a heater without power, a water wheel without water, a sailing ship without wind, or a steamship without steam. But no one calls the electricity a heater etc. When the power supply to the heater is cut off and it ceases to function and goes cold, no one says the heater has returned to the power station! The heater and all of its component parts remain together. All that has happened is the power supply has been cut off and returned to the free-flow of the national grid. The same applies to a radio, T.V. and all other electrical appliances which require the flow of power before they can operate.

Equally, no one calls the water a water wheel, the wind a sailing vessel, or the steam a steamship. When the water is cut off from the wheel, we do not say the wheel is gone; when the wind closes we do not say the ship is taken away; nor when the steam is removed, that the steamship is gone. Why then, say that the "man" has gone to God when it is only his "life" that has been taken away

ANIMALS POSSESS THE SAME SPIRIT

A careful study of the whole subject of the breath (neshamah) of life and spirit (ruach) of life leads us to one important and unavoidable conclusion, namely: whatever this breath and spirit is, animals also possess it. This is taught many times in Scripture. Therefore, if the "breath of life" even remotely meant that man has an immortal soul or spirit, then so must animals, birds and even insects!

Regarding the breath (neshamah) of life (chay) which God breathed into Adam's nostrils as recorded in Gen. 2:7, the following Scriptures teach that animals possess, and are animated by exactly the same breath:

(1) Gen. 7:21-22: "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth, and every man, all in whose nostrils was the breath (neshamah) of life (chay), everything that was in the dry land, died."

(2) Deu. 20:16: "But of the cities of these people (Canaanites) which the Lord thy God gives for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing (includes cattle) that breatheth" (neshamah).

(3) Ps. 150:6: "Let everything (all flesh) that hath breath (neshamah - breathes) praise the Lord."

(4) Gen. 1:20, 30: "And God said, let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures that hath life (chay), and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament ... And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life (chay), I have given every green herb for food." In these passages of Scripture it is evident that animals and every other living creature possess exactly the same breath of life which God breathed into Adam's nostrils.

The same is also true concerning the spirit (ruach) of life. In the following selection of Scriptures it is clear that animals also possess this same "spirit."

(1) Gen. 6:17: "And behold, I even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath (ruach) of life (chay), from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die."

(2) Gen. 7:15: "And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath (ruach) of life (chay)."

(3) Ps.104:20-30: "All beasts of the forest ... the young lions ... man ... leviathan These all wait upon thee (God) ...; Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath (ruach), they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit (ruach), they are created (fresh life begins): and the face of the earth is replenished."

(4) Ecc.3:18-20: "I said in my heart concerning the sons of men, that God is testing them to show them that they are beasts. For the fate of men and of animals is the same: as the one dies so dies the other; yes, they all draw the same breath (ruach - spirit); so that a man has no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again."

Here we are informed in clear, unambiguous language that animals

have the same breath and spirit as man, and, in that respect, man has no pre-eminence above a beast. Tradition argues the other way and contradicts the Bible by affirming that it is man's "spirit" which makes him different and superior to the beasts. Solomon however, inspired by the Holy Spirit says that men and animals have the same spirit and therefore in that respect, man is not superior to the beasts. The "spirit" of course, clearly relates to the energy-force and power which animates and sustains all flesh.

WHO KNOWS?

Often, the hasty believer in the traditional doctrine gets impatient with Solomon's statement. "No pre-eminence above a beast!" Sometimes it is imagined that it proceeds from a less authoritative pen than Solomon's and it is stigmatised as detestable; but there it stands, in unmistakable emphasis, as a sweeping condemnation in the very Bible itself, of the flattering dogma which exalts human nature, claiming that sinful man is immortal.

What then, are we to make of Ecc. 3:21 which, in the A.V. reads like this: "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" This translation of the A.V. reads as if the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes downward. This translation is a perversion of the original text and very few modern translations agree with it. The perversion is due to a Masoretic gloss in the pointing of the passage. The Jews at the time were immortal soulists, and were not acute enough to perceive that they were making a fool of Solomon in so treating his words as to make him affirm what he had just denied. The New English Bible captures the real significance of the passage in these words: "Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward or whether the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth?" Many other modern translations could also be quoted which support this translation. Solomon is asking a question and not stating a fact! The following facts must be kept in view in order that we might understand the real significance of the passage:

(1) Solomon was the wisest of men at the time, by God's special gift.

(2) It was a current pagan superstition that man survived death in some way different from the animals; the "immortal soul" doctrine was a "first principle" in the pagan's creed at the time.

(3) Solomon denied and refuted this, declaring that men themselves

are beasts, and share the same spirit, fate and death. "They all have the same spirit; so that man has no pre-eminence above a beast" (verses 18-20).

In view of these facts and declarations, Solomon goes on to ask: "Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward or the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth?" The answer is obvious for Solomon had just declared it. Solomon's question is challenging and ridiculing the "immortal soul" doctrine of the pagans which was believed by most of the nations in his day. Far from proving an immortal soul, Solomon's question actually ridicules and denies it.

So then, the flesh of man and beasts have all been made out of the same substance - "dust," and all possess and are animated by the same breath and spirit of God. In this respect, man has no pre-eminence above a beast.

MAN SUPERIOR TO THE BEAST

The equality of men with animals only consists in the dust substance out of which their bodies have been made and the breath of life that they breathe. However, it would be wrong to conclude on this basis that man is not superior to animals in any respect at all. It would be wrong to infer that, as man is referred to in Psa. 8:5 as being "a little lower than the angels," and yet has "no pre-eminence above a beast," that beasts are also but a little lower than the angels! The whole animal world has been made subject to man and is far from being "a little lower than the angels." In what way then, is man superior to the beast?

Man is different from other creatures in having been modelled after a divine type, or pattern. Man is superior to the beasts in form and capacity. This appears from the testimony in Gen. 1:26 that he was made in the image and after the likeness of God. Although created on the same day as the animals, man was created after a much higher and superior model. In form and capacity he was made like God. He was created in God's image, although a greatly inferior image - "a little lower than the angels."

Animals were not created in God's image. Only man was shaped according to the divine likeness and in the divine image. As far as outward form and shape is concerned, man is an inferior replica of God Himself. God didn't form any of the other creatures to be a clay replica of Himself. This unique form and shape was given to man alone. It is also evident from what Scripture says about the angels that they share the same form

and shape. At the moment their nature is superior to ours inasmuch as they are immortal, but ultimately we will be equal with them in nature (Lk. 20:36).

The "likeness" between man and God does not only relate to outward form and shape. It also relates to mental constitution or capacity - to mind and character.

One thing that sharply distinguishes man from the rest of nature is his highly developed capacity for thought, feeling and deliberate action. Here and there in other animals; rudiments, approximations, and limited elements of this capacity may occasionally be found; but the full-blown development that is called a mind is unmatched elsewhere in nature.

It is evident that man has a mental capacity which distinguishes him above all other creatures. God has given man the ability to think and reason in his mind. Man's mental capacity enables him to comprehend and receive spiritual ideas which develop the very mind and character of God. Man can communicate and reason with God. He can read and understand and develop wisdom, faith and patience and many other virtues which pertain to the character of God. Man can possess personality, bear responsibility, appreciate and admire beauty and goodness, love music and offer praise and thanksgiving to his Creator.

Man has these and other higher powers not possessed by any other creature. Animals do not have the potential of mind and character which God has given to man. It is this very special attribute of mind and character that separates men from animals. Many animals have physical brains as large, or even larger than man's brain, and with similar cerebral cortex complexity; but none has the powers of intellect, logic, self-consciousness and creativity. Animals do not have reasoning, self-conscious minds. Animals follow instinctive habit patterns in their feeding, nesting, migration and reproduction. God has "programmed" their brains, so to speak, with particular instinctive aptitudes. Thus beavers build dams, birds build nests etc. These aptitudes are inherited - they are not the results of logical cognitive processes.

For example, thousands of birds flock south each year in some countries as winter approaches in the northern hemisphere. They don't stop to "reason" why; they don't stop to ask themselves whether they should; they don't plan ahead an itinerary for the trip. At a given signal, like the pre-set alarm of a clock, they leave their summer feeding grounds in the north and travel thousands of miles south. Scientists don't fully understand why; they merely observe the operation of this animal instinct. But man is vastly different. He is able to perceive and understand

knowledge, draw conclusions, make decisions, will to act according to a thought-out plan.

Each man may build a different house, eat different foods, live an entirely different way of life from every other man. If a man wants to change his way of life he can: He is not subject to instinct. He is not governed by a set of pre-determined habit patterns as animals are. Man can choose for he has free moral agency. Man has free-will which permits him to decide his own destiny. He can voluntarily follow or disobey God. God has given him the power of choice, because he does not want human machines that obey him without thought or reason. God does not want man to serve him as an animal that blindly follows its own instincts. Man is able to devise codes of conduct and exercise self-discipline. He can originate ideas and evaluate scientific knowledge because he has a mind which is patterned after God's own mind. The attributes of mind and character make man God's unique creation. In sharing with man some of his own qualities God expects man to develop the "image" of His holy character and be "like" him. It is a case of the sons becoming like their Father! In this respect man is vastly superior to the animals.

However, if man refuses to be enlightened and directed by God's revelation, and uses his mental resources to do his own thing and go his own way, leaning to his own carnal understanding and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh; he declines to the level of the beasts and is hardly pre-eminent above them at all. When man, in his ignorance, degenerates to a beastly level, the Scriptures refer to him as a "beast" (Ps.49:12, 20, 73:22. Ecc.3:18, 1 Cor.15:32, Titus 1:12, 2 Pet.2:12, Jude v10). Man has tremendous potential for good or evil. It is all a question of how he is prepared to use his mind and apply himself. And the way in which he decides to apply himself will determine his destiny - life or death!

PROCESS OF DEATH AND DEATH STATE SAME FOR ALL MEN AND ANIMALS

It is difficult to deny, in the light of the Scriptures considered so far, that the process of death as experienced by animals is the same as that experienced by man. In the words of Solomon: "The fate of men and of animals is the same; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they all have the same spirit ... all go to the same place; all are from the dust and all turn to dust again" (Ecc. 3:19-20).

If the spirit (ruach) of man refers to some separate personal conscious immortal immaterial entity within man that lives on after death;

then beasts and all other living creatures must share the same experience. This is a natural and reasonable deduction, because it is clearly taught that beasts have the same "spirit" as man. Both men and beasts are energised and animated by exactly the same energy-force and power.

Not only does Scripture say that men and animals share the same experience in death, but it also describes the death of wicked men in exactly the same terms as the death of a righteous man. The process of death and the death state is the same for both classes.

For instance, Abraham's death is recorded in Gen. 25:8 in these words: "Abraham gave up the ghost and died." If this means that his immortal spirit or soul went up to heaven, then the same must apply to his fleshly "wild ass" of a son Ishmael, whose death is recorded in exactly the same terms in the same chapter verse 17: "Ishmael ... gave up the ghost and died."

Speaking about the wicked, Job says: "they shall not escape and their hope shall be the giving up of the ghost" (Job. 11:20). Again in Job. 14:10 we read: "But man dieth and wastes away; yea, man gives up the ghost, and where is he?" In the following verses Job answers his own rhetorical question by stating that dead men are asleep in the earth. He was under no illusion about some immaterial "spirit" or "ghost" going up to heaven! The word "ghost" has been translated from the Hebrew "gava" and literally means "to breathe out," "expire." "Ghost" is an old English word which meant "gust" or "blast." We saw earlier that this is the basic meaning of "ruach" and "neshamah" which are translated "spirit" and "breath." We are brought therefore, back to the same original concept, namely, that death is the reverse of what happened when man was first made alive. Life commenced when the energy-power of God was inhaled, and death commences when the same energy-power is breathed out for the last time.

Death is also referred to in the New Testament in terms of "giving up the ghost." Mark's record of the death of Jesus reads: "And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost" (Mk. 15:37). Luke's account is the same: "... he gave up the ghost" (Lk. 23:46). The Greek word translated "ghost" is "ekpeneo" and literally means to "expire" or "breathe out." Both Matthew and John refer to the death of Jesus in their gospel record, but instead of using the Greek word "ekpeneo" they use "pneuma" which is the New Testament word for "spirit:" "Jesus, when he had cried again with aloud voice, yielded up the ghost (pneuma)" (Matt. 27:50): "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost (pneuma)" (Jn. 19:30). All of these passages of Scripture clearly run parallel which means that

"pneuma" and "ekpeneo" are synonymous. In other words, yielding up the spirit simply means to "expire" or "breathe out." It is a simple case of allowing Scripture to explain itself. This conclusion is further confirmed in Lk. 23:46: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit (pneuma): and having said thus, he gave up the ghost (ekpeneo); that is: he "expired" and yielded up his breath of life to God who gave it.

The death of Annanias and Sapphira is expressed in the same terms; they both "gave up the ghost" (ekpeneo) (Act. 5:5, 10). But very few would be prepared to say that any part of them went up to heaven!

Speaking about death, Solomon said: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). It is important to note that Solomon is speaking here about mankind on a universal basis. He makes no distinction between good and bad men. He has not singled out just the righteous. What he says applies equally to all men. If his reference to the spirit returning to God who gave it means the departure of an immortal soul to heaven at death, then it must apply to all men, whether good or bad. If Solomon had such a concept in mind of man's immortal soul going to heavenly glory, it seems odd, to say the least, that he should follow his statement up with the words: "Vanity of vanities, says the preacher; all is vanity" (Ecc. 12:8).

One would imagine that there was nothing vain or empty about going to heaven to be with God! Solomon was clearly referring simply to the fact that when man dies, his breath of life departs from him and returns to God who gave it. All men share this same experience.

Job agrees with Solomon when he refers to God gathering to himself his spirit and breath from man (Job. 34:14-15). Job is also talking about man on a universal basis. At death, the spirit and breath of all men is gathered by God. That is: it returns to God who gave it. Psa. 104:20-30 speaks about God taking away the spirit, not only of all men, but of the animals as well. Yes, their spirit also returns to God who gave it!

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CHAPTER TWO MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL

We read in Gen. 2:7 that when the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, "man became a living soul."

Traditional speculation has assumed that the soul is something in the human body capable of living out of the body, and of the same essence as God himself. In times past some have busied themselves in calculating how many such souls could stand on the point of a needle; a problem, however, which still remains unsolved. A vast deal is said in "sermons" and systems about this idea; about its supposed nature, its wonderful capacity, its infinite value, its immortality, and its destiny.

The following interpretation of Gen.2:7 is a typical example of traditional thinking on this matter: "Immediately from the dust of the ground sprang forth a god-like form, which, perfect in limb, erect in stature, noble in mien, enshrined a soul immortal, a spark of divinity breathed into it by God himself. And thus was man created."

But Gen. 2:7 clearly does not say that man "enshrined a soul immortal," but that "man became a living soul," which is a totally different concept altogether. And neither does Gen. 2:7 say that God breathed into Adam "a spark of divinity," but "the breath of life" - the very same "breath" breathed by the animals.

An honest reading of Gen. 2:7 as it stands without traditional prejudice, simply reveals that man's dust-formed body, animated by the breath of life (spirit), constituted a "living soul." What became a living soul? The dust formed being! Man became a living soul. It does not say that man was given a soul but that man became a soul.

It is important to have a Scriptural understanding of the constitution of man. Let us then endeavour to understand ourselves as God has revealed our nature in his Word. Now, if it be asked, what do the Scriptures define a "living soul" to be? The answer is, a living natural, or animal, body. Writing about the body, the apostle Paul says: "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body." But he does not content himself with simply declaring this truth, he goes further, and proves it by quoting Gen. 2:7 saying: "For so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul." To prove his proposition that there is a natural body he quotes the statement in Gen. 2:7 which declares Adam was made a living soul. He obviously considered that a living soul and natural (animal) body were one and the same thing.

So then, if the use of the phrase "became a living soul," teaches the immortality and immateriality of any part of man's nature, it carries the proof to the body, for it was clearly the body which became a living soul. But, of course, this would be absurd. The idea expressed in Gen. 2:7 is simple and rational; i.e. the previously inanimate being became a living soul (body) when vitalised by the spirit of life.

The creation equation is as follows: The dust-formed body plus the breath of life equalled a living soul. Before Adam inhaled the breath of life, he was an inanimate or dead soul. After he received the breath of life, he was a living soul. When he died at the age of 930 the breath of life left his body and returned to God and he became a dead soul, and ultimately returned back to dust from whence he came.

God then, did not breathe into man an immortal soul, as is commonly taught in traditional doctrine. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man himself became a living soul, or "body."

ANALYSIS OF THE WORD "SOUL"

In seeking the true meaning behind the word "soul" we again turn to the Scriptures, whose voice is weightier than the fallible deductions of philosophy and the uninspired imaginations of tradition. And what do we find? The first and most astounding fact of all is that we do not find anywhere in the Bible those common phrases by which traditional doctrine is expressed. "Never dying soul," "immortal soul," "immortality of the soul," etc, so constantly on the lips and in the books of religious teachers, are forms of speech that do not occur throughout the whole of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. Anyone may quickly satisfy himself on this point by reference to a concordance.

How are we to explain this fact? All the essential teachings of Scripture are plain, unequivocal, and copious. The existence of God and his creative power - his purpose in regard to the future - the Messiahship of Jesus Christ - the object of his mission to earth - the doctrine of resurrection etc; are all enforced as plainly as language can enforce them; but of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, there is not the slightest mention. This fact is frequently acknowledged by eminent theologians, but does not seem to suggest to their minds the fictitiousness of the doctrine. They often argue the other way, and maintain (or at least suggest) that the reason for the Bible passing over in silence the doctrine of human immortality is because it is self-evident as to require no enunciation. This is very unsatisfactory. It would be much more

appropriate to suggest the opposite significance to the silence of Scripture on the subject. If the immortality of the soul is to be believed without sanction from the Word of God, on the mere assumption it is self-evident, may we not uphold any doctrine for which we have a pre-supposition or prejudice?

A more rational course to pursue is surely to treat as suspect a doctrine not based on the Bible, and subject it to the severest scrutiny. This is the course adopted in this thesis, and we shall find that the process will result in a complete breakdown of the doctrine. The Bible is not silent on the question, although it says nothing about the immortality of the soul. It supplies direct and conclusive evidence of the absolute mortality of man.

Some may not be satisfied that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not definitely broached in the Scriptures. Recalling to mind the constant use of the word "soul," they may be disposed to consider that it is countenanced and endorsed in such a way as to render formal enunciation superfluous. For the benefit of such, we will look at the word and analyse it and consider the use made of it in the Scriptures.

NEPHESH AND PSUCHE

The word "soul" in the Old Testament has been translated from the Hebrew word "nephesh," and in the New Testament it has been translated from the Greek word "psuche." The Hebrew word occurs about 750 times and is translated about 40 different ways. That is, about 40 different English words have been translated from the one Hebrew word "nephesh" in the Old Testament. The English words used in translating nephesh reveal that its primary meaning is "creature," "person," "man," "life," "lives." In the Authorised Version of the Bible, nephesh is translated as follows: "soul" 427 times; "life" 119 times; "person" 30 times; "heart" 15 times; "mind" 15 times; "self" 19 times; and by over 30 other words, none of which occur 10 times, and many only once, and which are all subordinately related to the foregoing. For instance, nephesh is translated "appetite," "lust," "pleasure," "mortal," "greedy," "fish," "beast," "body," "breath," "creature," "deed" (body), "thing," "will" etc. In the words of Strong's Concordance: "It is used very widely in a literal, accommodated or figurative sense."

The Greek word "psuche" occurs 105 times in the New Testament. It is translated "soul" 58 times; "life" and "lives" 40 times; "mind" 3 times; "you," "us," "heart," and "heartily" each one time. Psuche in Greek

basically means the same as nephesh in Hebrew. This is suggested by the fact that "psuche" is used in the New Testament when quoting Old Testament verses which contain "nephesh." This can be seen by comparing the following passages of Scripture:

(1) Matt. 20:28 with Isa. 53:10.

(2) Acts. 2:27 with Psa.16:10.

(3) Rom. 11:3 with 1 King. 19:10.

"Psuchikos" an adjective derived from "psuche" occurs 6 times and is translated "natural" and "sensual," and is properly translated "animal" in modern translations.

It is worthy of notice that in all the 700 times where nephesh occurs, and the 105 times of psuche, not once is the word "immortal" or "immortality" or "deathless" or "never-dying" etc., found in connection, as qualifying the terms.

It is also worthy of notice that in the large number of occurrences of the word nephesh, it is said to be subject to death in 326 places. And, of the 105 places where psuche occurs in the New Testament, 45 are those in which it is said to be subject to death.

So then, the Hebrew words "chay nephesh," translated "living soul" in Gen. 2:7, simply mean "living creature" or various aspects in which a living creature may be contemplated, such as body, person, man, life, self, mind, heart etc.

One commentator says: "The Hebrew word "nephesh" (with its Greek equivalent "psuche" and the Latin representative "anima" from which our word animal comes), denotes animal life or animal breath in contradistinction to that higher life, of which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter; and then, by metonymy, the animal life itself, whether man or beast, that lives by breathing; it includes the whole person, as does the personal pronoun for which it is often used. When qualified by the adjective "living," that person is a "living soul" or person, and when qualified by the adjective "dead," as it is at least half a dozen times in the Scriptures, that person is a "dead soul."

"Soul" is from the Anglo-Saxon "sawel" or "sawl," meaning the same as its Greek equivalent "psuche," from "psuchein" which means "to blow" or "to breathe." Now, breathing implies life in that which breathes, so it is not surprising to find that both "nephesh" and "psuche" have been translated "life" many times in Scripture. It was because of Adam's breathing, when given the breath of life, that he was called a soul; and it was because of his having life in that breathing that he was called a "living soul." Hence, what made him soul, and a living soul, was the

"breath of life;" so that a "living soul" is a "living breathing-frame" of organic parts. If the soul, or breathing frame, be incorruptible, it is then an immortal soul, or an immortal breathing-frame; but immortality is an attribute of God alone at the moment and not man. Hence, the soul, or breathing-frame of earth nature (dust), must be changed before it can be immortal.

It is because a living soul means a living breathing-frame that the figure of speech called metonymy came into use, which allows the container to be put for the thing contained, and the thing contained for the container; or the effect for the cause, and the cause for the effect. (For example, we speak of "boiling the jug" whereas in actual fact it is the water contained by the jug which is boiled and not the jug itself). Soul may thus mean the life which a breathing-frame has or that a living breathing man has in him, or it may mean the man himself, or various aspects in which the man as a living creature may be contemplated. It is all a matter of how the speaker or writer may be contemplating the men at the time of using the term. So then, the word "soul" is employed to express various ideas which all arise out of "respiring existence" as its fundamental significance. This accounts for the many different ways in which the word is used in Scripture as well as our present daily conversation.

As man becomes a living soul by breathing the breath (spirit) of life, the words "soul" and "spirit" came to be applied to that which proceeds from breathing, namely life, the mind, affections, emotions, desires etc.

Nephesh, as pointed out before, is actually translated "life" 119 times in the Old Testament. It is also translated "breath" because, as we have seen, the word carries with it the idea of "breathing creature."

THE SOUL IS IN THE BLOOD

A good example of the principle of metonymy referred to above, can be seen in Deu. 12:23, which states that "the blood is the life" (nephesh). That is: "The blood is the soul." Taken literally, one might argue that if the blood is the life, then so long as it is in the body it ought to live; on the contrary, it dies with the blood in it. The blood abstractly considered is not the life; yet relatively, and by metonymy, it is "the life of all flesh." The following Scripture will show the sense in which the phrase "the blood is the life" is used: "for the life (nephesh) of the flesh is in the blood itself" (Lev. 17:11-14).

As pointed out before: the breath of life or "spirit" is what really

keeps us alive. It is breathed into the nostrils, passes through into the lungs and then goes into the blood stream. As the blood flows through the blood vessels from the lungs on the way back to the heart, and then is pumped again throughout the body, the oxygen is carried by the red blood cells throughout the body to the individual cells. Each of our 60 trillion cells uses oxygen to "burn" our food to create energy needed to power our organs and muscles, and to maintain body heat. The life of man clearly depends on the blood, but the blood needs the breath and spirit of life to keep the body active and alive. The "life" or "soul" of man is clearly found in the bloodstream, and has nothing to do with an immortal, immaterial divine entity which has personal, conscious existence after the death of the body.

So then, by metonymy, blood is put for life - the container is put for the thing contained. By metonymy, the blood is the soul!

Once this fact is appreciated, we are able to properly understand Isa. 53:10 which refers to the shedding of Christ's blood in terms of making his "soul an offering for sin." Verse 12 says that he "poured out his soul unto death." It hardly needs to be pointed out that Jesus gave his life; he shed his blood, as an atonement for sin.

It is clear that when a man ceases to breathe the breath and spirit of life, his heart stops beating and circulating his life-blood, and then he dies. On the cross Jesus said: "Father, into thy hands (control) I commit my spirit." Jesus, knowing that the time had come for him to die, committed his life-breath to his Father's control and asked him to take it. Jesus then "gave up the ghost" (Lk. 23:46), which, as pointed out before, literally means "breathed out" or "expired." After asking his Father to receive his life-breath, Jesus, in one mighty act of self-sacrifice, breathed out and emptied himself of life. His life was not taken by man! He voluntarily emptied it up himself and offered it back to God who had given it.

Shortly afterwards, his body was pierced by the soldier's spear and "forthwith came there out blood and water" (Jn. 19:30-34). Jesus thus forfeited the two vital elements required to keep man alive - the breath and spirit of life, and the blood, and in that order.

Many believe that Jesus' request to his Father that he receive his spirit is expressive on Jesus' part to ascend to his Father in a disembodied form. There is not the slightest suggestion in any of the Gospel records that this is what Jesus meant. It arises from a false concept of what really constitutes the "spirit" and "soul." Had Jesus ascended to his Father in heaven the moment his body died, why would he say to his friends three days later after he had risen from the grave: "Touch me not for I am not

yet ascended to my Father?" (Jn. 20:17). And, if the "spirit" of Jesus ascended to heaven at death, how are we to reconcile this with tradition's teaching from 1 Pet. 3:18-20 that Jesus' "spirit" went to a prison under the earth at death to preach to other disobedient spirits? Was the "spirit" of Jesus in two places at once, or does he have two "spirits?" Both views are incorrect for the simple reason that acceptance of either one means that Jesus never really died at all, and Scripture clearly affirms that he did, and we will deal more specifically with what constitutes the death state in a later section.

Stephen expressed himself in a similar way to Jesus when he was put to death for his faith: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Act. 7:60). It is frequently understood from this passage that Stephen expected to go to heaven immediately in disembodied form. However, there is nothing in Scripture to support this interpretation of "spirit." Nowhere does Scripture teach that man's spirit is the real man in a disembodied form.

Stephen's "spirit" was not Stephen himself; it was merely the principle or energy that gave him life, as it gives all other men and animals' life. The individual Stephen consisted of that combination of power and organism defined earlier as body, mind and breath.

If the real Stephen was the "spirit" what is the "he" of Act. 7:60 which "fell asleep?" The personal pronouns are associated with the body, and not some immortal immaterial person inside the body.

If Stephen's personality, expressed in the pronoun "he," referred to Stephen's spirit, then this statement would prove that the spirit fell asleep, and this is just what those who quote this passage deny.

In asking the Lord to receive his spirit, Stephen was simply following Jesus' example on the cross of offering up and yielding his life.

But, it may be asked, why should Stephen make such a declaration about his spirit? Stephen was no doubt aware of the teaching of Jesus that whosoever loves and seeks to save his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life for his Lord's sake shall find it (Matt. 10:39. Lk. 17:33, Jn. 12:25).

Stephen was willing, and counted it a pleasure to die for his Lord and indicated this by asking him to take his life. He voluntarily offered it up as a sacrifice in his service. He didn't fight or struggle to free himself from his predicament. He didn't plead for deliverance or call down fire on his enemies. He quietly and humbly yielded up his life, knowing that by so doing he would obtain a better resurrection.

SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR

In the light of what has been presented concerning the soul referring to the life or blood, we are in a better position to understand such passages as Rev. 6:9-11: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the Testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who were to be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

This passage is often quoted in traditional circles to prove that souls go to heaven to enjoy a state of bliss after death. However, the word "heaven" does not occur in this passage, and to affirm that this is where the "souls" were is to affirm something that is not written in the text. In other words assumption! And, instead of being filled with joy and enjoying a state of bliss, this passage speaks of souls "crying with a loud voice." According to tradition, there is no crying or sadness in heaven. Instead of this passage supporting the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, it directly opposes it. In verse 11 the souls are given white robes. How can immaterial entities be clothed? In fact, if souls are immaterial and invisible, how could John see them? The souls in this text are "under the altar." Is this where immortal souls reside according to tradition?

The key to the understanding of this passage is contained in the phrase "under the altar." The book of Revelation contains over 500 references to the Old Testament, and in this text the reference to souls of the slain being under the altar takes us back to the blood of the burnt offering which was poured out at the base of the brazen altar (Lev. 4:7). The altar under the law, i.e. the altar of the Old Testament was a type or shadow of things to come in Christ. Under the law it was physical and literal; in Christ it is spiritual and symbolic.

An altar is the means by which sacrifices are offered to God; without an altar, sacrifices are unacceptable to God. It is through an altar that God receives offerings. In this respect, Christ is the Christian's altar. All their spiritual offerings and sacrifices to God are offered through him. After stating that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, Heb. 13:8-10 goes on to say that "We (the Christians) have an altar ..." The reference certainly has nothing to do with the literal physical altar under the law! It refers to the spiritual altar which belongs to those under

the new covenant, namely: Jesus Christ himself!

Christians "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1). There is only one way in which they can do this acceptably; through Jesus Christ. He is our altar!

The law of the altar is given in Ex. 20:24-25; Deu. 27:5. It could be made of earth or stone, but was not allowed to be shaped by human device. This pointed to the fact that the great antitypical altar, Jesus Christ, would be shaped and produced by a Divine hand and not human hands. The altar made holy all who touched it (Ex. 29:37). Jesus does the same for all who are prepared to draw near and "touch" him and allow their life to be set on fire for, and consumed in Him.

In New Testament times, many Christians were martyred for belonging to Jesus. As a result of laying their life on him as their altar, their blood was shed. Paul alludes to this in Plp. 2:17: "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith ..." Again in 2 Tim. 4:6 we read: "As for me, already my life is being poured out on an altar, and the hour for my departure is upon me" (New English Bible).

As the blood was poured out of the sacrifices offered upon the altar under the law, so the blood ("souls") of those slain in Christ is symbolically depicted as being "under the altar" in Rev. 6.

It was established earlier that "blood" or "life" is one of the basic meanings of the word "soul." The fact that the life-blood of the offerings under the law was poured out at the base of the altar strongly suggests that the reference to souls under the altar in Rev 6 should be interpreted in this light.

The "altar" then, in Rev.6 is not to be taken literally; it is to be understood spiritually; it is symbolic of things pertaining to Christ. It must be "spiritually discerned." It is not surprising to find such symbology in the book of Revelation. For the most part, the book of Revelation is symbolic. In the same sixth chapter of Revelation we read about beasts talking. Normally, beasts don't talk, and we are not expected to take it literally. The beasts are symbolic of something else and must be spiritually discerned. Once this fact is appreciated, most difficulties of interpretation disappear. Failure to recognise this fact can cause confusion!

In view of the symbolic nature of the book, it is not surprising to find that the souls in 6:10 are depicted as crying out for their blood to be avenged. Blood of course, cannot literally speak, but it must be remembered that we are not dealing with literal narrative. This is all written for the guidance of the living, not the dead, and therefore a voice is given to the dead in symbolic context in order that the living might

receive instruction. Many of the Christians living at the time that this message was given were suffering tribulation and were on the threshold of martyrdom themselves. A voice is fittingly given those who had already been martyred in order that others who were faced with the same prospect might be strengthened.

So then, by personification, a slain person's blood is represented as speaking or crying. Another example of this can be seen in Gen. 4:10 where the Lord, speaking to Cain, said: "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the ground." And Heb. 12:24 refers to Jesus "whose sprinkled blood speaks better things than that of Abel."

In an earlier section it was pointed out that in Scripture "soul" either refers to "life" or the "living-frame" which contains life. That is: it can relate either to the "body" or the "life" in the body. For example: Deu. 12:23 says "the blood is the life" (nephesh - "soul"). Here, the blood is referred to as being the soul. But in Jer. 2:34 we read about "the blood of the souls of the poor innocent people." Here, the "souls" refers to the bodies of poor innocent people whose blood was shed. Thus, in the first case the "soul" refers to the blood in the body, and in the second case it refers to the body which contains the blood. Such seemingly contradictory statements can only be reconciled through appreciating Scripture's use of the figure of speech called "metonymy."

Reference to the souls under the altar in Rev.6 can actually be understood in either of the two ways referred to above. That is, the "souls" can be viewed from the point of view of being the "life-blood" as already explained, or from the point of view of being the bodies which shed the blood. The persecuting powers of the people of God have been guilty on many occasions from early times of killing the saints, causing their bodies to fall dead upon the ground. Rev. 11:8 refers to "their dead bodies" which the enemy causes "to lie in the street." Also Psa. 79:2-3: "The dead bodies of thy servants have they (the enemy) given to be meat to the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them."

The enemy tried to bring ignominy and shame on the saints by leaving their dead bodies lying unburied upon the ground. Their dead bodies were left in the open street and other public places for people to gaze upon and sneer at. However, as far as the Lord was concerned, they were at the foot of the altar. Their death was not some empty senseless act performed by ignorant savages. The worldly mind, devoid of faith and

understanding would only view it in this light. But no! Their death was a sacrifice - a laying down of their life at the feet of Jesus, and reference to their souls under the altar beautifully enforces this. Wherever their dead body fell - whether in a dirty open street or prison or amphitheatre: if they died in the service of Christ their body really fell at his feet; under the altar, as a sacrifice well pleasing to his sight.

The vision continues in Rev. 6 to show that those in Christ never suffer in vain. Jesus himself taught on a number of occasions during his earthly ministry that the saints should regard themselves as blessed when men revile and persecute them because God has an exceeding great reward in store for them. This reward is symbolically depicted in Rev. 19:8 as "fine linen, clean and white" and is explained as "the righteousness of saints." Jesus, of course is their "righteousness," and their ultimate reward is to be "clothed upon" with his nature i.e. an immortal resurrection body. The ultimate reward of the saints under the altar in Rev. 6 is thus assured and expressed in terms of "white robes were given to every one of them." Their salvation and immortality was sure - so sure that John sees them in vision receiving it. What an encouragement to himself and all others who were about to be martyred for Christ!

It is hardly necessary to labour the point that a disembodied immaterial entity could hardly be clothed with a robe. The "souls" that John saw had nothing to do with the "souls" of tradition. Whatever these souls were, they were clearly "killed" as stated in verse 11. This does not agree with tradition's concept which believes souls cannot die. Also, as a result of being killed, the "souls" had to "rest a little season" v11. This should be read in conjunction with Rev. 14:13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." In a later section it shall be pointed out that death is a time of "rest" or "sleep" - unconsciousness, till awakened at the resurrection to be clothed with the new immortal body like our Lord's. When that takes place the saints will "rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty ..." (Rev. 4:8). In the meantime, as the dead saints sleep in the earth, they "rest from their labours."

The purpose of tribulation is to purge of all dross and make us white. Dan. 11:35 says that through tribulation some "shall fall" (in death under the altar) "to try them, and to purge, and to make them white." The vision in Rev. 6 very dramatically reveals that this purpose will be accomplished by symbolically depicting the souls as being clothed in white robes. Later on, in Rev. 20:4-6 John received a vision of the souls that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and he saw them living and

reigning with Christ. And, in answer to the question: "How did the beheaded souls live again to reign with Christ?" the answer is provided in verses 5-6: "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection ..." There is a significant absence of any mention in all of these "soul" passages to some immaterial, disembodied entity that departs to heaven at death.

"LIVING SOUL" APPLIES TO ALL ASPECTS OF LIVING CREATURES

The Hebrew words "chay nephesh" translated "living soul," relate, as we have seen to "breathing creature" or "body of life." Not only does it apply to man but also includes all species of living creatures. So then, if "living soul" means that man has an immortal soul within him that lives on after death, then so must animals, birds, and even insects, because the same phrase is applied to them in Scripture. "Living soul" relates to "all flesh" in the air, earth and sea, which breathe.

As pointed out before, natural man has no pre-eminence over other creatures God made. As far as the substance of our bodies and the energy - power that sustains us is concerned: Scripture makes no distinction between man and animals. All are equally styled "chay nephesh," and all are sustained by the same breath and spirit of life.

Proof of this is found in many parts of the Word of God. For instance, in Gen. 1:20 we read: "And God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that has life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." The words "life" and "creature" in this verse come from the same Hebrew words "chay nephesh" which are translated "living soul" in relation to man in Gen.2:7.

Gen. 1:21 goes on to say: "And God created great whales (sea-monsters), and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, each after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind ..." Again the words "living creature" come from "chay nephesh" and relate to all creatures in the sea and air, including insects.

The same applies to animals and reptiles: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature ("chay nephesh") according to their kind: cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth according to their kind: and it was so" (Gen. 1:24).

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air: and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature

("chay nephesh") that was the name of it" (Gen. 2:19).

The same applies in Gen. 9:10, 12, 15, 16 and Lev. 11:46. In each of these cases, "living creature" as applied to animals etc comes from the same Hebrew "chay nephesh" which is translated "living soul" in relation to man.

The basic significance of chay nephesh in these passages stands out quite clearly. It relates to a living creature, and embraces "all flesh" of fish, beasts, birds, insects and man. Not only are these all "living souls," but they are also all energized and animated by the same breath and spirit of life.

The equality of reference of "nephesh" (soul) to both man and beast is further demonstrated in the following verses;

(1) Num. 31:28: "And levy a tribute to the Lord from the men of war who went out to battle: one soul out of every 500 of the persons, and of the asses, and of the sheep."

(2) Pr. 12:10: "A righteous man regards the life ("nephesh - soul") of his beast." Here, as in the case of man, animal creatures are referred to as possessing "life" or "soul." And, by metonymy, as in the case of man, the physical creature itself is sometimes referred to as being the "soul" as we saw earlier on.

(3) Ezk. 47:9: "And it shall come to pass, that every thing that lives (Lit. "every soul of life") which moves whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish ..." Here, fish are referred to as "souls of life" i.e. "living souls or creatures." In fact, nephesh is actually translated "fish" in Isa. 19:10. The margin of the A.V. suggests "living things" as an alternative rendering.

(4) Rev. 8:9: "And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died." The Greek word translated "life" is "psuche" elsewhere translated "soul." Once again we have another example of fish possessing a soul i.e. "life."

Not only is "soul" applied to the "life" possessed by the sea creatures, but in Rev.16:3 it is applied to the creatures themselves which possess the life: "And every living soul (creature) died in the sea."

Now, if all these references to animals and other creatures possessing a soul means they possess some immortal entity which continues in conscious existence in a better state after death, then what are we to make of the statement in Ecc. 9:4 that "A living dog is better than a dead lion?" This could not be true if tradition's concept of a soul were true. Solomon is simply and clearly stating that there is more advantage being alive than dead. A lion is king of the jungle: a noble and princely

beast. A dog was regarded as the lowest of animals. However, because there is no advantage in death, i.e. it is not the "gateway to glory" then a living dog is better than a dead lion.

If it be conceded that the animal's possession of a soul does not mean an immaterial, immortal conscious entity, the same must be conceded in relation to man, for exactly the same Hebrew and Greek word is used in relation to both. Not the slightest distinction is made between them in this respect.

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CHAPTER THREE THE MORTALITY OF THE SOUL

The point has already been made that the Scriptures never refer to the soul as being immortal or never-dying. The common expression in traditional circles of "immortal soul" is quite unscriptural. The evidence all points in the opposite direction. Time and time again it is emphasised in the Word of God that the soul is mortal and subject to death and destruction. In fact, the emphasis is so clear and strong, one can only stand amazed and bewildered at the contradictory doctrine of tradition's immortal soul.

In the Old Testament alone there are 203 places where "nephesh" (soul) is said to be in danger of death, and 123 places where it is said to be delivered from death, implying its liability to death. In other words out of a total of 754 places in which the word is used in the Old Testament, 326 state that the soul is subject to death. The case for the mortality of the soul is therefore very strong indeed, especially in view of the fact that there is not one reference to it being immortal!

"Nephesh" is translated "mortally" in Deu. 19:11: "... smite him mortally that he die." Never do we find nephesh translated "immortal."

"Nephesh" is actually translated "dead body" or "the dead" in Lev. 19:28, 21:1, 22:4; Num. 5:2, 6:11, 9:6, 7, 10. It is never translated "immortal body."

The "soul" then, is clearly animal life that is subject to death and decay. It is not immortal.

In the following verses it is clearly stated that the soul dies:

(1) Abraham was afraid of losing his life in Egypt so asked his wife to tell a half-truth to save him. His words were: "that it may be well with me for your sake; and my soul shall live because of you" (Gen. 12:13), clearly implying that a soul can die.

(2) Lev. 23:30: "And whatsoever soul it be that does any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people."

(3) David, speaking to Saul said: "You hunt my soul to take it" (1 Sam. 24:11). The verse clearly refers to the taking of life.

(4) Josh. 10:28-40, 11:11: Many references are made in these sections of Scripture to Joshua and the armies of Israel "utterly destroying souls with the sword, leaving none to remain"

(5) Speaking of the ungodly, Job says: "Their soul dies in youth ..."

(6) Psa. 22:29: "No one can keep alive his own soul."

(7) Psa. 40:14: "Let them be ashamed and confounded together that

seek after my soul to destroy it ..."

(8) Psa. 56:13: "For you have delivered my soul from death."

(9) Psa. 78:50: "He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the plague."

(10) Psa. 89:48: "What man is he that lives and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Tradition would answer this question in the affirmative, saying "Yes! The soul lives on after death and does not accompany the body to the grave." Such affirmation contradicts the whole weight of divine evidence.

(11) Jer. 18:20: "They (the enemies) have digged a pit (grave) for my soul."

(12) Ezk. 18:4, 20: "The soul that sins shall die." This implies that all souls die: "For there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." (Ecc. 7:20. 2 Chr. 6:36. Rom. 3:23, 5:12. 1 Jn. 1:10).

(13) Ezk. 22:25-27: "... princes ... like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured souls ..."

(14) Hag. 2:13 speaks about a man becoming unclean through contact with a dead soul.

(15) Act. 3:22-23 says that every soul which refuses to hear the Word of God shall be destroyed.

(16) Jam. 5:20 says: "He who converts a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death," implying once again that souls die.

(17) Matt. 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

This passage is often quoted in traditional circles to prove the immortality of the soul. However, it plainly states that the soul is something that can be "destroyed" in hell. Since both soul and body can be destroyed in hell, this indicates that the soul is as destructible as the body since both can be destroyed in the same place. Is this what the immortal soulist wants from this passage? Whatever the "soul" is, it is obviously not immortal.

As pointed out before, the Hebrew word "nephesh" and the Greek "psyche" simply and basically mean "life," and are translated that way many times in Scripture. The Christian's "life" is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). Jesus is the "Way, the Truth and the Life ... The resurrection and the life." At his second coming he will resurrect all who have died in him and give them eternal life. Thus, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

So then, man may be able to kill the Christian's body and destroy it, but he has no control over the life. The power of life is totally in Jesus' hands. No man can destroy the eternal life promised to the saints in Christ. Thieves cannot break into heaven and snatch it out of Jesus' hands. It is the purpose of God to send His son Jesus back to earth to give life back to all who have lost it in him. So then, in the words of Lk. 12:4: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."

Man then, cannot destroy the life promised to the Christian - the eternal life which shall be bestowed at the second coming and resurrection. But God can destroy it - permanently - by casting the resurrected person into the "lake of fire" never to be resurrected or see life again! All who have proved disobedient, God will cast into "hell fire" from which there will be no future resurrection. Their body and soul will be eternally destroyed.

When men kill the saints, they only terminate their mortal existence. They do not touch that real life of theirs, which is related to the eternal future, and which has its foundation in their connection with Christ in the heavens. This is in Christ's keeping and can be touched by no man. We are not to fear those who can only demolish the corruptible body, and cannot do anything to prevent the coming bestowal of immortality by resurrection.

SOUL GOES INTO THE GRAVE

It is commonly believed that the body, and not the soul, goes into the grave. Such statements are really a contradiction of terms, for as already pointed out, "soul" frequently means "body." In view of this, it is not surprising to find that some Scriptures refer to the "soul" going to the grave.

(1) Psa. 49:15: "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me." (This is one of David's many references to his hope of resurrection of the body from the grave). David's position as a man of God is deliberately contrasted with what he said in his preceding remarks recorded in verses 6-9: "Men who trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem himself, nor give to God the price of his life. For the redemption of life is costly and the price they can pay can never suffice, that they should live for ever, and not see corruption." The righteous have hope beyond the grave. God will redeem their soul through resurrection to

eternal life. But the ungodly "shall never see light;" he is "like the beasts that perish" v 19-20.

(2) Psa. 30:2-3: "O Lord my God, I cried to thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down into the pit." David refers to a period in his life when he was sick. Had the Lord not healed him, he would have died, and been buried in the grave. He therefore refers to his healing as a deliverance of his soul from the grave. Being kept alive, to him, meant keeping his soul out of the grave. In other words, his soul going into the grave and death were one and the same thing.

(3) Isa. 38:17: King Hezekiah, as in the case of David, was healed by the Lord of a sickness that would have otherwise killed him. He says this to the Lord after his healing: "Behold, for my own welfare I had great bitterness: but thou hast, in love for my soul, held it back from the pit (grave) of corruption." From this we once again learn that the soul goes to the grave at death and corrupts. The soul is corruptible - not incorruptible!

(4) Job. 33:18, 22, 28-30 refers to God keeping back man's soul from the pit by sparing his life.

(5) The resurrection of the body of Christ is referred to as not leaving his soul in hell, or suffering his flesh to see corruption. (Act. 2:31). Faith in the resurrection enables the "soul" or "flesh" or "body" of man to rest in the grave "in hope." (Act. 2:26-27): "... my flesh shall rest in hope, because you (God) will not leave my soul in hell, neither will you suffer your Holy One to see corruption."

Instead of our "soul" going to "be with the Lord" at death, it "waits" for him in the grave where it "rests" in "hope" of the resurrection. Scripture never refers to our soul going to be with the Lord at death. However, there are many references to the soul waiting for the Lord. (Psa. 33:20; 130:5-6)

EXAMPLES OF "SOUL" REFERRING TO THE "BODY"

(1) It has already been pointed out that the phrase "living soul" in Gen. 2:7 is explained in 1 Cor. 15:45 to be "natural body." As far as the apostle Paul was concerned, the "soul" in Gen. 2:7 referred to the "body."

(2) The servants that Abraham purchased in Haran on his way down to the promised land are referred to in Gen. 12:5 as "the souls they had gotten ..."

(3) Gen. 46:18 refers to "sixteen souls" being born. Verses 26-27 says: "All souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his

loins - were 66; and the sons of Joseph, which were born to him in Egypt, were two souls ..." It hardly needs to be pointed out that when the writer referred to souls coming out of Jacob's loins and a woman's womb, he was not referring to some immaterial, invisible, immortal entity!

(4) Psa. 3:2: "Many there be which say of my soul, there is no help for him in God."

(5) Act. 27:37: "There was a total of 276 souls in the ship."

(6) 1 Pet. 3:20: "... while the ark was being prepared, in which few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water." (The rest of the "souls" perished!).

In the following references we are taught that a soul can sin, hear, touch, swear, has lips, eats flesh and blood, commits trespasses (Lev. 5:12, 14, 15, 17. 7:18, 20, 21, 25, 27. 17:10-12. Lk. 12:19).

A soul has flesh (Lev. 22:6); can be bought (Lev. 22:11); does work (Lev. 23:30); can get disease (Psa. 103:1-5); can be torn (Psa. 7:2); can be strangled (Job. 7:15); can be made fat (Pr. 11:25); can be idle and suffer hunger (Pr. 19:15. Isa. 29:8); can bow down (Isa. 51:23); can weep (Jer. 13:17).

Never is the soul spoken of as an immaterial, immortal thinking entity. Although the word occurs over 700 times in the Old Testament and about 180 in the New Testament; among all the variety of its renderings, it is impossible to discover anything approaching to the popular traditional dogma. In no instance has it the significance claimed for it by professing Christians of modern times. It is never said to be immortal or immaterial, but always the reverse.

EXAMPLES OF "SOUL" REFERRING TO "LIFE"

As pointed out before, the Hebrew word "nephesh", translated "soul" is also translated "life" 119 times in the Old Testament.

For example: Gen. 9:4: "But flesh with the life ("nephesh" - "soul") thereof, which is the blood ..." Lev. 17:11, 14: "The life ("nephesh" - "soul") of the flesh is in the blood." Gen. 19:17: "Escape for thy life ("nephesh") ..." Psa. 38:12: "They also that seek after my life ..."

The same applies in the New Testament. The Greek word "psuche" translated "soul," is also translated "life" 40 times.

Examples are as follows: Matt. 2:20: "which sought the young child's life" ("psuche" - "soul"). Matt. 20:28: "To give his life a ransom for many." Lk. 6:9: "To save life or destroy it." Act. 20:10: "... his life is in him."

In these and all other places where the original Greek and Hebrew words are translated "life," the basic idea is clearly "life-breath." This is particularly apparent in Lev. 17:11, 14 where we read that the life ("nephesh" - "soul") of the flesh is in the blood."

"LET THIS CHILD'S SOUL COME INTO HIM AGAIN"

It is in this light that such passages as 1 Kng. 17:21-22 can be properly understood. This passage refers to an occasion when a young lad died and the prophet Elijah went to restore him to life. The Authorised Version of the Bible records the incident in these words: "And he (Elijah) stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried to the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul ("nephesh" - "life") come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah: and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived."

Elijah was simply asking the Lord to give the breath of life back to the lad again to revive him and cause him to live. In fact, the death of the lad is actually recorded in verse 17 in these words: "there was no breath ("nephesh") in him." Elijah petitioned the Lord to restore that vital life-breath and cause it to flow through the blood again.

The New English Bible translation of 1 Kng. 17:21 is good. It says that Elijah "breathed deeply upon the child three times and called on the Lord, O Lord my God, let the breath of life, I pray, return to the body of this child. The Lord listened to Elijah's cry, and the breath of life returned to the child's body and he revived." The translators of the New English Bible clearly recognised that the Hebrew word "nephesh", translated "soul" by the Authorised Version translation, signified "breath of life."

Elijah's actions of breathing deeply upon the child takes us back to Gen. 2:7 where the Lord breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, causing Adam to breathe and become a "living soul." Elijah, whose name means "power (spirit) of God" was acting on God's behalf and virtually performed the same life-imparting action by breathing upon the lad. The result was that the lad once again became a "living soul." But if the "soul" was some separate, independent, personal, immortal entity, safely tucked away in heaven, far removed from the lips of Elijah, his action of breathing upon the child becomes quite pointless and irrelevant, a vain and senseless act. And, if the child was in heaven in the form of an immortal soul, would it not have been better to have left him there to enjoy the bliss rather than recall him?

Only the hard pressed resort to this passage to prove the immortality

of the soul. It neither states nor implies that the soul described is immortal or that it departed to heaven. This view is read into the passage and assumed. It is based entirely on an assumption for which no other passage in Scripture offers support. The personal pronoun "him" in the passage describes the lifeless body. If the real child was the immortal soul tabernacling in a mortal, earthly body, then the pronoun should have been descriptive of the soul and not (as it is) the body.

The same applies to Lk. 8:55. When Jesus prayed for a dead young girl to be restored to life, it is recorded that "her spirit came again, and she arose straight away." The "spirit" refers to the spirit and breath of life which the Holy Spirit, through Jesus, breathed upon her, causing her to breathe and revive, and live again. Prior to that she was in a death sleep (v52).

In connection with these examples, 2 Kng. 4:34 is worthy of mention. It refers to an occasion when Elisha went to pray for a young lad who had died. Verse 34 says: "And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child grew warm ..." The interesting point in this incident is that in seeking the restoration of the lad's life, Elisha put his mouth upon the lad's mouth. It almost suggests that he was following Elijah's example of breathing upon or into the dead body, the spirit of life which he possessed as a prophet of God, in order that the breathing process might recommence, and the dead body live again.

Another example similar to these of "soul" referring to "life" is in Gen. 35:18: "And it came to pass, as her (Rachel's) soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni ..." The phrase "soul was in departing" simply means that her life was ebbing away. She was breathing her last - she was getting weaker - she was dying. Some modern translators translate the phrase as: "with her last breath, as she was dying, she named him Ben-oni ..." The Jerusalem Bible says: "At the moment when she breathed her last, for she was dying ..." Elsewhere, as pointed out before, this same process is expressed as "giving up the ghost," which literally means to "breathe out," "expire."

It is sometimes argued that the word "departing" in the phrase: "soul was in departing," implies that the soul must have gone somewhere. The "somewhere" is then assumed to be heaven. However, to say the soul of a dying person departs is to say nothing about whether or not the soul is a personal immortal entity, or where, if any place, it might depart. In everyday speech it is appropriate to say "X lost the sight in his right eye,"

or "X lost his hearing after the accident." To use these expressions is not to imply that the eyesight was removed to another location or that the hearing departed to another abode where it continued to exist in a disembodied form. Likewise, "her soul was in departing" does not imply that the soul went to heaven, hell or anywhere else. The expression is synonymous with "her life was ebbing."

It has already been stressed that the word "ghost" in the oft repeated phrase: "gave up the ghost," is "gava" in Hebrew, and means "to breathe out", "expire". It is interesting to note that in Job. 11:20 and Jer. 15:9, where the same phrase "gave up the ghost" occurs, the Hebrew word for "ghost" is "nephesh" which is elsewhere translated "soul." These passages of Scripture which are describing the same event, i.e. death; obviously run parallel and are used synonymously. In other words, the giving up or departing of the soul simply means to "breathe out" the breath and spirit of life - to expire.

If the giving up of the soul must be taken to mean the departure and ascension to heaven of some immortal personal entity, what are we to make of Job. 11:20 which says this is the destiny of the wicked? Do the souls of the wicked go to heaven also?

While we are on the subject of "breathing-out," 1 Kng. 10:5 is worth mentioning. When the Queen of Sheba saw all Solomon's wealth and wisdom and power, "there was no more spirit in her." Some modern translators render it like this: "it left her breathless." In other words, she was flabbergasted! The basic connection between the word "spirit" and "breath" is once again apparent in this episode.

Josh. 5:1 tells us that when the enemies of Israel heard what the Lord had done for his people, "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more." Does this mean that their immortal souls or spirits departed from their bodies? By no means! Their experience would be described today in terms of the wind being taken out of their sails! That is: they were astounded - flabbergasted - breathless.

What then, is man's life? Many would reply to this question by saying it is an immaterial, immortal divine entity within man, which departs from the body at death and lives on eternally. However, the same question is asked and answered by James; and the answer he gives is very different from the common concept: "For what is your life? It is like a vapour, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away" (4:14). "As the flower of the grass he shall pass away" (Jam. 1:10-11). "The triumphing of the wicked is short ... he shall perish forever like his own dung: they who have seen him shall say, where is he? He shall fly away as

a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night" (Job. 20:5-8).

If the soul or spirit of man is immortal and divine, how are we to understand the various passages of Scripture which speak of it in terms of being "revived" as a result of eating food, drinking water and hearing good news? For instance, we read in 1 Sam.30:12 that a man's "spirit came to him" as a result of eating and drinking. He had been three days without food and water. If the "spirit" is immaterial and exists independently of the body, and is unaffected by the condition of the body, why would it "come again" to the body as a result of eating and drinking? And, if it had left the body, why wasn't the man dead? Obviously, there is very much more to this word "spirit" than what tradition generally allows. In Judg. 15:19 it is also recorded that Samson's "spirit" came again, and he revived as a result of drinking water. The simple meaning is that he got his breath back and his strength revived. In Gen. 45:27 it is recorded that "the spirit of Jacob their father revived" when he heard the good news concerning Joseph being alive.

The word "revive" means "come or bring back to consciousness, life, existence, vigour". It means to restore or stimulate the senses. Now, if the spirit is immortal and divine, it must surely be undying and unfading. This is what the word "immortal" means. Anything that is immortal is like God Himself "who only hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16). Being immortal, he never loses consciousness and His senses and vigour never abate. He never needs reviving! Surely then, if our "spirit" or "soul" is an immortal divine entity, it would never stand in need of being revived. Yet the Scriptures quoted above clearly teach that not only does it sometimes need reviving, but also requires material things such as food, drink and good news to effect the revival. In Num. 11:6 we read that our soul can become "dried away." Again, this hardly squares with the immortal theory.

CONFIRMATION IN HEBREW PARALLELISMS

We have seen that the same original words translated "soul" in both the Old and New Testament, have also been translated "life." We will now look at some verses where the same original words have been translated "soul," but where the same basic meaning of "life" is implied.

That "soul" means "life" in many parts of the Word of God is particularly evident in the Psalms. Hebrew parallelisms abound in this book in which "soul" and "life" are used synonymously.

To demonstrate what is meant by Hebrew parallelisms, consider the following examples:

(1) Psa. 78:24-25: "And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the corn of heaven. Man did eat angel's food (food provided by angels). He sent them food in abundance." Here, a certain point is made four times without seeming to be repetitious, by using four different words: "manna," "angel's food," "food" and "corn of heaven." Any reader of average intelligence would not conclude that the Israelites ate four different kinds of food! These words and phrases run parallel with each other and are synonymous.

(2) Psa. 78:27: "He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowl like the sand of the sea."

(3) Psa. 78:31: "The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel."

(4) Psa. 79:2: "The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of heaven, the flesh of thy saints to the beasts of the earth."

These, and many more are typical of the parallelisms that occur in the Word of God in which the same point is repeated in different words, but where the meaning is the same. They are synonymous expressions, specially designed for emphasis without appearing to be repetitious.

In the following selection of Scriptures the same principle applies in relation to the word "soul" and "life" revealing that "life" is the basic significance behind "soul" in these cases.

(1) Psa. 7:5: "Let the enemy pursue my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth."

(2) Psa. 78:50: "He made a path for his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the plague."

(3) Job. 12:10: "In whose hand is the soul ("life" marg.) of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind."

(4) Matt. 16:25-26: "For whosoever desires to save his life ("psuche") shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life ("psuche") for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul ("psuche")? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ("psuche")?"

These examples could be multiplied many times over. "Soul" and "life" are clearly synonymous expressions in many parts of the Word.

OTHER SHADES OF MEANING

Other Hebrew parallelisms in which the word "soul" occurs, bring to light other shades of meaning. For instance, Psa. 13:2: "How long shall I take counsel ("bear pain" - Revised Standard Version, "endure grief" - Jerusalem Bible) in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? Here, "soul" and "heart" are used synonymously. Nephesh is actually translated "heart" 15 times in the Old Testament. The Greek "psuche" is translated "heart" also in Eph. 6:6: "Doing the will of God from the heart."

The heart was regarded as the seat of the emotion by many of the ancients, mainly because the rate of its beat was affected by emotional situations. Emotional situations also affect the stomach, and for this reason the "bowels" were also regarded as the seat of all feeling and emotion. The words "inward affection" in 2 Cor. 7:15 literally mean "bowels" in the Greek, but most modern translators have given us "heart." Emotion pertains very much to the make-up of the constitution of man, so it is not surprising to find that the word "soul" is used in that sense in various places. Compare the following examples where the word "soul" carries with it the basic idea of emotion or deep human feeling:

(1) Gen. 34:3 says that Shechem's "soul clave ("was drawn" Revised Standard Version) to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel ..." "The soul of my son Shechem longs for ("is in love with" New English Bible) your daughter" v8; "He had delight in Jacob's daughter" v 19.

Shechem fell in love with Dinah and had a deep inward feeling for her. The fact that he had sexual intercourse with her as soon as he met her, before seeking her father's permission to get married, suggests his feelings were on a sensual level and motivated by the flesh. They were fittingly referred to as pertaining to the "soul" i.e. the body of flesh, from which all emotions spring.

(2) Emotional upset is referred to in Judg. 16:16 where we read that Samson's "soul was vexed to death" as a result of Delilah's incessant harping.

(3) Psa. 107:26 says that man's "soul is melted because of trouble." The reference is to men being filled with fear and losing their nerve. In fact, the Jerusalem Bible renders it: "nerve is lost in the ordeal."

(4) In Psa. 86:1-7 we read about the Psalmist lifting up his soul to the Lord. Running parallel with this statement are other statements such as: "I cry unto thee daily" - "I call upon thee" - "my prayer ... my supplications." The deep emotional feelings of David were reaching out to

God and are referred to in terms of lifting his soul to the Lord. In many other Psalms the same experience is attributed to the "heart," revealing that "soul" and "heart" are used synonymously in Scripture.

In fact, "heart" and "spirit" are used synonymously also. Compare Psa. 78:8: "... a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." Also Psa. 143:4-6: "Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is dismayed ... I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsts after thee ..." In this particular Psalm we have reference to spirit, soul and heart. These three words also run parallel in other portions of the Word of God, where they relate to the deep, innermost thoughts and feelings of man.

For instance, Psa. 77:2-6: "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God when I was troubled: I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed. Thou holdest my eyelids from closing: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made diligent search."

In most of the passages of Scripture which speak about the soul or spirit or heart being anxious or troubled or in distress; it really relates in the final analysis, to anguish of mind; mental torment or depression. It is not difficult to trace parallels throughout Scripture between such expressions as "desire of mind," "desire of heart," "desire of soul." They are frequently used synonymously. But, in the final analysis, all desires spring from the mind.

It has for some time been a medically established fact that the mind controls and governs the body. A man's mental and emotional disposition is determined by the way he thinks and exercises his mind. The Bible taught this long ago: "As a man thinketh - so is he (Pr. 23:7)." This is why Jesus is referred to as the "head" of the Church which is his "body." The head houses the brain which controls the body.

Our feelings and emotions are governed by the disposition of the mind. If the mind is weak and unhealthy; fearful and negative in its disposition and outlook, our emotional feelings will be consistent with that condition. This is why Scripture lays so much emphasis upon feeding the mind with good thoughts, influencing it by the precepts of God's Word.

Although the "heart" is referred to many times in Scripture as the seat of thought and reasoning, it is not in actual fact. It is only spoken of

this way in a metaphorical sense, and we still speak of it in the same terms today. The heart is not a thinking, reasoning mechanism, and this has been proved by the modern medical phenomenon known as "heart transplants". If the heart was responsible for a man's thoughts and mental disposition, one would expect that the removal of his heart to be replaced with another, would result in a change of disposition. This has never been the result! His former disposition has continued unchanged.

That the mind alone is responsible for all thoughts and mental disposition has been proved conclusively by paraplegics whose bodies have no feeling from the neck down. Many have become paraplegic as a result of an accident. Those whose bodies are "dead" from the neck down retain the same mental disposition and reasoning ability. Obviously no other part of the body besides the mind is responsible for that function.

In view of this, it is not surprising to find that the Hebrew word "nephesh" and the Greek "psuche" which are translated "soul," are also translated "mind." The mind, like the heart and emotion, belongs to, and is part of the body; which in totality, with all its parts, constitutes a "living soul." The mind is therefore, quite fittingly associated and linked with the "soul."

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CHAPTER FOUR THE SPIRIT OF MAN

It has been pointed out that "spirit" refers in many verses to the breath of life which God breathed into man to make him a living soul. However, it must now be pointed out that the word "spirit" cannot be limited or confined to that meaning. Some commentators have correctly pointed out that the word has four major significations, and is one of those elastic words which depends on the context for its significance. It cannot be kept in the groove of precise, uniform definition.

The four basic significations are:

(1) It represents primarily the life-force that all creatures, including man, breathe.

(2) It denotes a divine being or beings, such as the Father "who is spirit" (Jn. 4:24), and Jesus who is "a quickening spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45), and angels who "are ministering spirits (Heb. 1:7-14).

(3) It denotes an influence from a being, particularly the Holy Spirit which is invisible radiant power which issues forth from God, and by which God performs all his works and wonders.

(4) It denotes a state of feeling - mental or emotional dispositions, and often relates to the deep innermost thoughts of the mind; i.e. the real identity and personality of a man.

Point number (4) is the one that is under consideration in this chapter so we will now focus attention upon it.

FORMED AND BREATHED

There is no doubt that the word "spirit" is used in two quite different senses in relation to man in Scripture. Firstly, as we have seen, it relates to the divine life-breath or energy which all men breathe and by which all life on earth is sustained.

Secondly, it relates to something that the Lord formed in man and from which man's attitude, character, disposition, identity etc develops. Man's "spirit" in this sense, is the habitation of his deep innermost thoughts.

When God formed all the various parts of man out of the dust of the ground, he also, according to Zec. 12:1 "formed the spirit of man within him."

Now, the word "formed" comes from the Hebrew word "yatsar" and means "press into shape," "squeeze into shape," "to mould into a form,

especially as a potter," "fashion." It is the same word translated "formed" in Gen. 2:7-8 where we are told that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." The same word is used many times in relation to the potter forming things out of clay and the idolater forming idols out of wood etc. The word is always used in relation to the formation of something physical and tangible. It is never used in relation to the formation of something immaterial and intangible; such would be a contradiction of terms! In view of this, it is evident that whatever the "spirit of man" is, which God formed "within him," it is something physical and tangible like all the other parts of his body which the Lord formed. It is not, as commonly believed, something immaterial and intangible.

So then, the "spirit" which God formed within man is obviously not to be confused with the spirit-breath of life which God breathed into man's nostrils after he had formed him. Scripture refers to both as the "spirit of man" but there is a clear distinction to be made between the two. The "spirit" which is responsible for the innermost thoughts and personality of man was formed first along with all other parts of his body, after which the spirit-breath of life was breathed into the nostrils to activate and energize all those parts. The context of the word "spirit" usually determines the significance, and it is important to carefully examine it in each case in its context.

VITAL TO DISCERN THE "SPIRITS"

Failure to distinguish between the two usages of the word spirit in relation to man has led to much misunderstanding of Scripture. For instance some Scriptures speak about man's spirit returning to God at death. Our understanding of this will depend entirely on how we interpret the word spirit. If we interpret it to mean "breath of life" we will simply conclude that at death man breathes his last and yields his life-breath back to God who gave it. But, if we interpret spirit to mean man's innermost thoughts and personality, we might easily conclude that at death, the thoughts and personality of man survive the death of the body and live on eternally in the presence of God.

The truth of the matter is not too difficult to settle. If, when Scripture refers to man's spirit returning to God at death, it relates to man's thoughts and personality, one would expect to find at least one or two positive references elsewhere in Scripture teaching that man's thoughts and identity survive the death of the body. Unfortunately, there is not one

verse in the Bible that supports this concept. Quite the opposite in fact. Scripture is adamant that when man dies, "his spirit goes forth, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." (Psa. 146:4).

This is quite conclusive. If the "spirit" which "goes forth" at death represents the thoughts and personality of man, then they should surely continue after death. But the Psalmist says they do not. Instead, he says "his thoughts perish." Elsewhere he says there is "no remembrance" in death. Thus, the "spirit" which leaves man at death and returns to God must refer to the breath of life which all men exhale and yield up at death.

THE "SPIRIT OF THE MIND"

What then, is this part of man called "spirit" which the Lord formed within him? Well, a very significant statement made by the apostle Paul in Eph. 4:23 provides a good spring-board to our enquiry. Here he refers to the spirit as "the spirit of the mind." Notice that he doesn't say the spirit is the mind, neither does he say that the mind is the spirit. His phrase "spirit of the mind" implies that he did not regard the spirit and mind as being one and the same thing, but two separate and distinct "parts" of man.

This is confirmed in 1 Cor. 14:14-15 where the apostle Paul refers to the situation of a man praying with his spirit but not with his mind. He then says: "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the mind also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the mind also." It should be self-evident from this that Paul placed the spirit and mind into two different categories. Each "part" performed a different function.

However, although Paul places man's spirit and mind under two separate headings, it does not necessarily follow that they are totally unrelated to, and independent of each other. In fact Paul's reference to "the spirit of the mind" strongly suggests that the spirit is closely connected in some way with the mind.

In many circles it is believed that the spirit of man is his real self - his real identity and personality, totally free and independent of the mind, and capable of survival when detached from the mind and body. This "spirit" as pointed out before, is regarded as being immaterial and capable of disembodied existence.

But it should be recalled that the reference in Zec. 12:1 to the spirit being formed by God in man shows that it is something physical like the rest of his bodily parts which God formed, and not something immaterial

and intangible.

And as we pursue this study in greater depth, it will also become apparent that if the living relationship between our spirit and mind is terminated, our identity and personality also terminates. Not one case in the Bible or history can be cited to prove that identity survives brain destruction. All consciousness, knowledge and understanding ceases with the destruction of the mind. Whatever the spirit is, it cannot perpetuate our thoughts and identity after the brain has died.

LIFE AFTER DEATH EXPERIENCES

To offset what has been said, some would make reference to various claims that have been made of life after death experiences, involving voices, feelings of exhilaration and euphoria and light at the end of a tunnel etc. But what is overlooked is the fact that none of the people who have had these experiences were really dead in the full clinical sense of the word. As all physicians agree; a person is not dead when the heart stops beating or when breathing ceases. A person is dead when the brain cells have died and there is no possibility of revival. Oxygen still remains in the brain cells for several minutes after the heart stops beating and breathing ceases, during which period the mental machinery is still quite capable of creating pictures and visions consistent with the hopes and expectations and data fed into it over past years of teaching and indoctrination. It is all very subjective of course but very real to the one experiencing it.

If the sub-conscious is full of hope and expectation of disembodied existence in heaven after death, it can dictate such thoughts and impressions and even "visions," especially if the person believes he is standing on the threshold of death, and if the fear of death was paramount in his mind when he went out under the anaesthetic. Naturally, if the person is revived before destruction of the brain cells takes place, he will remember and recount his "experience."

When a person wakes up or regains consciousness after a general anaesthetic, a host of experiences of colour and light, sounds, feelings, thoughts and memories can flood in on him. As for his objective, observable behaviour is concerned, he may be lying unmoved, unmoving; but as far as his state of consciousness is concerned, he may be undergoing a series of subjective experiences. Those who believe that the spirit survives the death of the body naturally quote such experiences as proof! The feeling of lightness which often accompanies the anaesthetised

state, is also often quoted to add weight to the disembodied concept. In actual fact, nothing has left the body at all. The patient is simply undergoing a series of subjective experiences.

Similar tunnel effects experienced by those who are dying are experienced by fighter pilots when subjected to high G forces as a result of massive acceleration. The blood drains from their brain and they black out. It is believed that loss of consciousness in this way is about as close as you could get to the death experience. Sensations that are associated with the blackout nearly always include a tunnelling of the vision down to a central point where you just have light ahead of you, giving a pleasant effect - almost a sense of euphoria. The sensations of euphoria may be because the brain releases opiate-like substances to relieve the acute distress and pain. These produce hallucinations in the parts of the brain that deal with memories and emotions. Lack of blood flow causes this and cardiac arrest has the same effect. The sudden rush of blood and oxygen to the brain as a result of resuscitation and revival, can also cause various physical and subjective experiences, and to base a doctrine on life after death on such subjective experiences would be a deception.

If cases could be cited in which identity survived the destruction of the brain, the case would stand differently. Such however, is never the case. Those who claim life after death experiences have all been revived before the brain cells died. They were not really dead at all in the full clinical sense of the word!

Once the brain cells die, all knowledge, personality and identity also die at the same time - even if the heart is revived and breathing recommences afterwards. In such cases the person concerned is just a "vegetable." His body is still alive but he knows nothing and responds to nothing. The presence of his wife, children, favourite food etc cannot produce even the slightest emotional response from him. Bible reading and spiritual songs also fail to elicit even a flicker of recognition or pleasure.

During this condition the "spirit" (in the Orthodox sense) must still be in the body, because traditional theology accepts and teaches that "the body without the spirit is dead" (Jam. 2:26). If the body is still alive, it must still contain the "spirit."

So then, if the spirit is man's real consciousness and identity, and functions independently of the mind (as it must do if it lives on eternally after death), why does identity cease with the destruction of the brain cells? If identity ceases to manifest itself while the spirit is connected with a dead brain, how could it possibly manifest itself if totally separated and

detached from the brain? If the spirit requires a mind to produce thoughts, character and personality, how could it possibly produce such things if disconnected from the mind? Also, if the spirit is the real person, eternally conscious and indestructible, a person should not lose all sense of time and reality and consciousness when knocked unconscious or when placed under an anaesthetic.

Scripture and history teaches that conscious existence, knowledge, understanding, and personality requires the combination of both mind and spirit. Together, they form an inseparable unit.

MANY PARTS

We have seen that a person can be divided into two main parts - body and brain. Together, energised by the spirit-breath of life, they form a unit called "man."

However, the body can also be sub-divided into many different parts, such as arms, hands, legs, feet etc, all of which have different functions to perform.

The same applies to the brain. It too, can be subdivided into various sections, each of which have different functions to perform. From it nerves travel to all organs and tissues of the body, effecting muscle contraction, gland secretion, etc; and to it nerves bring messages from sensory organs providing the basis of sensation. The brain, like the rest of the nervous system, is constructed of nerve cells which can conduct electrochemical currents along their length.

The major part of the brain is the cerebral cortex which occupies the vault of the skull, and is believed to be the seat of conscious experience. It is estimated that there are up to 14,000,000,000 nerve cells in the cerebral cortex. In this enormously complicated structure distinct pathways have been identified which are responsible for the transport of individual modes of sensation, e.g. touch, vision, hearing etc. The brain can be subdivided into various sections, like the body; each section being responsible for each of the senses, and in all probability, for the personality of an individual; sometimes styled "spirit" in Scripture. Although the functions of many parts of the cortex are ill-understood, it is the ardent belief of most scientists that the function of the mind will eventually be reduced to the functions of different parts of the brain.

It is one thing to understand how electrical current travels to muscles of the body to cause a contraction and quite another thing to understand the motivation and will which initiated the electrical impulses.

It is one thing to understand how physical forces such as light initiate a train of impulses in a nerve, and quite another thing to understand how those impulses are interpreted by the brain into meaningful pictures of the world and how sensations can be experienced as pleasure, pain, beauty, or ugliness.

Pagan philosophy denied the possibility of God making brain-substance think, and invented the speculation that the thinker was an immortal, immaterial man inside the mortal material man, as if this made the matter any plainer!. Surely if it is difficult to conceive of a finely-organised electrical instrument like the brain thinking (when we feel and see continually that it does), it is a million times more difficult to imagine an invisible shadow doing it!

Scientists stand together with the rest of mankind in being unable to comprehend how brain-matter can think. However, it would be foolish to conclude, on this basis, that brain-matter cannot think. At the moment it is one of these "secrets" of the Creator which he has not revealed to man. It is high above our thoughts as the heaven is above the earth. Truly, man is awesomely and wonderfully made!

CONSCIOUS AND SUB-CONSCIOUS MIND

The brain then, in which all thought processes take place, and through which the whole body is controlled, is divided into various sections, each section being responsible for different functions.

It has now been ascertained beyond any possible question that in addition to the ordinary objective consciousness, man has beneath this consciousness a subjective or sub-conscious mind which is continually controlled by suggestion. It is this subjective mind with which the hypnotist plays his pranks when he has lulled the ordinary objective consciousness to rest.

"Subconscious," is a term used to describe mental processes such as thoughts, ideas, feelings that go on in a person's mind without his being aware or conscious of them. It has been proved that unconscious thoughts and feelings are of basic importance in the way the minds of people work. Before Sigmund Freud, it would have been widely agreed that the notion of unconscious mental phenomena was logically impossible - a contradiction of the very terms. It is now known that perceptions take place below the threshold of awareness, capable of leaving effects on the mind.

"Subconscious," then, describes an activity of the mind which

persists without our awareness of it. Such things as the memory and the function of habit, belong to the subconscious and relieve the conscious mind of a vast amount of labour. We do not need to think about a multitude of actions, such as reaching for the light switch. They have become so habitual that we need no conscious effort to perform them. A mental activity precedes each such effort but the activity is borne by that great labour saver - our subconscious mind.

The subconscious however, is not entirely hidden from us. We all feel, to our regret, the offensive nature of those unwelcome and rebellious thoughts, which like a stream flow through the conscious stratum, ever diverting our attention, ever penetrating our tranquillity of mind.

In sleep too, that lower self continues its restless course; intrusively it produces dreams, or works on problems, even mathematical ones, if necessary. It can even produce correct answers to such problems. It can also perform some amazing feats, such as waking us like an alarm clock at a desired hour. It can also assimilate noises which would otherwise awaken us and translate them into dreams, and the rattle of a dustbin lid may become a rational feature of a most irrational dream.

When a man falls into a dreamless sleep, he does not lose all his beliefs or abandon all his goals; he does not cease wanting a better world or being artistic or imaginative or lazy; nor does he forget how to do arithmetic or speak French.

ABSENT IN BODY, BUT PRESENT IN SPIRIT

A person is not concerned for someone only when thinking of him, in the same way that one does not have confidence in God only when concentrating on his power. Our deep inner self - the subconscious mind, can quietly maintain concern for a friend and maintain a confidence in God while the conscious mind is busily engaged in mundane affairs.

In fact, a deep and lasting relationship with a friend and God depends on this kind of total devotion and commitment of both the conscious and subconscious mind. Commitment that goes no deeper than the conscious mind is very shallow. It is not difficult for nice words to roll off the top of the head, but if they do not come from deep inner devotion, they are merely empty platitudes, spoken one minute and forgotten the next. Worship that merely proceeds from the top of the head without any real inner conviction and feeling is totally unacceptable to God. True worshippers worship "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23); i.e. in the "spirit of the mind" - in the deep innermost subconscious department of the mind.

On one occasion when the apostle Paul was concerned about his Christian friends at Corinth, he wrote to them and said that although he was "absent in body" he was nevertheless "present in spirit" (1 Cor. 5:3). Did he mean that he left his body and travelled in a disembodied state to Corinth? By no means. The phrase "present in spirit" is explained by the following phrase: "as though I were present."

Although Paul was miles away from the Corinthians as far as his physical bodily presence was concerned, and although his conscious mind was ever actively involved in his preaching and teaching work, his subconscious was firmly focused on his friends back at Corinth and continually exercised concern for them. He was present with them in spirit. It was as though he was present with them in the flesh.

HIGHLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO SUGGESTION

Our knowledge of this lower aspect of the mind (for we must not think of it as a separate mind) derives largely from the discovery by Mesmer, several centuries ago, of what used to be called Mesmerism, but now is called hypnotism. This is a form of sleep in which the conscious mind is suspended from activity by another person who can then make direct suggestions to the subconscious mind of the subject. There has been much that is foolish, written about hypnosis in modern fiction. First, it is important to realise that a person cannot be hypnotised against his will. The willed co-operation of the subject is necessary and the difficult subject is one who lacks power of concentration. Secondly, a person cannot be compelled to do something contrary to his moral dispositions. What we call character is, to use the metaphor the word implies, so deeply engraven upon the mental process that it cannot be easily effaced. Hence, the necessity of years of persistent effort in rectitude in order to produce something of value

A person is able to be induced to perform quite incredible acts under hypnosis. Even delayed actions can be suggested to a subject and performed at the required time, after consciousness has been restored. Again, certain diseases yield to the suggestions made to the mind in hypnotic sleep. A final point of interest is that there are degrees of hypnotic state, ranging in depth or intensity from a dreamy tranquillity to a deep sleep in which a surgical operation can, in some cases, be performed.

The main point is that the subconscious mind is a function which is highly susceptible to suggestions. This is generally described by a term

"suggestibility." This feature, in given circumstances, can produce amazing results. It is of course, susceptible to our own suggestions, hence the term "auto-suggestion." This we practise, perhaps without realising it, every day of our lives in differing degrees and with varying success. Children are adept in this respect and probably so too, were men like Hitler. If we have ever wondered how such beings deceived themselves into believing that they were subjects of divine election; herein lies the probable answer - they were possessed of a high suggestibility.

Our suggestibility is greatly exploited today by television advertisements and the high-powered salesman. Their methods are instructive and illuminating. Their suggestions that we try their commodities are delivered in crisp, resonant, penetrating, but pleasing tones. Their sentences are short and repeat a single idea rapidly in a variety of ways. If this is backed by a short burst of song in a catchy rhythm, repeating the idea, so much more are they successful. In this way, they drive the suggestion through the barrier of the conscious mind, deep into the subconscious, and we find ourselves walking into a shop and asking for the particular goods suggested.

Self-made suggestions, such as good resolutions, are hindered by the activity of the conscious mind. Yet, in spiritual life, the greatest quest, reduced to practical terms, is a reorganisation of our subconscious mind: an ennobling of its emotional, moral and intellectual impulses. It is only achieved by a ceaseless pressure of ideas from the mind of God revealed in his quickened word, and from the glorious vision of his son. But how difficult this becomes, we know to our regret. How obstructive are our conscious minds to the reception of the divine! All because the mind, either from infirmity, or preoccupation, or through lack of interest, impairs the degree of our suggestibility.

God's methods of spiritual education are wonderfully adapted to our needs for he gave us our faculties and knows their function. The maximum profit will be obtained only if we relax the mind and empty it of all diversions. Even the thought of trying to obtain spiritual benefit can be an obstruction. We must listen as effortlessly as possible and allow the mind, during a service, to dwell passively on the vision of the perfection of Christ. It is a mistake to think that strenuous concentration is needed; this will hinder rather than increase our state of suggestibility. The same applies to private meditation which should be practised by all Christians. Here lies the greatest source of all spiritual renewal. The most successful method of contemplation requires complete relaxation of the body and mind, with a tranquil pondering upon the Lord and his Word. Labour of

thought sets up the counter-activity of the conscious mind which obstructs the deep penetration of those things we yearn to cultivate.

SLEEP ON IT

There is an important law of the subconscious mind which, once it is understood, can give great encouragement. We have all of us at some time wrestled with a piece of writing which seemed beyond our ability to comprehend. Some give up the struggle, but this is perhaps due to mental laziness in most cases. If however, we have persisted; which is ever the wisest and most profitable course; we have found success. Putting the material away for a time, we have found to our surprise that the second attempt yields fruit and the subject has become much clearer. We may have even wondered why it was so difficult the first time. The reason for the change to comprehension is that "the flesh thinks." Even without our being aware of it the subconscious mind works upon the material such as new and difficult ideas. Herein lies the answer to the mysterious experience of people like mathematicians who sometimes "go to sleep on the problem," and awaken with the answer in mind. Hence it is that the first reading of a difficult subject even if to the conscious mind it appears utterly fruitless, has laid the foundation stones for comprehension in the subconscious. The second and third efforts bring satisfaction to the consciousness.

There is then, a natural built-in process in the subconscious by which problems can be worked out and solved. Fortunately however, God does not leave his people merely to the natural resources of their conscious and subconscious mind in order to receive understanding and acquire wisdom. He is able and willing, by his Holy Spirit, to quicken those inward parts and impart an understanding and knowledge which, left to our own natural resources, we would never receive.

Nevertheless the faculty of the mind is of vital importance to the Christian and the Lord expects him to exploit it to the limit in divine matters. Jesus laid down the principle that "to him that hath shall more be given and from him that hath not shall be taken that which he hath" (Mk. 4:25). He made this statement with regard to the degree of attention which men give to the teaching of his doctrine. Where there is no response, even the power to respond is diminished!

One reason for his introduction of parabolic teaching was to evoke in willing hearts that absolutely necessary quality of attentiveness to the word of the kingdom. Following upon his remarks on the subject of

assiduous application to the word, Jesus gave a parable which throws further light upon the fruitful development of the fourth class in the preceding parable of the sower - those who bear fruit with endurance. (Mk.4). His second parable is in fact a revelation of this all-important principle which we have been considering. The seed or word having been sown; the individual continues his daily life, sleeping and rising and all the time the seed develops into the full corn-bearing stalk. "The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself." There in soil and atmosphere are all the potentials; sow the seed and the usual laws of reproduction proceed silently and inexorably through the whole process of fructification. Hence, if we give ourselves to that word, prayerfully seeking God's help and not being "forgetful hearers," it is in us a wonderful potency which, if replenished daily from the Scriptures, works deep in the subconscious, shaping and refashioning our personalities without our even being conscious of the process. Away from this, the mind will revert to its original emptiness. The infallible advice to every man and woman anxious about going on in God is - read the Scriptures daily.

DANGERS

There are many in the world who claim to receive what is termed "religious experience." Investigation reveals at least one fact about these experiences - which is certainly true of many cases, namely; that the experience, whatsoever its cause may be, is a reality. Take for example, experiences which come to those individuals called mystics. Undoubtedly these people are subject to some form of trance in which they hear voices, or see visions, or at least feel a powerful presence. There is no doubt about this. Error arises in the supposition that the experience is a work of God. Most of the subjects of these experiences are ignorant of the true God and his purpose.

The cause of such experience lies in the subconscious mind, which in its unregenerate state, is "deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17:9). It is important for us to know about this so as to guard us against attributing every strange experience to the direct operation of God. In no way, be it noted, is it being suggested that God cannot and does not operate by His Holy Spirit today. Attention is simply being drawn to the fact that the mind is capable of very strange activities. This should caution and preserve us from too hasty a conclusion which might border on presumption.

REMARKABLE MENTAL EVENTS

Many Christians have experienced remarkable mental events which cannot be explained, but care should be exercised to not hasten to fill in the inexplicable by immediately attributing it to a direct act of God. The wonders of the subconscious are all at His disposal for He made them and can make marvellous use of them in those who co-operate as fellow-workers with Him. Consider the following authentic experience of a Christian, which can be attested by those who observed it.

He wished to drop the habit of smoking; he could not conquer it, and it troubled his conscience. He prayed about it earnestly. One night, during an air raid, he was smoking. A bomber was making its run overhead. He was seized with fear at the thought of being destroyed with a cigarette in his hand; he threw it away and never again experienced the slightest desire to smoke. For weeks he kept his stock of cigarettes and could handle the smell of them without any craving whatsoever. It seemed a miraculous answer to prayer, yet for years he wondered whether the thought was presumptuous. Many years later he discovered something more about the potential of his mind which provided a possible explanation. He learned from a work on hypnotism of some of the cases cured by hypnosis from the habits of drinking or smoking. Sometimes after only one hypnotic suggestion on the part of the psychiatrist, a patient was cured. Further he learned that in a state of strong emotion the mind during consciousness is highly suggestible and very receptive. He read a case in Lorenz's book "King Solomon's rings" of a cockatoo described by the famous naturalist as having learned, in a moment of great fright, a whole sentence. Normally it would have taken the bird weeks of repetition to learn it. He concluded from what he had read that it is possible in a moment of intense fear for the self-made suggestion to produce an effect equal to one made by a hypnotist. Further than considering this as a possible explanation, it is important to mention that he took it no further, never doubting that it was an answer to prayer!

How God works we often do not know, and it is foolish for us to surmise. He can work providentially and he can work direct. Either way, he meets the needs of those who seek his help. The case in hand helps us in so far as it serves to illustrate the vast potential available to God which is deep in our subconscious mind. These mysterious powers he can manipulate for good or evil by circumstance without direct interference by his spirit upon the brain. He can control our environment by his spirit without impairing our own wills.

If any feel that this seems to be a too materialistic a view of one of God's methods, the following appeal is made: Is it not reasonable to suppose that he who made our minds, has adapted his method of regenerating us, re-educating us and controlling us, in ways compatible with the mysterious principles in those minds?

It is believed that the subconscious mind is some marvellous recording machine which loses nothing. All sensations of every sense-organ throughout a lifetime are inscribed upon its mechanism. We are speaking figuratively of course, but the scientific definitions are not our concern. An evidence of the efficiency of our mental "tape recorder" is referred to by one writer in a short memory course of his. He mentions a serving girl who worked for a student of Hebrew who frequently read aloud. In old age and under anaesthetic she uttered phrases of Hebrew! She had never made a conscious effort with her conscious mind to learn the Hebrew words. She simply heard them and they went straight into her subconscious mind where they were recorded and stored away. Under anaesthetic, when the conscious mind was asleep and inactive, the subconscious released a flow of Hebrew words, the meaning of which she did not know, but which a Hebrew student would recognise and be able to interpret. It was a case of her "spirit" speaking while her mind lay dormant. It reminds us of what Paul says in 1 Cor. 14 concerning the gift of tongues which enabled a Christian to speak a foreign language with his spirit, which his mind could not understand. The main difference being of course, that such a Christian was not put to sleep (his mind was still awake and active), and the words that his spirit uttered were supernaturally dictated to, and quickened in his spirit.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

In the operation of the gift of tongues, the Holy Spirit releases the speaker from step by step thought processes. The conscious mind is bypassed, and the speaker is released from dependence on word and phrase specifics. The Holy Spirit reaches beneath the conscious mind, and by a supernatural quickening in the deep inner processes of the subconscious mind; referred to in Scripture as our "spirit" or "spirit of the mind," a spontaneous upsurge of praise in a foreign language takes place.

When the Holy Spirit moves upon a person, inspiring him with a supernatural utterance, it inevitably produces an exalted state of feeling - a state of deep joyous emotion. Even in cases where the speaker does not understand what he is saying, the experience of having his spirit

quicken by the divine anointing, has an edifying and exhilarating effect. Thus, 1 Cor. 14:4 says: "He that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself." Though he cannot understand with his mind what he is saying, he can nevertheless edify himself in his spirit in the knowledge that the praise or prayer is faithfully reflected in some foreign tongue, and that God, who knows all languages, understands it. The sense of intensity of that brother's experience, even though it conveys no clear message to his mind, stirs up feelings of joy in his spirit or heart. The experience creates a sense of marvel, and "builds up" and strengthens feelings of love, praise and adoration. Under such circumstances, when the mind does not understand the message, the "edification" is more in the realm of feelings of exhilaration in the deep inner consciousness.

However, the whole point of emitting sound is to convey some intelligible message, and Paul teaches in 1 Cor. 14 that a message in tongues should not be uttered in church unless it is interpreted, so that it might be properly understood with the mind. If someone with a gift of interpretation is not present, those with the gift of tongues must remain silent and speak to themselves and God. A careful reading of the whole chapter reveals that the gift of tongues was not fully functional when it only edified the spirit. When properly exercised, it edified both spirit and mind.

As far as Paul was concerned, speaking quietly to oneself in the Church in a language that could not be understood, was not the real purpose of the gift and was by no means the ideal or ultimate with which one should be satisfied. It is never taught in Scripture that the purpose of the gift of tongues was that a man might be able to pray quietly to himself in a language that he could not understand. Not once does Paul encourage men to be content and feel fulfilled by praying with their spirit and not with their mind, i.e. to pray without understanding what they are saying. It was only because of failure to attain to the ideal, that Paul gave instruction concerning the speaker in tongues to speak quietly to himself and to God. It was simply a temporary expedient - a compromise, and not a state with which he should be totally satisfied.

When Paul speaks about those who speak: "not unto men but unto God, for no man understands them," he is not encouraging such practise, but discouraging it. He is simply stating the position of those whose tongue cannot be interpreted by anyone present in the meeting.

The same applies to his instruction concerning someone speaking quietly in tongues in his own spirit. Paul never teaches that this was the actual purpose of the gift. In his view the gift was by no means fully

operational and providing its intended maximum benefit if it only edified the spirit. When operated fully and properly, it ministered to, and edified, both spirit and mind.

Throughout 1 Cor. 14 Paul lays tremendous importance upon the edification of the mind. He teaches that understanding is impossible without edification of the mind and he is emphatic that edification of the mind and understanding are vital. The criterion governing the use of all the gifts is edification of both spirit and mind.

In 1 Cor. 14:4 we are informed that if a person prays in a tongue that he cannot understand, his spirit prays but his mind (Greek "nous" i.e. intellect) is unfruitful. Or, as the New English Bible puts it: "my intellect lies fallow." The Jerusalem Bible says: "my mind is left barren."

Notice very carefully what Paul is saying here. He says that if one prays in an unknown tongue which he cannot interpret, his spirit prays, but his mind and intellect gets no benefit. Because the mind cannot understand the meaning and significance of the language, it remains inactive and unproductive. All that happens is the person concerned experiences an exalted and exhilarating feeling in his inner man. It is a kind of emotional experience, but does not develop and enlarge the mind in the knowledge and revelation of God.

Now the important question is this: is this a good thing or not? Is it something to be greatly desired to pray with our spirit and not with our mind? Does Paul encourage this? Does he encourage Christians to pray in a language that they cannot understand and which leaves their mind and intellect barren? Does Paul say that the ideal type of prayer is that in which the mind is abandoned and made to hang loose? By no means! Quite the opposite in fact. 1 Cor. 14:15 commences with these words: "What is it then?" That is: "What am I to do?" - "What is the ideal situation?"

His answer is as follows: "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the mind (intelligently - New English Bible) also. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the mind also ..."

Notice how Paul places equal emphasis upon praying with both spirit and mind. Nowhere in his writings does he encourage Christians to pray with only their spirit and ignore the mind. His instruction for a tongue speaker to keep silent and speak to himself and God is purely a compromise and temporary expedient, due to an interpreter not being present. In Paul's view, the gift of tongues was not fully operational and was not ministering its intended maximum benefit unless interpreted and understood with mind and intellect. For this reason he strongly

encouraged those with the gift of tongues to pray for the ability to interpret.

So absorbed were certain of the Corinthians with the sheer emotion and joy that this experience of speaking in tongues generated in their spirit; they were remaining satisfied with it and neglecting the importance of the mind. The emotional part of the experience meant more to them than understanding. Joyful and uplifting feelings in the spirit took precedence over enlightenment of the mind and intellectual development in the Word of God. In fact, some of them may have concluded, like some in certain Pentecostal circles today, that the mind is not a good thing and should be abandoned. By a pernicious twist of facts and logic, there are some today who regard as carnal and unspiritual those who diligently exercise and apply their mind to the things of God. There are those who would be more than happy to speak in tongues all day and night not understanding a word they say and not receiving the slightest increase in knowledge and understanding. They find total satisfaction and fulfilment in the uplifting feeling and vibrations generated in their inner consciousness. The apostle Paul would not share with them in this attitude. His counsel is to pray for the ability to interpret so that both mind and spirit are edified.

Some today who want to let the mind hang loose all the time and never apply it to diligent study, research and meditation; are often basically lazy and irresponsible. Their minds are not disciplined. They are merely looking for a spiritual "trip" or "kicks." They don't want to learn and be acquainted with the deeper things of God. They are content with good feelings which don't tax the mind and which don't require them to do some thinking for themselves. It is a flesh-motivated religion they are seeking - selfish and self-centred. It is a form of escapism - a cop-out!

CONCLUSION

It should be evident from what Paul says in 1 Cor. 14 that there can be no understanding without a mind. The "spirit" of man, by itself cannot produce understanding. Paul clearly says that if only his spirit functions in prayer "my understanding is unfruitful." i.e. "my intellect lies fallow."

Coherent and intelligible thoughts require the combination of both spirit and mind. The spirit and mind are so inseparably linked, that Paul refers to the spirit as "the spirit of the mind." And, as we shall see in the next chapter, the spirit is often put by metonymy for the mind and vice versa, because they are so inseparably linked in their functions and

operations. Together, they constitute a unit. A man's identity and personality requires the combination of a conscious mind and subconscious mind. One without the other cannot produce a proper rational thinking being. If it could, brain damage would have no effect upon a man's consciousness and identity. Instead, it destroys it. It is impossible for consciousness and identity to survive brain destruction. The mind vanishes and all thoughts cease.

If the spirit of man was his real consciousness, and could perpetuate thoughts and understanding and personality after the death of the body, Paul would hardly teach, as he does in 1 Cor. 14, that when the spirit prays without the mind, there is no understanding!

* * * * *

CHAPTER FIVE THE SPIRIT AND MIND OF MAN

We have seen that in addition to the ordinary objective consciousness, man has beneath his consciousness a subjective or subconscious mind which is continually controlled by suggestion, and Scripture refers to this subconscious mind as "spirit" - "spirit of the mind."

Subconscious is a modern term used to describe mental processes such as thoughts, ideas, feelings etc that go on in a person's mind without concentrating on them with his conscious mind. It has been proved that subconscious thoughts and feelings are of basic importance in the way the minds of people work. Perceptions take place below the threshold of awareness, continually leaving effects on the mind. This lower, deeper self of ours, works on problems and produces answers. It is highly susceptible to suggestions, as we have seen, and is really a marvellous recording machine which loses nothing.

There is clearly an inseparable connection between the conscious and subconscious mind, referred to in Scripture as the mind and spirit of man. Thoughts, feelings and ideas are sorted out in the spirit and are finally presented in the mind as clear, rational and coherent understanding. The mind could never understand anything if it did not have a "spirit" (subconscious) to perform the basic sifting and sorting out processes.

Because the spirit is inseparably linked with the mind, and forms its most vital compartment, it is frequently put, by metonymy, for the mind in Scripture. And, because the mind is responsible for attitude and disposition, which constitutes the real character, "spirit" is put by figurative synecdoche for the whole person; a part for the whole (as in Lk. 1:47 where "my spirit" means "I myself").

The inseparable connection between a man's spirit and mind is indicated in the following passages of Scripture:

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES

"There is," says Job, "a spirit in man." (Job. 32:8). The Bible speaks a great deal about this "spirit," and some light is thrown on the subject in the rest of the verse in Job. 32:8. After saying that "there is a spirit in man," Job continues by saying: "and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding." This seems to teach that when God wants to impart understanding to a man, he firstly has to inspire and

quicken his spirit. The spirit of man is that vital machinery or mechanism through which all thoughts and ideas are processed and from which understanding is produced in the conscious mind. When God, by his spirit, imparts understanding to a man, it is a case of his spirit witnessing with man's spirit, as we read in Rom. 8:16: "The spirit bears witness with our spirit."

So then, without a spirit man could not "understand" anything. Without a subconscious mind, the conscious mind could not function and understanding would be impossible. The close connection between man's spirit and understanding is again indicated in Job. 20:3 where we read: "The spirit of my understanding causes me to answer."

A dictionary definition of "understanding" is "to have use of the mind; to know well and fully; to be informed of; to comprehend; to know the meaning of."

The ability to understand is clearly related to the mind. We do not rely on a dictionary definition to establish this. Medical science has proved it beyond all shadow of doubt and the Bible taught it centuries ago. For instance: Jesus told a Scribe that, among other things, he should love God with all his mind. In reply to this, the Scribe said: "You are right teacher, you have said the truth: for there is one God ... and to love him with all the ... understanding ..." (Mk. 12:30-33). Here, "mind" and "understanding" run parallel - they are used synonymously.

Without a mind we could not understand, as is evident in various cases of brain damage. The "spirit of man" which God has "formed within him" is directly connected with the mind and is responsible for the basic processes which lead to understanding. However, it is incomplete by itself, and without a mind, cannot make man a thinking, understanding person.

The connection between the mind and understanding is again taught in Eph. 4:17-18 where we are told that men's ignorance and darkened understanding is caused through "the vanity of their mind."

Numerous other Scriptures bear this out. Consider the following:

(1) 1 Cor. 2:11: "For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of man which is in him?" Paul is saying, "I don't know you and you don't know me; we only know ourselves." Mental states are privately owned, so to speak; an individual has direct access only to his own mental state, while he can know the mental state of another individual only indirectly and by inference - either from the behaviour of that individual, or by analogy with his own mental states. Thoughts in the conscious mind, unless expressed, are never known by others. Only the spirit of the

man knows them, i.e. his subconscious mind. The fact that the spirit of man knows the thoughts of his conscious mind confirms the close connection between the spirit and the mind and shows why Scripture refers to the spirit as "the spirit of the mind." The mind is the seat or centre of man's spirit. We can deduce from 1 Cor. 2:11 that "the spirit of man" is that power or controlling force within his mind that is manifested outwardly in character. Character is the sum of a person's mental and moral qualities.

(2) Pr. 20:27: "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward parts." The Jerusalem Bible translates it like this: "Man's spirit is the lamp of Yahweh, searching his deepest self." The function of a lamp is to reveal things otherwise hidden and concealed in the dark. The true character and innermost thoughts of man are tucked away and hidden in the deep recesses of the subconscious mind. These innermost thoughts, if seen, bring to light and reveal the true character of a man just as a lamp reveals things hidden in the dark. Thus, for one like God, who reads these innermost thoughts of the spirit, they are, to him, a "lamp ... searching man's deepest self."

(3) Psa. 77:6-7: "I commune with my own heart; and my spirit made diligent search in the night. Will the Lord cast off for ever?" Here, the "spirit" is referred to as that part of man responsible for research and investigation. Once again we are directed back to the conscious and subconscious mind in which questions originate and are manufactured.

(4) Psa. 106:33 refers to Moses speaking "words that were rash" because the Israelites "provoked his spirit." Here we are taught that rash words are produced by a provoked spirit. Seeing that words are usually produced by conscious thoughts in the conscious mind, we can again see the close relationship between man's mind and spirit. When man is provoked his temper is aroused - his mind becomes inflamed and rash words are easily produced.

(5) In many parts of the Bible we read about men and nations taking various courses of action as a result of God "stirring up their spirit." (1 Chr. 5:26. 2 Chr. 21:16. 36:22. Ezk. 1:1, 5 etc). The body is controlled by the mind and the mind is controlled by the spirit. Every action is directed from this centre. When the mind is out of order or dead, the body will be in a corresponding condition. The body responds to the dictates of the mind, and seeing that the mind or mental attitude is largely influenced by circumstances and events in our life; God is able, by his control of events, to "stir up" our spirit to induce into whatever action his purpose requires without in any way violating our free will. Thus, "The king's heart (spirit -

mind) is in the hand of the Lord; like streams of water he turns it wherever he desires" (Pr. 21:1). "Man's steps are ordered by the Lord; how can a man then understand the road he travels?" (Pr. 20:24). In other words; man proposes but God disposes! "A man's heart (spirit) plans his way but the Lord directs his steps" (Pr. 16:9). The Moffatt Bible renders this as: "A man thinks out his plans, but the Eternal controls his course." "All the ways of man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weighs the "spirits" (Pr. 16:2). The alternative translation for "spirits" in the margin of the Authorised Bible is "disposing." It clearly relates to mental disposition and attitude - motives. Pr. 21:2 runs parallel and uses the word "heart" instead of spirit: "Every way of man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord weighs the hearts."

(6) Pr. 18:14: "The spirit of a man will endure sickness, but if the spirit is broken, who can mend it." Here, the "spirit" relates to the "will" or "mental resolve" to live. Pr. 17:22 can be compared with it: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit (down-cast, depressed mental condition) drieth the bones." Or, as the New English Bible puts it: "saps a man's strength."

Mental outlook and attitude has a tremendous influence over the body, particularly in times of sickness. Negativity produces depression which weakens the will. Positive thinkers tap the resources of faith and usually recover more quickly from sickness. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." "According to your faith, be it unto you."

It should be evident from these examples, (and there are many more), that there is an inseparable link between the "spirit" and "mind" of man.

ATTITUDE OR DISPOSITION

Often, in Scripture, the word "spirit" simply signifies attitude or disposition. Consider the following examples:

(1) In Num. 14:24 Caleb is referred to as having "another spirit." Some modern translations render this as "a different attitude." Caleb was one of the 12 spies sent out to spy out the land of Canaan. When they returned, the attitude of all of them except Caleb and Joshua was not good; they were full of unbelief and depression, imagining in their mind that it was impossible for Israel to conquer the land. Joshua and Caleb had an entirely different attitude and mental disposition, and it is referred to as having "another spirit."

(2) Mental anguish and grief is referred to a number of times in

Scripture as a "sorrowful spirit." (1 Sam. 1:15). When King Ahab was mentally depressed and sad, his wife said to him: "Why is your spirit sad so that you eat no food." (1 Kng. 21:5).

(3) David's prayer in Psa. 51:10 is well known: "Create in me a clean heart O God; and renew a right spirit within me." David was praying for a renewal and transformation of mind and outlook. He wanted a change of attitude, disposition and motivation.

(4) Mental depression is referred to in Isa. 61:3 and other places as "spirit of heaviness." Or, as we might express it today: "a heavy spirit." When the mind is full of fear, worry and anxiety, it is "heavy" and weighs us down. Such a condition will often be accompanied by a "head-ache". When those fears and anxieties are taken away the mind is relieved of its load and cleared and becomes light. It then becomes a "spirit of rejoicing." That is, our mind becomes a "rejoicing spirit."

(5) Daniel is referred to as having "an excellent spirit." He was a man of outstanding faith, wisdom and integrity. His attitude and mental outlook in every respect was "excellent." He not only had an excellent spirit, but also possessed "the spirit of the Holy God" i.e. the Holy Spirit. (Dan. 5:11-12).

(6) In Mal. 2:14-16 we read about God's abhorrence towards divorce. As we know, unfaithfulness causes more divorces than any other single factor, and unfaithfulness is usually a product of wrong thinking and attitude towards the marriage covenant and relationship. Hence, the Lord says: "Take heed to your spirit, and let none deal unfaithfully ..." That is: keep a close eye on, and guard your attitude towards your marriage partner and the marriage covenant.

(7) A humble mind and attitude is expressed in 1 Cor. 4:21 as a "spirit of meekness." That is, a "meek spirit."

(8) Paul refers to an experience in which he was concerned and uneasy in his mind in these words: "I had no rest in my spirit" (2 Cor. 2:13). He was in a state of mental anxiety and agitation. And, referring to an occasion when he was relieved of the tension, pressure and burden of his mind, he said "my spirit was refreshed" (1 Cor. 16:18).

SOME PARALLEL PASSAGES

The inseparable link between "spirit" and "mind" also becomes evident in many parallel passages of Scripture where "spirit" and "mind" are used interchangeably. That is: one passage of Scripture in one

part of the Bible will use the word "spirit," and another passage in another part of the Bible which speaks about the same subject will use the word "mind," indicating that they are inseparably linked. And, not only are spirit and mind used synonymously, but "heart" also. This is evident in some of the following examples:

(1) In Rom. 1:9 Paul says that he serves God and the gospel "with my spirit." In Rom. 7:25, speaking about the same thing, he says that he serves God "with my mind."

(2) Rom. 12:11 exhorts us to be "fervent in spirit" and 2 Cor. 7:7 refers to the Christian's fervent "mind." And 1 Pet. 1:22 speaks about a fervent heart.

(3) 2 Cor. 8:12 speaks about the importance of having a "willing mind." And, on one occasion Jesus said the "spirit is indeed willing ..." (Matt. 26:41).

(4) It is emphasised throughout Scripture that God must be worshipped, served and loved "in spirit" (Jn. 4:23-24, Rom. 1:9 etc). Yet Jesus, in telling the Scribe how he must love and serve God, never included the word "spirit" in his message. All four gospel writers record the incident, but not one makes any reference to Jesus using the word "spirit." He did, however use the word "mind" and "heart." Now, if it is vital to love and serve God in spirit, we can hardly imagine Jesus failing to mention it when dealing specifically with that very issue. No! He didn't forget to mention it; he simply referred to it as "mind."

(5) Eph. 4:23 exhorts us to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind." This suggests, as pointed out before, that the spirit is located in the mind - that the mind is the seat of the spirit. This spirit is not the man - it is something that God has formed within man. Joined with the physical brain of the man, it forms a vital part of the human mind. It is, as pointed out before, the vital mechanism which enables man to understand. It imparts to man's brain his unique powers of intellect and personality - the ability to reason, think rationally and make free-will decisions. It imparts the ability to learn mathematics, languages or any other type of knowledge. Most important of all, it enables man to develop the very mind and character of God himself!

Each animal was created with a brain suited for each animal kind. But animals do not have the potential of mind and character which God gave only to man. No animal was ever given the gift of mind power! It is this very special attribute of the mind that separates men and animals. It is this very special attribute - "the spirit of the mind" - that places man in the unique position of being in God's image and after his likeness.

Some are a little reluctant to speak of man's "spirit" for fear of countenancing the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. However, if we are not careful, we may, in so doing, hide an important truth. The fallacy of the immortal soul doctrine is not that man has no spirit, but that his spirit is not immortal and furthermore cannot have an existence apart from the body. It is upon this conception of a separate existence of an immortal soul that the false ideas of heaven, hell and purgatory are built. More about that later!

"Spirit" then, simply relates to man's mind - intelligence - attitude. And it is apparently from the pattern locked up in this "spirit" (comparable to a tape recording) that God, at the resurrection, will re-create each individual with exactly the same mind, personality and character that he had at death.

NOT SPIRITUAL BY NATURE

Eph. 4:23 then, exhorts us to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind." In its natural state, uninfluenced by the Word and Spirit of God, man's mind is vain, carnal and base. In short - unspiritual i.e. out of tune and on a different wave length from God. When man is unenlightened by the things of God, he is "alienated" from God and an "enemy" of God "in his mind" (Col. 1:21). Such a man walks "in the vanity of his mind" (Eph. 4:17), "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (2:3). Rom. 1:28 tells us that those who refuse to retain God in their knowledge, he will abandon to a "reprobate mind."

Man's mind or spirit is not spiritual by nature. Quite the opposite: it is carnal and unspiritual. In order to please God and have a character like him, the spirit of the mind has to be renewed - transformed - changed. This is what the word "repent" means: "Change your mind" - alter your thinking - attitude - outlook. God has made the spirit of the mind in such a way that it can change; it can be renewed and transformed. Through the reading of the Word of God and influence of the spirit of God, man's spirit can be transformed into something beautiful like the character of Jesus. But in order for this to happen, a man must be willing to crucify and destroy his old carnal thinking processes and yield his mind to the mind and thinking processes of Christ. And this he can do with the help of God if he is willing to submit to him without reservation.

The entrance of God's word and precepts into the spirit of our mind gives us light, and conforms our thinking to God's thoughts. By this process our mind becomes washed of all its former filth and becomes like

the mind of God. Psa. 119:9 tells us that a man is able to cleanse his way by taking heed to God's word. Eph. 5:26 says that a man is cleansed by the washing of water by the Word. God's Word is like water: when it enters the mind it has a cleansing effect, making the spirit of the mind pure and holy like God.

Jesus said on one occasion to his disciples: "You are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (Jn. 15:3). On another occasion he asked his Father in prayer to make his disciples holy through his Word of Truth (Jn. 17:17). It is by hearing the Word of God that faith comes (Rom. 10:17). The Word of God is obviously a very powerful force and can totally change a man's attitude and outlook if he is prepared to yield his mind to it. It is, as we read in Heb. 4:12: "living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword." This verse carries on to say that the Word of God is able to cut away from a man's life everything that is 'soulish' (carnal - unspiritual) and establish a clear demarcation line between that which is carnal and that which is spiritual.

The experience of the transforming power of God's quickened Word in the spirit of our mind is like a new birth. We become an entirely new and different person. The old personality dies and a new one like the image of Christ is born. Jam. 1:18 makes the point that God, "of His own will begat us with the word of truth ..." That is, by the influence of His Word in our lives, He caused us to be born again as new creatures unto Him. As we read in 1 Pet. 1:23: "You have been born again, not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible, by the Word of God."

It is obviously vital for the spirit of our mind to be constantly exercised in the Word of God. The more we read and meditate upon it, the more our spirit will be subjected to its cleaning, transforming power. For this reason, Scripture exhorts and encourages the Christian to apply and exercise his mind in the things of God regularly. Peter says: "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and set your hope on the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). The New English Bible renders it: "Be mentally stripped for action ..." Peter is exhorting them to bind up the loose flowing robes of the mind - to tidy and tighten up their thinking processes. It is a summons to strenuous thinking; to understand what he is saying as well as what the Word of God teaches. Peter virtually says that there is no place for apathy or indifference towards the reading and understanding of God's Word, and the exercising of the mind in spiritual matters.

The writer to the Hebrew Christians rebuked them because they had become "dull of hearing" (Heb. 5). They had become sluggish, lazy and

slothful in the mind. They should have been in a position to eat "strong meat" and teach the Word of God; but were, instead, through laziness and apathy; in need of drinking milk - being taught again the first principles of the oracles of God. Verse 14 says: "but strong meat belongs to those who are mature, even those who by reason of practise, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Maturity in Christ is clearly dependant on the exercising of our mental senses (spirit of the mind) in the Word of God. There is no other substitute; there are no short cuts. It is at this point that the men are sorted out from the boys.

A PERNICIOUS SPIRIT

There is a pernicious spirit spreading around many religious circles these days which teaches that it is not a good thing to exercise the mind in study and meditation. By a subtle twist of logic it is argued that the mind can only be carnal, and the more we suppress it and let it hang loose, the better off we will be spiritually. The result is that those who spend all their spare time reading and studying and exercising their mind in the Word of God are regarded as being "of the flesh" and "carnal." In actual fact, the truth of the matter is quite the reverse. Left to itself and its own reasoning without the influence of the Word of God, the spirit of the mind will be what it is in its raw natural state, namely, carnal and out of touch with the truth of God. There is no natural inherent divine illumination in the spirit of man or man's nature. Of our own selves we are nothing and cannot achieve anything spiritually. Inspiration and illumination must come from outside ourselves. Indeed it does through the quickened Word of God. Failure to read and study the Bible will result in a carnal mind and philosophy. Willingness to exercise the mind with the Scriptures produces a spiritual mind in which the thoughts, purposes and truths of God will be established.

Many Christians today are being encouraged to let their minds and intellectual powers hang loose, and "speak in tongues all day." When all the emphasis is placed in this direction, and little emphasis placed on the exercising of the mind in the Word of God, the result is a shallow and fallow understanding of the mind of God, and a diminishing desire and ability to communicate intelligently in prayer in their own language to God.

MUCH EMPHASIS ON MIND

Isa. 26:3 says that God will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him. Jesus said we must love the Lord with all of our mind (Matt. 22:37). Act. 17:11 commends the people at Berea for being "noble" because "they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily." Rom. 14:5 tells us that each man must "be fully persuaded in his own mind" concerning the things of God. Paul says that "with the mind I myself serve the law of God" (Rom. 7:25). God has given to the true Christians a "sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). The word "sound" means "healthy" which implies a mind that is correctly fed and exercised. Young men are exhorted to be sober minded in Tit. 2:6; i.e. to think soberly and rationally. Jam. 1:8 warns us not to be "double-minded" which implies we must be single-minded.

Time and time again Scripture emphasises the importance of the mind and the importance of exercising it in the reading and study of the Word of God. Scripture only refers to the mind and the exercising of it as a bad thing when it is allowed to lean towards its own carnal impulses and natural understanding - when it refuses to be influenced and directed by the Word and Spirit of God. God formed the spirit within man to be used and exercised to his glory and honour. This can only be done by allowing divine thoughts and teaching to penetrate the mind, and this is done either through reading or hearing the Word of God. The degree to which we apply ourselves in this area will determine the degree to which we advance and deepen in Christ.

We come back then to Eph. 4:23: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Speaking about the same thing, Rom. 12:2 says: "... transformed by the renewing of your mind." This renewal of our spirit or mind is also referred to in 2 Cor. 4:16 in terms of "the inward man" which is "renewed day by day." Col. 3:10 also speaking about the same thing says: "the new man is renewed ..."

David also prayed for this in these words: "Create in me a clean heart O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10). And the prophet Ezekiel refers to the time when God would do this to his people: "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new ("renew") spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh" (Ezk. 11:19). Thus, Paul says that the Christian must "serve in the newness ("renewed") of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6). He says in Rom. 2:27-29 that true circumcision is not that which is outward in the flesh, but that which is inward, in the

heart - "in the spirit and not in the letter." A true Christian will "display the effect of the law, written in their hearts, their conscience witnessing in such a way that between their own reasonings they are condemned or defended" (Rom. 2:15).

God's new covenant then, involves the transformation of man's own thoughts and thinking processes - his mind - spirit - heart. In God's own words: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb. 8:10, 10:16). This promise was originally declared in Jer. 31:33 and it is interesting to note that the word "minds" is not used there but "inward parts" instead. The two expressions are obviously used synonymously. Elsewhere the "inward parts" are referred to as the "spirit" or "fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 3 etc). It is also interesting to note that the revised versions of the Bible often give us "mind" where the Authorised Version gives us "heart." In Scripture, the two are frequently to be regarded as synonymous, and modern translations recognise this.

The putting of God's laws into the minds of Christians is symbolically described in Rev. 14:1 as having the "Father's name written in their foreheads." Why? Simply because the head contains the mind, or "spirit of the mind." How important it is therefore, to protect the mind and guard it against every evil influence and false teaching that threatens to rob it of its hope of salvation. Significantly enough, the hope of salvation is referred to in 1 Thes. 5:8 as "a helmet." A helmet was that part of the soldier's uniform which protected his head. The hope of salvation is embedded in the spirit of the mind and must be protected! David's confession in Psa. 140:7 can be appropriated by the Christian in a spiritual sense: "O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." In Dan. 2:1 the phrase: "spirit was troubled," runs parallel with: "visions of head troubled me" in 4:5.

(6) In Ex. 35:5, 21, 29, we read that the materials for the divine building project were offered by those who had a "willing heart." Verse 21 says the materials were offered by those who had a willing spirit. And, in 1 Chr. 28:9 we read that service to God must be rendered with a "willing mind." In other words: one must put his whole soul into it.

(7) Many times Christians are exhorted to be of one spirit. Speaking about the same thing, 2 Cor. 13:11 says to be of "one mind." Both aspects are mentioned together in Plp. 1:27: "Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind."

Likewise, Scripture exhorts us to have the spirit of Christ. Speaking about the same thing, Plp. 2:5 says: "Let this mind be in you, which was

also in Christ Jesus." And 1 Cor. 2:16 says "we have the mind of Christ."

(8) Those who have the spirit of Christ, and live in the spirit are referred to in Rom. 8:5 as those who "mind the things of the spirit" i.e. those whose minds are transformed, renewed and governed by the spirit. Thus, in verse 6 they are referred to as being "spiritually minded" (Rom. 8:6).

Those who live in the flesh are those who mind the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5); i.e. who mind earthy things (Plp. 3:19). They are "carnally minded" (Rom. 8:6).

The difference then, between a Christian and a non-Christian is determined by the way he exercises his mind and by the way he allows it to be influenced.

(9) Many references are made in the Bible to a "contrite spirit" (Psa. 34:18). The same disposition is described as "lowliness of mind" in Plp. 2:3, and "humbleness of mind" in Col. 3:12. The phrase: "broken heart" relates to the same condition.

(10) Jesus grew up from childhood to be "strong in spirit" (Lk. 1:80, 2:40). He was not weak or easily shaken in the mind, but grew up to be a man of unshakeable conviction and confidence. His followers are likewise encouraged to "be not shaken in mind" (2 Thes. 2:2). Instead they are encouraged to "gird up the loins of their mind" (1 Pet. 1:13).

Never does the Bible discourage us from exercising our mind in the Word of God. Quite the opposite; it encourages us to study and meditate in it day and night, going deeper and deeper into it. After all, as we have seen; it is only through the spirit of the mind that man can understand God and his purposes. There are no thinking devices in man's feet, hands, stomach or chest, but only in his mind which God created with the ability to understand and know him, and be enlightened in his ways.

Other parallel statements in Scripture which reveal that "spirit," "mind" and "heart" are often used synonymously are as follows:

(1) In Ex. 7:3 we are told that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. The same thing happened to another gentile king named Sihon, and Deu. 2:30 says his "spirit" was hardened. It clearly relates to stubbornness of mind.

(2) Job. 15:12 speaks of man's heart carrying him away from God. Verse 13 refers to the same process as man turning his spirit against God. Col. 1:21 describes the situation as being "alienated in mind."

(3) Reference is made in Num. 5:14, 30 to a man having a "spirit of jealousy" i.e. a disposition of jealousy or a jealous attitude. Jam. 4:5 says that "the spirit that dwells in man (man's spirit) lusts enviously" i.e. man's spirit is envious and jealous by nature. Jealousy and envy are elsewhere

attributed to the "flesh" which is a metonym for the "carnal mind" (Gal. 5:19-21, Rom. 8:4-6).

(4) A double minded man (Jam. 1:8) is referred to as one whose "spirit is not steadfast" (Psa. 78:8). Thus, God will only keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on him (Isa. 26:3).

(5) A Bad tempered, wrathful man is referred to in Pr. 14:29 as one who is "hasty of spirit." Impatience and wrath are attributed to the flesh in Gal.5:19-21, which as already pointed out, is a metonym for the carnal mind.

(6) One who is master of himself and his desires is referred to in Pr. 16:32 as one who "rules his spirit." 1 Cor. 7:37 refers to the same kind of person as one who "stands steadfast in his heart" and "has power over his will," having "decreed (resolved) in his heart" ("mind" New English Bible).

(7) The Scriptures refer many times to the heart of man seeking God. The same experience is referred to in Isa. 26:8-9 in these words: "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea my spirit within me seeks thee early ..." Desire from the innermost part of our being is expressed here. Jn. 11:33 could be compared with this where we read that Jesus "groaned in the spirit" i.e. "in himself" v38.

(8) Ezk. 13:1 refers to false prophets who "prophesy out of their own hearts." Verse 3 says they "follow their own spirit." In other words, they were led, directed and deceived by the carnal promptings of their own natural mind. God in fact specifically states that their false prophecies were "the things that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezk. 11:5). These men were proclaiming things that their own mind wanted to believe and not what God said they should believe. Truly, "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).

* * * * *

CHAPTER SIX FALSE SPIRITS AND FALSE PROPHETS

Reference to the false prophets "following their own spirit" in the preceding chapter, introduces us to, and provides a key to the understanding of some New Testament passages of Scripture which contain the word "spirit."

It has been emphasised that "As a man thinks (exercises his mind) so is he." The importance of thought cannot be overstated. It is the gateway to destiny. Thought leads to action; action makes for habit; habit creates character, and character will determine destiny. The "spirit of the mind" - the thoughts of a man, constitute the real man. The real man is the "spirit of the mind." The real character and personality that makes a man what he is, is all encompassed and tied up in his spirit, as we read in 1 Cor. 2:11: "No man knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man."

We saw earlier that our "spirit" is the "inward man" (2 Cor. 4:16). When converted, it becomes the "new man." (Col. 3:10) Our spirit is either an "old man" or a "new man," depending on our relationship with the Lord. Either way, our spirit is "man" - the real person - the real "you." Thus, when a person speaks, it is really his spirit speaking. When we speak to a person we speak to his spirit. It is important to keep this in mind when we come to certain passages of Scripture which refer to spirits speaking and spirits being spoken to.

When we communicate with a person we do not speak to his feet or arms, but to the spirit of his mind. When a person speaks to us, it is not his knees or elbows that speak to us, but his spirit. Even God himself has to speak to our spirit in order to communicate with us: "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit ..."

So then, when a man speaks, because his message originates in, and proceeds from the spirit of his mind, it is really his spirit speaking. Or, to use a modern colloquialism: "speaking his mind." In view of all this, it is not surprising therefore, to find that some Scriptures refer to the utterances of men in terms of their spirit speaking. By metonymy, the "spirit" is put for the man himself because "as a man thinketh so is he." Hence, "my spirit," as in Lk. 1:47 and other places, means "I myself."

Consider 1 Jn. 4:2 where we read: "every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." Reference is clearly made here to spirits confessing that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. (I say "spirits" because the phrase "every spirit" implies more than one).

Now, how are we to understand this reference to spirits making confession? Do we imagine that the reference is to disembodied, intangible entities floating around the air making confession that Jesus came in the flesh? The Bible is completely devoid of any reference to this kind of thing happening. The confession that Jesus came in the flesh is a Christian confession! Such a confession came about through the Holy Spirit witnessing this truth to the Christian's spirit. Every time a Christian witnesses to this truth, it is a confession of his spirit. It demonstrates that the spirit of his mind has been renewed, having been converted unto Christ.

According to Rom. 10:8-17 and common sense, confession requires a mouth and voice, and is the product of faith-development in the heart. Therefore, the "spirits" that "confess" must have a mouth, voice and heart. They cannot be immaterial, intangible entities. Confession is an acknowledgement, which comes from knowledge and understanding, which is a function of the mind - "the spirit of the mind." The confession of faith that Jesus is Lord comes through hearing and understanding the Word of God (Rom. 10:17. Matt. 13:23). The statement then, in 1 Jn. 4:2 that "every spirit that confesses ..." simply refers to the Christian confession.

The false Christian's rejection of the coming of Jesus in the flesh is expressed in terms of "every spirit that confesses not ..." (v3). This immediately reminds us of the statement quoted before from Ezk. 13:3 concerning the false prophets "that follow their own spirit," which is explained in Ezk. 11:5 in terms of speaking "the things that come into your own mind."

It is interesting to note, in the light of this, that the word "spirit" in 1 Jn. 4:1 runs parallel with "false prophets." This is how it reads: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." The "spirits" which did not confess the truth about Jesus Christ are the false prophets themselves who "follow their own spirit" i.e. lean to their own understanding.

Deceived by their own deceitful hearts and carnal reasoning, and leaning to the philosophy dictated by their own fleshly wisdom, they speak forth vain philosophies which they claim to be inspired by God. Their "spirits" are false; not divinely motivated. They are "false prophets," and "many shall follow their pernicious ways; and because of them the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness they will exploit you with false words" (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

Because there has always been a tendency for man's spirit to lean to its own understanding and philosophy of man, and claim divine inspiration for its own self-originated and self-induced reasonings; the gift of "discerning of spirits" has been necessary in the Church. This gift gives the recipient the ability to distinguish between true and false inspiration - between that which proceeds from man's spirit and that which proceeds from God's spirit. That which proceeds from man's spirit if uninspired by God, is a "false spirit," referred to in 1 Tim. 4:1 as a "seducing spirit," causing some to depart from the faith. This passage says that the latter times will witness many "seducing spirits," causing some to depart from the faith. As pointed out before, these "seducing spirits" are referred to in 1 Jn. 4:1 and 2 Pet. 2:1 as "false prophets." Jesus also warned that prior to his second coming "many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many ... For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; inasmuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before hand" (Matt. 24:11, 24).

The Apostle Paul's reference to the Thessalonians being troubled "by spirit" (2 Thes. 2:2), refers to false teachers who claimed inspiration for their false teaching. The New English Bible gives us "oracular utterance" instead of "spirit." False teachers were claiming that the second coming of Christ had already taken place and were claiming that their teaching was inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit taught no such thing. It was their own human spirit.

To receive teaching which originates and proceeds from the spirit of man instead of the Spirit of God, is to receive "another spirit" (2 Cor. 11:4); or as it says in the same verse, "another gospel."

All attitudes and dispositions of men relate directly to the spirit of the mind. When our attitude and disposition is contrary to what the spirit of God requires, we have a "false spirit." When the spirit of our mind is in harmony with God's spirit, we become "one spirit" with Him. When Christians share the same convictions and attitudes, they "walk in the same spirit" (2 Cor. 12:18). When their attitudes differ and conflict with God's spirit, it is because they "know not of what manner of spirit they are of" (Lk. 9:55).

It should be evident then, that the "spirit" of man is directly related to his "mind." The "spirit" or "mind" or "spirit of the mind" is the real person. When relating to a man and seeking to get through to him and

know him, we endeavour to get deep inside and reach the deep recesses of the spirit of his mind. This is particularly the desire and ambition of all preachers of the gospel. As channels of the Holy Spirit, they seek to penetrate and influence the spirits of men, quickening and illuminating them, transforming them by the renewing power of God's Word, delivering them from the dark prison of trespasses and sin and ignorance. This has been the mission of God's people since the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Peter expressed it in terms of preaching to the spirits in prison.

THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

"For Christ also has once died for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might reconcile us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive again by the Spirit, by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison; who formerly were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water" (1 Pet. 3:18-20)

On the basis of this passage, it is often claimed in traditional circles, that when Jesus died on the cross he went to the lower regions of the earth ("prison") in a disembodied state ("spirit") to preach to disembodied people ("spirits") who had been there since their days of disobedience in the time of Noah.

This interpretation requires four things:

- (1) Jesus didn't really die on the cross.
- (2) "Spirits" are disembodied people.
- (3) "Prison" is a place in the lower regions of the earth where people have conscious existence in a disembodied state.
- (4) Jesus became engaged in a preaching work between the time of his supposed death on the cross and resurrection three days later.

The traditional interpretation relies on all four of these points to uphold its teaching on 1 Pet. 3:18-20. Significantly enough, neither this passage nor any other in the Word of God supports such teaching. In actual fact, not one of these points is affirmed in 1 Pet. 3:18-20. They are all assumed and read into the text. Let us consider them:

(1) The traditional interpretation outlined above nullifies the power of the resurrection of Christ. Jesus said: "... I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (Jn. 10:17). But according to the above interpretation, the real personal Jesus didn't really die at all. Jesus, in contrast to this said

plainly: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ..." (Rev. 1:18). It shall be established in a later section that to die, in a Biblical sense, means to go to one place - the grave, and to be without consciousness. At death, Jesus was, as we shall see, without life and totally dependant on resurrection.

The personal pronouns in Acts 13:29, 30, 34, 37 indicate that Jesus - the person was dead, and that he became alive by resurrection when God raised him by His Holy Spirit power: "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him up from the dead ... But he whom God raised again, saw no corruption." Who would be so bold to assert that the pronoun "him" refers, in the former part of these verses, to the body, and in the latter to some disembodied entity? Any interpretation of Scripture which requires that the real Jesus didn't really die on the cross is a very serious error of the most fundamental nature possible. It cuts at the very foundation of Bible teaching on the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ. If he could live on and minister without a body, why the need for resurrection? This point will receive full treatment in a later section.

(2) 1 Pet 3:18-19 clearly teaches that Jesus preached when "quicken" (i.e. made alive) and not when he was dead. The passage says that he was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." The word "quicken" comes from the Greek "zoopoieo" and means "made alive." It is translated "made alive" in 1 Cor. 15:22 in relation to resurrection and is translated "quicken" in relation to resurrection in most places in the New Testament.

Jesus was made alive by the spirit of his Father when he was raised from the dead, and as 1 Pet. 3:19 goes on to say: it was by that same resurrection power that Jesus then preached to the "spirits in prison." So then, whoever these spirits in prison were, Jesus did not preach to them until after his resurrection! And, when he did preach to them, he did so through his resurrection power. He preached "by" the Spirit not "as" a spirit. Therefore, in order to identify the "spirits in prison," we need to focus attention on the preaching work of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection of Jesus.

Before passing on to the next point, it should be pointed out that the traditional interpretation of 1 Pet. 3:18-20 involves a contradiction in traditional theology itself. It is generally taught that when Jesus died on the cross his "spirit" went to be with his Father in heaven. This is usually claimed on the basis of his dying statement on the cross: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Also the statement in Ecc. 12:7 that "the spirit

returns to God who gave it." Jesus' promise to the thief on the cross that he would be with him in paradise that very day is also often quoted to prove that Jesus (his "spirit") went to heaven when he died on the cross. Yet, in spite of this, it is often affirmed in the next breath that the "spirit" of Jesus went in the opposite direction down into the lower regions of the earth to do a preaching work there! Not only that, but the point seems to have been completely overlooked that, if man's spirit departs to God the moment he dies (as taught in Ecc. 12:7), then why would Jesus descend into the earth if he wanted to preach to those who had died?

(3) The word "spirits" never signifies disembodied persons in Scripture. Even angels, who are called "spirits" (Heb. 1:7) are bodily beings. Lot called them "men" (Gen. 19:1, 8) and Jacob wrestled with one all night. Even Jesus is referred to as a "quickenning spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45) but he was nevertheless "flesh and bone," and was a real physical bodily being. Even the imprints of the nails were still in his hands and feet.

(4) "Spirits in prison." The key to the understanding of this phrase lies in the fact that Jesus, through the spirit, preached to them!

It was pointed out before that all preaching of the gospel is aimed at reaching and penetrating the spirit of man - the "spirit of the mind." That is the vital area the Holy Spirit seeks to influence - the "inner man." The Holy Spirit seeks to quicken and illuminate the spirit of man, and transform it by his renewing power, delivering him from the dark prison of trespasses and sin. In previous sections it was demonstrated from Scripture that because the "spirit" of man is the real personality and character of man, it is sometimes referred to by metonymy as the whole man. It is helpful to keep this in mind in connection with the "spirits in prison."

The Greek word translated "prison" is "phulakee" and is used almost 50 times in the New Testament. It is never used to relate to some place down in the deep regions of the earth where disembodied persons are supposed to go!

Seeing that preaching is always aimed at the "spirit of the mind" we can reasonably conclude that the "spirits" to whom the preaching was directed in 1 Pet. 3:18-20 relate to the spirit of the mind of certain people, and the "prison" that these spirits were in, must be interpreted in this light. In other words, the preaching was aimed at minds that were bound and locked in the darkness of sin and ignorance. Hymn 324 in the Redemption Hymn Book expresses it in these words: "Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin."

The words "prison" and "prisoners" are used a number of times in

Scripture in a metaphorical sense to describe the spiritual position of those who are alienated from God in their mind and have no hope. Such people are "enemies in their mind" (Col. 1:21); their "understanding is darkened" (Eph.4:18); their "heart is darkened" (Rom. 1:21); their "eyes are darkened" (Rom. 11:10). These are all just different ways of expressing the same basic concept involved in the phrase: "spirits in prison."

Christ's ministry of delivering the minds of men from the prison-house of ignorance and sin and lifting them to a new dimension and higher plane, was predicted by the prophet Isaiah in these words: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because he has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, he has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives ("spirits in prison") and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isa. 61:1). At the commencement of his ministry, Jesus quoted this and applied it to his work of renewing and transforming the spirits of men's minds (Lk. 4:18). The same work is referred to in Isa. 49:9 in terms of Jesus preaching: "saying to the prisoners, Go forth, and to those in darkness, Come into the light."

Christ's preaching work to the Gentiles by the Holy Spirit through the Church after his resurrection is referred to in identical terms. In Isa. 42:1 reference is made to the fact that the Holy Spirit is upon him and that he will be a light to the Gentiles "to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Here, those who have "blind eyes" are referred to as being in "prison." The "blind eyes" of course, as pointed out before, is just another way of saying: "eyes that are darkened" - "understanding darkened" - "heart is darkened" - "enemies in their mind" - "spirits in prison." The word "prison" is clearly metaphorical and relates to a state of spiritual blindness and bondage; ignorance and darkness.

Without a doubt, Christ's mission after his resurrection, was to preach to imprisoned spirits of the gentiles which lay in the prison-house of sin. And he performed this work by the Spirit in his body - the Church. The Gentles were called "out of darkness into his (Christ's) marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9-12). The "darkness" in which they once walked is described in 1 Pet. 4:3 as "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." Those who live like this are "dead in their trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). They are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). They are "spirits in prison."

However, the following verses in this second chapter of Ephesians point out that in Christ, those Gentiles who were afar off are now made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Verse 17 is an interesting verse in connection with our present consideration. It says that Christ came and preached peace to the gentiles who were afar off. This is precisely the point that is being made in 1 Pet. 3:18-20 where reference is made to Christ preaching to the spirits in prison by the spirit, after his resurrection. Acts 26:23 makes the same point: "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and show light to the people and to the gentiles."

It was not Jesus himself personally, of course, who preached to the gentiles. He did it by the Holy Spirit through his disciples. Paul is quite clear about this when he refers to himself as the "minister of Jesus Christ to the gentiles, ministering the gospel" (Rom. 15:16-19). In view of this, he also says: "I will not dare to speak to any of those things which Christ has not wrought by me to make the gentiles obedient." As far as Paul was concerned, he regarded his preaching to the gentiles as Christ preaching through him! There is an inseparable relationship between Christ and each member of his body. So close is the relationship, that when a member is persecuted, Jesus says to the persecutor: "Why persecute thou me?" Jesus entrusts his body with the "keys of the kingdom." Their message of salvation and deliverance is able to deliver the spirits of men from their prison of darkness and hopelessness.

IN THE DAYS OF NOAH

The preaching of the gospel to the gentiles in the first century was not the first time the gospel had been preached to the gentiles. Noah also preached the gospel of righteousness to the gentiles of his own time (2 Pet. 2:5) This preaching took place during the period referred to by Peter when the long suffering of God waited while Noah prepared the ark (1 Pet. 3:20). However, they were disobedient and refused to respond, so God refused to spare them. Their destruction in the flood stands forth as a solemn warning to all gentiles in later times, and Peter refers to it for that reason.

1 Pet. 3:19-20 is frequently interpreted to mean that the "spirits in prison" to whom Christ preached were the disobedient of Noah's day. This is unacceptable because:

- (1) The preaching took place after resurrection, and there is no

record of Jesus preaching to any other gentiles by the Spirit other than those living after his resurrection.

(2) If Noah preached to the gentiles of his day during the 100 years that he was building the ark, and they refused to respond and were disobedient (so disobedient that the flood was specifically sent to destroy them), then why should they be given a second chance 2,500 years later? Was Noah a poor, ineffective preacher? Are there any other Scriptures that support this "purgatory" concept of the disobedient having a second chance after rejecting the gospel and dying in the judgement of God for their wickedness? By no means! Such a concept is as far removed from the teaching of the Word of God as east is from west. Scripture plainly declares: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement" (Heb. 9:27). "They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth" (Isa. 38:18).

Goodness me, if a man can reject the testimony of God during this life yet be given a second chance after he has died, nobody would fail to respond. Once a man is dead, and all the pleasures of life have been left behind, he would have nothing to lose if, in his death state he could have a second chance to enter the kingdom of God. If such a doctrine were true, men would be encouraged to live life to the fullest while alive in the flesh, leaving it till they enter the death state to make their decision to serve God. This way they could enjoy the best of both worlds. It is a very attractive doctrine - clearly a flesh-inspired doctrine inherited from the Apostasy.

(3) Scriptures could be multiplied to show that death is a time of unconsciousness - a time when "the dead know not anything" - a time when their "thoughts have perished" and this will be established in another chapter. In view of this, it is impossible that the dead could hear, understand or respond to any gospel message, even if it was preached in the lower regions of the earth. Anyway, why should Jesus be concerned only with those who lived contemporary with Noah i.e. men and women who had already had the Word of God preached to them, and apparently made no effort to save the "lost souls" of any other generation?

The statement in 1 Pet. 3:20: "Who formerly were disobedient ... in the days of Noah ..." clearly cannot mean that the generation of gentiles who disobeyed Noah's preaching was the same generation to whom the gospel was preached after the death of Jesus. Peter is simply talking about the gentiles in broad general terms. He is merely stating that, as in the days of Noah when the gospel was preached to the gentiles, so also now (in what was believed to be the end-time "days of Noah") the gospel was

again being preached to them. It was also preached to them in the days of Jonah, when the prophet Jonah went to the great gentile city of Nineveh and called upon the inhabitants to repent. On this occasion they were obedient.

The principle that I am putting forward here is well illustrated in 1 Pet. 2:9-10. In verse 9 Peter says: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood ..." Here, Peter is addressing his contemporary first century generation of gentile Christians. He then goes on to say in verse 10: "Who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God ..." Peter is actually quoting words uttered over 700 years before by the prophet Hosea in relation to the gentiles (Hos. 2:23). At that time, and indeed, right through to the time of Peter, the gentiles were not the people of God. But it would clearly be wrong to conclude that the people to whom Peter was writing was the same generation of gentiles that lived 700 years ago in the time of Hosea.

Incidentally, the phrase "in time past" in 1 Pet. 2:10 comes from the Greek word "pote." It is exactly the same word which is translated "sometime" in 1 Pet. 3:20, which more correctly means "formerly."

Another example of this principle of speech under consideration can be found in Matt. 23:36-39. Speaking to Jerusalem around 33 A.D. Jesus said: "Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent to you ..."

Now, taking these words of Jesus at their face value and interpreting them literally, we would have to conclude that the Jews living at the time had killed all the prophets. But, excluding John the Baptist (who was killed by Herod and not the Jews) there had not been any prophets in the land for over 400 years since the time of the last prophet Malachi. Prior to Malachi, there were, of course many prophets, and many of them were stoned and killed by the Jews. But by saying to the Jerusalem of his own day: "thou that killest the prophets ..." Jesus did not imply that the Jews living contemporary with him at the time, were the same people who killed the prophets centuries before!

In precisely the same way when Peter talks about the gentiles of his own time being the centre of a preaching work, and then says "who formerly were disobedient ... in the days of Noah," he is not implying that the generation of gentiles that lived contemporary with Noah is exactly the same group of gentiles to whom the gospel was being preached after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This illustration may help: Suppose the preaching work of some

missionaries among some tribes in Africa in the 18th century was unsuccessful and failed to bring about obedience, and then the preaching of some 20th century missionaries proved successful. An account of the situation might very well be described like this: "They (the 20th century missionaries) went and preached to the spirits in prison (ignorant unbelieving African tribes), who formerly (in the 18th century) were disobedient ..." No one would conclude from this that the natives to whom the 20th century missionaries preached were the same people to whom the 18th century missionaries preached!

Peter's reference to the disobedient gentiles in Noah's time is purely a quick, spontaneous and passing exhortation to the gentiles of his own day - a solemn warning not to fall into the same condemnation through unbelief and disobedience.

It is not difficult for those who are steeped in such prejudices as immortal soulism to develop the idea out of certain portions of the Word of God. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul or spirit, like all other false doctrines, can easily be read in various Scriptures by those who want to believe it. A number of passages, if wrongly interpreted, can easily lead to the adoption of such a belief. Once adopted it needs little to maintain it. Indeed, it has less than little to maintain it!

MODES OF INTERPRETATION

There are in the world, as we are all too painfully aware, many modes of using and interpreting the Bible; but there is one general principle which, if applied, would simplify most of the difficulties that confront the student. It might be stated thus - that belief is true which is supported by the greatest weight of evidence. In the present instance the principle might be expressed in this way: If a view of a doctrine seems to be supported by five texts, and the opposite view by twenty five, then the latter is more likely to be the true one. A secondary point arises from this conclusion, namely: the five texts which seem to be out of harmony with the twenty five should be interpreted in such a way as to bring them into harmony with the twenty five, in order to avoid the appearance of self-contradiction in Scripture.

It would be a very bad and dangerous principle to try and bring twenty five verses into harmony with five! Worse still is the practise in some religious circles to build a major doctrine upon one verse! There are, as Peter points out in his second epistle (3:16), some things written, especially in Paul's epistles, which are "hard to be understood," and

"which those who are unlearned and unstable twist, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."

An example of something "hard to be understood" in one of Paul's epistles is the following statement in 1 Cor. 15:29: "Else what shall they do who are baptised for the dead ...?" It is an obscure statement and there is not another like it in the rest of Scripture. It would be foolish to take it on its face value and build a major doctrine out of it. Some groups however, have done this and have used this verse to justify the false doctrine of baptism by proxy i.e. the baptising of a living Christian in the place of some unbelieving friend or relative who has died.

The same applies to the teaching that Christ went and preached to disembodied people who had lived in Noah's day in order that they might have a second chance of salvation. This teaching is based almost entirely on the passage in 1 Pet. 3:18-20 and maybe one or two other obscure statements in Scripture. It is based on extremely tenuous ground to say the least! Literally dozens of verses can be set against this obscure and somewhat doubtful passage in 1 Pet. 3 which plainly and unambiguously teach the very opposite with regard to the state of the dead, and we will come to them shortly. The traditional teaching based on 1 Pet. 3:18-20 is outnumbered by far more than 25 to 5 as we shall see!

To summarise then, looking at it in its context, 1 Pet. 3:19-22 is a parenthesis. In verses 17-18, Peter begins the section by speaking on the subject of suffering. He says that the Christians should take courage in their sufferings by considering the fact that they might thereby bring men to God. It is implied that they must emulate the sufferings of Christ whose death was effected for the salvation of sinners. They themselves had been brought to God through his sufferings. The next four verses (19-22) are in the nature of a digression and the theme is resumed in chapter 4:1: "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered ..."

The parenthetic verses 19-22 of chapter 3 contain, in very tightly packed ideas, a description of the situation in which the Christians believed themselves to be. They believed that the judgements of God were near (1 Pet. 4:17) and that the world was facing catastrophe as predicted by all the prophets, particularly Daniel who said it would come "with a flood" (Dan. 9:26). Jesus also had warned that the judgement would be like unto the days of Noah: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the son of man be. For as in the days of Noah before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the son of man

be" (Matt. 24:37-).

The judgement of God in Noah's day was an unforgettable experience. It stood paramount above all other judgements and naturally came quickly into the mind of any man of God whose mind turned to the subject of judgement. Peter turned to it again in his second epistle when speaking about the judgement of the end-time: "And (God) spared not the old world but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:5). He turned to the same judgement again in chapter 3:6, saying: "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." When he wrote his epistles, Peter was clearly preoccupied with the thought of the flood judgement in the past in Noah's day and the end-time judgement yet to come.

Peter's reference to the preaching of the gospel to the gentiles in his own time ("spirits in prison") led him by association of thought to the typical situation in the days of Noah, when a similar offer of salvation was proclaimed in the preaching of Noah and the long suffering of God waited while Noah prepared the ark.

Peter was conscious (to quote his own words in 4:7) that "the end of all things is at hand." He believed that he was living in the end time and that the judgements of God were not far away, in which all who rejected the gospel would be destroyed. This is what happened in Noah's day, and he mentions it as an exhortation and solemn warning to the readers of his epistle, and the exhortation is no less applicable in our day. The Christians to whom Peter was writing were also persecuted at the hands of unbelieving gentiles. The Christians were trying to do good to the gentiles (and Jews) by preaching the gospel to them, but the majority of them retaliated with evil. Peter, in referring to Noah's day, points out that this was a repetition of the past, and like the past will end in a judgement.

HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE

To complete our consideration of the "spirits in prison," some thought should be given to several other passages of Scripture which are often quoted to support the traditional interpretation of the spirits in prison passage.

The first one is Eph. 4:8 which reads: "When he ascended on high he led captivity captive." This is how the Authorised Version reads and other translations agree. As it stands, it simply teaches that the grave, which locked Jesus up and held him captive for three days, finally became

his captive through resurrection. Jesus was put to death and the key of Hades locked its door on him. But he rose again by the power of God and now has the key of Hades in his own hand. Truly, he has led captivity captive. That which captivated him, is now his captive. That which gained a momentary victory over him, he now has victory over. Resurrection constitutes victory over hell as stated in 1 Cor. 15:54-57.

Some modern translations give an alternative rendering of the phrase under consideration, namely, "led a host of captives." This is quite acceptable and supports another aspect of resurrection. Jesus was resurrected to lead the way. He is the leader of a triumphal procession. Does this mean that when he rose from the dead to eternal life and ascended to heaven, that multitudes of old testament saints (as well as the disobedient of Noah's time) accompanied him? There is no support for such a concept anywhere in Scripture. The evidence in fact points in the opposite direction. For instance, if the Old Testament saints etc. accompanied Jesus to heaven, one would assume that David would be included. Yet, speaking quite some time after Christ's ascension, Peter said: "David is not ascended into the heavens" (Act. 2:34). The point is also made in Heb. 11:40 that the Old Testament saints will not attain to their perfection before us.

The divine purpose is that all the saints will enter into glory together, and not in dribs and drabs. If Jesus was accompanied by the Old Testament saints to heaven, one would expect some reference to be made to them in the ascension account. However not a word is mentioned with regard to others accompanying Jesus to heaven. The angels were present, but apart from them, Jesus ascended alone. This was actually required by the types in the Law of Moses. Under the Law, the high priest went into the most holy place alone once a year to stand before the Lord on behalf of the people. He went in unaccompanied and later returned to the people who were waiting for him outside. Jesus, as the perfect antitypical high priest went to heaven alone and will soon return to his people who are waiting for his appearance. This is all clearly taught in Heb. 9:24-28.

In 1 Cor. 15:20 Jesus is referred to as "risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." This helps us to understand the significance of the phrase: "led a host of captives." "First fruits" refers to the first-ripe product which came as an earnest or forerunner of the main crop. The main harvest came afterwards. The harvest did not accompany the first fruits! In applying this principle to the resurrection of Jesus, it is difficult to accept that he could be styled the "first fruits of them that slept," if in fact, others were raised to life, not only with him, but even

before him, as is taught in certain departments of traditional theology.

The term: "first fruits" as applied to the resurrection of Jesus, implies that he was the first among all who have entered into the death-sleep to awake to eternal life. He has led the way into the eternal and immortal realm just as the first fruits in nature lead the way. The others will attain to the same state afterwards. This in fact, is stated in 1 Cor. 15:23: "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." A very clear and specific order is presented here. Unlike the "spirits in prison" passage in 1 Pet. 3, this is quite unambiguous. It teaches that Christ leads the way as victor over the grave through resurrection, and a triumphal procession will follow him by likewise emerging from the grave when he resurrects them at his second coming. The word "afterward" as in Heb. 9:27, bridges a gap of many centuries for many people. In the meantime, in accordance with the types contained in the Law, Jesus the High Priest entered the most holy place (heaven) alone, from which he will appear eventually a second time without sin unto salvation.

This order is again confirmed in 1 Thes. 4:14 which says that Jesus died and rose again, and that God will bring to life with him all who sleep in him. Thus, Jesus is again presented as the first fruits and leader of the captives. All who sleep in him will follow in his train by emerging from the grave as he did. When? Verses 15-17 clearly teach that this triumphal procession will not take place until the second coming. It is stated that both the dead and the living will be united with Christ "together" (v17). This is a very important and clearly defined truth in the divine scheme of things. Nobody gets eternal life or glory before anyone else. All will be perfected together. All must "wait" for the return of the Bridegroom.

Heb. 11:40 makes the point that God has provided a better thing for us, that all the Old Testament heroes of faith shall not be made perfect without us. They do not "prevent" i.e. "precede" us. All of us shall be glorified "together" (Rom. 8:17). "Therefore," concludes Paul, "comfort one another with these words" (1 Thes.4:18).

So then, if all the Old Testament heroes of the faith did not accompany Jesus to heaven, but have to wait for his return before they can see him and enter into their glory, it is most unlikely that the disobedient of Noah's time would have accompanied Jesus - even if it was possible for them to repent after their death!

NB: One more important observation can be made in connection with this subject. If Jesus was the first fruits of "them that slept," it is clearly implied that he too, prior to his resurrection, was "asleep." (Many

Scriptures could be cited to reinforce the fact that death is a time of sleep - an unconscious state, and a chapter will be devoted to this aspect shortly).

Now, preachers of the gospel do not preach while they are asleep! True, sometimes men talk and walk in their sleep, but not in the death-sleep! If Jesus was not asleep in his death, then he could not be the first fruits of those who slept. And if he was asleep, he would not be preaching! Thus, Peter's reference to Christ preaching to the spirits in prison cannot possibly relate to the period of his death. The preaching clearly took place after he was "quickenened by the spirit" i.e. after he was made alive through resurrection. After all, if as tradition teaches, Christ's "spirit" never died, but survived the death of the body, how could it possibly be "quickenened" i.e. made alive. If it never died, how could it be "made alive?" The very word "quickenened" implies the making alive of something that was dead. If Christ's spirit never died, or fell asleep, how could it be made alive? But, once it is conceded that Jesus fell into a death sleep like all other men, then the word "quickenened" becomes meaningful, and makes sound sense when related to his resurrection.

MANY BODIES AROSE

Matt. 27:50-53 is sometimes quoted to support the traditional interpretation of the spirits in prison. Reference is made in this passage to the earth quaking as Jesus breathed his last upon the cross, at which time certain graves opened from which many bodies of the saints which slept arose. Verse 53 explains that although these saints came back to life as Jesus died upon the cross, they remained in their tombs waiting for Jesus to be resurrected, after which they emerged into the open and went into the holy city and appeared unto many.

(Some commentators suggest that a full stop should be placed after the word "graves" in verse 53. This would suggest that the saints arose from their tombs as Jesus died and went straight to their homes and remained there until Jesus was resurrected. After that they ventured into the city to reveal themselves. Whatever view we take doesn't really matter. Both views agree on the same basic point; namely, that these saints arose as Jesus died).

Tradition sometimes affirms that those who were disobedient in Noah's time were among these saints who arose as Jesus died on the cross. A number of interesting and important points arise from the episode:

(1) Matt. 27:52 says these saints "slept" in their death state, prior to

coming out of their graves. If they were asleep, then what would be the point of preaching to them in such a sleep state? Sleep is a time of unconsciousness during which preaching falls upon deaf ears and cannot be heard. (Those who fall asleep during a sermon will testify to this!) "For in death there is no remembrance" (Psa. 6:5). "Man's spirit (breath) is breathed out and he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psa. 146:4). "The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything ... their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished ... there is no knowledge in the grave" (Ecc. 9:4-10). "They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth" (Isa. 38:18). Such is Scripture's own definition of the death-sleep. It is a time of unconsciousness and inactivity. Those who enter this state can neither preach or listen to preaching.

(2) Those referred to in Matt. 27:53 came back to life at the same time that Jesus died upon the cross, before he went to Hades. If Jesus preached in Hades, they were not there to hear him!

(3) If these "saints" were resurrected to eternal life, then they preceded the "first fruits" (Jesus) because they came back to life three days before he was resurrected. This is almost proof positive that their resurrection was not unto eternal life, but merely an extension of natural life as in the case of Lazarus and Jairus' daughter etc. Nothing is said in Matt. 27:52-53 to suggest that these saints rose to eternal life, and certainly nothing is said about them accompanying Jesus to heaven. Had such a group accompanied Jesus to heaven, the apostles would surely have seen them alongside Jesus as he rose from the Mount of Olives into heaven, and would have made reference to it somewhere in their writings. Also, if such a large company rose from the dead (as would be required if all the Old Testament saints and the disobedient of Noah's time were involved), then the city of Jerusalem wouldn't have standing room in it due to such a vast multitude. And one would expect at least one historian like Josephus to at least make some passing reference to such an unprecedented happening. Instead, there is absolute silence on the whole matter. There is not a single historical or Biblical reference to it.

(4) Matt. 27:52 says that "many bodies of the saints which slept arose." The passage is not concerned with disembodied "spirits," and says nothing about immaterial entities floating out of Hades with Jesus accompanying him to heaven. The teaching of Scripture with regard to eternal life relates to immortal bodies and not disembodied immortals! Jesus, as the "first fruits" of those who slept - "the first to rise from the dead" (Acts. 26:23), is the supreme example of what life after death is all

about. He came back to life through resurrection and entered the realm of immortality in a physical bodily form. He was a real tangible being, and not some immaterial, invisible mysterious entity.

(5) There is no basis in Matt. 27:52 or any other Scripture upon which it can be affirmed that the "saints" who rose were Old Testament saints. The fact that these resurrected saints went into the holy city to reveal themselves as a witness, indicates that they, like Jesus; had been buried in the vicinity of the holy city. Not all of the Old Testament saints were by any means, buried in the vicinity of Jerusalem. The disobedient of Noah's day most certainly weren't. The fact that these resurrected saints went into Jerusalem to appear unto many as a witness to the resurrection power of God by which their Master had then also been raised, strongly suggests that they were known personally to the inhabitants of the city and had lived contemporary with them prior to their death. How else would the local inhabitants recognise them and know that they were previously dead?

If Old Testament saints and people from the days of Noah - people who they had never seen or known, rose from the dead and appeared to them, they would not recognise them. They would probably conclude that they were strangers and foreigners who had sneaked in during the night trying to deceive them. Rather than be an effective witness and confirmation of the resurrection power by which Jesus was raised, it would cause more doubt and suspicion upon the Christians and their Lord.

(6) If the "bodies" of Old Testament saints rose to eternal life, they would of necessity, be immortal bodies. Elsewhere, Scripture emphatically teaches that the saints who fall asleep in Christ will not receive their immortal body until the second coming. Contradiction and confusion is immediately created if it is taught that all the Old Testament saints received their immortal body long before the second coming, and even before the resurrection of the great resurrector himself.

Some scholars believe that the incorrect interpretation of the Matt. 27:52 incident led some during New Testament times into the situation described in 2 Tim. 2:18: "Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." We learn from this that incorrect theology in certain areas can lead to serious repercussions, making it so important for us to ensure that to the best of our ability; we "rightly divide the word of truth."

GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM THAT ARE DEAD

1 Pet. 4:6 says: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." This is also often quoted to support the belief that the spirits in prison to whom Jesus preached were the disobedient dead of Noah's time. In answer to this the following points should be noted:

(1) Peter does not say that the gospel was preached to them "when they were dead." He is not talking about the gospel being preached to dead people. He is simply stating that those who are now dead once had the gospel preached to them. And if the reference is to those of Noah's time to whom Noah preached the gospel, then they are now quite clearly dead.

A similar form of expression can be seen in Ruth. 1:8 where Naomi said to Ruth: "The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead, and with me." The "dead" with whom Ruth had dealt kindly was her husband, the son of Naomi, who was now dead. While he was alive, Ruth was a good wife to him and dealt kindly with him. Referring to this, Naomi said: "you have dealt kindly with the dead" i.e. "with him who is now dead." Very few would read the verse to mean that Ruth was being a good wife to him while he was in his death state.

The same applies to 1 Pet. 4:6. Reference to the gospel being preached to "them that are dead," simply means that those who are now dead, once had the gospel preached to them. And this is perfectly true in relation to the disobedient in Noah's day. Noah was a preacher of righteousness and he preached the gospel to his contemporaries. Peter plainly declares this in 2 Pet. 2:5.

So then, Noah preached to the gentiles of his day, but they proved to be disobedient during that period when the long suffering of God waited. They refused to allow the spirit of their mind to be delivered from the prison of sin, ignorance and unbelief. They were therefore destroyed, and stand forth as a solemn warning to all gentiles in succeeding generations - especially the end time generation which live in "days like unto Noah."

(2) The gospel was preached to the gentiles in Noah's day for the same reason it is preached to the gentiles in later times, namely: "that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Pet. 4:6).

Men who live "in the flesh" can refer to those whose life is controlled by the lusts of the flesh. In this sense "they that are in the flesh

cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). The reference is to those who are "carnally minded" (v6). "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (v5). The purpose of the gospel is to induce a man to crucify - put to death the flesh with its lusts. This constitutes a "judgement" and "condemnation." This is what the crucifixion of Christ achieved literally, and we identify with that judgement symbolically in baptism. This is done in order that we "might live according to God in the spirit." That is, that we might live a life according to God's purpose, being "spiritually minded" - having our lives controlled and directed by the spirit instead of the flesh. This has been God's purpose and desire for men from the very beginning. For this purpose the gospel was preached to the disobedient in Noah's day, to Abraham (Gal. 3:8), to the Israelites (Heb. 3:17 - 4:2, Rom. 1:1-3) and to ourselves.

So then, a judgement takes place in a man's life when, in response to the gospel message, he renounces self - the flesh, putting it to death and burying it in the waters of baptism. When a man does this he qualifies for God's salvation. Had a man responded to Noah's preaching in this way, he would have been allowed to enter the ark and gain salvation with Noah and his family. Today we have a living personal "ark" in our Lord Jesus Christ. Those "in him" are safe and secure - saved from the judgements to come.

However, in its context, the word "judged" in 1 Pet. 4:6 seems to relate more particularly to the end time judgement which will take place at the second coming of Christ. At that time we shall, in another sense, "be judged according to men in the flesh." Paul refers to it in 2 Cor. 5:10: "We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

That the word "judged" in 1 Pet. 4:6 relates particularly to this end-time judgement is apparent from the fact that it follows the statement in verse 5 about "giving account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." And verse 7 follows on by referring to the fact that "the end of all things is at hand." Peter clearly had in mind the great climactic judgement of the last day when Jesus returns. Again in verse 17 he refers to the "judgement" which must first begin at the house of God, but "what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (The answer to this question has already been supplied in his epistle. They shall end up like the disobedient in Noah's day!).

The purpose of the judgement then, is to reveal whether or not we have sown to the flesh or to the spirit i.e. whether we have been controlled

by the lusts of the flesh or the desires of the spirit. All will be judged on the basis of how we have conducted ourselves while living in the flesh i.e. while clothed with a mortal body. Those who have truly crucified the flesh, following the example of Jesus, will be vindicated at the judgement. They do not come under condemnation. They will live eternally unto God in the spirit. They will become "spirits" like the angels - spirit beings clothed with a "spiritual body." They will partake of the same divine, resurrection nature possessed by Jesus who is now a "quickenning spirit." But their change of nature from a natural mortal body to a spiritual immortal body will not take place until Jesus returns and puts the resurrection processes into action.

(3) Noah's contemporaries then, to whom the gospel was preached, "are dead." The Greek word translated "dead" is 'nekros', and generally relates to dead bodies - corpses. The same Greek word is also rendered "dead" in the preceding verse: "Who shall give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" ("nekros").

Here it should be evident that the "dead" are not "living" and vice versa. Two entirely different states are referred to by the terms "dead" and "living." The "dead" are clearly not "alive." It is therefore not only contradiction and confusion to affirm that those who die are really still alive and conscious, but also very unscriptural. Once a man is dead he becomes unconscious and it is impossible for him to hear, understand or respond to a gospel message. For this reason, Noah preached the gospel to his contemporaries before they died in the flood. It is virtually impossible to give a sound, logical or Scriptural explanation as to why the gospel should be preached particularly to them again a second time over 2,000 years later.

SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT

The purpose of preaching to spirits in prison is to deliver them from the darkness of self-centredness and sin. The Holy Spirit seeks to renew and transform the spirit of the mind and conform it to the image of Christ. In other words, the divine purpose is to change the spirit of man from something imperfect and incomplete, to something perfect and complete in Christ. This ultimate state is referred to in Heb. 12:23 as "the spirits of just men made perfect."

It is sometimes argued that this refers to the immortal, disembodied spirits of the departed in heaven. However, the same verse clearly states that the church members are written (enrolled) in heaven, and this is quite

a different concept from individuals themselves actually living in heaven in a disembodied state. Paul elsewhere refers to certain ones "whose names are written in the book of life" (Plp. 4:3).

This text in Heb. 12:23 cannot mean that the spirits of men have gone to heaven, for the same writer to the Hebrews says in chapter 11 that even those great men like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David etc, will not be made perfect until all other Christians are made perfect (v39-40). And it will be established in another section that this will not take place until the second coming when resurrection and judgement takes place. Paul himself makes the point in Plp. 3:10-12 that he was not already perfect and would not attain until the resurrection. The spirit of the believer must endure to the end, overcoming the world; in order to complete the maturing perfecting processes which are preparing it for its immortal perfect body. In the meantime the believer has a perfect conscience if he is truly in Christ, because he knows that his sins are forgiven and that salvation is his gift from God.

In our present mortal state, while still clothed with "sinful flesh," the best of Christians still fall short from time to time, thinking and doing things that they know they should not. Imperfection still accompanies the best efforts to be sinless! Only Jesus attained to sinless perfection.

However, after resurrection, the saints will be clothed with divine nature. They will partake of a glorious immortal sinless nature like Christ's which will be devoid of all promptings and temptations to sin. They will no longer be able to die for they will be equal to the angels (Lk. 20:36). The fact that they will no longer be able to die implies they will no longer be able to sin, for death is the product of sin. And, the fact that they will no longer sin, implies they will no longer suffer temptation (Jam. 1:14-15). They will become "like unto God" who "cannot be tempted." In other words, their spirits will be made perfect! This constitutes the great hope and exciting prospect of the Christian! The strong hereditary bias of our spirit to incline towards evil, induced by the sinful impulses and propensities of the flesh, will no longer exist.

When this perfection is attained at the resurrection and second coming of Christ, the saints will, as pointed out above, share the glorified nature of Christ and will become equal with the angels. In his immortal state, Jesus is described as a "quickenning spirit," (1 Cor. 15:45). The angels also, although inferior to Jesus in status, are nevertheless described as "ministering spirits." They, like Jesus share the glorious immortal divine nature of the father himself who "is spirit" (Jn. 4:24). When the bodies of the saints are fashioned like unto the glorious body of the

glorified Christ; they too, like the angels, will become "spirits" - sharers and partakers of God's eternal nature and no longer drawn away by the ungodly lusts of "sinful flesh."

It is possible that Heb. 12:23 refers to this when it speaks about "spirits of just men made perfect." If this was read with a comma or a hyphen after the word "spirits" it could easily suggest that "just men made perfect" is an explanation of what is meant by "spirits." There is no doubt that all the righteous in Christ ("just men made perfect") will become "spirits" - divine beings, equal to the angels. There is no punctuation in the Greek text so this suggestion does not violate any inspired punctuation in the text. Heb. 12:23 could very well read like this: "to the spirits - of just men made perfect." Certainly, the concept of the just men in Christ becoming "spirits" when perfected at resurrection is quite Scriptural.

It is impossible to come to a satisfactory understanding of the whole subject concerning "spirit" and "soul" by approaching it with a narrow, legalistic attitude. Scripture gives these words such a great variety of meanings, that the utmost care needs to be exercised against forcing them into the groove of a fixed and precise definition.

One thing seems certain: in all cases where the words occur we must ultimately go back to their original use in Gen. 2:7 and see them as relating to man who is, at the moment, a living soul vitalised by the breath and spirit of life.

Man's soul refers to man's life or man himself, or some part of his constitution which cannot exist if separated or detached from the body. Man's spirit, in the first instance, is the life-breath that he breathes, without which he could not think or feel. Without the breath of life man could not exercise his conscious or subconscious mind or have feeling (emotion). By metonymy therefore, the mind and emotion ("heart") are referred to many times in Scripture by the word "spirit."

By the union of "body" and "spirit" man becomes a "living soul" or "living being." When the body returns to "dust as it was" (Gen. 3:19), and the spirit "returns to God who gave it," (Ecc. 12:7. Psa.104:29-30), man becomes, and is called, a "dead soul" (Lev. 21:11. Num. 6:6) i.e. a "dead body."

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CHAPTER SEVEN MAN IS A UNITY

Man is a unity. His physical nature is undivided and indivisible. The union of man's body and the breath of life forms one living unit. The living unit is a living person having a multiplicity of endowment. He possesses many powers and abilities. He can do many different things. He can think, feel, and choose. He has a conscience and possesses character. His personality, however is one undivided whole.

Man's mental nature and physical nature are not two separate entities within the individual. They are linked together. They form two inseparable parts of one unit. Man's mental nature really is a part of his physical nature. Man's mind results from the functioning of the brain. Without a brain, man cannot possess a mind. The brain is part of man's body, his physical nature. The thinking, conscious part of man, therefore, results from the functioning of the physical part of man. Not one case can be quoted from the Bible or history of identity and personality surviving the destruction of the brain. "Mind" is clearly the product of "brain," and it is both unscriptural and unscientific to bring in an alleged separate, immaterial entity to explain the thinking.

It is impossible to have consciousness without life; or to have life without an organism for its reception. As there can be no love without a lover, no thought without a thinker, no sin without a sinner, so there can be no life without a physical organism in which it is contained.

From these facts one can easily recognise that man has no consciousness or life apart from the union of the body and breath of life. If the breath is removed, man's body ceases to function. He becomes lifeless and unconscious. He is dead. The brain and nervous system are parts of the body. At death the brain and nervous system cease to work. "In that very day his thoughts perish" (Psa. 146:4). "The dead know not anything" (Ecc. 9:5). Man's consciousness, therefore, is dependant upon the functioning of his body. Without a nervous system he cannot feel. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest" (Ecc. 9:10). There is no part of man that can exist apart from the rest of himself.

It will be observed then, that life was all that was added to man after his creation to make him a "living soul" or man; and consequently, all that was taken away at death. He was perfectly formed, having eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, lungs, heart, arteries, veins, nerves, muscles, and

brain; but this wonderful formation, in the likeness of his Creator, was useless and helpless without life; as would be a radio or T.V. without electricity. Life in the abstract as God's all pervading energy-power, is indestructible. But not so with regard to living human beings! As soon as this energy flow departs from their body, they are dead.

YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY

We now come to Paul's statement recorded in 1 Thes. 5:23: "May the God of peace make you holy in every part; and I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It has been pointed out that man is one whole, although he has different parts. The apostle Paul, in his statement quoted above, speaks of "body, soul and spirit," but he says nothing about man existing wholly in any one of those parts! Quite the opposite in fact! He teaches that man's continuance in life and therefore his conscious existence, depends upon body, soul and spirit being preserved together. He does not separate or isolate any one part and teach that it alone can preserve the man. All three combined are necessary for the preservation of man. Spirit, soul and body together are one whole man. This is the point which Paul is accentuating; and to subdivide them would be to put reasoning into the text that Paul never had in mind.

Whatever Paul means by the word "preserved," he applies it equally to body, soul and spirit. If this means the spirit is immortal, the same must equally apply to the soul and body.

It is not difficult to find separate Scriptures which, in some cases speak about the soul being preserved, and in other cases refer to the body being preserved. David for example, prayed several times that the Lord would preserve him (his body) and his soul (Psa. 86:2, 121:7-8). Paul, speaking about himself - his whole being, says in 2 Tim. 4:18: "And the Lord ... will preserve me for his heavenly kingdom."

What are we to make of all this then? Does Paul's reference in 1 Thes. 5:23 to spirit, soul and body being preserved mean that man has three separate immortal entities and three types of eternal existence? It is important to get our thinking straight on this whole matter. There appears to be a lot of contradiction and confusion in traditional teaching on the subject of life after death. Sometimes the examples of Enoch and Elijah being taken away physically are quoted to support the popular life after death theory. And sometimes other passages which speak about the soul

departing are quoted to prove the popular belief. And, on other occasions certain verses which speak about the spirit being committed, and returning to God are used to support the same view. Does this mean that body soul and spirit are all one and the same thing or does it mean that man has three different types of life after death and eternal existence? If something lives on after man dies, what is it? Just exactly what is the supposed immortal part of man, because body, soul and spirit are referred to in all these texts which tradition quotes to prove its view of man's existence after death.

The word "preserved" in 1 Thes. 5:23 means to "keep, maintain or continue in its present state." That is, firstly, preserved "blameless" (i.e. in a sanctified state), and secondly, preserved from death and dissolution. All the words in 1 Thes. 5:23 must be determined by the scope. The scope of the whole context is the hope that the Christians might remain holy in every part and remain alive and continue in conscious existence until the second coming of Jesus. (Compare the reference in 1 Cor. 7:34 to being holy in both body and spirit). Paul's prayer then, was that the Christian's body, soul and spirit be preserved - continue and remain combined, and blameless.

Paul says nothing about the combination of spirit, soul and body ceasing in order that one of these "parts" or all three might take a trip in disembodied form to heaven! Job 10:12 clearly says that life depends on man's spirit being preserved in his body! Job says that an extension of life was granted to him as a result of the Lord preserving his spirit. Once the spirit departs from the body and the spirit-soul-body combination ceases, death and unconsciousness is the immediate result. Isa. 57:16 says that when God takes human life, man's spirit and soul fails!

Because of death and unconsciousness which follows the cessation of the spirit soul and body combination; the apostle Paul expressed the hope and desire that the Thessalonians' spirit, soul and body remain holy and preserved, till the return of Christ (which he anticipated in his own day). But, if death brings about a release, and our real immortal "self" immediately ascends to the "celestial city" to be with Jesus in sinless perfection, then surely this would be more desirable than remaining on earth waiting for his second coming! Why then, did the apostle Paul hope and pray that the Thessalonians' spirit, soul and body be preserved until the second coming if the cessation of this "tri-part constitution of man" resulted in an immediate journey to the presence of Jesus in heaven?

The answer is quite obvious. Paul hoped their body, soul and spirit would be preserved because the severing or dissolution of them meant

death which is an unconscious state involving inactivity. It was better to remain alive, conscious and active in the Lord's service than to die and be put to rest in the grave where fruitful service, praise and thanksgiving are no longer possible. It was Paul's desire that they remain alive unto the coming of Jesus; and the way in which he says "we (which includes himself) who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" in 1 Thes. 4:15; indicates that, at the time of writing this epistle, he believed the return of Jesus was very near, and that he would live to see it. Later on in life he realised that time was not quite as short as he had thought and that he would not, after all, remain alive until it took place (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

So then, nothing is said in 1 Thes. 5:23 about some separate part of man being preserved for an upward journey to the presence of Jesus the moment the body dies. Quite the opposite: it teaches that life and conscious existence depends upon spirit, soul and body all being combined and preserved together. The hope expressed by Paul is not for any one of these "parts" to separate from the others and take an upward journey to heaven to be with Jesus, but for them all to remain preserved together until Jesus descends from heaven.

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

What precisely then, is meant by "spirit, soul and body" in 1 Thes. 5:23? In view of the tremendous variety of applications of the words in Scripture, most honest Bible students who have made an extensive study of the words freely confess that it is impossible and unwise to be dogmatic. A legalistic and narrow mind will try to put a fixed, precise and specific meaning on these words. However, Scripture's use of the words "spirit" and "soul" is so flexible; dogmatism as to precise and definite meaning is impossible.

We have already seen how the original word translated "spirit" basically refers to man's breath of life - the God-given vital force and energy of life. We have also seen that "soul" is basically man himself and the life he possesses. But, because there are many aspects pertaining to man's life and body, we have also seen that those same words are also translated in many other different ways, and are applied in many metonymical senses.

For instance, as pointed out earlier, the original word translated "soul" is also translated over 30 different ways which include "desire," "heart" (emotion), "life," "mind" etc. And, as far as the "spirit, soul and body" passage in 1 Thes. 5:23 is concerned, any one of these meanings

could very well apply. It is impossible to dogmatise. But one thing is certain: whatever meaning we choose, none of them have anything to do with an immortal, immaterial entity within man that is preserved and continues living after his death.

The same applies to the word "spirit." Although it basically refers to man's breath of life - the vital force of life which the Spirit of God provides for all flesh; it is also used in relation to the subconscious mind and mental attitude of man. Without the vital life-force of God's breath and spirit, man could not have an attitude or mental disposition; his brain would be dead; so the word "spirit" is often used metonymically for mental disposition as well as emotional feeling. Thus, the Hebrew word "ruach," translated "spirit," is also translated "mind," "understanding," "courage," etc in some places. In the New Testament the word "spirit" sometimes signifies "will," "conscience" etc.

Once again, any one of these meanings could well apply to the word "spirit" in the 1 Thes. 5:23 passage. The writer of the passage - the apostle Paul, was familiar with the great variety of meanings that these words are given in Scripture, and only God knows exactly what he had in mind when he used them.

It is possible that Rom. 12:1-2, 11 could shed some light on what Paul had in mind when he penned 1 Thes. 5:23. In verse one he exhorts the Christians to present their body as a living sacrifice to the Lord. In verse two he encourages them to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. And in verse eleven he charges them to be fervent in spirit.

Here, the body, mind and spirit are referred to as the essential elements or aspects that must be exercised and preserved for God in the Christian's life. In 1 Thes. 5:23 they are listed as spirit, soul and body. If these two passages could be regarded as running parallel, the two words "soul" and "mind" become synonymous.

Paul's words: spirit, soul and body could also simply define the natural divisions of man's nature, i.e. life, mind and body. A carcass illustrates the "body;" an idiot illustrates the body and life without the mind; a full-grown efficient manhood presents us with the whole three in combined manifestation.

The mind unquestionably plays a vital role in true Christian discipleship as we have seen, and it would be surprising if Paul did not have it in mind in his "body, soul and spirit" passage.

Jesus himself said that we must love the Lord God "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37, Mk. 12:30). Once again we see the mind included as one of the essential things

that must love the Lord. The Scribe who was being addressed by Jesus on this occasion replied: "You are right teacher; you have said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength ..."

Notice that the Scribe's reply did not include the word "mind." Instead, he used the word "understanding." The two are treated synonymously. Understanding is impossible without a mind. The mind is the vital part of man through which understanding is developed. Understanding is a vital requirement in a servant of God, and it comes through exercising and applying the mind in the things of God as we saw earlier. "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom; but with all your getting, get understanding" (Pr. 4:7). "Brethren, be not children in understanding - but in understanding be men" (1 Cor. 14:20). All this talk we hear these days in some circles that understanding only becomes possible when we abandon our mind and let it hang loose, is absolute nonsense and utter foolishness. No wonder there is so much shallow thinking and half-baked concepts floating around!

Notice also that the Scribe added the word "strength." Did one of the words "heart," "soul" or "mind" suggest strength to him or did he use the word in an all-embracing sense, to summarise everything for which heart, mind and soul stood?

"Strength" or "might," formed part of the original three words used in Deu. 6:5 from which Jesus and the Scribe were quoting: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Luke's record of Jesus' quotation of this is practically identical with the original in Deu. 6:5. It is recorded in Lk. 10:27: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind."

To summarise then, 1 Thes. 5:23 lists the three vital aspects as "spirit, soul, and body." The original words translated "spirit" and "soul" are very flexible and have a great number of meanings and applications in Scripture. Rom. 12:1-2, 11 lists the three vital aspects as body, mind and spirit. The original declaration of God in Deu. 6:5 lists them as "heart, soul and might." Jesus refers to them as "heart, soul and mind." The Scribe speaks of them in terms of "heart, understanding, soul and strength."

All of these aspects can really be summed up in "body, mind and life." Without divine help and preservation, the forces of evil can capture

the mind, take life and destroy the body. Paul's prayer in 1 Thes. 5:23 was that the Christians would remain holy in all these areas and that they would be preserved unto the coming of the Lord.

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CHAPTER EIGHT THE REALITY OF DEATH

Death is mentioned for the first time in the Bible in the sentence: "Thou shalt surely die," as recorded in Gen. 2:17. The full statement reads like this: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

The word "die" simply means "cease to live;" "cessation of life;" "expire." Adam of course, did not expire within a literal 24 hour period after eating the forbidden fruit, and the Lord did not intend his words to be interpreted that way. The obscurity which creates the difficulty does not lie in the words spoken by God, but in the English version of them. In Hebrew, the words translated "thou shalt surely die," literally mean: "dying thou shalt die," and the marginal reference of the A.V. gives this as the alternative translation. In this light, the Lord's warning meant that a mortal process ending in death would commence from the very day that sin was committed. And so it was that from the day of Adam's sin he started dying. He finally died at the age of 930.

Adam did not live to be a thousand years old. This is quite significant in itself. It could be said that, in the light of the divine principle that 1,000 years to man is only one day to God, Adam literally, in that sense, did not live beyond the "day" on which he ate the fruit. He fell short of the 1,000 year mark!

The phrase: "in that day ... thou shalt surely die," can be compared with an identical phrase in 1 Kng. 2:37. In this chapter we read how Solomon warned Shimei to remain in Jerusalem, telling him that "on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die." Shimei disobeyed Solomon and departed from Jerusalem to Gath, a city which was over 60 miles away. It took Shimei some days to make the return journey and it was not until he returned that Solomon took his life. Shimei did not literally die on the very same day that he sinned, but his death warrant was sealed on that day of his sin. So it was for Adam: his death warrant was sealed on the day of his sin and from that point on, a process of mortality set in, culminating in death.

Gen. 2:17 then, is the first reference to death in the Bible. After Adam sinned, the Lord reaffirmed the death warning and defined it in more specific terms: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art and

unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). Adam was simply told that death was going to be a process at the end of which he would return to what he was before he was made, namely: unconscious, impersonal dust!

Whatever Adam may have been when originally made, God clearly decreed that he would cease to be - that he would return to the state of nothingness from which he had originally been made and created. In other words, that he should die: and this constitutes the greatest disproof that could be brought forward of man's immortality in any sense.

To say that the sentence merely related to the body and did not affect the real being, is to play with words. The personality expressed in the pronoun "thou," i.e. "thou shalt return to the ground," is distinctly affirmed of the physical organisation. "Thou art dust." What could be more emphatic? "Thou shalt return to dust." This of course, is utterly inapplicable to the intangible principle which is supposed to constitute the soul, and refers exclusively to man's material nature.

The word "thou" then, refers to the real Adam - the person, and not some impersonal "shell" that the real person lives in. Thus, the real person "returns" to where he came from - the dust of the ground. This immediately refutes the popular concept that each person originally pre-existed in heaven with God. If this was true, and each person returned to where he came from when he died, he would return to heaven and not the dust of the ground. The fact that the Bible states that at death we return to the ground proves that we originally came from there and not some pre-existent state in heaven.

Tradition argues that the words: "Dust thou art, to dust thou shalt return," was not spoken of the soul. Abraham however, expressed this view: "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27).

This is Abraham's estimate of himself. Some of his modern friends would have corrected him saying: "Father Abraham, you are mistaken; you are not dust and ashes; it is only your body." Abraham's unsophisticated view however, is more reliable than "the (philosophical) wisdom of this world," which Paul pronounces to be "foolishness with God."

Paul keeps company with Abraham: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing" (Rom. 7:18).

When Adam and Eve sinned and the death penalty was pronounced, "The Lord God said, Behold man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him from the

garden ..." (Gen. 3:22-23).

Now, if man was really immortal, why did God expel him from the garden and deny access to the tree of life? If the real man is immortal, then why deny him access to the tree of life "lest he put forth his hand ... and eat and life forever?" To say that man, who possesses immortality, was expelled from the garden that he might not live forever by eating the fruit, is absurd. And, if man was created with an immortal soul which lives on in a better state when the body dies then where is the "sting" in death and the "victory" in the grave? How could death be a punishment if it is the gateway to glory?

ADAM'S NATURE BEFORE THE FALL

This of course, raises some questions concerning Adam's condition before the fall. Theophilus of Antioch states the situation like this: "Some will ask, was Adam by nature mortal? By no means. Immortal? Not thus, either. What then - nothing at all? I answer neither mortal nor immortal; for if the Creator had made him from the first immortal, he would have made him a God. If mortal, then God would appear as the author of death. He made him then, capable of becoming either; so that by keeping the commands of God he might attain immortality as his reward, and become divine. But if he should turn to mortal things and disobey God, he would himself be the author of his own death. God made man free, with power of self-control."

If Adam had been created subject to death, death could hardly have been assigned to him as a punishment for eating the forbidden fruit. If death were the penalty for sin, who could possibly affirm that Adam was mortal before he sinned? If he was created mortal, why threaten him with death? Such a threat would be superfluous and frivolous. But let us beware of jumping hastily to the conclusion that because he was not inherently mortal, he must have therefore been immortal. This by no means follows.

Adam was expelled from Eden so that he might not become immortal by eating of the Tree of Life. Who then, could possibly affirm that he was created immortal? If he were immortal, why drive him from Eden that he might not become so? To expel an immortal from Eden so that he might not live forever is nonsense.

The annihilation of an immortal is an absurd notion. That which is deathless cannot cease to be. An immortal man cannot be annihilated, for were it so, then it would be proved that he was not immortal.

The only reasonable view on the matter is that Adam was created with a nature endowed with certain capabilities. He was made "very good" - a free and noble being, totally dependant upon God's goodness, and susceptible to either mortality or immortality. He was capable of death, and capable of endless life. (God was able to make his body a spiritual or immortal body). When Adam was first placed in Eden he was on probation. He had to exercise free-will and make his own choice between life and death - between obedience and disobedience. Until he made that choice he was in a provisional state - a state of flux. His destiny - a mortal or immortal body, was entirely contingent upon his actions. Immortality is a gift of God which His grace bestows on the basis of faith and obedience. Until Adam was given opportunity to exercise faith and obedience, he would not possess immortality. For this reason the commandment was given concerning the trees. It constituted a test that would determine Adam's destiny.

If Adam had remained obedient he would have passed the test and would have been changed in "the twinkling of an eye" from a "living soul" to an "ever-living soul;" i.e. a real physical being with endless life. This is the implied hope presented to him in Eden. This is the kind of immortality God planned from the beginning - real, tangible, physical existence as immortal beings. The whole record is totally void of any hope or purpose concerning disembodied existence.

THE FIRST LIE

We have seen that the first reference to death in the Bible is in Gen. 2:17 and is clearly defined in Gen. 3:19-24. It is significant that, sandwiched in between these statements is the first lie recorded in the Bible - a lie which relates to, and contradicts the very issue of life and death.

God had plainly warned Adam and Eve that death would be the result of disobedience. The Serpent contradicted this and said: "You shall not die," thus giving birth to the first lie recorded in Scripture (Gen. 3:4). This "lie" has been perpetuated in all the creeds of paganism and Christendom which state that man, in view of his "immortal soul," does not really die.

The incorrect identification of the words "soul" and "spirit" have lead many theologians to falsely assert that the soul and spirit are immortal. They affirm that it is impossible for man's soul or spirit to be destroyed. In other words it is claimed that man himself - the real man,

cannot die. It is a perpetuation, in principle, of the Serpent's lie and is diametrically opposed to the Word of God. It is, like the serpent, very subtle, because it superficially gives the impression of accepting the true facts of death by agreeing that the body is dead, but in actual fact it is a deceit because it is believed that the body is not the real person at all and that therefore, in death, the real person is not dead at all, but still lives on in another form and state.

Tradition's basic problem is either that it does not understand the deep significance of the word "death," as employed by the Bible, or, understanding it, does not want to accept it. Death is plainly and simply "cessation of life." It is true of course, that the word "death" has a secondary use in Scripture, as many other words have, and is used to denote a spiritual condition of insensibility towards God i.e. "This my son was dead and is alive again" - "Dead in trespasses and sins" - "Let the dead bury the dead" etc. But, is this the death that overtakes a man when he is put in a coffin and taken away to the cemetery? Is this what the Lord meant when, speaking to Adam about death, when he said he would return to dust? Must the secondary and subsidiary use of words blind us to their real and primary import? Death is so certain for those who are spiritually dead, that they are referred to prospectively as being dead already!

Death is cessation of life. It is the end of conscious existence. Death and life are opposites. To die is to cease to live, as we read in Isa. 38:1: "Thou shalt die and not live."

As pointed out before; what happens to man at death is the reverse of what took place when originally created by God. Originally the dust-formed body received the breath of life and life was the result. In death the process is reversed: the breath of life is withdrawn and returns to God who gave it; the person dies and returns to dust. "The body without the spirit is dead" (Jam. 2:26).

Death is an indisputable fact in the human experience. Its occurrence is universal and inevitable. It brings grief to the living, often overwhelming them with a sorrow that refuses consolation. It is not for ourselves that we mourn, for if the deceased came back to life it would bring gladness, even if they were in some overseas distant country where it was impossible to communicate with them. No; it is unquestionably for the dead that hearts are filled with pain and remorse. Let us consider the bearing of this upon the popular theology of the day. If death be merely a change of state, and not a termination of the real person, why all the heartbreaking for those who have gone? It cannot be on account of any uncertainty as to where their "spirit" has departed, because grief is just as poignant for those who

are believed to have "gone to heaven" as for those about whom there is some doubt. Tears flow just as fast for the good as for the bad, and perhaps, a little faster. There is something inconsistent with the popular theory here. If our friends have really gone to "glory," we ought to feel thankful as we do when they are promoted to honour "here below;" but we do not; and why? The evidence will justify the answer, **BECAUSE THE STRENGTH OF NATURAL INSTINCT CAN NEVER BE OVERCOME BY THEOLOGICAL FICTION.** Men will never practically believe the occurrence of death to be the commencement of life, when they see it to be the extinction of all they ever knew or felt of life.

If the dead are not dead, but "gone before;" if they are "praising God among the ransomed above," they are alive, and therefore, they have merely changed a place of "temporal" for a place of eternal abode. They have simply shifted out of the body from earth to heaven, or to hell, as the case may be. The word "death," therefore, in its original meaning, has no real application to man. It has lost its meaning as popularly employed. It is no longer the antithesis of life. It no longer means cessation of life or living existence, but simply means a change of habitation or state.

"A man die? No, impossible! He may go out of the body, but he cannot die." This is the popular traditional sentiment - the dictum of the world's philosophical wisdom. It is the modern equivalent of the serpent's lie and constitutes the poisonous root and cause of many false and mischievous doctrines in Christendom today. The Lord's attitude towards it could very well be the same as it was towards the false man-made traditions that he encountered in his own day. Speaking to those who taught for doctrine the traditions of men, he said: "How ingeniously you get round the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition" ... "Ye serpents ..." (Mk. 7:9. Matt. 23:33).

THE STATE OF THE DEAD

An honest enquiry into the teaching of Scripture on the state of the dead reveals that death robs a person of existence and renders him totally unconscious. In death, man has no life. He is without consciousness. His brain and nervous system cease to function. Without a brain, man cannot think; without a nervous system, he cannot feel pain or pleasure. Intellect, sensibilities, and will can only be exercised when man's brain can function. The dead therefore, are unconscious. This state of unconsciousness is metaphorically described in Scripture as a "sleep" or "rest." Consider the following verses:

Deu. 31:16: "And the Lord said to Moses, Behold, you shall sleep with your fathers ..." The "sleep" refers to his death. It is a euphemism i.e. a pleasant way of expressing something not so pleasant. "Sleep" is also a very appropriate word to describe the death-state of God's people because the word implies a waking up again. One who goes to sleep usually wakes up again, and all the dead saints will wake up and rise to eternal life at the resurrection.

1 Kng. 2:10: "So David slept with his fathers and was buried ..."

Job. 3:11-26: Here, Job refers to the death state as a time of lying still and being quiet - a time of rest and sleep - a time in which one "never sees light." In ch.10:18-22 he refers to it as a time of darkness.

Job. 7:21: " ... sleep in the dust ..."

Job. 14: In this chapter Job says that when man dies he shall not awake nor be raised out of sleep till the appointed time of resurrection.

Job. 17:11-16: In this passage Job refers to the grave as a bed in darkness; a place of "rest."

Psa. 13:3: David calls on God for deliverance "lest I sleep the sleep of death."

Psa. 16:9: In death, David says: "my flesh shall rest in hope."

Psa. 76:5: Speaking about the death of the wicked we read: "They have slept their sleep;" "cast into a deep sleep" (v6).

Isa. 57:1-2: "He enters into peace: they rest in their coffin."

Jer. 51:39,57: It is stated here that when the ungodly unbeliever dies, they "sleep a perpetual sleep, and do not wake."

Dan. 12:2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame."

Dan. 12:13: "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand (i.e. stand up from a resting position at the resurrection) in your allotted place at the end of the days" (on the last day).

It is emphasised throughout the Old Testament that death is a time of sleep and rest. This teaching is reinforced in the New Testament:

Jn. 11:11-14: Speaking about the death of Lazarus, Jesus said: "Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go that I might awake him out of sleep." The apostles thought Jesus was speaking about ordinary natural sleep, so Jesus "said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead."

Act. 2:26: is a quotation of Psa. 16:9: "my flesh shall rest in hope."

Act. 7:60: Stephen's death is recorded in these words: "he fell asleep."

Act. 13:36: "For David, when he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw

corruption."

1 Cor. 11:30: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

1 Cor. 15:6,18,20,51: This chapter deals specifically with the subject of death and life after death. Not the slightest hint is dropped throughout the whole section of 58 verses that death is a time of consciousness in some disembodied state. Quite the opposite! It is emphasised that death is a time of "sleep" and that consciousness after death relies entirely on being awakened from that sleep through resurrection of the body. Four times in this chapter (verses 6,18,20,51) the death state is referred to as a sleep.

1 Thes. 4:13-15: What has been said about 1 Cor. 15 also applies here. In three consecutive verses (13,14,15) the dead are referred to as being asleep. In verse 16 they are referred to as being "dead." In 1 Thes. 5:10 they are again referred to as being asleep.

2 Pet. 3:4: The "fathers fell asleep" refers to the death of ancestors.

Rev. 6:11: The dead martyrs are presented as having a rest.

In all these verses in the Old and New Testaments, death is clearly defined as a "sleep" or "rest," and is applied equally to both the righteous and wicked. The death state is the same for both classes of people prior to the resurrection and judgement. Death is a sleep from which man will not awake till the resurrection. Till then, the grave is his "bed" and resting place.

Someone may argue that "sleep" or "rest" is not cessation of life, because when a man is asleep he is still breathing - his heart is still beating and his blood continues to circulate, and he is not dead. On this basis some may argue that death, if it is a sleep, cannot be a cessation of living existence. This kind of argument hardly needs answering. Any doctor or undertaker will soon testify to the difference between a person who is dead and one who is having an ordinary normal sleep. The heart has clearly stopped beating and the blood has ceased to circulate, resulting in a state of total unconsciousness and motionlessness.

The terms "sleep" and "rest" are merely applied to the dead in a metaphorical sense. "Sleep," as stated earlier, is a euphemism for death, and this is particularly apparent in the story of Lazarus.

Because the dead in Christ will wake up and rise to life at the resurrection, their death is appropriately referred to as a sleep. It is a very inappropriate word to describe the position of disembodied spirits which are supposed to be more conscious and alert than ever before as they bask in the glory and presence of their Lord!

Most dictionaries define sleep in terms of being in a "benumbed state" - a state in which "the nervous system is inactive" (i.e. has no feeling), and consciousness is merely suspended."

DESIRE TO DEPART AND BE WITH CHRIST

Death is clearly like an unconscious sleep and there are many Scriptures which refer to death as a time of unconsciousness as we shall see shortly. There is no knowledge or awareness of the passing of time in death. Death would therefore not seem to last a moment longer for one who has been dead for several thousand years than for one who has been dead for several seconds. After a person has fallen asleep in death, his next conscious experience will be at the resurrection when he stands before Christ. Because there is no consciousness or awareness of time in death, it will seem that the moment he died, he was immediately taken to the presence of Jesus. Much time may have passed between the two events of death and resurrection, but he will have no knowledge of it. Therefore, anyone familiar with the true Bible teaching on the death state could say: "I am going to be with the Lord after I die," because, as far as they are concerned, the next conscious moment after death at the resurrection will be in the presence of Jesus. This in fact, was Paul's view.

It is in this light that Paul's words in Plp. 1:23 should be understood: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." Paul, who knew his Scriptures well, understood that when he died he would fall asleep and be at rest in the grave where time stood still - where time was non-existent. He knew that his next conscious moment would be in the presence of Jesus. It is because of the non-existence of time in death that Paul also wrote on another occasion: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgement." On the surface this statement might appear to teach that the judgement takes place immediately after death. In actual fact, it takes place at the second coming of Christ and, for many people, centuries or millenniums after their death! But, because there is no knowledge or awareness of time in death, the next conscious moment after death will be in the presence of Jesus at the judgement.

Paul's reference in Plp. 1:23 to having a desire to depart and to be with Christ is, of course, often quoted as proof that man has an immortal soul or spirit which departs to heaven at death. However, it is significant to note that Paul nowhere makes reference to "soul" or "spirit" in this passage. Paul's words do not teach that he would be with Christ as soon as

he departed. It would require to be shown from other parts of the Word that a man was with Christ the moment he "departed," before this passage could be pressed into that service. As it stands, it merely expresses a certain sequence of events, without indicating whether there is any actual interval between the two events or not. Depart first; then be with Christ, but whether immediately after departing, or some time after departing, there is nothing in the expression to tell. The same applies, as already pointed out, to the statement: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement."

If we understand that "depart" means to die, then the question to settle is, what is provided in the Christian system as the means of introducing a dead person to Christ? The answer which an honest investigation will produce, is resurrection. It might seem as if two things so far apart could not be brought together as they are in Paul's language; but it must be remembered that the thing is described from the point of view of the person dying. Now, if the dead "know not anything"; which the Scriptures declare, it follows that departing and being with Christ would, to those dying, appear instantly sequential events, and therefore, perfectly natural to be linked together in the way Paul does here. In a later section it will be shown that without any shadow of a doubt, Paul's whole hope of life after death centred in resurrection. It is impossible to use his statement in Plp. 1:23 to overthrow the huge weight of evidence on the side of resurrection.

So then, Paul expresses a desire to be with Christ, but he does not say when he would be with Christ. Certainly, he implies that he will be with Christ after he departs, but he does not say how long after. To say that he meant immediately, in a disembodied form, is to read something into the text which is not there, or anywhere else. All sorts of ideas can be read into the verse, but let it be carefully ascertained what Paul himself teaches about the time when he expected to see Christ. He speaks about this very subject in other sections of his writings and it is only by turning to them and comparing them together, that we are able to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

Many verses can be presented to show that Paul's whole hope of seeing Jesus, rested in the second coming and resurrection. In 2 Tim. 4:1-8 for instance, he speaks about Jesus judging the living and dead at his appearing and kingdom. He goes on to say that his "departure (death) is at hand" and that "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing." Paul here talks about

his death in terms of a "departure" but makes it quite clear that he did not expect to immediately ascend to heaven in a disembodied form. No! His whole hope lay in the appearing of Jesus from heaven. It would not be till that day that Paul would receive his crown.

It is sometimes mistakenly assumed that when Paul said he desired to depart and be with Christ, that he meant to ascend to Christ in heaven in a disembodied form. One would be hard pressed for proof that this is what "depart" means. Nowhere is it taught in Scripture that the saints ascend to heaven at death. The whole emphasis of Scripture is on Christ descending to the earth to be with us. The only journey involved with regard to our being in the presence of Christ is his return from heaven to the earth, and this will be dealt with fully in another chapter. Elsewhere, in the same epistle to the Philippians, Paul taught that his hope of being in the presence of Jesus lay in his second coming and resurrection. See Plp. 1:6,10. 2:16. 3:11, 20-21. And he reinforces this in many other epistles as we shall see.

When a man dies, he goes from the land of the living upon the earth to the land of the dead beneath the earth. He "departs" - he is physically taken away and removed. He is buried and seen no more till he is raised from the dead. There is nothing difficult to understand about this. It is a simple, well attested Bible fact. Why should the word "depart" be read to mean "ascend to heaven" instead of "descend to hell" (grave); specially in view of the fact that all the promises of God place the emphasis upon man inheriting the earth and not heaven? Actually, the words "depart" and "abide" in Plp. 1:23-24 run parallel with "fallen asleep" and "remain" in 1 Cor. 15:6, as a careful consideration of the two passages reveals.

Also, a careful comparison between Lk. 2:26 and 29 reveals that "depart" and "death" are synonymous. In verse 26, Simeon says that the Lord told him that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ. After he had seen him, he said: "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word" (v29). Death is a departure! It was also pointed out before from 2 Tim. 4:1-8 that Paul again spoke of his death as a "departure," and his following comments reveal that by this he did not mean ascension to heaven. He clearly states that his hope of seeing Christ and receiving his crown rested entirely upon the second coming.

Significantly enough, the Greek word translated "depart" in Plp. 1:23 is "analuō" and only occurs in one other text (Lk. 12:36) where it is rendered "return:" "And be ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return (analuō) from the wedding." Here, analuo refers to the second coming of Jesus! "Analuo" literally means to "unloose."

Jesus' return will be an unloosing from heaven. Death also, for man, is an unloosing from life and involves a journey to the grave beneath the surface of the earth to await the return of the Lord. In death the cord or connection with life is cut, unloosing the body therefrom, and it "returns" to the dust from which it came.

The Septuagint version has in 22 cases used *analuō* as the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "shoov," which always signifies "return," as in Josh. 22:8: "And he spake unto them saying, Return with much riches unto your tents."

In view of this, there is a certain amount of merit in the Emphatic Diaglott's translation of Plp. 1:23 which reads: "... I have an earnest desire for the returning, and being with Christ, since it is very much to be preferred."

However, if by the word "depart" or "return," Paul meant his death, it creates no problem and perfectly harmonises with the rest of Scripture which speaks of death as a "departure" or "return." At death, the breath of life "returns" to God who gave it, and the body "returns" to the ground from whence it came.

WHY SUCH A DESIRE?

The question will be asked: "Why did Paul have a desire to depart if it meant dying and resting unconscious in the grave? How could this be "gain" to him as he says it would be in verse 21?"

Well, the answer is really quite simple. At the time of writing the epistle to the Philippians, Paul was in prison and was experiencing suffering. He refers in verse 16 to "affliction in my bonds," and mentions suffering conflict in verses 29-30. During his whole life as an apostle he suffered a tremendous amount of persecution and suffering. On one occasion in his epistle to the Corinthians he outlined some of the trials and troubles he had been through (2 Cor. 11:23-29), and the list is quite long. He had been beaten many times; stoned; often near death, almost despairing of life; in countless perils and countless places; had many sleepless nights; suffered thirst and hunger; often in the cold and even naked; and in addition to all this, he had the daily pressure of care for the churches upon him. For one who suffered so much and who was now in prison, advanced in years, the rest of sleep in death would indeed be "gain" and "desirable." It would bring relief from suffering. To remain alive meant trouble and anxiety. Death brought rest and relief from all this.

Thus, referring to exactly the same situation, Rev. 14:13 puts it like this: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ... that they may rest from their labours." Death, with its accompanying "rest" was a blessing to those who laboured and travailed in the Gospel under persecution and trouble. Even today, it is not uncommon to refer to the death of the suffering as "gain."

Thus Job, in the midst of his suffering and pain said to God: "O that you would hide me in the grave, that you would keep me secret (conceal me), until thy wrath be past, and then remember me when it is the appointed time" (i.e. resurrection Job 14:13-15). Job sought relief from suffering in death, but expressed no hope of ascending up to heaven in a disembodied form as a result! Quite the opposite, he had his heart and hope set on resurrection of the body.

In Ecc. 4:1-3 we read about Solomon considering the people who were oppressed and afflicted. In verse 2 he says: "And I thought that those who had already died were more fortunate than those who were still alive." The reason for this, as he explains in verse 3 is because they no longer see and experience the evil and suffering on the earth.

Paul also realised that he would be more fortunate in the sleep of death than to remain living in suffering and affliction. It would be "gain" for him to die. He knew that those who died in the Lord will see the Lord quicker than those who live because the death interval is but a flash. In life we have to wait the slow roll of years. In death the interval is abolished, and we are hurried as in a moment to the very coming and presence of the Lord. The dead in Christ rise first (1 Thes. 4:16). Yes, there is much to be gained for a tired, persecuted, suffering and imprisoned saint from falling asleep and resting till the coming of the Lord. But Paul, typically unselfish, realised that for the sake of testifying to the Lord and strengthening the churches, it would be better to remain alive - "abide in the flesh" (Plp. 1:24-26).

The many cases of accident victims who have been rendered unconscious for long periods of time illustrate and confirm what has been said about time becoming non-existent in the unconscious state. When they finally regain consciousness they are totally oblivious to the period of time that has passed, even when it involves many months. The time has stood still for them in the unconscious state. (It is interesting to note that the word "cemetery" is derived from the Greek word that is the equivalent to the Latin word, from which we derive the word "dormitory." Death is like a dreamless sleep; there is no knowledge or consciousness of the passing of time. Scripture confirms this as we shall now see).

NO CONSCIOUSNESS IN DEATH

For in death there is no remembrance of thee (God): in the grave who shall give you thanks?" In this particular Psalm (6:5), David is in trouble. He is faced with the prospect of death. His appeal to God to deliver him and save his life is made on the basis that no one can remember or give thanks to God once they are dead! David appeals to the Lord for an extension of life in order that he might continue to remember the Lord and offer praise and thanksgiving. David obviously did not believe that death was the release of an immortal soul which resulted in ascending to the very presence of God, where praise and thanksgiving could be offered to God in a more perfect way than ever. David clearly regarded death as a time of cessation of life - a time of "no remembrance" - a time of unconsciousness.

Psa. 146:2 reads: "While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises to my God while I have any being." David indicates here that his being would cease with the occurrence of death, and he would no longer be able to praise the Lord. In verse 4, speaking about man, David says: "His breath goes forth, he returns to the earth; in that day his thoughts perish." This is extremely clear. There is nothing ambiguous about this kind of language. When man dies: in that very day his thoughts (thinking, schemes, plans, purposes) perish.

Ecc. 9:4-10 reads: "He who is counted among the living has hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither is there any more advantage to them, since the faculty of remembering ceases to exist. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; no longer do they have a share in all that is taking place under the sun ... there is no achievement, nor thought, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, to which you are going."

How often we hear this kind of remark concerning the dead: "Ah well! He knows all now!" What shall we say about it? If Solomon's words have any meaning, the remark is the very opposite to the truth. What can be more explicit? "The dead know not anything." It would certainly be a wonderful feat of exegesis that should make this mean: "The dead know everything."

How common also, to believe that after death, the dead will love and serve God with greater devotion in heaven, because they are freed from the clog of this mortal body; or curse him with hotter hatred in hell, for the same reason; that, in fact, their love will be perfected, and their

hate intensified. However, Solomon's teaching is very much to the contrary. He says: "Their love and their hatred, and their envy are now perished." We saw earlier that David taught the same truth when he referred to man returning to the earth, in which day his thoughts perish.

Psa. 88:12 refers to death as "the land of forgetfulness." Or, as some modern translations render it: "the land of no remembrance;" "the land of oblivion." The same verse says it is a time of darkness in which God's wonders and marvels are not seen nor known.

Psa. 39:13 declares: "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." Once again the Psalmist expresses his conviction that death is cessation of being. It is a time when "I" (the real being or person) shall "be no more." This is reminiscent of Psa. 146:2, quoted before, in which the Psalmist says that praise is only possible while he has any being. Death results in cessation of being! Thus, in Job. 10:18-19, Job says that in death he would be "as though I had not been." In Job. 3:16 he makes a similar statement.

These, and many other Scriptures prove the reality of death and the consequent unconsciousness of those who are dead. These are not doubtful and ambiguous Scriptures. They are clear, plain and intelligible.

Now suppose the positive declarations they make were presented in the form of questions to any modern religious teacher, or to any of his flock; would their answers be at all in harmony with those declarations? Let us see. Suppose we enquire:

"Do the dead know anything?" What would the answer be? "Oh yes, they know a great deal more than the living."

Or let us ask: "When a man goes to the grave, do his thoughts perish?" The answer would instantly be: "Oh no, we rejoice to know that death, though it may close our mortal history, is not the termination of our existence - it is not even the suspension of consciousness."

Or again: "Is there any remembrance of God in death?" "Oh yes, the righteous dead know him more fully than they did when on earth."

"Do the dead praise the Lord?" "Certainly; if they are redeemed; they join in the song of Moses and the Lamb before the throne."

"Do babies that die pass away as though they had never been born?" "No, perish the thought! They go to heaven, and become angels in the presence of God."

Thus, in every instance, popular belief, in reference to the dead is exactly contrary to the explicit statements in Scripture. It is a belief entirely destitute of foundation. It is opposed to all truth - natural and revealed. Not one simple positive statement appears in Scripture which

says something like: "in death there is remembrance," or "the dead are conscious," or "the dead know everything." Such declarations are significantly absent from Scripture. But many Scriptures contain statements which affirm the opposite! This should make any genuine truth-seeker re-think the whole subject.

PRAISE CEASES AT DEATH

It is often said in traditional circles that after death, the dead will love, serve and praise God with greater joy and devotion in heaven, because they will no longer be hindered and restricted by this present mortal body. Scripture however, does not support this concept at all. If there is no consciousness in death, then it naturally follows that there is no love, joy and praise. This is plainly taught in many places:

Psa. 30:9-10: "O Lord you have brought up my soul from the grave: you have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. ... What profit is there in my death, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise you? Shall it declare your truth?"

David clearly did not believe in going to heaven in a disembodied form to praise the Lord around the throne! If he did, he would not speak about his death in terms of being unprofitable. His reference to the dust not being able to praise the Lord indicates that he believed that he - his real being or person - would become dust, and not live on as some immaterial, indestructible entity.

Psa. 88:10-12: In this Psalm, David is again facing death. His life is drawing near to the grave (v3). He pleads to the Lord for deliverance and an extension of life. The basis of his appeal is in verses 10-12: "Will you work wonders for the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise you? Shall your loving kindness be declared in the grave? Or your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall your wonders be known in the dark? And your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"

David's argument is that since there is no consciousness in death - no thoughts, speech or action; it was surely in God's own interest to keep alive as long as possible those like David whose earnest praises were always pleasing to himself. The argument is akin to that in Psa. 6:5. In other words, praise ceases at death and does not re-commence in a greater way than ever!

Psa. 115:17-18: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we (who are alive) will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore" (as long as we live).

Psa. 104:33: "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being." This clearly implies that death is cessation of being, and when this takes place, praise is no longer possible.

Isa. 38:1-20: Hezekiah, king of Israel, became "sick nigh unto death." Not believing in the immortality of the soul and realising that death was cessation of life and consciousness; he, not being an old man; was filled with remorse at the prospect of his premature death. He cried to the Lord for an extension of life and the Lord answered his prayer by adding another 15 years to his life.

On his recovery, Hezekiah offered a song of praise to God in which he gave the following reasons for thanksgiving: "Behold, for my own welfare I had great bitterness: but you have, in love to my soul held it back from the pit of corruption: for you have cast all my sins behind your back. For the grave cannot praise you; death cannot rejoice in you: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for your truth. The living, the living, he shall praise the Lord, as I do this day ..." (17-19).

Scriptures like this must be conclusive with those with whom Scriptural authority carries weight. Scripture's verdict on the state of the dead is very decisive. It should not be a debatable question. The Bible settles it against all philosophical speculation. It teaches that death is a total eclipse of being - a complete obliteration of our conscious selves. Those who go to the grave cannot praise the Lord. The living, and only the living praise the Lord.

When he was dying, Hezekiah said: "I said in the prime of life, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the remainder of my life. I shall no longer see the Lord ..." (10-11). What a contrast to tradition's confession.

(In passing it is interesting to note the way in which body, soul and spirit come into view in this chapter. In verse 13, "bones" refers to the body; soul is referred to in verses 15 and 17; and spirit in verse 16. It is clear from what Hezekiah says in the chapter that he did not believe his "soul" or "spirit" would survive the death of the body and perpetuate his consciousness).

The Old Testament teaching on the state of the dead is very clear. Not one verse can be found which supports the view that those who died during the Old Testament period were in a conscious state in some "prison" under the earth, waiting for the "spirit" of Jesus to come and preach to them. Not one ounce of support can be found to establish such teaching.

DEATH STATE OF ALL MEN AND ANIMALS THE SAME

If man does not possess an immortal soul or spirit, which departs from the body at death, then it naturally follows that the death state of all men as well as animals is the same. That is: all lie in the earth in an unconscious state. However, although the actual death state of men and animals may be the same, God's purpose and programme for man far transcends his purpose for the beasts. He intends to resurrect all men of faith and endow them with eternal life. The animals do not have this hope!

Consider the following Scriptures which speak of men and animals dying the same death and sharing the same experience in death. This concept would not be true if man lived on eternally in another form.

Psa. 49:12-20: "Man being in honour does not remain: he is like the beasts that perish ... like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their form shall waste away; the grave shall be their home. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave (i.e. through resurrection) for he shall receive me. Man that is in honour and understands not is like the beasts that perish - they shall never see light."

Psa. 104:29: This verse is talking about both men and animals and says: "God hides his face, they are troubled; he takes away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." No distinction is made here between the death of man and beast. The experience is the same for both. It is cessation of life and being and consciousness.

Ecc. 3:18-20: "I said in my heart with regard to the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For the fate of men and of animals is the same: as the one dies, so dies the other; yes, they all draw the same breath, so that man has no pre-eminence above a beast (i.e. man is no better than an animal with regard to the fact of death and the death state. Man, like the beasts, cannot avoid dying - both are mortal). All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again."

Isa. 43:16-17: "Thus says the Lord, who made a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters, who led forth the chariot and horse, the army and power; they (the army and horses) shall lie down together; they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched like the wick."

NO IMMEDIATE ADVANTAGE IN DEATH

It should be self-evident that if men and animals share the same death state, and are unconscious in the grave, then except for the relief it gives from toil and suffering, there is no immediate advantage in death. That is, it is not the "gateway to glory" - it is not the moment at which we are released to make a journey to the realms above, as taught in many creeds today. If there was such an immediate advantage in death, it would be hard to reconcile the following passages of Scripture with such a view:

Gen. 15:15: God told Abraham that when he died he would go "to his fathers in peace and be buried in a good old age." This is clear enough. At death, Abraham would join his fathers and be buried. Who were Abraham's fathers and where were they? Josh. 24:2 informs us that Abraham's fathers were idolaters. Now Scripture leaves us in no doubt that idolaters will not be in the kingdom of God, so we can safely assume that these men would not go to heaven at death, even if it was customary to go there. Therefore, if Abraham joined them at death, he could not have gone to heaven. Where were they then? The answer is: in the grave! 2 Chr. 34:28 teaches that the phrase: "gather you to your fathers;" means "gathered to the grave." Abraham sleeps in the earth, "not having received the promises." He is awaiting the resurrection!

Gen. 37:35. When Jacob became convinced that his son Joseph was dead, he did not start rejoicing, saying: "Praise God, his soul has gone to glory and when I die I will join him in glory." No, nothing like it! Jacob would feel quite uncomfortable and out of place at the funerals of those in modern times who claim to be the true Israel. "Jacob rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and said: No! I will go down into the grave to my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

What a strange thing to say if his son really wasn't in the grave, but in heavenly mansions. No such thing as far as Jacob and all the faithful patriarchs were concerned. Only the heathen about them believed that sort of fictitious nonsense. Jacob was quite adamant; for him there was no going up anywhere; he was going down into the grave.

1 Sam. 28:15-19: "And Samuel said to Saul, why have you disturbed me, to bring me up?" Samuel had died and was buried, and Saul wanted to speak to him through a medium. The Lord also wanted Samuel to speak a message to Saul. So, much to the surprise and astonishment of the medium, the Lord temporarily raised Samuel from the dead. Samuel's

statement to Saul is very instructive. He said: "Why have you ... brought me up?" Now, if Samuel had gone to heaven when he died, he would surely have said: "Why have you brought me down?" But no! He clearly states that he has come up out of the grave where he had been asleep. Saul's desire to communicate with him "disturbed" his sleep. And, in verse 19, Samuel predicted Saul's death and told him that when he dies he will join him in the grave. The whole concept of departing to glory after death is totally foreign to this and all other accounts.

Job. 1:21: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither ..." (the "mother" to which Job knew he would return is explained in Job. 17:14-17 as "corruption" in the grave). Job expresses no thoughts or hope of returning to God in heaven.

Psa. 102:24: "I said, O my God, take me not away prematurely ..." Here the Psalmist refers to death in terms of God taking him away. If this meant that God was going to take him to heaven, it is hard to understand why a man of such great faith and love towards God would resist this and express a desire not to be taken. Act. 2:34 clearly says that David never went to heaven. No! By saying: "take me not away," David was referring to his departure from the land of the living to the land of the dead. Because he knew that death was cessation of life and consciousness, he expresses a desire not to be taken.

Ecc. 4:1-3: This is the section referred to earlier in which Solomon speaks about those who are oppressed and suffer. He says he regarded those who had died as being better off than those who were still alive. He then says that, in view of the suffering and oppression people experience during life, those who have never been born are even more fortunate than those who have died. If he believed that those who died had "gone on to glory," he would hardly say that they were less fortunate than those who were never born.

Heb. 11:13: This passage says that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob etc "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off ..." If death was an immediate departure to glory and reward, how are we to understand this statement which says these people died not having received the promises?

It is then, a well attested Scriptural fact, that the dead are unconscious and do not go anywhere at death apart from the grave. Belief in the serpent's lie has lead many in all ages, races and creeds, to believe that man "shall not surely die." This is, in principle popular belief which asserts that the real living conscious essence of man survives the death of the body and lives on in an immaterial form.

The ancient Egyptians had a very elaborate doctrine revolving around the immortality of the soul. The Indians have their "happy hunting ground." Other mythological creeds believed in a ferry boat ride across an imagined river in Hades called "Styx."

Others believe they return to the world in the form of disembodied spirits which they call "demons." Others believe they return to the world reincarnated in some other animal or another person. Others believe they fly away and ascend to some celestial mansion in heaven, or descend to a burning hell where they remain alive to be tortured in inconceivable agony for all eternity.

These, and many other similar concepts, are all based on the belief that some part of man survives and lives on after death. They all have the same thing in common; namely, that man does not really die at all. They are all "tarred with the same brush" and find their origin in the serpent's lie. It is a mischievous and damaging doctrine because, once believed, it produces all manner of superstitious and philosophical nonsense, such as can be seen in the Greek doctrine of demonology and various doctrines on reincarnation and "ghosts."

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CHAPTER NINE DEPARTURE TO HEAVEN AT DEATH – UNSCRIPTURAL

Nowhere is it taught in the Bible that man, in any shape or form, departs to heaven at death. Quite the opposite in fact, is the case. When Scripture speaks about the death of anyone, it does not employ the phraseology of the modern traditional religionist. It does not say of the righteous that they have "gone to their reward," "gone to glory," "gone to heaven," "gone to be with the Lord;" or of the wicked, that they have gone to the depths of the earth to be eternally tormented. The language of Scripture is quite contrary to this and expresses a doctrine that does not harmonise with such concepts at all.

For instance, the death of Abraham, the father of the faithful, is recorded in these words: "And Abraham gave up the ghost and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered unto his people" (Gen. 25:8-9). Some years prior to this, the Lord spoke to him about his death in the same terms: "And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age."

Now, if "giving up the ghost" meant departure to heaven in a disembodied form, why didn't the Lord follow up his statement by saying: "And you shall be gathered to your heavenly Father," instead of: "you shall be gathered to your fathers"? As pointed out in the last chapter, Abraham's fathers were idolaters (Jos. 24:2), and most certainly would not have gone to heaven at death, even if it was customary for some to go there. They were buried in the grave and remained there like all the rest of the dead. Abraham, in spite of his righteous life, was no exception; he "gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered to his fathers." He joined them in the same resting place - the grave. He did not go to heaven.

It may be recalled that the identical phrase: "gave up the ghost" is also used to describe Ishmael's death in Gen. 25:17. And very few would believe that Ishmael would be welcome in heaven. He was a fleshly "wild ass of a man," guilty of persecuting Isaac (Gal. 4:29). Yet, if the phrase: "gave up the ghost" as used to describe Abraham's death, means he went to heaven in a disembodied form, then Ishmael must have gone there too, which means both the righteous and the unrighteous end up in the same "celestial city."

The death of Isaac and Jacob is also expressed in the same terms of Abraham's death (Gen. 35:29. 49:33). They, like their father, gave up the ghost and were "gathered to their people."

Of Joseph it is simply said: "So Joseph died, being an hundred and

ten years old, and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt" (Gen. 50:26).

Concerning Moses we read: "So Moses the servant of the Lord, died there, in the land of Moab, according to the Word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley, in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor, and no man knows of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deu. 34:5-6).

If Moses departed to heaven, why doesn't the record of his death say so? If he went to heaven, why are all the specific details given concerning the geographical location of his grave? Why go to the trouble of mentioning the "valley" and "the land of Moab" and "Beth-peor," if it was only Moses' body that was buried there and not the real Moses himself? If Moses went to heaven, one would expect to read something like this: "And the Lord took him to heaven." Instead, it says "the Lord buried him in a valley ..." Not the slightest hint or suggestion is given that some disembodied "spirit" or "soul" of Moses ascended to the presence of God! And, even as far as the transfiguration scene was concerned in which Moses appeared and talked to Jesus, it should be pointed out that it was not a disembodied, invisible "spirit" that spoke! And, it should also be pointed out that what took place at the transfiguration was a "vision" (Matt. 17:9). Even if it was not a vision - if it really was Moses in the flesh speaking to Jesus, this still would not have to mean that Moses never really died. It would simply mean that he was temporarily resurrected by the Lord, and the Lord has demonstrated his ability to do this on more than one occasion.

Joshua described his death in these words: "And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth" (Josh. 23:14). Here, Joshua says that as a result of his death he was going somewhere. Where was he going? To heaven? By no means, otherwise he would surely have said so had he believed it. He said that he was "going the way of all flesh," which meant being buried in mother earth with the rest of humanity. His death is thus recorded in these words: "Joshua ... died ... and they buried him ..." (Josh. 24:29-30).

Samuel also "died ... And was buried in his house at Ramah" (1 Sam. 25:1). He did not go to heaven, but was buried in the earth. Thus, as we saw in the last chapter, when Saul went to the witch of Endor with the desire to communicate with Samuel, she said: "Whom shall I bring up unto thee?" If Samuel was not in the earth, but in heaven, she would surely have said: "Whom shall I bring down?" Instead, she said "bring up." As far as she and Saul were concerned, Samuel was in the earth! And when Samuel finally appeared, he is referred to as "ascending out of the

earth" and "coming up" (28:13-14).

When Samuel spoke to Saul he said: "Why have you disturbed me, to bring me up?" (not "down" as one would expect if he had been in heaven). The word "disturbed" is significant also. It is a word commonly used in relation to the interruption of sleep. Death, as we have already seen, is a "sleep" or "rest," and Samuel's death was no different. It was "disturbed" by Saul's desire to communicate with him. A careful reading of the whole chapter reveals that it was necessary in the divine purpose for Samuel to speak to Saul, so the Lord temporarily resurrected him for the occasion. The witch wasn't expecting anything like this to happen and when she saw Samuel she was terrified. Never in her life had she experienced such a thing! (1 Sam. 28:12).

We read in 1 Sam. 28:13 that the witch "saw gods ascending out of the earth" (A.V.). The Hebrew word translated "gods" is "elohim." On some occasions in Scripture this word is applied to angels. In fact, "elohim" is actually translated "angels" in Ps. 8:5 in the A.V. And the reference to this Psalm in Heb. 2:7 also uses the word "angel," confirming that it is a correct translation. Also, Psa. 97:7 which reads: "worship him all ye gods (elohim), is interpreted in Heb. 1:6 to mean: "And let all the angels of God worship him." The writer to the Hebrews clearly understood that the Hebrew word "elohim;" sometimes translated "gods;" referred on some occasions to angels.

In this light, the reference in 1 Sam. 28:13 to "gods ascending out of the earth" could relate to angels. God certainly uses these angelic messengers to accomplish His purposes and could very well have used them to raise Samuel from the dead on the occasion before us. This would explain why the witch reacted with such surprise and terror. She had never witnessed anything like it in all her life.

Other modern translations render "elohim" in the singular as: "a god ascending out of the earth." This, in light of the foregoing, would suggest that just one angel was sent by the Lord to raise Samuel from the dead.

On the other hand, it is possible that "elohim" refers to Samuel himself, because not only is the word applied to angels in Scripture, but also to the Jewish judges. In Ex. 21:6, 22:8-9, 1 Sam. 2:25, Psa. 82 etc; the word "elohim" is translated "judge" and is applied to the mortal judges of Israel who executed judgement on behalf of the Great Judge - God. And Samuel of course, was in his time, a great judge in Israel. So, the reference to the witch seeing an "elohim" ascending out of the earth could very well relate to Samuel himself. This again would account for her fear and surprise when she witnessed it, because witchcraft was a violation of

the law which Samuel, as judge, upheld. However, let us not miss the main point: Samuel came up out of the ground and not down from heaven!

Referring to the death of Saul and his sons, Samuel said: "Tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me" (v19). Death would cause Saul and his sons to join Samuel. Once again it is evident that those men did not go to heaven, in any shape or form, but remained in the earth, asleep in the grave. Saul's death was a divine judgement because of his disobedience and it would be absurd to imagine that the Lord destroyed him for his wickedness and then took him to heaven to be with righteous men like Samuel. Yet, if Samuel was in heaven, then Saul must have joined him there!

NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

Death and the death state is no respecter of persons. The wise and the unwise, righteous and unrighteous all go to the same place. Scripture after Scripture backs this proposition up. Solomon put it this way: "What befalls the fool will befall me also ... And how dies the wise man? Just like the fool" (Ecc. 2:15-16). Again, in Ecc. 9:1-2 we read: "... the righteous and the wise ... one fate comes to all; there is one event (death) to the righteous and the wicked; to the good and pure, and impure; to him that sacrifices and to him who sacrifices not. Good man and sinner fare alike."

David recognised this when, just before his death, he said: "I go the way of all the earth" (1 Kng. 2:2). He was under no illusion about going to heaven and continuing in some disembodied state. And the New Testament confirms this. Peter made the point in his speech on the day of Pentecost concerning David that: "he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day ... For David is not ascended to the heavens" (Act. 2:29,34). Again we read in Acts. 13:36: "For David, when he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption."

It is important to remember that these statements in the book of Acts were written some considerable time after Jesus had ascended to heaven. Sometimes it is claimed that all the Old Testament saints like David slept in the earth till Jesus came and made atonement for sin, and then accompanied him to heaven after he rose from the dead. If this was true, Peter would never have emphasised that David was still dead and buried, and had not ascended to heaven. Even though Jesus had gone to heaven,

David had not!

In fact, if David had ascended to heaven, the very point that Peter was seeking to establish in his preaching would have been destroyed, and the Word of God negated. Peter quoted one of David's Psalms in which the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God was predicted. Some of the Jews in Peter's day, who refused to accept that Jesus was the Messiah, naturally would not accept that the Psalm related to him. They would argue that the Psalm applied to David himself. Peter refutes this on the ground that David is "both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." Peter, who knew his Old Testament Scriptures well (especially after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost!), understood that the dead are asleep in the grave, and will remain in that condition till resurrected on the last day. He could therefore quite confidently affirm that: "David is not ascended into the heavens." This meant that the Psalm had not been fulfilled by David himself. It must refer to someone else, and that someone else is Jesus Christ (whom Peter personally witnessed ascending into heaven after the resurrection). The argument is very powerful, but is totally negated the moment it is said that David and other Old Testament saints ascended to heaven at death.

So then, throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, the death of all men, good and evil, is recorded and described in the same terms. They are all asleep - unconscious, buried in the earth where they must remain till resurrection. They are never said to have gone anywhere, but are always spoken of as dying, giving up the life, and returning to the ground.

The same style of language is adopted by Paul when he speaks about the Old Testament generations of the righteous dead. He says: "all (including Enoch! v5) died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off" (Heb. 11:13). Again in verses 39-40 we read: "And these all (including Moses! v23-29) having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

All the Old Testament saints therefore died not having received God's promises, and at the time when Heb.11 was written, they still had not been made perfect. It is important to realise that Heb.11 was written quite a few years after Jesus ascended to heaven. If he took all of the Old Testament saints with him, Paul could hardly write afterwards stating that they were still dead - had not received the promises - had not been made perfect, and would not be made perfect till all the New Testament saints (which includes us) were perfected.

GLORIFIED TOGETHER

If the Old Testament saints have gone to heaven they have surely been rewarded and perfected. Tradition usually affirms this. But, according to Paul, they have not been rewarded or perfected. Moreover Paul explicitly states that the Old Testament saints will not be rewarded or perfected before the New Testament saints - and that includes all of those who live in the 21st century. God has purposed to perfect us together at the same time. As we read in Rom. 8:17: "... we may be glorified together." This glorification and perfection will take place on the last day at the second coming when all the saints are resurrected and there are many Scriptures which teach this.

Paul is again very emphatic in 1 Thes. 4 that no saints precede or get to glory before other saints. He clearly teaches that no one will see Jesus until he comes back from heaven. Some of the Thessalonians were concerned over those who had fallen asleep. They were afraid that those who were still alive at the second coming would meet Jesus and be with him first, and that those who had died before his return would have to wait till later. They obviously did not believe that the dead went to be with the Lord the moment they died! If they did, the question of the dead being the last to see the Lord would never have arisen in their minds!

Paul puts their minds at rest by pointing out that when Jesus returns, those who are alive and remain at his second coming will not precede those who are asleep (dead). "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

The important word is "together." All the dead and living saints will be united with Jesus together at the same time - at his second coming. Nobody meets him and enters into glory before others. Nobody in fact, whether dead or alive, meets the Lord till he descends from heaven. This is the plain, straightforward teaching of the apostle Paul in this passage, and the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and heaven-going at death, cuts across it in the most fundamental way possible.

If it is not till the return of Jesus that the dead in Christ "meet" him, as is plainly taught in 1 Thes. 4, then they obviously have not had a previous trip to heaven to meet him there!

The Bible constantly teaches that the dead do not "go" anywhere at death except to the grave in which they are buried, and in which they remain unconscious - asleep, till Jesus returns to awaken them.

When Jesus spoke about the death of Lazarus, he referred to it in the plainest sense: "He (Jesus) said to them, Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go to wake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death, but they thought he had spoken of taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead."

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave, he was dead and buried in the tomb. As we read in Jn. 11:44: "He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them, Loose him and let him go."

Where was Lazarus while he was dead? Was he in the grave or heaven? When Jesus called to Lazarus in a loud voice, telling him to come forth, he was not asking him to descend from heaven to hop back into his decaying body. Jesus was simply telling Lazarus to come forth from the tomb where he was buried. Even before Jesus called out, the spirit of God fell upon the body of Lazarus, quickening it and making it alive again, so that when Jesus called out, Lazarus was alive and responded. Jesus simply told Lazarus to come forth from the tomb where he was buried. It is a simple story with a simple meaning and is only confused by the introduction of the immortal soul dogma.

When Luke records the death of Stephen (Acts. 7:60), he does not indulge in any of the high-flown death-bed rapture theories so prevalent in modern religious literature and preaching. He simply says: "he fell asleep."

When Paul refers to the deceased Christians, he does not speak of them as having "gone on before to glory." The words he employs are in keeping with those already quoted: "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not as others who have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13).

NO MAN HAS ASCENDED TO HEAVEN

All Bible allusion to the subject of death is as unlike modern traditional sentiment as it is possible to conceive. The Bible speaks of death as the ending of life, and never as the commencement of another state. Not once does it tell of a dead man having gone to heaven. (Even in the case of Jesus, he was brought back to life first before ascending to heaven). Never do we read anything in Scripture like: "many men have ascended to heaven." Quite the reverse! Jn. 3:13 plainly says: "and no man has ascended to heaven, except he who came down from heaven, even the

son of man." Many believe that this is a parenthetical statement written by the gospel writer, John himself. In this case, seeing that he wrote his gospel after Jesus had ascended to heaven, his statement that no man except Jesus had ascended to heaven would mean that no one accompanied Jesus to heaven or went there afterwards. Jesus went to heaven alone!

When speaking to the Jews about his ascension to heaven, Jesus expressly stated that no one could go with him. "Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to him who sent me. You shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am (in heaven) thither you cannot come" (Jn. 7:33-36. 8:21). He repeated the same point to his apostles: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me, and as I said to the Jews, where I am going, you cannot come, so now I say to you" (Jn. 13:33).

This was all foreshadowed in the law in Old Testament times. Once a year the high priest alone went into the holy of holies to make atonement for the people. He went alone; no one was allowed to accompany him. All the people for whom atonement was made had to wait outside for the high priest to return. When he returned he was united with the people and pronounced the divine blessing upon them. The people were not allowed inside the holy of holies. They had to wait for the high priest to return before they could receive the fullness of blessing.

The high priest foreshadowed Jesus, and the holy of holies represented heaven. Entrance into the holy of holies with sacrificial blood once a year pointed to the one great sacrifice of Jesus himself by which he once and for all time made atonement for sin, and ascended to heaven itself to the right hand of God. Under the law it was very specifically commanded that the high priest enter the holy place alone; he had to go unaccompanied. This pointed to the fact that Messiah alone would ascend to heaven as the people's representative and intercessor. Under the law, no one accompanied the high priest or ventured into the holy of holies afterwards. Jesus also went unaccompanied to heaven and no man has ventured there since.

Under the Law, the people could only see the high priest and be united with him when he returned from the holy place. He did not stay in the holy place and wait for the people to come to him. When he returned, they received the blessing for which they hoped while awaiting his return. The same is true with regard to our high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. No one will see and be united with him till he returns from heaven. It will not be till he returns that our faith will be turned into sight and our hope fully

realised. The fullness of blessing and reward depends entirely on his second coming.

Heb. 9:24-28 should be read in connection with all this: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which was only a foreshadow of the real thing; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor is he there to offer himself again and again, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with blood not his own, for then would he have to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world: but now, once for all, in the end of the age has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement, so Christ, having been once offered to bear the sins of many; and to those who look for him shall he appear the second time (second coming!) without sin, unto salvation."

In this passage the following points are presented:

(1) Jesus is in heaven to appear in the presence of God for us. This is very different from saying that we go to heaven and appear in the presence of God for ourselves. Jesus alone, like the high priest under the law, appears in heaven for us, and we don't go there to appear for ourselves.

(2) No one will see Jesus till he appears the second time. The people under the law likewise could not see their high priest till he returned from the holy place. Jesus our high priest will not be seen by any of his saints until he returns from heaven.

(3) "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement." This point confirms point number two. The "judgement" takes place on the last day at the second coming of Jesus. So then, the next event after death will be the judgement at Christ's return. This rules out a journey to heaven during the interval. It is difficult to conceive of going to heaven for our reward the moment we die, and then being brought back to our bodies to be judged later. Who ever heard of a judge pronouncing sentence before a court hearing? Who ever heard of a man receiving freedom or condemnation before having a trial and then being brought back to court years later to be judged?

THE SAINTS INHERIT THE EARTH

"The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth is given to man" (Ps. 115:16). The earth has been promised to the saints - not the earth as we now know it, but a new and purified earth filled with the glory and knowledge of God - an earth to which God's city and kingdom will come

in all its fullness and in which His will shall be done as it is in heaven. We often pray for this in the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." When Jesus returns to the earth and transforms it; restoring it to its original paradise condition, it will be like heaven.

As far as the Bible is concerned, which takes us through to the end of the millennial reign of Christ, the earth to which the city of God descends will be the saints' inheritance. Here they will live and reign with Christ for 1,000 years. Scripture's whole emphasis is upon Jesus' return to the earth and his reign upon it, accompanied by his saints.

This truth is taught in the following passages of Scripture. They could be multiplied many times over for it is a major theme in the Bible, but the earnest Bible student will soon discover them through his own prayerful research.

Dan. 7:27 says: "And the kingdom and dominion, and all the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them."

Rev. 11:15: "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Acts. 17:31 says that God's purpose is that Jesus should "judge (rule) the world in righteousness." And in 1 Cor. 6:2 Paul asks the pertinent question: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?"

Rev. 5:10: Here it is affirmed that the saints "shall reign on earth." "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5). This same point is repeated three times in Psa. 37:9, 11, 22. In the parable of the ten pounds in Lk. 19:13-19 it is taught that when Jesus returns he will put the saints in charge of various "cities" throughout the earth. They will reign with him because they have suffered with him (2 Tim. 2:12). The apostles likewise are promised 12 thrones in the land of Israel over the restored and sanctified tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:27-28. Lk. 22:28-30).

Jesus promised in Rev. 2:26-27 that "he who overcomes and keeps my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ..."

The return of Jesus to the earth is symbolically depicted in Dan. 2 as a stone descending from heaven and smiting the worldly kingdoms of men. The stone became a great mountain and filled the earth (v35).

The purpose of God is beautifully summarised in Num. 14:21: "As truly as I live, the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the

Lord as the waters cover the deep" (Hab. 2:14).

"And let the whole earth be filled with his glory" (Psa. 72:17-20).

"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth" (Zec. 14:9). In that day the song of the angels at the birth of Jesus will be fulfilled: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will toward men." This represents the ultimate purpose for which Jesus was born: to establish peace on the earth. This programme requires his second coming and reign on earth before it can be fulfilled. In that day, when he judges among the nations, the nations "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic. 4:1-5. Isa. 2:1-5). At that time God's kingdom will have come in all of its intended fullness, and his will shall be done in earth as it is in heaven. The earth shall be "the kingdom of heaven" - a model or replica of heaven itself.

NOT CONFINED TO CHRISTENDOM

Belief in heaven beyond the grave is not limited to professing Christians. People around the world have always believed in some kind of after-life - some kind of "reward" immediately after death. It is a recognised article of the creed of the heathens, Jews and Mohammedans. Eternal blessedness was, in the view of the ancient pagans, "reserved for those only who were distinguished for their exalted virtues, and who were accordingly admitted into the society of the gods ..." ("The Faith of the World" vol.5 p.10).

The same authority states: "The heaven of the Hindu is absorption on Brahma, and of the Buddhist, annihilation or Nivana. The priesthood of the ancient Egyptians taught the immortality of the soul under the name of Palingenesia, or a second birth, being a return of the soul to the celestial spheres, or its re-absorption into the Supreme Being ..." (p.11).

The 11th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica declares there is "a bewildering variety in the view of the future life and the world held by different peoples ... The scene of the future life may be thought of on earth, in some distant part of it, or above the earth, in the sky, sun, moon or stars, or beneath the earth. The abodes of bliss and the places of torment may be distinguished, or one last dwelling-place may be affirmed for all the dead. Sometimes the good find their abiding home with the gods; sometimes a number of heavens of varying degrees of blessedness is recognised" (vol.9 p.760).

Mohammedans believe in a heaven prepared for the blessed, the

professors of the "true religion," followers of Mohammed. In paradise, they believe they shall enjoy perpetual light and all heavenly pleasures. Their belief includes eight heavens of different degrees of happiness.

Mohammed taught of a paradise of carnal, sensual pleasures, but at the same time he taught in the Koran that the height of happiness will consist of seeing God face to face, and this pleasure will make all other pleasure of paradise be forgotten.

Many Australian tribes have had a belief in a happy other-world. In particular, those scattered over the south-eastern region believe in a future happy life "beyond the great water" or in the sky. This paradise was often called "gumtree country." The path to sky-land was believed to be by the rays of the setting sun or by the Milky Way.

Ancient Teutonic peoples believed in a heavenly abode called Valhalla. To this heaven of the gods - warrior's paradise - all brave warriors hoped to go. "It is rafted with spears, it is decked with shields, its benches are strewn with coats of mail. A wolf hangs before the western door, an eagle hovers over it ... So great was Valhalla that it possessed 540 doors. Every day the warriors, fully armed, issued from the gates to amuse themselves in combat with each other, returning to feast and drink heavenly mead from the cups presented to them by the Valkyries" (Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol.11.p709).

Some Eskimos of Greenland still believe in two religions of paradise: the first in the cold sky or over-world, with hills and valleys and a heaven; the other, an underground domain, a blissful place with sunshine and perpetual summer.

Clearly, the idea of going to heaven when one dies is not the sole property of professing Christians. Christendom did not originate the concept neither has it exclusive rights to the concept. If time permitted, many historical records could be quoted to show that the concept of the immortality of the soul and heaven-going at death, originated in pagan nations like ancient Egypt thousands of years ago. Pagans since time immemorial have had this notion. Ultimately, during the period of pagan Rome, certain pagan concepts were gradually superimposed upon the Christian teaching, and the immortality of the soul was one of them.

History tells us that many ideas of professing Christianity concerning heaven came directly from the ancient Egyptians.

Writes Adolph Erman in: 'The Ancient Egyptians' (translated by Aylward M. Blackman): "The pyramid Texts are mainly concerned with the desire of the august dead to avoid leading a gloomy existence in the underworld - the fate of ordinary mortals - and to dwell in the sky like the

gods. There he might voyage with the sun-god in his ship, or dwell in the Fields of the Blessed, the Field of the Food-Offerings, or the Fields of Iaru (or Alu). He might himself become a god, and the fancy of the poets strives to depict the king in his new role. No longer is he a man whom the gods graciously receive into heaven but a conqueror who seizes heaven from them" (p.2).

The Egyptians believed that before the souls of the dead could reach the Egyptian "heaven" - the Fields of Iaru - and appear in the presence of Osiris, they must traverse a vast underworld region called Tuat which was inhabited by gods, devils, fiends, demons, good and bad spirits and the souls of the wicked; besides snakes, monsters and serpents. The Egyptian sacred book: "The Book of the Dead;" prescribed spells, incantations, prayers, charms and amulets to help the dead man overcome the dangers of the Tuat and to reach Sekhet Aaru and Sekhet Hetep - other names for the Egyptian heaven - to take his place among the subjects of Osiris in the "Land of Everlasting Life" (E.A. Wallis Budge, "The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians").

The arriving dead, the Egyptians thought, were ushered into a hall of judgement presided over by Osiris. "When the verdict is favourable and he has been cleared of any impurity, his heart is restored, and after several other ordeals, he is ushered into the bright Elysian Fields (the Fields of Alu) beyond the water ... Henceforth, he enjoys the perennial life of the blessed under the shadow of the tree of life, or the sycamore of Nut, the goddess of the sky, a true Osiris" (Kohler, "Heaven and Hell in Comparative Religion" p22).

When the verdict was unfavourable, the poor sinner experienced "second death." His dismemberment followed, and the fiercest tortures awaited him, including "burning by hot coals, plunging into deep waters, or cutting the body into pieces by sharp swords." Says Kohler: "We have here the very origin of the Inferno and Paradiso" (p.23.)

Herodotus speaks of the Egyptians as the first who recognised the human soul as immortal (Lib.11; c.cxxiii). Egyptian superstition is the parent of the dogma! Moses was well acquainted with the idea, being learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Act.7:22), yet he gives not the remotest hint concerning it from Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy. Quite the opposite as we have already seen in a previous chapter. He clearly had no faith in the dogma at all.

PAGAN PHILOSOPHY

False theories concerning man's physical nature and life after death dominate religions of paganism, and have, unfortunately, greatly influenced the doctrine of the Church. Paganism devised its theories of man's nature in the darkness of superstition, legends, and mythology. Christendom has received some of its theories and concepts from that source.

Legends and myths of the pagan world are filled with accounts of what is imagined to happen to man after death. Paganism perverted the worship of God into idolatry and the truth of God into mythology. The truth that God created man with a desire for immortality was perverted by the pagans. God promised immortality to men if he met God's requirements. The pagans, having this desire, but turning their back on God's promises of conditional immortality, developed their own philosophy that all men naturally possess immortality i.e. an "immortal soul." They insisted that death is not death at all but only the continuation of life in a new form and in a new place.

Pythagoras was the first man who styled himself a "philosopher" which signifies a "lover of wisdom." He flourished about 550 B.C. He spent about 25 years in Egypt, which at that age, was renowned for its "science falsely so called." From this source he learned all about the immortality of the soul, and that souls, in pagan belief, lived in some pre-existent state; and that for sins committed there, some souls were sent into human bodies, and others into beasts to be punished, and purified from sin! As to the essence of souls, he taught that they were an emanation from the substance of God who was the mover and soul of the world.

Socrates lived over 400 years B.C. He was an Athenian, and a great student of philosophy. He believed and taught that man possessed an immortal soul which was immaterial.

Plato (428-348 B.C.) was a disciple of Socrates. He formulated into a philosophy the pagan theory of the immortality of the soul. He lived during the golden age of Greek culture known as the Periclean age. Platoism was the dominating philosophy of European civilisation for many centuries. It is asserted by many scholars that Plato has exerted a greater influence upon the thinking of man in the western world than any other man in paganism. It was Plato's pupil Aristotle (384-322 B.C), who was the teacher of Alexander the Great and was instrumental in spreading the theories of Greek philosophy throughout the known world, including Palestine, the land of the Jews. Plato's philosophy incorporated the

perverted theology of pagan religion.

The philosophy of this Greek thinker has been preserved in the form of some 36 dialogues and a group of letters. The complete Jowett translation of the "Dialogues" was published in two volumes by Random House (New York) in 1937. The writings of Plato are also included in "Britannica Great Books." Plato believed in the pre-existence as well as the immortality of the soul. He believed that matter was evil, and taught that the soul is contaminated by the body and the earth. Purification, he asserted, can be attained only when man's soul is released from the body and dwells apart from the earth.

Plato's writings were used as textbooks in Greek and Roman schools. His philosophy was accepted by a large portion of men living in the Roman world even as the false theory of evolution, as propounded by Darwin, is taught in schools today and has influenced many.

The apostles and their immediate followers were faithful to the Bible truth that man was wholly mortal and that immortality was a conditional gift of God to be bestowed at the resurrection. After the death of the apostles, the Church gradually slipped from the light into darkness, from truth into error. Men became members of the Church, but continued to believe and teach Plato's philosophy. The Roman Empire outwardly became Christianised; the Church inwardly became paganised. Those familiar with the teaching of the New Testament will call to mind a number of warnings against philosophy. For example:

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). In other places Greek philosophy is referred to as "the wisdom of this world" which "is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:18. Also chapters one and two). In 1 Tim. 6:20-21 it is referred to as "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions (i.e. empty and worldly chatter, and the contradictions) of science (knowledge) falsely so called, which some having followed have erred from the faith."

Church theologians rejected Plato's theory of the soul's pre-existence, but they accepted his theory concerning the soul's immortality. They adopted his belief that matter is evil. Pagan teachings and practices gradually replaced Bible teachings and practices. By the time Augustine formulated the doctrines of man's physical nature into the official theology of the Roman Church, Plato's domination over Bible truth was complete. The Church's departure from the faith, predicted by the apostle Paul on several occasions, came to pass as he said it would.

When Plato's theory of the soul's natural immortality was accepted,

many important Bible doctrines were ignored and denied. Since theologians believed that man had an immortal soul, they could see no real need for a future resurrection to immortality. Since they believed that man was rewarded the moment he died, they could see no need for Christ's return to the earth to reward the righteous and judge the dead. Thus the important doctrines of resurrection to immortality, Christ's second coming, and his future millennial kingdom on earth were neglected, ignored and denied. Many faithful believers, who continued to uphold true Bible teaching on these matters, were treated as heretics, and at one stage, men and women were burned at the stake for believing in the second coming of Christ and his millennial reign. Such was the position to which the doctrine of the immortality of the soul led!

History shows that the teachings of Clement of Alexandria (Egypt), Origen and others gradually turned most professing Christians from the belief of a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. Their hope rested entirely on the immortal soul going to be with the Lord in heaven. They had no place in their theology for Christ returning to the earth to reign.

Gibbon, in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" declared: "The ancient doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ ... A joyful Sabbath of a thousand years when Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints, and the elect who had escaped death, or had been miraculously revived, would reign on earth ... The assurance of such a millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine ... But when the edifice of the Church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism."

The floodgates were opened. Hellenistic philosophy, which had borrowed heavily from ancient Babylonian and Egyptian mythology, began to replace the teachings of the Bible as the source of doctrine. Athenagoras (177 A.D) was among the first writers living in the era following the death of the apostles, who taught the immortality of the soul and endless torture of the wicked. An example of his teaching can be seen in his work: "The Resurrection of the Dead" in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers."

Tertullian (160-220 A.D) wrote profusely concerning the soul's immortality. Plato's influence over Tertullian was tremendous. This fact

can easily be seen in his writings. Notice for example: "A Treatise on the Soul" in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers."

The two outstanding Roman Catholic theologians are Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) lived when the Roman Church had its actual beginnings. Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.) lived when the Roman Church was at the height of its power. Augustine expressed his theology in terms of Plato's philosophy; Aquinas expressed his theology in terms of the philosophy of Plato's pupil, Aristotle. Thus, the Roman Catholic Church crystallised the errors of Greek philosophy into formal doctrines and organised them into that remarkable institute which became the Papacy. The theory of the soul's natural immortality has been advocated by many Protestant theologians and has been included in many Protestant creeds. When the Church of England separated from the Roman Catholic Church, she took the doctrine of the immortality of the soul with her. And, most other Protestant groups which have formed since then have done the same.

In spite of the persecution from the Roman Catholic Church during past centuries, there have been faithful Christians who have believed and taught the truth in various countries. The truth of this matter has never completely died out even though the contenders for it have been small in number on many occasions.

So then, the theory of the immortality of the soul and its accompanying heaven-going at death, is not a Bible doctrine. It is a theory borrowed by Egyptian and Grecian mythology and ultimately superimposed upon the Christian faith by admirers of Plato. It is pagan in origin which explains its universality, for it matters not where we turn; there, in principle, is found the same doctrine. Shintoism, Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Paganism, hold the belief in common with Christendom. It is a man-made drug designed to deaden the pain of sorrow which death brings; but in fact, it turns mankind away from the true comfort and hope that the Word of God offers, which is physical resurrection at the second coming of Christ.

The early Church, in order to become popular and universal, adopted and taught these prevailing pagan philosophies and rejected the testimony of God in his Word. This decline from the truth was predicted by Paul in these words: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own liking; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and wander into myths and fables" (2 Tim. 4:1-4). However, Scripture also speaks about a time of "restoration." Since

Martin Luther's time, a gradual "stripping" process has been taking place, and the end is not yet! Gradually, the original truths of original Christianity are being restored. The doctrine of the second coming and millennial reign of Christ on earth, for example, is now very strongly advocated in many circles, whereas it was once rejected by the majority and some were put to death for believing it. The rest will be put right as the restoration process completes its cycle.

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CHAPTER TEN

GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED

In Gal. 3:16 we read that God made some promises to Abraham and his seed. The verse carries on to say that the "seed" refers particularly to Christ, but verse 29 concludes by stating that all true Christians, whatever their nationality, are Abraham's seed also, and heirs according to the promise.

So then, God has specifically promised something to Abraham, Christ, and all who belong to Christ. All who belong to Christ are "heirs" of this promise. The Christian is not yet a possessor of this promise - he is only an "heir."

What then is the promise? In Gal. 3:18 the promise is referred to as "the inheritance." Rom. 4:13-14 comes right out into the open and informs us that the inheritance is "the world." "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but the righteousness of faith. For if they who are adherents of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect."

The world then, has been promised to Abraham and his seed for an inheritance. This is clearly confirmed when we go back into the book of Genesis and study the original promises made to Abraham. When God first called Abraham out of Ur, he told him to get out of his country and come into a land that he would show him (Gen. 12:1). Abraham obeyed, and migrated to the land of Canaan. When he arrived there, God said: "Unto thy seed will I give this land." And, while it was true that Abraham's natural seed, the Israelites, inherited the land and possessed it for several centuries, they were not the "seed" to whom God was really referring; neither did they inherit the land according to the terms of God's promises to Abraham.

You see, as already pointed out, the "seed" that God really had in mind was Christ and all who belong to him - all who live by faith like their father Abraham. This is the very point that Paul makes in Gal. 3:16, 29. Remember also that it was through the law of Moses that the Jewish people inherited the land of promise, and not through "the righteousness of faith" as God promised Abraham. God's promise to Abraham and his seed concerning the inheritance was not on the basis of law, but faith. Obviously then, Israel's inheritance under the law was not a fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham! This is the point that Paul is making in Gal. 3. Israel's inheritance of the Holy Land under the law was simply a foretaste of greater things to come.

Israel's inheritance under the law was merely a temporary occupation. Each Israelite only enjoyed the inheritance for a short span of his natural life. The reason for this was because they inherited it under law. It was impossible for anyone to totally obey the law, so the result was that all had to die, for "the wages of sin is death," and sin is "transgression of the law." As long as they were under the law there was transgression, and where transgression prevailed, death also prevailed. Everlasting inheritance was impossible under the law, yet Abraham and his seed have been promised this!

Obviously then, Israel's inheritance under the law was not the fulfilment of the promises made by God to Abraham. And, equally as obvious is the fact that it will not be under law that the true seed of Abraham receive their inheritance. If it was, they could not have an "everlasting" inheritance, for transgression of the law would bring death. It is purely on the basis of God's grace, manifested in the atoning work of Jesus which we appropriate by faith that enables us to receive everlasting life and the everlasting inheritance.

Therefore, the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus "confirmed the promises" made to the fathers. How? By making their fulfilment possible! When Jesus shed his blood for the remission of sin, he opened up the way for life everlasting. If sin brought death, then atonement for sin brought life - more abundant life! The resurrection of Jesus as captain of our salvation and the "first fruits of them that slept," is a guarantee - earnest - confirmation of God's purpose to restore to life and immortality all who belong to him, i.e. "Abraham's seed." When he returns he will accomplish this and enable us to inherit our everlasting possession.

So then, God said to Abraham in Gen. 12:6-7 "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Later on God told him to: "Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward, to southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land that you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever" (Gen. 13:14-15). This promise is very specific and extremely clear. Abraham was told to look at all the land surrounding him as far as he could see and further, for the Lord was going to give it all to him and his seed as an everlasting inheritance. Notice that God didn't tell Abraham to look up into heaven! No! It was not somewhere out in the realms of space, but all the land under heaven, to the north, south, east and west that God promised to give to Abraham. The specific, literal geographical terms of this promise cannot be misunderstood. As Paul says in Rom. 4:13, Abraham was promised "the world."

Now, it should be evident from all this, that Abraham never received

his inheritance. He lived in the land but did not inherit it according to the terms of the promise. If he had, he would still be there today and forever because the promise involved an everlasting inheritance. Instead, Abraham died, not having received the promise. He did however, by faith, see the promise "afar off" and was persuaded of its ultimate fulfilment (Heb. 11:13). By faith he saw the day of Christ and was glad because he knew that on that day all would be fulfilled and he would enter his everlasting inheritance with all his "seed." (We learn from 1 Cor. 1:7-8 that the "day" of Christ is his second coming which inaugurates the millennial reign).

It is clearly taught in Acts. 7:5 that Abraham never received his promised inheritance. In this passage, Stephen, speaking about Abraham's sojourn in the promised land said: "And God gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: Yet he had promised that he would give it to him for a possession and to his seed after him, even though he had no child."

Stephen plainly declares that God did promise Abraham the land of Canaan, and that Abraham did not inherit it. And Stephen does not give the slightest suggestion that God never intended Abraham to inherit the land, but intended to take him away from the earth instead! No! The simple facts of the case cannot be avoided. God clearly promised Abraham the land and Abraham died without receiving it. Further proof of the fact that Abraham did not inherit the land can be seen in the fact that while he was a sojourner there, he had to buy a section of property from the native inhabitants as a burial ground for his wife Sarah (Gen. 23). Had Abraham owned the land, it would not have been necessary to buy a section of it as a burial place!

What does all this mean then? If God promised the land to Abraham for an everlasting inheritance, and he died without receiving it, what conclusion must we draw? We cannot say that God meant something else, because his promise is clear enough. Neither can we say that he does not keep his promises because he is 100% faithful to his Word. The only conclusion we can come to is that he must intend to bring Abraham back to life and give him everlasting life. This of course, necessitates the second coming of Jesus and resurrection. Indeed, this is the purpose of God in a nutshell. And God proved his purpose to bring the patriarchs back to life when, many years later after their death, he referred to himself when speaking to Moses as "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Now God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Thus by addressing himself as their God, while they were dead, he demonstrated his purpose

to bring them back to the land of the living. In fact, so sure is his purpose to raise the dead, they are as good as alive already. As Scripture says: "For all live unto him." His purpose demands their existence!

When Abraham lived in the land during his natural life, it was occupied by the heathen; and it was therefore full of idolatry and iniquity. There was nothing very heavenly about it. Quite the opposite: it was full of carnality and sin. However, Abraham knew from the promises God gave him, that it would become a "heavenly country" when Jesus "possessed the gate" and exercised control (Gen. 22:17-18). The point is actually made in Heb. 11:13-16 that if the condition of the promised land had caused them to lose faith and patience in God's promises, they could have called to mind the country of their birth from which God had called them and returned to it. However, they didn't. They desired a better country, that is, a heavenly, and they were persuaded that God was eventually going to make Canaan like that. So they remained there and were buried there.

They will also be resurrected there when Jesus returns, and will inherit it as an everlasting possession. "And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God" (Matt. 8:11). The land of promise, along with the whole world, will become "the kingdom of God." As we read in Rev. 11:15: "The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." Palestine will be the geographical centre of a new world order in which righteousness and peace will prevail. The city of Jerusalem will be the "city of the great king." He will sit there upon the throne of David, as predicted by all the prophets and as announced by the angel Gabriel prior to his birth (Lk. 1:32). "Jesus shall reign - where the sun's successive journey runs." And his saints, the "seed" of Abraham will reign with him - they will constitute the new ruling administration of the new earth. The result will be God's knowledge and glory filling the whole earth - perfect total peace. Heaven will be on earth!

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CHAPTER ELEVEN CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

It follows as a natural conclusion that if the saints do not ascend to heaven at death to receive their reward, they do not ascend there to be united with Jesus. The bible supports this conclusion as we have already seen. It is never taught in the Word of God that the souls of the saints ascend to heaven to live with Jesus. Quite the opposite! The consistent, emphatic testimony of Scripture is that we will never see or be with Jesus till he descends from heaven to the earth on the last day.

The second coming of Jesus is therefore an important and outstanding Bible doctrine. It has been estimated that 318 verses in the New Testament refer to this great event. This works out at one verse in every 25. In the Old Testament there are 1,527 direct and indirect references to the same event. It is an outstanding Bible doctrine.

For many centuries this great truth was dropped and lost as a result of the doctrine of immortality of the soul being superimposed upon the Christian creed. However, since the Reformation, many religious groups have seen the reality and truth of the second coming. For this reason, there is really no need to quote lists of Scripture to establish this truth. Suffice it to say that, on the basis of Act. 1:11 alone, it can be confidently affirmed that Jesus is going to return to the earth, and that his return will be personal, physical and visible. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." Many Scriptures back this up.

If Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives and is going to return in the same way as he went, it would not be unreasonable to assume that when he returns, his feet will touch down on the same Mount. As it happens, this is actually predicted in Zec. 14:4. Reference is made here to the feet of the Lord standing upon the Mount of Olives which is east of Jerusalem on his "day."

Jerusalem is destined to be the "city of the great king" - the throne of the Lord (Matt. 5:35). It will be the future world metropolis from which the whole world will be governed. The place of Jesus' humiliation will become the place of his power and glory. It is natural that when he returns to the earth he will return to that locality. As he returns, descending through the air, all his saints will be gathered up to meet him and accompany him to the Holy Land. Much more could be said about this with Scriptural support but not now.

SAINTS MUST "WAIT" TO SEE JESUS

The following verses teach that the saints will not see or be united with Jesus till his second coming. Such statements would hardly appear in Scripture if Christians departed to heaven at death.

Matt. 25:6: "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh (second coming): go ye out to meet him." In this parable it is taught that the saints will not meet Jesus till he comes.

1 Thes. 4:13-18: In this passage we are informed that both the dead and living at Christ's return will be caught up into the air to meet him. But if the dead in Christ had already gone to be with him in heaven, surely they would descend from heaven with him when he returned. By no means! They are clearly referred to in 1 Thes. 4 as being caught up into the air with the living to meet Jesus.

In Matt. 24:31 we are told that when Jesus returns he "shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." And 2 Thes. 2:1 makes the same point that the saints will not be gathered to Jesus till he returns. Never is there any mention of some disembodied part of man being gathered to Jesus up to heaven. No! It is the saints themselves – body, soul and spirit, that shall be gathered into the air to meet Jesus on his downward journey to earth at his second coming.

Jn. 14:2-3 also makes the point that it will not be till Jesus comes again that he will receive us unto himself.

Lk. 12:36 says that all the Christians are "like unto men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately." The emphasis is upon the word "wait." Christians wait for the return of their Lord which means they don't rush off to see him in some disembodied form beforehand. This is emphasised a number of times in Scripture:

1 Cor. 1:7: "... waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Plp. 3:20-21: "... heaven from whence we await our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thes. 1:10: "... and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus ..."

2 Thes. 3:5: "And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

Jam. 5:7-8: "Be patient therefore brethren, unto the coming of the Lord ... Be ye also patient ... for the coming of the Lord draws near."

2 Pet. 3:12: "Look eagerly for the coming of the day of God."

Rev. 2:25: "... hold fast till I come."

Lk. 19:12-13: "Occupy till I come."

Repeatedly, and with tremendous emphasis, Scripture speaks of the "coming" of Jesus from heaven to earth. But never is anything said about the saints going from the earth to heaven! The emphasis in traditional theology of the saints going to heaven, has no foundation in the word of God.

When Jesus returns, he will receive us to himself so that where he is, we may be there also, namely: in the city of God in the Holy Land. "We shall ever be with the Lord" (1 Thes. 4:17). Or, in the words of Rev. 14:4: "Follow the lamb wherever he goes."

So then, although we cannot follow Jesus to heaven now, we will follow him afterwards when he returns. This in fact, is what he said to Peter: "Whither I go you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow me afterwards" (Jn. 13:36). Peter, along with all the saints, will follow Jesus "afterwards" because he will have returned to the earth. The word "afterwards" bridges a gap of almost 2000 years as in the case of Heb. 9:27: "It is appointed unto man once to die but afterwards the judgement."

(It is even possible that when Jesus told Peter that he would follow him afterwards, that he was referring to martyrdom. Peter, like Jesus, died for his faith. Jesus actually predicted this as recorded in Jn. 21:18-19, and Peter's own statement in 2 Pet. 1:14 confirms it. All Christians, in a certain sense must take up the cross and follow Jesus. It was not till after his crucifixion that this truth was fully appreciated and understood).

SAINTS REWARDED ON EARTH

It has been demonstrated that the earth is the promised reward and inheritance of the saints. It has also been demonstrated that the saints do not ascend to heaven at death to be united with Jesus. Jesus descends to the earth to be united with the saints.

Let us now consider some passages of Scripture which teach that the rewarding of the saints takes place on earth and depends on the second coming for its fulfilment. Nowhere is it taught in the bible that the souls of the saints go to heaven at death for their reward.

Someone of course, will quote Matt. 5:12 and other similar passages as proof that the saints are rewarded in heaven: "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven." It is often argued from this verse that because our reward is in heaven, we must go there to receive it. However, it is equally as logical to argue that if our reward is in

heaven, someone must be going to bring it down to us. When a father tells his children that he has some lollies up in the cupboard for them, they don't imagine that they will have to climb up into the cupboard to eat them. Usually the father will reach for them and hand them down to his children.

Fortunately, the correct conclusion does not rest with human reasoning or logic. Scripture specifically states that when Jesus returns he will bring the reward with him: "For the son of man shall come in the glory of his father with his angels: and then shall he reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). Again we read: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

Other passages which reinforce this teaching that the saints will not be rewarded till Jesus returns are as follows:

Lk. 14:4: "And you shall be blessed; for ... you shall be rewarded at the resurrection of the just."

2 Tim. 4:8: "And now there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Tit. 2:13-14: "Looking forward to the happy fulfilment of our hope when the splendour of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus will appear."

1 Pet. 5:4: "And when the chief shepherd shall appear you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away."

Matt. 25:31: "When the son of man shall come in his glory ..." (He will, as the following verses teach, separate the sheep from the goats and reward each class accordingly).

Lk. 19:15: "When he returned ..." (The ensuing verses show how Jesus rewards his followers after his return).

Col. 3:4: "When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear (be manifested) with him in glory." That is: it will not be till Jesus is manifested from heaven and changes the corruptible bodies of the saints into incorruptible bodies like unto his own glorious body, that the saints' true calling and position as sons of God will be manifested and made plain. Like Jesus, they will be manifested in power and great glory: "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

This happens, as outlined in verses 40-41, when Jesus returns at the end of the age with his holy angels. 2 Thes. 1:10 puts it like this: "When he shall come to be glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that

believe." Or, as we read in 1 Jn. 3:2: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is."

A BLESSED HOPE AND INCENTIVE

In view of all this, it is no wonder that the second coming of Jesus is referred to in Tit. 2:13 as the Christian's "blessed hope." This is how it reads: "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

The second coming of Jesus is the hope of the gospel. Without it, we would never see him again and would never receive our reward. The saint's reward and union with Jesus depends entirely upon his second coming. In the fullest and widest sense possible, the return of Jesus is our "blessed hope." The second coming was the "day" that Abraham "saw" by faith, causing him to rejoice and be glad. Without it, he can never receive his everlasting inheritance. This is why such tremendous emphasis is laid upon it in the Word of God. Take away the second coming of Christ and you take away everything for which a true New Testament Christian hopes.

The second coming is also presented in Scripture as the incentive to true Christian living. It is the motivating power and stimulus to Christian watchfulness and faithfulness. Consider the following verses:

Matt. 24:36-44: Here, Jesus says we must "watch" (i.e. keep a close eye on our manner of life), "for we do not know what hour our lord will come." This whole passage shows that the fact and certainty of his coming should stimulate us to live a true Christian life. Col. 3:1-3 also emphasises that we must die to self and set our affections on things above where Christ is, because he is coming again. 1 Jn. 3:1-3 tells us that the hope of Christ's appearing should induce every man to purify himself even as Christ is pure.

NEGATED BY TRADITION

Without any shadow of a doubt, the second coming of Christ constitutes the only blessed hope and motivating influence in a Christian's life. But the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and heaven-going at death completely contradicts and negates this hope, because it robs it of its absolute necessity. The concept that teaches heaven is the inheritance of the saints, and that they go there the moment they die to be united with Jesus and receive their reward, makes the hope

of the second coming and everything it stands for, quite meaningless. The two views cannot go together. They contradict each other. They are incompatible, and any attempt to unite them results in confusion.

If the earth is not our inheritance, then there is no need for Jesus to return to it. If we ascend to heaven to be with Jesus the moment we die, then the need for him to descend to earth no longer exists. If we receive our reward in heaven, there is no need for him to come with it to the earth. If we go to our respective rewards the moment we die, then death must be a judgement in itself, thus ruling out the need for Jesus to return to the earth to judge the living and the dead; as 2 Tim. 4:1 says he will. The concept of going to our reward in heaven the moment we die makes a mockery and farce of the judgement which Scripture teaches will take place at the second coming.

In 1 Cor. 4:3-5, Paul tells us to judge nothing till the Lord comes. He is the judge and it is his prerogative to judge. The common practice at funerals of confidently consigning souls to heaven is not only theologically wrong, but morally wrong as well. It is really usurping Christ's authority as judge. He alone knows the hearts and true motives of men and for that reason, judgement is reserved for him. The common practice therefore, of consigning souls to heaven or hell is exercising a judgement and authority which belongs exclusively to Christ, and which he will exercise when he returns. Men are not rewarded at death. Judgement is not at the time of death but after death, at the resurrection.

So then, the traditional doctrine which teaches we go to our respective rewards at death, dispenses with the need for a judgement. And, if we exist in glory in a disembodied state, full of joy and praise, why the need for resurrection of the body? There is no need. It is immediately cancelled out. If man possesses an immortal soul or spirit, he must be an eternal being from birth. In other words, he possesses eternal life as a natural consequence of birth. In this case, eternal life is no longer a gift of God by faith through grace. Every man, saint and sinner alike, has got it whether he likes it or not! After all, if sinners live for ever in a burning hell, as tradition says they do, they must have eternal life! Thus, eternal life ceases to be a specially endowed gift of God only on the righteous as a result of faith and obedience, but something every man receives and possesses through the purely natural event of birth.

And if every man, from the time of Adam, possessed eternal life, why the need for the sacrifice of Christ? We read in 2 Tim. 1:10 that Jesus "hath brought life and immortality to light." "But no," says tradition: "There was really no need for him to die to bring life and immortality;

man already possessed it from birth." If man possesses an immortal soul which ascends to heaven at death, then all the saints who lived during the 4,000 year period of Old Testament history prior to the sacrifice of Jesus, must have ascended to heaven to glory. This is believed in many circles today. The case of Enoch and Elijah are frequently quoted as proof. Why then, if this be the case, was Christ's sacrifice necessary? Men were evidently doing quite well without it.

Another point: if man has conscious existence when his soul or spirit departs from his body, how is it that he never had conscious existence prior to birth before his spirit entered the body? If his spirit is eternal and divine, one would expect, as was taught by the pagans, that he would have had a pre-existent consciousness.

The immortality of the soul is a very pernicious doctrine. It weakens and nullifies many major aspects of Bible teaching. It particularly plays havoc with the whole point and principle behind the atonement. To use a modern expression: "It throws a spanner into the whole works." In view of the way it weakens and virtually cancels out the need for the second coming, judgement, resurrection and millennial reign of Christ; it is no wonder that many traditional churches often place little importance and emphasis on these events.

One hears a great deal about immortal spirits going to heaven at death etc. but very little about Jesus returning from heaven to earth to resurrect the saints and change their bodies into immortal bodies. Occasionally the second coming is mentioned in certain circles, and less occasionally the resurrection, and very rarely the judgement. One gets the impression that even when these things are occasionally mentioned from some pulpits, they are only mentioned in passing, and not with a burning fire and zeal inspired by the conviction that they constitute the "blessed hope" and motivating force of a Christian's life and service.

One rather gets the impression that they are sometimes only mentioned because it is recognised that the Bible does speak about them, and therefore reference should be made to them from time to time, even though they seem to be unnecessary, and superfluous. In many traditional circles, particularly in the past; because little practical need could be seen in these things due to the belief in immortal soulism, reference to the real "blessed hope" was often brief and sadly lacking in any real conviction and enthusiasm. And, as mentioned earlier, there was a time in church history when those who believed in the second coming and millennial reign were regarded as heretics, and some were put to death.

SYMPTOMATIC OF UNBELIEF, FEAR AND IMPATIENCE

This writer would venture to say that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is, in certain respects, symptomatic of unbelief, fear and impatience.

(1) Unbelief: It is easier to believe in life after death if we believe that we never lose consciousness and that our real being or personality never really dies. It is harder to believe, and requires more faith, if our personality as well as our body dissolves in death. It is easier to believe that God could re-create our body or make us another body than it is to believe that he could re-create from the dust our original personality and character. Unbelief balks at this, but full assurance of faith finds it no problem, being fully persuaded that nothing is too hard or impossible for God.

(2) Fear: It is not uncommon for man to fear death. It is a natural built-in instinct. Self-preservation - the continuation of self, is uppermost in most men's minds. Most don't want to die. It is much more convenient and satisfying to believe that we don't really die at all. Such a concept is often the natural outworking of fear - fear of death. Fear often leads to deception - burying the head in the sand - refusing to face reality and the true facts of life. Pride and conceit often comes into it too. In his pride, man thinks highly of himself and imagines himself to be too important to cease existing. He prefers to think of himself as being like God who only has immortality and can never die.

(3) Impatience: Impatience rarely wants to wait the proper time for promised reward. Impatience refuses to accept that there must be a waiting period after death before seeing Jesus and receiving the crown of glory. Impatience wants things immediately - straight away, and such impatience has no doubt made some sort of contribution towards the invention of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul which enables man to rush off to his reward the moment he dies.

However, it is by faith and patience that the promises are received as we are taught in Heb. 6:12, and this requires the added virtue of humility. 2 Thes. 3:5 refers to the "patient waiting" for Christ. And we saw earlier how many other Scriptures lay emphasis on the fact that we must "wait" patiently for his second coming, at which time all hopes and aspirations in him will be fulfilled, and not before. In the symbolical picture presented in Rev. 6:11, the dead saints are presented as having to rest for a season before the coming of the great day of the Lord. When that day arrives, they will be resurrected (Rev. 20:4-6), and enter into the joy

of their Lord.

The array of Scriptural testimony against the immortality of the soul must be conclusive for those with whom Scriptural authority carries any weight. If there is anything decisive in the verdict of Scripture, the state of the dead ought to no longer be a debatable question. The Bible settles it against all philosophical speculation. It teaches that death is a total eclipse of being - a complete obliteration of our conscious selves. This will do no violence to the feelings of those who are governed by wisdom of the type inculcated in the Scriptures. Such will but bow in the presence of God's appointment, whatever it is. They would do this if the appointment were harder to receive than it is in this case. Instead of being hard to receive, it accords with our experience and our instincts. And still better, it frees all Bible doctrine from obscurity and contradiction and makes the second coming of Jesus, and resurrection, meaningful and desirable.

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CHAPTER TWELVE RESURRECTION – A NECESSITY

Many often jump to conclusions after being told that the saints do not go to heaven at death, imagining that it involves a denial of future reward and hope. This writer knows of a Pastor who, after being told that the saints do not go to heaven at death, reacted by saying that anyone who thinks like that is an annihilationist and may as well throw their Bible away and give up the Christian faith! His statement revealed the enormous extent to which his theology and hope rested in the immortality of the soul and heaven-going; and how little in the second coming and resurrection. He obviously did not see the second coming and resurrection as being any great hope or consolation at all, otherwise he would have reacted differently. It never came into his mind. Not for one moment did it occur to him that there is a "blessed hope" in the gospel which does not depend upon, and is totally foreign to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and heaven-going at death. The truth concerning man's mortality certainly leads to a modification of traditional views, but not with the effect imagined by the Pastor. And the modification it leads to is well supported by the Bible with an explicitness that removes all difficulty from the path of the sincere mind.

We have seen that at death man ceases from breathing the breath and spirit of life; he becomes unconscious and returns to the dust. It is evident that man's conscious existence depends upon the combination and preservation of spirit, soul and body. This being so, it follows as a natural process of logic that conscious existence after death would depend upon, and necessitate the re-combination of spirit, soul and body. In other words, life after death necessitates a fresh effort on the part of the Almighty to rebuild the body and breathe into it the spirit of life, causing the soul to be reactivated again and live. Such an operation would enable a man to stand up again after having been prostrate in death. The Bible refers to such an operation and expresses it as resurrection, which comes from the Greek word "anastasis," and literally means "a standing up again," or "recovery."

ABSOLUTE NECESSITY

The fact that man is wholly mortal and ceases to have conscious existence at death, establishes the doctrine of the resurrection on the firm foundation of necessity; for in this view, a future life is only possible

by resurrection. It is for this reason that resurrection is listed among the first vital principles of the doctrine of Christ in Heb. 6:1-2.

But, as pointed out before, according to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, life after death is merely a natural growth from the present, affected neither one way nor the other by the "resurrection of the body." And, if we accept this view, it is difficult to see any use for resurrection at all, for if man goes straight to his reward at death and enjoys all the glory of heaven, it seems incongruous that, after a certain time, he should be compelled to leave the "celestial city," and rejoin his body on earth, when without that body he is supposed to have so much more capability of enjoyment.

The resurrection seems out of place in such a system. Accordingly, the Greeks gave it no place in their philosophy and many are abandoning it these days, vainly trying to explain away the New Testament doctrine of physical resurrection altogether. We hear much talk about "spiritual resurrection" i.e. the new life in Christ to which we emerge from the waters of baptism after conversion (which is unquestionably an important Bible doctrine), but we hear very little about physical resurrection. I know some people in various churches who, after some years, have never so much as heard a reference to the subject from the pulpit. The closest they have come to it is when the Bible reading for the day contained a reference to it. The same at funerals: Passages of Scripture which are thought to support the immortality of the soul concept are read and expounded in traditional terms, and sometimes a few passages relating to the resurrection are quoted but not expounded in a meaningful manner. Usually, the whole emphasis is upon man's immediate flight to heaven in a disembodied form.

The pagan doctrine of the immortality of the soul is incompatible with the Bible doctrine of death and resurrection. The early Christian resurrection faith, is irreconcilable with the pagan concept of the immortality of the soul and can neither be surrendered nor reinterpreted without robbing the New Testament of its vital substance, and violating one of its first principles.

GREEK PHILOSOPHY

The immortality of the soul, as we have already seen, was part of the "vain philosophy" of the Greeks and Romans before the advent of Christ. It was introduced into the churches of the saints soon after by some of the gentiles to whom God had granted repentance. But, as the

apostles taught the resurrection of the body, the dogmatism of the gentiles was vastly modified. Some admitted the resurrection of the dead; but as it interfered with their hypothesis about souls, they said the resurrection was already past: "Have nothing to do with pointless philosophical discussions - they only lead further and further away from the true religion. Talk of this kind corrodes like gangrene, as in the case of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have gone right away from the truth, claiming that the resurrection has already taken place; and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:16-18).

The Greek mind, having been indoctrinated with philosophical twaddle concerning immortal souls etc, found the resurrection of the body hard to accept. All their life they had been taught that the body; being material, was evil, and was just a useless unimportant "shell;" and the sooner it was shaken off in death the better off they would be. They felt that their philosophy concerning life after death was superior, and that resurrection of the body was too materialistic - earth bound - clumsy - superfluous etc. They preferred to believe in something ethereal and nebulous. The more mysterious and undefinable it was, the better they liked it. Anything practical, rational and logical did not have the same appeal and was regarded as being carnal. Thus, "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked ..." (Act. 17:32). The preaching of Jesus and resurrection ("anastasis") was, to them, "strange gods" (v18). The Jewish class of the Sadducees had also been influenced by Greek philosophy. They rejected the concept of the resurrection and therefore became enemies of Christ (Lk. 20. Act 23:8).

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul was clearly taken over by the early Fathers of the church from Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek sources; and read into Holy Writ by these same seekers after an attempted reconciliation between man's philosophy and Christian truth. Doubtless these earnest thinkers acted in all good faith and were blind to the fact that in attempting such a reconciliation, they were trying to establish an agreement between the revealed will of God and the times of ignorance he had "winked at."

Resurrection is a key theme in Scripture, and is very strongly emphasised particularly in the preaching and writing of the apostle Paul. As far as he was concerned, any concept which negated or undermined the resurrection, was "pointless philosophical discussion that leads further and further away from true religion." How true this is concerning the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The false doctrines of inherent immortality, heaven-going at death, endless torment in hell, purgatory, saint worship,

demonology, Mariolatry, spiritual millenniumism etc. all spring from, and are based upon the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

Thus as Paul says: "Talk of this kind corrodes like gangrene and leads right away from the truth." One reformer who saw the error of the doctrine wrote: "The dogma of the immortal soul in sinful flesh has eaten out the marrow and fatness, the flesh and sinew, of the doctrine of Christ; and has left behind only an ill-conditioned and ulcerated skeleton of Christianity, whose dry bones rattle in the "winds of doctrine" that are blowing around us, chopping and changing to every point of the compass."

OVERTHROWS THE FAITH

Paul says that any claim or doctrine that negates the resurrection "overthrows the faith." But how could it possibly overthrow the faith if we have an immortal soul that goes to heaven? Denial of resurrection wouldn't have any influence or bearing on our faith in that case. However, if man does not have an immortal soul and his faith in life after death is based entirely on resurrection, then denial of resurrection would be fatal - he would be left without hope. As Paul correctly says; his faith would be overthrown. Such a statement reveals Paul's view on the whole matter. To him, without resurrection there was no hope of life after death.

As we have seen, resurrection constitutes one of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Denial of it in word or principle is therefore a repudiation of one of the basic tenets of the apostolic faith. Without resurrection, there is no hope of life after death! It is significant that immediately preceding his remarks about pointless philosophical discussions which negate resurrection, Paul wrote: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). How vital it is to be enlightened and influenced by the study of the Word of God and not the vain and empty traditions which find their origin in pagan philosophy.

"To the law and to the testimony" says Isaiah: "If they speak not according to this word it is because they have no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11).

"But avoid profane and vain babblings and contradictions of "knowledge" falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20).

The Word of God alone can lift the veil of ignorance and impart true light. It is the only yardstick by which we can safely measure and value

every concept. Had the pagan philosophers turned to it and sought their inspiration from it instead of from their own unenlightened pagan hearts, they would not have deceived themselves and countless others. But their philosophical twaddle consists of great swelling words and flowing oratory which has great appeal to man's pride. Many today therefore, even among so-called Christians, give more attention to Platonic philosophy than Bible teaching.

However, the true Christian takes up his position alongside Paul who never indulged in "any show of oratory or philosophy" (1 Cor. 2:1 Jerusalem Bible). "In my speeches and the sermons that I gave, there was none of the arguments that belong to philosophy; only a demonstration of the power of the spirit. And I did this so that your faith should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God" (which raises the dead) 1 Cor. 2:4-5.

When the leaven of pagan philosophy concerning the immortality of the soul has completed its work, the result is total denial of resurrection. Some of the Greek Christians in Corinth had reached that point: "... how say some of you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Cor. 15:12). This paganising of the hope of the gospel filled Paul with zeal and righteous indignation, and caused him to pen the fifteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, to counteract its pernicious influence.

FIRST CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 15

Paul's emphasis on resurrection and the importance he attaches to it is very revealing and enlightening. His words leave us with the distinct impression that apart from resurrection, there is no other hope of life after death. All that he writes could not possibly come from the pen of one who believed in the immortality of the soul. If he believed in life after death in the form of an immortal soul, he would surely have said so in such a long chapter, which is totally devoted to the very subject of life after death. There is a significant silence and absence of reference to any form of life after death apart from resurrection.

Throughout this chapter he is emphatic that the dead in Christ are "asleep" - "some are fallen asleep" (v6); "they also who have fallen asleep" (v18); "them that slept" (v20); "we shall not all sleep" (v51).

It is quite evident from a careful reading of the whole chapter that by: "asleep," Paul means "dead" i.e. "not alive." For instance, in verses 20- 22; "slept," "death" and "die" are all used interchangeably. And, that this means "not alive" is evident from the fact that they are referred to as

being "made alive" at the resurrection in verse 22. If they are "made alive" then, they obviously must have not been alive beforehand. In verse 51 we also read about those who "sleep" and verse 52 refers to them as "the dead."

THE REAL CRUNCH

The real crunch of Paul's argument comes in verses 16-18. In refusing the false teaching of the Greeks, Paul links together inseparably the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers at the second coming. If Christ has not been raised, all else is false. (This will be considered in depth later.). Paul's words are: "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, our faith is vain; you are yet still in your sins. Then they also who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

Paul makes two important points here:

(1) If there is no resurrection for the saints, then Christ himself cannot have been raised. This clearly implies that one of the main purposes in the resurrection of Christ was that those who belong to him might also be resurrected. In other words, if Christ has been raised it is inevitable that his followers will be raised also. So inevitable is this in fact, that denial of his followers' resurrection implies that he himself cannot have been raised. Paul goes on to show that Christ's resurrection is like the "firstfruits." The firstfruits inevitably led to a harvest or main crop, which represents the saints who will be resurrected afterwards at the second coming. To deny their resurrection, yet accept Christ's resurrection was as illogical as denying that there would be a crop of fruit, yet accepting there would be some firstfruits.

(2) Paul says that if there is no resurrection, then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished. In other words, without resurrection, all the dead saints are "utterly lost," as the New English Bible puts it. Take away the resurrection, and there is no hope of life after death for the dead Christians. But, if man possessed an immortal soul which lived on in glory after death, Paul could not possibly have written this way. If a man lives on out of the body, he could not, under any stretch of the imagination, be referred to as being "utterly lost" unless his body was brought back to life. Paul clearly had no hope or confidence in immortal soulism.

Paul goes on to say in verse 19 that: "If it is for this life only Christ has given us hope, we are of all men most miserable." That is, if the only

life we receive as a result of being a Christian is what the present life provides, and there is no resurrection to life eternal, we would be very miserable. But, once again, if Paul believed in an immortal soul, he could not write this way because apart from resurrection, he would still have hope in life after death through his immortal soul. However, Paul clearly says that without the hope of resurrection we would be very miserable because, without it, there is no other hope of life after death. But, Paul teaches that as a result of belonging to Christ, we have hope of life beyond this present life: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (v20-22).

"FIRSTFRUITS"

Once again, Paul places all hope of life after death in the resurrection. Christ is risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept. "Firstfruits" refers to the first-ripe of the land of Israel which were accounted the Lord's property; and as such were offered to him under the law of Moses. Firstfruits come as an earnest - a prelude or forerunner of the main crop. The main harvest always came some time after the firstfruits as a natural consequence. Jesus was the "first-fruits" of them that slept inasmuch that he was the first man to be raised from the dead to eternal life. Other men before him had been brought back to life of course, like Lazarus, but in their particular case it was only an extension of natural life and not immortality.

In applying the term "firstfruits" to the resurrection of Jesus, Paul teaches that a harvest will follow - others who are asleep will also experience the same resurrection to immortality. When? Verse 23 supplies the answer: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming."

Paul very clearly presents a specific order of events here which the doctrine of the immortality of the soul destroys. He speaks about certain Christians who are asleep (v20), which he explains to mean "dead" (v21); but they "shall be made alive" through resurrection (v22) at "Christ's coming" (v23).

Nothing could be plainer than this. It is completely contradicted and confused by the immortal soul theory. Tradition often teaches that when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, he took with him from the grave all the immortal souls of the Old Testament saints, along with

the souls of the early Christians who died before the death of Jesus. This is completely contrary to what Paul teaches in the passage before us. He stresses that it is resurrection of the body, upon which life after death depends, and not the departure of an immortal soul. Moreover, the resurrection of the body will not take place till the coming of Christ. Tradition has totally reversed the facts by saying that it was at the going (ascension) of Jesus that the saints entered into their eternal inheritance, and that since he has gone, all who believe in him go to be with him at death. This is not Pauline theology!

The resurrection of Jesus then, is an "earnest" or token of the Christian's coming immortality. By raising the head of the body from the dead, God has given assurance to all the body, of his ability and desire to do the same for them (Act. 17:31). A head is incomplete without a body! The body must be linked with the head in the promised eternity. So the resurrection of the head demands and necessitates the resurrection of the body, which is the church. Our resurrection is as sure as the harvest that follows the "firstfruits," and that is why Paul used the expression in relation to Christ's resurrection.

In the resurrection of Jesus; God has, as pointed out earlier; "confirmed the promises." The promises of God involved life-eternal for all who avail themselves of the salvation provided in his son. Now, living forever requires the possession of eternal life, and from the point of view of all who have died, eternal life depends on resurrection. Christ's resurrection and the power now invested in him to resurrect others has confirmed God's promises. How? By making their fulfilment possible! Now that he has destroyed the very enemy responsible for death; namely sin, and has been raised from the dead himself with the power to raise others; all the promises of God concerning eternal life are now able to be fulfilled. The resurrection of Jesus is the proof and confirmation of this. The stage is all set up for the fulfilment of all things offered in the promises of God. All it requires to set everything in motion is the second coming of Christ! And his coming is so certain, and his reward so sure to those who love him, they already as good as have it in their possession! Prospectively speaking, we already "have it".

Let us pass on to 1 Cor. 15:32-34. Paul refers to the fierce opposition he encountered at Ephesus with ungodly men. He refers to his encounter in metaphorical terms of: fighting with wild beasts. He often suffered tribulation and persecution at the hands of violent and ungodly men for the sake of preaching the gospel. He asks the pertinent question: "What is the point in suffering persecution if there is no resurrection of the

dead to look forward to? Tradition would reply that there was a great advantage without the resurrection being necessary because the immortal soul departs to heaven the moment the body dies. But the apostle Paul clearly had no such fallacious prop to fall back upon in his theology. His hope of life after death centred entirely on resurrection, and as far as he was concerned, if there was no resurrection, then there was no advantage in serving the gospel of Christ.

He continues in v33-34: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good character. Awake to righteousness (i.e. "the right way") and sin not (by believing and teaching false concepts which negate vital truths of God), for some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame." In Paul's view, the whole subject was a serious issue and vital to understand correctly.

IMMORTALITY RELATES TO A BODY

From 1 Cor. 15:35 onward it is apparent that Paul associates immortality with a "body." His whole concept of life after death has nothing to do with some vague, mysterious, immaterial, invisible "ghost" or "spirit." Not a word is said in this chapter or any other to this effect. The word "body" or "bodies" occurs 10 times within the compass of just a few verses which all relate to the subject of life after death. This is very significant. This chapter, which deals specifically with the subject of life after death, mentions the "body" 10 times as the state in which life after death takes place. The words "soul" and "spirit" only occur once each, in the same verse (v45), where they both refer to the physical nature of the body, and not some disembodied entity!

Job, long before, was adamant that although worms would destroy his skin and body in death, yet "in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:26-27). His hope was clearly in the resurrection of the body. This will be made even more apparent when we consider his statement in 14:7-15 later.

Modern talk on the subject of immortality would lead us to suppose it was a purely mental quality, like conscience or benevolence - a thing of spiritual condition - an essence which has no reference to time or space or being. As death has come to have an artificial theological significance; so immortality itself, the promised gift of God through Jesus Christ; has been frittered way into a metaphysical conception - beyond the conception - beyond the comprehension, as it has been placed beyond the practical interest of mankind.

Bringing common sense and Scripture teaching to bear on this point, we find that immortality is the opposite of mortality. Mortality is deathfulness in relation to being, and immortality is deathlessness in relation to being. Mortality is life manifested through a corruptible body; and immortality is life manifested through an incorruptible body. In the latter part of 1 Cor. 15, Paul refers to those two bodies as a "natural body" and a "spiritual body" - "corruptible" and "incorruptible."

In Rom. 2:7 Paul says that those who seek for immortality shall receive eternal life. "Eternal" refers to endless duration of existence, and "immortal" refers to the type of physical nature (i.e. a "spiritual body") that enables us to have eternal existence. One writer puts it like this: "The exact difference between the terms "immortality" and "eternal life" is this: Eternal life describes the life that will be experienced in the "age" or "world" to come, and implies or involves "deathlessness of body" which is the meaning of immortality."

A mortal body is one that has terminable existence, and an immortal body is one so constituted that its life is endless. The terminability of the one, and the endlessness of the other, are the result of established conditions in their natures respectively. Man is mortal, because his organism tends to decay. He is under the sentence: "dying thou shalt die." If his organism could go on working from year to year, without deterioration, or liability to disorder, he would be immortal; apart from violence, because life would constantly be sustained and manifested. But it is not so at the moment, as we know to our sorrow.

Man's nature contains within it the seeds of corruption, and hence it runs down to unavoidable dissolution. The finest constitution will succumb at the last to the gradual exhaustion going on from year to year. To be immortal, we must be incorruptible in substance; because that which is incorruptible cannot decay; and an incorruptible living organism will live forever. Hence, the necessity laid down in the saying of the apostle Paul: "This corruptible (body) must put on incorruption, and this mortal (body) must put on immortality." Paul again reveals here that he did not believe in natural, inherent immortality. He did not believe he possessed immortality in the form of an immortal soul. He refers to immortality as something external to man - something in the hands of God which has to be "put on" the body at resurrection before man can become immortal. It will not be till this takes place, that death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:53-54).

This doctrine of "life and immortality" was new to the Greeks and Romans and was brought to light only through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It was foolishness to the pagans, for they thought, in their blind conceit; that their philosophy of the immortality of the soul was wiser and better, and thus, by such "wisdom," knew not God. Paul however, did not regard resurrection as foolishness and was not ashamed to be identified with it and openly proclaim it. He unashamedly based his whole future hope upon it. The certainty of the resurrection was the motivating hope that spurred him on in his ministry and enabled him to face persecution and death with confidence.

In 2 Cor. 1:8-9 Paul speaks about the trouble he and his fellow-workers had in Asia. He says that: "we were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life." He then says that "we had the answer of death in ourselves." Tradition would probably interpret this to mean that Paul was referring to an immortal soul. Was this Paul's answer to death? By no means! He goes on to say that the answer to death was the conviction within himself that he should not trust in himself, but in God who raises the dead. Paul's answer to death was his conviction of the resurrection!

Immortality then, requires our present mortal body to be changed into an immortal body. This in fact, is what we read in Plp. 3:20-21: "Jesus Christ shall change our vile ("lowly") bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body."

Again in 1 Cor. 15:51-52 we read: "Behold, I will tell you something that has been kept secret; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Or, as Paul puts it in 1 Cor. 15:42-44: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It (the body) is sown in (the grave) corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

Once again it is significant to note that all of Paul's discussion on immortality relates to resurrection of the body. He does not say that the body is sown in corruption and the immortal soul immediately departs to heaven incorruptible. No! The body is sown corruptible and at the resurrection, the body will be raised incorruptible. Then, and only then, will the saints experience immortality.

LESSONS FROM NATURE

In 1 Cor. 15:35, Paul faces the question: "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" We should recall here certain prominent Jewish teachings about resurrection which held either that the resurrection body will be identical with the mortal earthly body (2 Macc. 14:46), or that the same earthly body would be raised and only later transformed (Apoc. Bar. 50:2).

Paul's first answer is that resurrection is a resurrection of the body. To establish this he uses a rather imperfect metaphor: that of sowing a naked seed which dies but from which comes forth a new body (v35-38). That the analogy is imperfect, is seen from the fact that in agriculture, the bare kernel planted in the ground carries within itself the power of germination so that death is not the final word: life is perpetuated. But who can find in the realm of nature adequate analogies for supernatural truth? The resurrection is an act of God, not a process of nature. Yet to the observer, it is a marvellous thing that a dried-up, dead-looking seed of corn is buried in the ground only to have a beautiful green blade spring forth. After all, Jesus used the parable of seeds of grain (Mk. 4:26-29), to teach the contrast between the present and future aspects of the kingdom which is altogether God's deed, not a process of nature. The point is that one body is buried in the ground; another body springs forth. That this is Paul's meaning is proven by his statement: "But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body" (v38).

So it is in the resurrection. The body that is sown in the earth is not the body that shall be. The body that goes into the earth is mortal and corruptible; the body that shall be produced when Jesus has finished his resurrection work will be immortal and incorruptible.

Paul then, shows that the mortal "natural body" had a similar relation to the immortal "spiritual body;" that naked grain has to the plant produced from it, according to the law of its reproduction. He says that before a plant could be produced from a seed, the seed must be put into the soil and die, or decay away. By the time the plant is established, all vestige of the seed is gone from the root; yet the identity of the seed with the plant is not lost, inasmuch as the same kind of seed re-appears in the fruit of the plant. The plant is the secondary body of the seed-body, which is the first. "So also," says Paul, "is the resurrection of the dead." We are in a state like the naked grain. We die and are buried, and go to corruption; leaving only our characters behind us written in the Lord's book of life. When decayed, a little dust alone remains, as the nucleus of our future

selves. When the time comes for the righteous dead to rise, then "he who raised up Christ from the dead will also make alive their mortal bodies by his spirit," operating through Jesus upon their dust, and fashioning it into the image of the Lord from heaven.

To obtain immortality then, is to be transformed from our present weak, frail, corruptible condition of a body; into a perfect, incorruptible, powerful condition, in which we shall no more be the subject to weakness, pain, sorrow and death; but shall be like the Lord Jesus Christ in his present exalted state of existence.

It is important to note that the context of the often quoted victory song: "Death is swallowed up in victory; O death where is thy sting ..." (v54-55), relates wholly and solely to the time of resurrection. Yet, if man entered into immortality in a disembodied state the moment his body died, the victory song would hardly have to wait till the resurrection at the second coming of Jesus.

APOSTOLIC FUNERAL SERMONS

Let us now consider some passages of Scripture in which consolation is ministered in reference to the dead. We will find that there is a great contrast between these and the consolation ministered in funeral sermons in many churches today.

We have already looked at 1 Thes. 4, but let us look at it again in the light of our present consideration.

Some of the Thessalonians were sorrowing over the death of their fellow Christians. So Paul writes to them saying: "I don't want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope."

This is quite straightforward. Paul reminds them that those who die in Christ have hope, so there is no need to be sad like unbelievers who have no hope. And, says Paul, "I don't want you to be ignorant ..." In these days of superficial Christianity, lukewarmness and apathy towards a deep and thorough study of the Word of God; there is tremendous ignorance of the real purpose of God and the true hope of the Christian faith. Many Christians today are indifferent to what is correct Bible teaching, and are unwilling to study it carefully and thoughtfully and become rooted and grounded in the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Many are content to strum guitars and sing happy little choruses but never spend time deeply meditating in the word of God. There is, of course, nothing wrong with singing happy choruses and strumming a guitar, but when it is done at the

expense of spending time in the Word, it more often than not results in ignorance of important aspects of the true Christian faith.

Paul's words: "I don't want you to be ignorant ..." are a very strong challenge and puts this whole subject of resurrection in its true perspective. Many today would say: "What does it matter what you believe about life after death. The important thing is to believe that there will be life after death. Who cares what form or shape it will be in?"

This kind of careless, carefree, flippant, almost irresponsible attitude towards the things of God is very common today, and stands in sharp contrast with the apostle Paul's attitude. On another occasion he said: "Brethren, be not children in understanding ... but in understanding be men" (mature) 1 Cor. 14:20.

"How long you simple ones, will you love simplicity" asked Solomon (Pr. 1:22). The same verse says: "Fools hate knowledge." The Jewish Christians were strongly rebuked by Paul for remaining on the milk of the Word and not advancing to meat. They were lazy in the spirit and had failed to exercise their senses in the Word of God. Paul wanted to take them on to deeper truths but could not, due to their dullness. So dull were they, that Paul said they were in need of being taught again the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. And, significantly enough, the doctrine of the resurrection was among these first principles! (Heb. 5:6 to 6:2). What a challenge in view of the present situation in Christendom with regard to the teaching on immortality!

Paul then, told the Thessalonians not to sorrow over those who had fallen asleep as do others who have no hope. What then, is the "hope" that Paul had in mind that causes the Christian to not sorrow to the same extent as others who have no hope? Is it, as commonly preached at funerals these days, that the immortal soul of the deceased has journeyed upwards to the celestial city? By no means! There is a significant silence of such a concept in this passage in 1 Thes. 4, and all other portions of the word of God. Such a "hope" is a vain and false hope and therefore a meaningless and artificial kind of comfort to minister to the bereaved.

Paul explains the hope by saying that if we believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead, God will bring back to life with him all who are asleep in him (v14). When? Verse 16 tells us: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

Once again we are plainly taught that life after death depends on the resurrection, and will not take place till the return of Jesus from heaven. Reference to the "trump of God" takes us back to the "last trump" in 1

Cor. 15:52. They are parallel passages, and relate to the second coming of Christ. The "great sound of the trumpet" in Matt. 24:30-31 also relates to the second coming.

Nowhere in Scripture are we taught that men, women and children come from heaven with Jesus when he returns to the earth. Nowhere is it taught that when Jesus returns he will be accompanied by disembodied spirits which he will quickly send down into their bodies so that they can rise physically from the dead. Some Scriptures refer to Jesus being accompanied by "saints" i.e. "holy ones" when he comes from heaven, but a careful reading of all the passages concerned soon reveals that the reference is to angels. The Christian saints will be gathered up to meet Jesus in the air as he descends from heaven with his angels, and will join the angelic company; and in that respect, will descend to earth with Jesus. But that is quite different from saying that their immortal souls come from heaven (God's throne) with him.

Paul concludes in 1 Thes. 4:18 by saying: "Therefore comfort one another with these words." This is very important and significant. Regarding the bereaved, Paul says they should be comforted with the hope of the second coming and resurrection. Such constitutes the true apostolic hope, and Paul comforted the bereaved in his day with this.

Paul would hardly recognise the message of hope and comfort that is ministered to the bereaved in modern times! Yet he probably wouldn't be surprised because he knew that the time would come when the church would not endure sound doctrine but would turn away from the truth to myths and fables and empty human philosophy.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN RESURRECTION, THE HOPE OF BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

The importance of resurrection as the only hope of life after death is made very clear in both the Old and New Testament doctrine.

To start with, we go right back to the first book of the Old Testament to Genesis chapter 22. Here we read about the remarkable faith of Abraham who was prepared to offer up in sacrifice to God his only beloved son Isaac. On what basis did he exercise such faith? Was it because he believed that the moment he plunged the knife into his son's body, his immortal soul would be released and ascend to heaven? By no means! His faith was totally based on the certainty and reality of resurrection, as we read in Heb. 11:19: "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead."

So sure was Abraham about God raising Isaac from the dead, that he told the company of men that were travelling with him to the place of sacrifice: "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad (Isaac) will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Gen. 22:5). Abraham believed that, although he was going to slay his son as a sacrifice, both he and his son would nevertheless return to the camp, indicating that he believed God would raise Isaac from the dead and restore his life.

In Heb. 11:35, reference is made to Old Testament saints who were tortured for their faith, refusing to accept deliverance by denying their faith. Why did they refuse to accept deliverance from death? Was it because they believed that the moment they died their immortal soul would go to heaven? No, the passage clearly states it was in order "that they might obtain a better resurrection."

Concerning Joseph we read: "By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones" (Heb. 11:22). The Old Testament account of this is in Gen. 50:24. Joseph did not want his bones to be buried and remain in Egypt. He wanted them to accompany the exodus of Israel and be buried in the land of promise where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been buried.

It seems strange that Joseph should be concerned about the burial place of his bones if he believed in the Egyptian doctrine of the immortality of the soul. His concern can only make sense in the light of the doctrine of resurrection. His whole hope of life after death was, as a true seed of Abraham, based on resurrection of the body and he wanted

his body to be in the land of promise; and not Egypt, when the great resurrection event took place. After all, the great patriarchs were buried there, and it is to that land of promise that Messiah will specifically return when he comes to earth. Joseph wanted his bones to rest in company with the bones of the enlightened faithful rather than remain among the ignorant and superstitious pagan Egyptians.

It was for the same reason that Jacob made Joseph swear that he would not bury him in Egypt. He wanted to be carried out of Egypt and be buried in the burying place of his fathers in the land of promise (Gen. 47).

In Psa. 71:20 we read: "You (God) have sent me misery and hardship, but you will give me life again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth." In this typical Hebrew parallelism, David indicates that receiving life again depended on being brought up from the grave.

In Psa. 17:15 he says "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." David clearly understood that he would not see the Lord face to face till he was awakened from his death-sleep. When this takes place at the resurrection we shall all be "changed" and fashioned after his likeness. But, according to the theory of the immortal soul, we never lose consciousness, which means we never "sleep" and therefore never need to "awake." David certainly did not believe this, and Peter, 1,000 years later; was adamant that "David has not ascended to heaven."

Daniel was also under no illusion concerning the death-sleep of the saints. Speaking about the time of the end when Jesus returns, he says: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). From this we learn that all the dead saints are "asleep" in the dust till the second coming and resurrection. This includes Daniel who was told that he would not arise till the end. (Dan. 12:13). In the light of this, it should be evident that the Old Testament saints did not accompany Jesus to heaven when he ascended. Like Daniel, they remain asleep in the dust till the end-time resurrection. In Dan. 12:2, Daniel states explicitly that it will not be till the resurrection that the saints will receive "everlasting life." This verse says that they shall awake to everlasting life at the resurrection. In other words: they have to be awakened before they can receive it. They did not die possessing it in the form of an immortal soul! Their bodies must be resurrected from the dust before they can live forever.

1 Sam. 2:6 states: "The Lord killeth, and makes alive: He brings

down to the grave, and brings up." In this verse, the words: "makes alive" and "brings up" from the grave obviously run parallel. That is, life after death depends upon resurrection.

Isa. 26:14 reads: "They (heathen rulers) are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise ..." Here, death is clearly defined as not being alive. And, in addition to that, it is clearly stated that if they do not rise from the grave they will never live again. Life after death clearly depends upon resurrection.

The contrast is provided in verse 19: "Thy (God's) dead men (i.e. the saints) shall live, their bodies shall rise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Once again it is apparent that life after death depends upon the body rising from the grave or dust. When this takes place, the dead saints will "awake and sing." They have not been awake and singing in heaven prior to the resurrection!

The metaphor presented in the words: "Thy dew is as the dew of the herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead," is interesting. It reminds us of Paul's analogy in 1 Cor. 15 between the sprouting of seed and the resurrection of the saints. The dew from heaven was essential for vegetation during the dry summer months in the land of Israel. It caused vegetation to spring forth from dust. Without it, the vegetation would never sprout, but remain hidden in the earth.

The return of Jesus from heaven will be like the dew - a dew imparting life and light to those who sleep in the darkness of death. At the coming of Jesus, all the saints who sleep in the earth will spring forth into everlasting trees of righteousness. Without the coming of Jesus and resurrection, they would remain dead in the earth like herbs without dew. (There are many Scriptures in which the "dew" and "rain" are used metaphorically for the blessing of God, and they are easy to find with the aid of a concordance. A number of Scriptures also liken the return of Jesus to the descending showers of rain which fructify the earth).

Job. 14:7-15 is an interesting testimony: "For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender shoots will not cease. Though the root grows old in the earth, and its stump die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth branches like a young plant. But man dies, is laid prostrate and wastes away: yes, man gives up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from a lake and a river drains and dries up, so man lies down, and rises not: till the (old) heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that you would hide me in the grave, that you would

conceal me, until your wrath be past, and then remember me at the appointed time. If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer you: you will have a desire towards me, the work of your hands."

Job's concept of life after death is in total harmony with everything we have considered and established from Scripture up to this point. His whole concept and hope of life after death rested entirely in the body being awakened out of death sleep, raised out of the dust and changed from a mortal body into an immortal body. This is his own inspired answer to his own question: "If a man die, shall he live again?" He says nothing about an immortal soul. Quite the opposite. He asks the very pertinent question: "... man gives up the ghost, (breathes his last), and where is he?" He answers this question, not by saying his immortal soul is in heaven, but that he lies down in the grave and does not rise again till the appointed time of his change comes.

The "appointed time" of this "change" comes of course, at the resurrection when Jesus returns to the earth. "It is appointed to man once to die, but after that the (resurrection and) judgement" (Heb. 9:27). God "has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man (Jesus) whom he has ordained" (Act. 17:31). "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though he (Jesus) tarry, wait for him; because he will surely come, he will not tarry" (Heb. 2:3. Heb. 10:37).

UNCLOTHED AND CLOTHED UPON

When the "appointed time" of the second coming and resurrection takes place, Job, along with all the other Old and New Testament saints who sleep in the earth, will be awakened and "changed." This "change" of nature from mortality to immortality was considered in the previous chapter when attention was given to 1 Cor. 15:51-52 and Plp. 3:21.

The divesting of the body of mortality and investing it with immortality is like a man changing his garments. It is actually referred to symbolically in Zec. 3:4 in these words: "Take away the filthy garments from him ... clothe him with change of raiment." At the moment, the flesh-nature of man contains propensities and impulses which have a strong bias towards sin. For this reason our flesh nature is referred to as "sinful flesh" in Scripture. It is like a poison in our system which induces us to do rotten and vile things when not controlled. Hence, Paul refers to our body as

being a "vile body" in Plp. 3:21 which desperately needs to be "changed."

Jesus himself, in order to deal with sin in the flesh, partook of the same flesh nature (Heb. 2:14), so that by nailing his body of flesh to the cross, he might destroy sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). In this passage, his flesh nature, which he inherited from his mother, is referred to as "sinful flesh." He was thus "made sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). This does not mean that he sinned of course! It simply means that he was clothed with the same flesh nature which contained the same impulses as other men. These impulses had mastered and conquered all other men, resulting in death. Jesus however, mastered and conquered these impulses and, instead of them putting him to death, he put them to death by nailing them to the cross in his body of flesh. His victory is imputed to all who believe and avail themselves of God's grace.

This flesh nature then, which contains the propensities to sin, is referred to in Zec. 3:4 as "filthy garment" and "iniquity." At the resurrection this nature is unclothed and changed into glorious, immortal nature like the very spirit nature of God which does not contain desires and propensities which have a bias towards sin. The spiritual body, like God himself, cannot be tempted or sin. The effects of Adam's sin no longer influence it or induce it towards evil. Those who attain to it cannot die any more because they will be equal to the angels (Lk. 20:36).

SECOND CORINTHIANS CHAPTER 5

The apostle Paul refers to this change of nature that we are considering in 2 Cor. 5. He refers to it in terms of being "clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up by life." This statement is clearly an echo of his statement in 1 Cor. 15:54 where, speaking about the resurrection, he says: "death is swallowed up in victory." Without a doubt, resurrection is the subject in both cases.

2 Cor. 5:1 provides a contrast between "the earthly tent we live in" which, in time dissolves (corrupts); and the "eternal building" or "house" reserved in heaven in Christ, which God has provided for us to live in. A contrast is made here between our present mortality and the future immortality reserved in heaven with Christ which he will clothe upon us at his return. Our present body, like a tent, is only temporal. Our future body, like a building, will be permanent.

Verse 2 reads: "For in this (temporal body) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is (coming) from heaven." It is important to note that Paul speaks of our "house which is

from heaven." He does not say that it is a house we go to in heaven. We do not go to heaven to get into this "house" - it will be brought to us from heaven by Jesus. It simply refers to the new spiritual body or immortal nature with which we shall be clothed when Jesus returns.

Paul's reference in 2 Cor. 5:2 to "groaning earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house" (i.e. be invested with immortality), immediately takes us back to Rom. 8:23 which speaks about the Christians groaning within themselves for the redemption of their body. These are parallel statements revealing that being "clothed with our house" refers to the "redemption of the body." Now, when does the redemption of the body take place? Certainly not at death, for at death the body undergoes the very opposite of a process of "redemption." It goes into bondage and corruption. It will not experience "redemption" till the Lord returns as the Resurrection and Life. It should be evident then, that Paul's expression: "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," is simply a metaphorical reference to the change of nature that will take place at the resurrection when Jesus gives his saints a new glorious permanent body.

That Paul had in mind the period of resurrection is further indicated in 2 Cor. 5:10. He says: "we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Now, when does Scripture teach that believers must appear before the judgement seat of Christ? The answer is clear: at his second coming and resurrection! What will faithful believers receive after judgement? A change of nature - their "house" from heaven!

This passage in 2 Cor. 5 concerning Paul's desire to be unclothed is often quoted by tradition to prove that Paul's desire was to have his immortal soul released, so that he could depart to be with Jesus in heaven, and leave his body behind. But, if the expression "unclothed" meant leaving behind the mortal body and departing to heaven in a disembodied form, Paul would have left it at that and just simply expressed a desire to be unclothed. However, he didn't leave it at that, but went on to explain what he really had in mind.

In verses 2-4 he emphasises three times that his desire in being unclothed was that he might be "clothed upon." In other words, he is simply expressing a desire to put off his weak mortal nature and to be clothed upon with the immortal nature. In verse 4 he says that while we live in our present mortal "tent" we groan because we are burdened with its weaknesses and anxieties. He says his desire is "not that we would be

unclothed (i.e. die and dissolve) but be clothed upon (i.e. be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality at the second coming) so that mortality might be swallowed up by life." Paul's deep desire was for the return of Jesus. He hoped that he would be among those who would live to see his return and therefore never die (i.e. be "unclothed"), but be "clothed upon" in the twinkling of an eye with immortality.

These verses quickly dispose of the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which doctrine, in contrast, wishes us to be unclothed from the body; not clothed upon with a body from heaven.

It surely follows of course, that we must have something which may be clothed upon, namely the "inward man," referred to in an earlier chapter as the "spirit of the mind." The very words "tent" and "house;" the first temporary, and the second permanent; define a dwelling and of necessity a tenant. This "tenant" is the "spirit of the mind" - the character and personality which is never lost or forgotten by God, but is written and recorded in the book of life. At the resurrection, this is re-created by God and clothed with a permanent habitation - an immortal "building" or body.

Nowhere then, in 2 Cor. 5 is Paul expressing a desire for disembodiment. Quite the opposite! He wanted to be "clothed upon" with his immortal body. He particularly hoped that he would remain alive till the second coming and experience his "change" of nature without having to die. In death the body corrupts and dissolves, leaving a man "naked." Paul preferred to avoid this so that he would "not be found naked." (Compare the analogy involving a "naked grain" in 1 Cor. 15:37).

It is in the light and context of all this that Paul's much misunderstood statement in verse 6 appears: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; (for we walk by faith, not by sight). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

This passage is generally interpreted to mean that Paul wanted to discard his body and go to heaven in a disembodied form - as an immortal soul. However, as we have already seen, there is nothing in the context of this chapter, or any other chapter in Paul's writings which upholds such interpretation. The word "soul" does not appear and there is certainly no reference to "immortal soul" here or anywhere else in the Word of God.

It is made quite clear in 2 Cor. 5 that Paul was not desiring disembodiment. His desire was not to be "unclothed" but to be "clothed upon." Hence, the phrase: "absent from the body" cannot mean that Paul

was desiring immaterial, disembodied existence. His hope was not to exist without a body! He did, however, express a desire to discard his weak mortal body and have it replaced with a strong immortal body! He clearly had this in mind when he spoke about being "absent from the body." The "body" from which he desired to be "absent" was the "natural body."

As long as we are at home in the natural body we are absent from the Lord. That is, if we still have a natural body the Lord is clearly not present with us in person, but absent in heaven, because when he has returned he will change our natural body into a spiritual body. Being clothed with a natural body is inevitable during the absence of the Lord. And, as Paul says in his parenthetical statement, it is a time during which we walk by faith and not by sight. However, when the Lord returns our faith will be turned into sight and we shall see him face to face and "shall be like him," when he has given us our spiritual body.

When the immortal nature is bestowed on the saints, they will be absent from the old mortal body and will be present with the Lord in the new immortal nature, because he will have returned. However, before this immortal nature is bestowed at the second coming, all will firstly have to appear before the Lord at his judgement seat (v10).

In 1 Cor. 15:50 Paul says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." "Flesh and blood" of course, refers to the "natural body" which is mortal and corruptible. Such a body cannot inherit the everlasting kingdom of God because it cannot live forever. This being the case, Paul might well desire to be absent from it. But this was not enough; it was necessary to add his desire to be present with the Lord. Many will be absent from the body forever as well as being absent from the Lord. They will be without body - without existence - swallowed up in the second death. Only those who are accepted will "be absent from the body, and present with the Lord" in the glory of a spiritual body. Paul's desire then, to be "present with the Lord," was a desire for his return, at which time his faith would be turned into sight and his immortal clothing would be provided.

When Jesus returns, many saints will be "present" and many will be "absent." That is, some will be present living in the body, and some will be absent, their bodies having died and dissolved away. Paul says in verse 9 that Christians should make it their ambition that, whether present or absent when Jesus returns, we may be accepted by him, because all of us, both dead and living, will have to stand before his judgement seat. Hence, each Christian should live every day as unto the Lord so that if his life is taken he will die ready and prepared to stand before the judge with

confidence and a clear conscience, and so be accepted by him. And the same will apply to the fully dedicated Christian who remains alive unto the coming of the Lord.

N.B. The reference in 2 Cor. 5:1 to the building of God - a house - eternal in the heavens, is often read to mean that the house will remain for all eternity in heaven. This is clearly a wrong interpretation for verse 2 states that the house will come from heaven to clothe the saints on earth. The point that is being made in verse 1 is that our house which comes from heaven is an eternal one, and not that it is eternally remaining in heaven; otherwise the second coming of Jesus would be entirely ruled out. Jesus returns with the power of God by which he will subdue all things and by which he will clothe his saints with an immortal body ("house"). As long as he remains in heaven with the power to perform this, our house remains in heaven with him!

Our future house from heaven in which we shall live forever is referred to in 1 Cor. 15:40 as a celestial body. Verses 48-49 refer to it as "heavenly" because it will be like "the Lord from heaven"(v47). Our present "house" gets old and shaky. Solomon refers to this in Ecc. 12:3 where he talks about "the keepers (arms) of the house (body) tremble." However, no such trembling will take place in our new house from heaven! (The house or "tabernacle of God," i.e. "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:1-3) also comes from heaven and will "clothe" all who enter it).

The expressions in 2 Cor. 5 of being clothed and unclothed can be compared with Peter's statement in 2 Pet. 1:13-14: "Yea, I think it is right as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tent, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me." Then, in verse 15 he explains that by saying he must put off his tent, he means "decease." Paul, of course when he penned 1 Cor. 5, hoped that he would not have to put off his tent and be unclothed. He hoped to see Christ's return and experience the instantaneous change of nature that he spoke about in 1 Cor. 15:51-52. However, it is evident from some of his later epistles that, like Peter, he realised that he was not going to remain alive till the second coming.

GOD SHALL CALL

Coming back to Job. 14, it is interesting to note that when the appointed time for his change comes, he says that God "shall call, and I will answer" (v15). The resurrection of Lazarus can be compared

with this: "And when he (Jesus) had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth ..." (Jn. 11:43-44).

Lazarus of course, was not changed from mortality to immortality, but simply received an extension of his mortal natural life. However, the manner in which Jesus revived him by calling to him in a loud voice, immediately links up with Job's testimony, suggesting that the resurrection of Lazarus was a type or foreshadow - a parable in action of greater things to come on the resurrection day. In that day, "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice" (Jn. 5:28-29). We have already read in 1 Thes. 4:16 that when resurrection takes place, the Lord shall "descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise." The perfect dovetailing of minor points such as these surely put the seal of inspiration on the whole subject.

Talking about Lazarus: Martha's reaction to his death and her response to Jesus' arrival on the scene is very revealing. When Jesus arrived she said: "Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know, that even now, whatever you ask of God, God will give it to you." What was Jesus' reply? What comfort did he offer her? Did he say that Lazarus' immortal soul was now in heaven in glory, or that it was resting in Hades waiting for him to take it to heaven at his ascension? Did he say that he would bring the soul or spirit back from heaven or wherever tradition thought it was, and cause it to re-enter his body? By no means! Jesus said to her: "Thy brother shall rise again." Lazarus was dead and buried in the tomb. His only hope of living again was in his body rising from the dead.

"Martha said to Jesus, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." All of Martha's hope in life after death clearly rested in the resurrection at the last day. Until then, she knew that her brother was not alive, but dead - asleep in the tomb.

Where did Martha get her teaching from on this subject? By turning back a few pages in the gospel of John it soon becomes evident that she was influenced by the teaching of Jesus himself. Jesus emphasised many times, as recorded in the sixth chapter of John's gospel, that "this is the Father's will who has sent me, that of all which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (v39). The same point is repeated and emphasised in verses 40, 44, and 54. Mary's declaration of faith: "I know that he (Lazarus) shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" is clearly an echo of this.

Notice that Jesus states that he will raise up at the last day those who have died in him, so that he "should lose nothing." In other words,

they would be lost forever if never resurrected! This hardly fits in with the immortal soul theory! If man, in some disembodied state, lives on forever in heaven after the death of his body, he could hardly be described as "lost." The Greek word translated "lose" in Jn. 6:39 is "apollumi" and means "destroy," "perish." Thus, without resurrection, man would perish and be destroyed forever. This, as we have already seen, is what Paul affirms in 1 Cor. 15:18 when he says that without resurrection: "Then they also who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished" ("utterly lost"- New English Bible).

On another occasion Jesus said: "You shall be rewarded at the resurrection of the righteous" (Lk. 14:14). This harmonises with the other passages of Scripture considered earlier which state that the saints will be rewarded at the second coming. The saints do not receive their reward prior to the resurrection. This again rules out the immortal soul theory.

A careful reading of Lk. 20:35-36 teaches that without resurrection it will be impossible for the dead saints to obtain the new world and age to come, and that it will not be until the resurrection that they will have a nature that "cannot die any more." Till then, they are not immortal in any shape or form.

Rev. 20:4 refers to those who died for Christ, and who "lived" again. Verse 4 explains how: "This is the first resurrection." It is impossible to miss the repeated emphasis in Scripture with regard to this vital subject. To live again after death necessitates resurrection.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN IMMORTALITY AND JUDAISM

The Old Testament concept of man should be quite clear by now. It teaches that man is wholly mortal and ceases to exist at death. In death there is no remembrance; all thoughts cease. The "dead know not anything;" they are unconscious.

In the Old Testament, man's soul or spirit is never viewed as an immortal part of man which survives death. Man's death occurs when his spirit (breath) is withdrawn, and his soul (nephesh) dies. "Soul" in the Old Testament is primarily vitality - his life, and not a separate "part" of man that lives on enjoying conscious existence after the death of the body.

Never in the Old Testament, is there any thought of an immortal soul existing after death. The Old Testament view of man is that he is an animated body rather than an incarnated soul. Death therefore, means the end of life - a time when man is stripped of his energy and vitality. It is a time of unconsciousness because mental consciousness depends upon the pulsation of energy - the operation of electrical impulses in the brain.

We have seen that the Old Testament view of man stands in sharp contrast to the Greek view. It has been pointed out that one of the most influential concepts of man stems from Platonic thought and has had a strong influence on the theology of Judaism as well as on Christian theology. Platonic thought holds that the soul belongs to the real, permanent world; and the body belongs to the visible, transitory world. In this view, the soul is immortal, and "salvation" means the flight of the soul at death to escape the burden of the physical world and find fulfilment in the world of eternal reality.

However, as far as Divine revelation is concerned in the Old Testament, hope of life after death is based on God's power over death, not on a view of something immortal in man. Survival after death is not a characteristic inherent in man; it rests altogether with God. Immortality is promised but not possessed. It depends entirely upon resurrection, and quotations were provided in the last chapter showing that the concept of bodily resurrection is clearly taught in the Old Testament.

Resurrection is the logical outcome of the Old Testament view of man, for whom bodily existence is essential to the full meaning of life. From Genesis onwards then, man is regarded as being mortal, and no other hope than resurrection is presented as the answer to life after death. This belief is eschatological. It is resurrection on the last day (Dan. 12); and the same hope is presented in the New Testament as we have also had

occasion to see. The Old and New Testaments are in complete harmony on this subject.

"NEW DOCTRINE"

If man really lives on after death of the body in some immaterial, invisible form; he clearly has no need of resurrection for salvation, and in no way depends upon it for himself; and has no need for the resurrection of Christ. If he is saved, and enjoys the bliss of heaven without a body, then the idea of resurrection becomes superfluous. For this reason, those who subscribed to the Greek philosophy of the immortality of the soul regarded Paul's teaching on resurrection as "strange" and "new doctrine" (Act. 17:18-19); and some mocked at it (Act. 17:32).

The doctrine of bodily resurrection at the last day has been practically discarded from the theology of many Churches today. Many Christians would not say they denied the resurrection (they could not do so without going directly against the Bible), but so far as spiritual requirements are concerned - so far as practical preaching goes, the resurrection has dropped into the background. It is a doctrine that could be dispensed with, without interfering with the character or applications of popular theology. Its absence would interfere with no hope, and diminish no motive that may belong to popular theology. It is a doctrine that is, in fact, denied by many professing Christians. And these days, Christianity is not regarded as any less sound on the account!

What is the reason for this? It is to be found in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. If man lives on without a body, then bodily resurrection becomes superfluous, and for this reason the doctrine of bodily resurrection is not regarded as being very important these days by many Christians.

Many Christians are essentially Greek in their concept of immortality. Resurrection at the last day is little more than an appendix to their theology, not a vital and integral part of it. The common view is that final salvation occurs when the body dies and the immortal soul flutters off to heaven to be with the Lord. "Salvation," according to this view, is achieved when, at death, man strips off the burdensome body and his soul finds its way to the "world of ultimate reality." It is a Greek concept - pagan philosophy and much popular Christian faith and some scholarly thinking reflects the same pattern.

This is not Biblical theology. Both Old and New Testaments teach

that the goal of individual salvation is the resurrection which will occur at the coming of Christ on "the last day." This is why the second coming of Christ is absolutely essential in the plan of redemption. "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Plp. 1:6).

The divine purpose is to redeem creation from the curse of corruption. Because man is the vital part of God's creation, redemption must mean the resurrection and transformation of his very body. As long as sin, evil, corruption, decay, violence, and death remain in the world, God's redemptive work remains incomplete (Rom. 8). Total and complete redemption awaits the second coming of Christ and the manifestation in glory of the sons of God. Without the second coming, redemption in the total sense is impossible.

IMMORTALITY AND JUDAISM

We have access to fairly extensive literature which reflects to us Jewish ideas about the nature of man and the state of the dead. This literature was produced during the inter-testament and post New Testament periods. First is the Jewish inter-testamental literature, i.e. the literature written between the period from the last book in the Old Testament (Malachi) and the first book of the New Testament (Matthew), which was a period of around 500 years. This literature is usually referred to as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. "Apocrypha" means "things that are hidden," and it is not clear how the term came to be used to designate a certain collection of books. The books of the Apocrypha are those books contained in the Roman Catholic Bible which the Protestant churches do not generally recognise as canonical. "Pseudepigrapha" means "false writings" in the sense that a given book is attributed to someone who obviously did not write it i.e. Enoch, Baruch, Moses etc. However, these are artificial designations which have arisen through historical accidents. It is more accurate to describe all of these books as Jewish apocryphal or inter-testamental writings. The various books were produced by various groups within Judaism and reflect great diversity of viewpoints.

A second group of literature is the so-called Qumran writings, produced by a separatist sect in the first two centuries B.C. The most important of these writings are the Manual of Discipline, the Damascus Document, the Hymns, the War Scroll, and the commentaries on certain Old Testament books. The Qumran writings reflect ideas which are different from those found in the other Jewish inter-testamental writings.

One fact about the character of Judaism stands out in all these writings. The Christian church throughout its history has placed great emphasis upon "orthodoxy" - correct thought. This was not true of Judaism. Normative in Judaism was "orthopraxy" - correct practice. If a Jew obeyed the Law of Moses, he was considered orthodox, even though he might have different theological ideas from the mainstream of Judaism. Thus we may expect to find great variety in inter-testamental Judaism about the nature of man, the state of the dead, the fate of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Indeed we do! In fact, we discover that the Sadducees, who were the dominant party in the Sanhedrin, did not believe in the immortality of the soul or resurrection of the body. They rejected both. The Pharisees and other Judaizers accepted both. Others only accepted one or the other.

A number of the inter-testamental writings express the Old Testament belief in resurrection. One of the most vivid resurrection hopes is found in 2 Maccabees (7:9, 11, 14, 22-23, 29. 12:43. 14:6).

The hope of resurrection is also expressed in the Apocalypse of Baruch, a writing of the late first century A.D. Baruch was overwhelmed by the tragedy of the destruction of Jerusalem. Reflecting on the evils of this life, he sees hope only in the world to come, including the resurrection of the righteous (Apoc. Bar. 50:2-51:10). There is a twofold idea of resurrection in this passage. First, the dead are raised in precisely the same form in which they died that there may be mutual recognition. After that they are transformed into the light and splendour of angels, in order that they may dwell in the heights of the invisible heavenly world.

Another apocalypse, written at about the same time, is the apocalypse of Ezra, usually designated 4 Ezra. This book, together with several additional chapters, is included in the Apocrypha under the name of 2 Esdras. However, the book is as apocalyptic and as pseudepigraphical as Baruch. Ezra describes the coming of Messiah who will reign on earth in a temporary kingdom of 400 years duration. After this interim kingdom the earth shall give up those who sleep in it etc. (4 Ez. 7:32-36). In another passage, Ezra speaks of the blessedness that awaits the righteous dead in the day of resurrection: "Their face is to shine like the sun, and ... they are to be made like the light of the stars, being incorruptible from then on" (4 Ez. 7:97). This sounds very much like Dan. 12:3.

One of the most interesting books of the Apocrypha is Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach. This is the only apocryphal book whose author is known. Jesus had no concept of either a happy afterlife or of resurrection; he perpetuates the Old Testament idea

of Sheol being a place of darkness, silence and corruption; but also refers to it as a place of endless sleep and eternal rest. He says: "Do not forget, there is no coming back from death" (38:21). The only immortality he knows is a good name which can be remembered (39:9. 41:11-13. 44:8), or the persistence of one's name in his children (11:28. 46:12). Thus, while Jesus ben Sirach lived and wrote before the emergence of the Pharisees and Sadducees, his attitude towards death and the afterlife was the same as that adopted by the Sadducees. In fact, the Sadducees may have been largely influenced by his writings.

Another interesting apocalyptic book is the book of Enoch, usually called 1 Enoch. (There is a 2 Enoch, the date of whose composition is difficult to decide. It may be much later than the early Christian period). This book consists of five very diverse parts, whose history and compilation is impossible to reconstruct. The several parts of Enoch were probably written during the first two centuries before Christ. These five books contain very different eschatological expectations. The first book does not speak of resurrection, but resurrection is implied. Resurrection is also implied in the fourth part of Enoch but is not spelled out. The most interesting expectation of resurrection is found in the second part of Enoch (46:6. 51:1-2. 62:13-16). Resurrection is also implied in the fifth book of Enoch (92:3-5. 104:2. 104:4, 6). However in this part of Enoch we find a feature which is quite uncommon in Judaism. It seems to be a resurrection not of the body but of the spirit. This is how it reads:

"And the spirits of you who have died in righteousness shall live and rejoice. And their spirits shall not perish, nor their memorial from before the face of the Great One unto all the generations of the world" (103:4). Here we meet the idea of a blessed immortality of the spirit, apparently without bodily resurrection.

Some have also attributed to the sectarians of Qumran the same idea of the immortality of the soul as that found in the fifth part of Enoch (see John Pryke, "Eschatology in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in "The Scrolls and Christianity," ed. by M Black. London: S.P.C.K. 1969 p56). While the question is debated, the answer seems that they were not much concerned about the fate of the dead.

The Pharisaic Scribes, whose teachings formed the mainstream of Jewish thought, were influenced by the inter-testamental writings. The Talmudic writings, written after New Testament times, represented the thinking of the Scribes and Pharisees, and found their source in the inter-testamental writings. These writings must be used with caution, for they were compiled much later than New Testament times. However, since

they embody the "tradition of the elders" (Mk. 7:35) which were preserved in oral form in Jesus' day, they reflect one important strand in Jewish thinking, and provide an important background to a number of statements made in the New Testament which relate to the subject in hand.

Josephus, the great Jewish historian who wrote in the first century A.D. says that the Pharisees teach "that every soul is imperishable." Although they believed in the resurrection (and this is a very prominent teaching in the Talmudic writings), they also believed in the immortality of the soul. In his writings, Josephus frequently reflects current Jewish teaching on the subject, especially in his comments about demons. He asserts that demons are the "spirits" of wicked men who, after death, enter the living and torment them, seeking to possess their body. Josephus believed that the soul or spirit of man lived on after the death of the body and in saying this, reflected current Jewish teaching.

Such teaching clearly did not come from the Old Testament. It came from the Greeks, whose influence can be seen in history and in some of the inter-testamental writings which, significantly enough, were written during the hey-day of Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy particularly asserted itself during the period between the two Testaments. The Greeks came to power under Alexander the Great around 330 B.C. and dominated the world almost up to the New Testament times. Although the Romans succeeded the Greeks as a world power, the Greek philosophy nevertheless remained rooted and grounded in the world and continued to influence the minds of all peoples. As was pointed out in an earlier chapter: Greek philosophy was taught in the various schools throughout the Roman Empire.

The period between the two Testaments (from Malachi to Matthew), was a time referred to by the prophet Amos - a time when there would be famine of hearing the words of the Lord (Am. 8:11). It was a period during which open vision and divine manifestation virtually ceased (Hos. 3:4). Instead of holding fast to Old Testament revelation, many Jews relaxed their grip and become influenced by the flesh-inspired philosophy of the Greeks which had a tremendous appearance of wisdom about it. This influence can be seen in certain statements in the inter-testamental and Talmudic writings, and the writings of Josephus.

Certainly, the concept of demons being the departed spirits of the dead was a Greek concept. This is borne out in many ancient Greek writings. The Jews clearly borrowed the idea from them. Not the slightest foundation exists for this doctrine in the Old Testament. By New Testament times, after several hundred years of Greek influence, many

Greek concepts had become superimposed on Jewish teaching. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul in particular, was well established in the mainstream of Jewish thought by the time of Christ.

APOSTLES INFLUENCED

Naturally the men who Jesus chose to be his apostles, being Jews, had grown up under the influence of Judaism. Initially, they would have believed in the immortality of the soul. This is suggested in Lk. 24:36-40.

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared in the midst of a gathering of his disciples, and spoke to them. Their reaction is described in these words: "But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit." Jesus addressed them saying: "Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

Now, why did the disciples think Jesus was "a spirit" when his form appeared in their midst; and what did they mean? The answer is really quite simple. Even though Jesus had told them on a number of occasions that he would be put to death and rise again afterwards, they did not believe him. "They understood not ... it was hid from them ... they perceived it not" (Lk. 9:45. 18:34). They "questioned with one another what the rising from the dead should mean" (Mk. 9:10). When Jesus died on the cross, the disciples did not expect to see him again, certainly not in bodily form! All hope of ever being in his company again completely vanished when he died on the cross. The last thing that they expected was for him to be physically resurrected and to appear to them in a body. Having been influenced from childhood by the Pharisaic Scribe's teaching on the immortality of the soul, the disciples no doubt imagined that the "spirit" of Jesus had left the body at death and departed to wherever good spirits were supposed to go. They no doubt believed, as was taught by the Pharisees, that a resurrection would take place at the end of the world, and would therefore believe that Jesus would be resurrected at that time. In the meantime however, they would be of the understanding that the "spirit" of Jesus had left the body and that Jesus lived on in a disembodied state.

Hence, when Jesus suddenly and unexpectedly appeared in their midst, they immediately concluded it was his departed spirit. Having never seen what they believed to be a "spirit-manifestation," and their minds no doubt filled with all sorts of fictitious stories about such "spirits" as taught by the vain superstitious pagan philosophies current at the time;

they became afraid and troubled. For this reason, Jesus "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart" (Mk. 16:11). Prior to this he also rebuked another couple of disciples who did not believe in his resurrection: "O fools and slow of heart to believe ..." (Lk. 24:25-27). It should never be forgotten that although the apostles accompanied Jesus during his ministry and ministered themselves, they were by no means totally enlightened in all matters. It was a time of education and learning for them - a period during which they were gradually unhinged from false concepts they had grown up with since childhood. Unlike many modern teachers, Jesus did not set out to dispossess their minds of incorrect concepts and cram them full with right concepts overnight! He was patient and usually gentle; realising that time is often required for prejudices to evaporate.

According to Greek philosophy, and therefore the "vain traditions" of Judaism's immortality of the soul which came from the same source, the departed human spirit is without body or parts. In other words, immaterial. Jesus, being aware of this, dispelled his disciples' fear by reminding them of it, saying: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." In saying that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, Jesus simply pointed out that their concept of a spirit was inconsistent with what they could see him to be. In other words, Jesus told them he could not possibly be what they imagined him to be.

Jesus' statement that "a spirit hath not flesh and bones," should not be regarded as a statement of fact supporting the current doctrine of the immortality of the soul. He is simply reminding the disciples that such a doctrine cannot possibly explain his appearance after death. It was not the time or the place to get bogged down in an involved theological debate, refuting the concept of the immortality of the soul. Jesus dealt with the crisis in the quickest and most effective manner possible simply by pointing out that his life after death experience was inconsistent with the concept of the immortal, immaterial soul.

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus frequently centred all hope of life after death in resurrection, as we have seen; as will become even more apparent in a later chapter. His teaching clearly implied that he agreed with the Old Testament teaching on this subject and not the Greek concept. His teaching clearly implied that without resurrection, life after death was impossible. A careful study of his teaching soon leads us to the conclusion that he did not believe in the immortality of the soul. The disciples were characteristically slow to understand this. Their minds had

been considerably influenced and programmed from childhood by the teaching of the Pharisees. Had they understood, they would not have interpreted the resurrection appearance in the way that they did. They would have concluded that it was the resurrected Christ and not a mythological spirit.

It was mentioned earlier that the Pharisees, like the pagan Greeks, believed that man's spirit departed from the body at death and became a "demon." According to this philosophy, a good man became a good demon and an evil man became an evil demon ("evil spirit"). It was believed that such a spirit could possess the body of another man and speak to or through him. In fact, the general teaching was that departed spirits became "gods" - inferior gods, which acted in a mediatorial way between the Supreme God and man, for good or evil. They were regarded as reporters and carriers from the Supreme God to man, and also from men to God. (Plato clearly taught this concept and many sections of his writings could be quoted to show it). Such then, was the view also held by the Pharisees, as Josephus himself states on a number of occasions in his works.

Hence, on one occasion, when certain statements made by Paul before the Jewish Sanhedrin jeopardised the Pharisees' position, they replied: "We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God" (Act. 23:9). In their view, communication could come from God in three different ways:

- (1) Through the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Through angelic spirits.
- (3) Through departed spirits from the dead.

However, in all fairness to the Pharisees, it should be emphasised that, although they subscribed to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, they also believed in resurrection (Act. 23:6-9. 24:15). They simply incorporated the Greek concept of immortality with it. It was a convenient "added-extra" - a "prop" to carry them through to the time of resurrection. However, although they had not abandoned the hope of resurrection, the added extra of the immortality of the soul really made it superfluous, robbing it of its absolute necessity. Christendom's doctrine of immortality is virtually identical in this respect. The Pharisees would feel quite at home with Christendom in this area of theology.

SPIRIT AND SPIRIT

According to pagan philosophy, man, after death, becomes through a natural process, "a spirit" which hath not flesh and bones, i.e. an immaterial entity. In contrast according to divine revelation; after death man can become, through resurrection, "a spirit" that hath flesh and bones i.e. a real, tangible, immortal bodily being.

To some it will seem a contradiction to speak in terms of a spirit having flesh and bones. It is often thought that "spirit" always relates to that which is devoid of body and parts. Sometimes, of course, in certain applications and contexts this is true, as for example when the word is used in reference to breath and wind. However, as pointed out earlier, the word "spirit" has a tremendous variety of applications and does not, by any means, always refer to something intangible or impalpable.

Take for example the case of Jesus. He is referred to in 1 Cor. 15:45 as a "quickening spirit" i.e. a life-giving spirit. Does this mean that he is an immaterial intangible being without body or parts? By no means! We have already seen that when he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection he had "flesh and bones" and he ate a meal with them. His hands and feet still had the imprint of the nails in them, and Thomas thrust his hand into the hole that the soldier's spear made in his side. Jesus was a real, tangible, bodily being, and he remains the same today, and forever. When he ascended to heaven, he ascended as a real bodily being, and the apostles were told that "this same Jesus will return in the same manner." When he does, "every eye shall see him," and the Jewish people will see the imprints in his hands and feet which will still be there.

Yet, although Jesus is clearly a real bodily being, he is nevertheless referred to as a "spirit" - "quickening spirit." His father is also "spirit," yet he is a real personal being as many Scriptures testify. He must be, if Jesus is the image of him. Heb. 1:3 clearly states that Jesus is the "express image" of his father's "person," which literally means "substance" in the Greek. Ultimately, the pure in heart shall see him.

The angels are also referred to in Scripture as "spirits" i.e. "ministering spirits" (Heb. 1:7, 14). But once again, it is clear from what the Word of God says about them that they are not immaterial or intangible. They are so similar in appearance to men that they have been entertained at times by men unawares (Heb. 13:2). Their bodily existence is so real that Jacob wrestled with one all night. Time and again their bodily existence is made apparent in the things recorded concerning them in Scripture. Ultimately the saints shall become equal with them, and join

the ranks of the heavenly "spirits."

A NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL BODY

In an earlier chapter, attention was drawn to the fact that Scripture refers to two different kinds of bodies. 1 Cor. 15:44 says: "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." The natural body is the one we now possess which we inherit from the first Adam. The spiritual body is the one that we will possess when the second Adam, Jesus, returns from heaven to change our present body, fashioning it like unto his glorious body.

The natural body is "flesh and blood;" the spiritual body, as in the case of Jesus, is "flesh and bone" (Lk. 24:39). It has no blood! Natural or animal bodies are sustained by the blood, as we read in Lev. 17:14: "The life of all flesh is in the blood." The blood is the medium of animal vitality, with which it becomes charged by the action of the air on the lungs. The life principle or "spirit" is thus applied only in an indirect manner. The blood is proximately the life-giving agent; bodies sustained by it are simply blood bodies. Their life is not inherent; it is dependent on a complex function which is easily interfered with. It is applied by a process so delicate as to be easily marred by external influences. Therefore, life is uncertain, and constant health and vigour almost impossible. Our constitutions are easily impaired, and we are liable to be afflicted with various pains and infirmities which can easily become dangerous. There is one disease with which the whole of humanity is afflicted, namely: mortality. Death is inevitable to every member of the human race because of it. The best of doctors are incapable of curing this disease. It is too deep for their skill. It is in the constitution; it is in the blood; it is deep-grained and incurable. All that the doctor can do is to patch up a humanly "unmendable" mortality.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only true physician. He offers us resurrection to spirit-body existence. He promises to fashion us like unto his own glorious body. Although we may be afflicted with all the pains that flesh is heir to in this present life, and be disfigured by all the distortions of disease: although we may die loathsome deaths, and be laid in the grave as a mass of festering corruption; we shall be raised to a pure and incorruptible state in which our bodies shall be "spiritual bodies."

As we have seen, "spiritual body" does not mean a gaseous, shadowy, spectral body that a man could drive his hand through. On the contrary, it relates to a real and corporeal existence like Jesus in his

resurrection body. The resurrection body is called a "spiritual body" because it is directly energised by the spirit of God. It is filled in every atom with the concentrated inextinguishable life-power of God himself. Spiritual bodies are bodies sustained by the direct operation of the spirit of life, without the intermediate agency of the blood. In other words, immortal, bloodless embodiments of the spirit in flesh and bones like the Lord Jesus; not pale and ghastly as a human body would be without blood, but beautiful with the electrical radiance of the spirit which can show colour otherwise than by blood, as witness the jasper and the ruby, and the rainbow. Living by the thorough permeation of the life-spirit in the substance of their natures, they will be glorious and powerful, "pure as the gem, strong as adamant, and incorruptible as gold." They will be glorious in the sense of luminosity, as exemplified in the lord Jesus when he shone with the lustre of the sun on the Mount of transfiguration, and according as it is written: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). They will be powerful in the sense of being vigorous and inexhaustible in the power of their faculties: "... they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). They will be free from all pain and disease. In this perfect condition the saints will have a boundless eternity before them - everlasting joy upon their heads.

So then, those who possess this spiritual body become "spirit." Like the angels, they will constitute "spirits." And, as such, they will possess new and marvellous powers. Like Jesus and the angels, they will not be bound or restricted by the natural or physical laws of time and gravity. The spiritual body will move about according to laws that transcend all known laws of space and motion, and will be able to appear and disappear at will - even through rocks and walls!

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The importance of resurrection is particularly apparent in relation to Christ. He is the supreme example of what has been said concerning resurrection being the only hope of life after death.

If men really live on without a body after death, why was Christ's resurrection so necessary? Why does Scripture make such an issue of it and hang so much upon it? Why has Christendom ever since made such a big thing of it every Easter?

If continued existence after death does not depend upon resurrection, then surely the same would apply to Jesus! And if, as tradition teaches, man lives on after death without a body, then surely it would be just as easy to believe that Jesus lived on after his death without necessitating the resurrection of his body. If Christians can confidently affirm, as they do at funerals, that their deceased friends have actually survived the death of the body and live on eternally in heaven, without ever seeing them again in bodily form, then could not the same be confidently affirmed of Jesus, without resurrection taking place? Why is so much importance attached to the resurrection of Christ? According to the immortal soul concept, he would have lived on without resurrection anyway. If this was the case, his resurrection seems to be unnecessary and superfluous.

Surely if, as tradition teaches, man is better off when he has shuffled out of his burdensome mortal coil at death, it would have been a retrograde step for Jesus to rise bodily from the grave. And, if other faithful men of God in Old Testament times like Enoch, Elijah and Moses etc, lived on in glory after the death of their body, then why the need for the death and resurrection of Christ centuries later? Apparently, men were doing quite well without it!

Why then, was it necessary and so important for Christ to be physically resurrected from the grave? If someone answers by saying: "To prove to people that he was alive again," it is clearly implied that without resurrection there is no proof that man lives on after the death of the body. And this, in fact, is exactly what Scripture teaches. Life after death depends on resurrection. Without resurrection, there is no life after death.

Act. 1:3 says that after his death Jesus "showed himself alive" to his apostles "by many infallible proofs, being seen by them forty days, speaking to them ..." Here, it is clearly implied that resurrection is the only infallible proof of life after death! Without resurrection there is no

proof. Hence, Thomas himself said, prior to seeing his resurrected Lord: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (Jn. 20:25). Did Thomas mean that he would not believe that Jesus was alive or that he was not alive in a bodily form? If Thomas believed in the immortality of the soul, it would seem strange if he refused to believe that Jesus was alive after death. It would only go to show, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, that the strength of natural instinct can never be overcome by theological fiction. Men will never practically believe the occurrence of death to be the commencement of life, when they see it to be the extinction of all they ever knew or felt of life.

Act. 17:31 declares that: "God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained. Of this he has given assurance to all men, by raising him from the dead." Here again it is made clear that assurance of life after death can only be found in resurrection. Without resurrection, there is no assurance; no way of being sure.

Act. 2:24 makes the point that God has raised up Jesus, having unfastened the cords of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it. This statement teaches that without resurrection, Jesus would have remained fastened by the cords of death. Release from death necessitated resurrection, and many Scriptures emphasise this in relation to Christ in the New Testament.

In Rom. 1:4 Paul says that Jesus was declared ("appointed") son of God by the resurrection from the dead. This does not mean that he became the son of God through resurrection, for he was already that during his earthly ministry. The resurrection was a confirmation - a vindication of Jesus' divine sonship; it meant entrance into his supreme ministry of lordship - of both the dead and the living (Rom.14:9). His sonship and lordship rested entirely upon resurrection. Had he not been raised, he would have remained dead. Had he remained dead, his prior claims to divine sonship and Messiahship would have proved false, because Scripture proclaimed that Messiah would abide forever. Failure to emerge from the tomb to live forevermore would have established Jesus as an impostor. A dead man cannot raise himself, and if Christ rose, God raised him, and therefore endorsed him - justified him - established his claims to sonship.

THE FIRST THAT SHOULD RISE FROM THE DEAD

The special and important significance of Christ's resurrection can only be appreciated when it is realised that he was the first man in history to be raised from the dead unto life everlasting:

Act. 26:23: "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead ..."

1 Cor. 15:20: "... became the first fruits of them that slept."

Col. 1:18: "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead."

Rev. 1:5: "The first begotten of the dead."

Christ's resurrection is robbed of its power and importance and rendered superfluous, when it is believed that up until that time, and afterwards, men didn't really die anyway, but lived on without a body; without their own resurrection or Christ's resurrection being necessary.

But, once it is understood that death is a reality - that in death one is an unconscious, helpless, rotting corpse; and that from Adam to Christ death reigned over all men, holding them captive in this state; then Christ's reappearance from the grave to eternal life becomes an astounding victory and breakthrough!

True, several others in both Old and New Testament times were brought back to life after having died. However, they were merely given an extension of natural life in the natural body at the end of which they died again. But Jesus was raised to eternal life in a spiritual body, and was the first man in history to break through death's barrier into the realm of immortality. He is alive forevermore. He can never die. He gained total victory over death and hell.

The resurrection of Jesus is the most decisive point at which the age to come broke into this age, in which the supernatural world of God intersected this world.

The resurrection of Jesus is related to the resurrection of believers in the most fundamental way possible. Paul hangs the whole Christian hope of life after death upon the factuality of resurrection (1 Cor. 15:14-18).

This probably sounds like an exaggerated statement to those who believe that we possess an immortal soul which lives on after the death of the body. It would be natural for such theology to wonder why the resurrection has so much importance for the Christian faith. Even if Jesus' body did not rise from the dead, surely it would make very little difference to the essential truth of Christianity. His wonderful teaching and works and sacrificial death would still remain, and he would remain alive forevermore as an immortal soul or spirit; and the immortal souls of his

followers would join him when they died. An immortal soul theorist may well ask: Why then, is the resurrection so important?

The New Testament knows nothing about the continuation of Christ's personality apart from the resurrection of the body. Neither does the New Testament know anything about the "resurrection of the spirit" to heaven such as that found in the book of Enoch. When we look at Christ in this matter, we find that it is Christ as a body that is concerned. Christ as a body, died; Christ as a body, rose again - to die no more; to live forevermore as a body. It is never, at any stage, a question of an immortal soul in his case. There is clearly something wrong in the theology that makes the saving of an immortal soul everything (of which the Bible does not speak), and the resurrection of the body nothing (of which the Bible has everything to say).

Scripture speaks plainly about death being a cessation of life and being - a time of unconsciousness. Without resurrection, those who die will never be conscious again; they perish. This, precisely, would have been the position of Jesus had he not been raised from the dead. His flesh would have seen corruption and returned to dust; he would have perished. In such a case, he could not have become the exalted Lord. He could not have become the victor over his enemies who put him to death. He could not have become the conqueror of death because death would have conquered him. The Christian profession of the lordship of Christ would be a hollow echo. To say otherwise is to say that resurrection wasn't necessary, which of course, Scripture will not allow.

The importance of the resurrection of Christ to the Christian faith cannot be exaggerated. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and Christianity stand or fall together. The resurrection is the very keystone of the arch of Christian faith. Remove it, and all must inevitably crumble into ruin. Refute it, and you refute Christianity. Christ himself deliberately staked his whole claim to the credit of men upon his resurrection. When asked for a sign he pointed to this sign as his single and sufficient credential. It was this miracle, and this alone to which Christ referred as the attestation of his claims and authority.

Resurrection is more than just one of many tenets of belief. Without the resurrection there would be no Christianity at all, because Jesus would have remained dead in the tomb and would have corrupted away. The Christian church would never have begun; the Jesus movement would have fizzled out. The apostles would have reverted to previous occupations of fishing etc. Christianity stands or falls with the truth of the resurrection. If this goes, all that is vital and essential to Christianity goes.

If this remains, all else remains. And so, through centuries the resurrection has been the storm centre of the attack upon the Christian faith. The ironical part about it is that Christendom, which doesn't really need the resurrection because it has its immortal soul; has nevertheless fought hard on many occasions to uphold it and has clung to it with great tenacity. Could it be that it really is a case, in the final analysis, that the strength of natural instinct can never be overcome by theological fiction?

Jesus most decidedly conquered death, and proof of this is found in his resurrection. And his resurrection, according to Paul, is the beginning of eschatological resurrection. Jesus in his resurrection, is the "first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" in death (1 Cor. 15:20). The term "first fruits" may not be as meaningful in a twenty first century urban society, but in first century Palestine, first fruits meant the actual beginnings of the harvest. First fruits is more than blossoms with its promise of fruitage; it is more than green fruit with its assurance of a large crop; it was the actual beginning of the harvest itself with the certainty of much more of the same grain shortly to follow.

Thus as in Adam, all who are in Adam die; so also in Christ shall all who are in Christ be made alive. "But each in his own order; Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor. 15:23). That is to say, the resurrection body of Jesus was of the same order as the resurrection bodies of the saints at the end of the age. Jesus is what we might call a specimen of man totally saved and eternally redeemed. It may shock some to hear him described this way, but the New Testament description of him as "first fruits," and "first begotten of the dead" clearly implies this. The saints, like Jesus, will have a glorified "spiritual body." This is most vividly set forth in 1 Cor. 15:50 which speaks of our present lowly natural bodies being changed to be like his glorious body. Until then, those who die in Christ "fall asleep" and are unconscious.

The goal of history is the resurrection of the dead. However, an anticipatory resurrection of the dead has already occurred in the resurrection of Jesus. With Jesus and his resurrection from the dead, there has already happened what is yet to occur for all other men who love him and desire to be like him - morally, spiritually and physically. Jesus and his resurrection is the unique event within history which gives a preview of the future, and this is that which unifies all history.

This is precisely what Paul means by designating the resurrection of Jesus the "first fruits" of the eschatological resurrection at the end of the age. This has led us to designate Jesus' resurrection as an eschatological event. It is an anticipation of the end. To speak crudely, it is a piece of

eschatology split off from the end and planted in history. The end has begun; the future is present.

It remains obvious then, that if Jesus is not raised from the dead, one can no longer argue from the present to the future. If Jesus is not raised, I know nothing about resurrection at the end of the world. The hope of resurrection, the idea of a world to come, remains theological speculation, with no firm foundation in human experience. History has no meaning, no goal, and no purpose. As a human race we are going nowhere. We would be, in Paul's words: "of all men, most miserable."

However, Paul himself met the resurrected Christ, and knew many others who had the same experience. Therefore he could write with confidence: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." Jesus has "brought life and immortality to light" (2 Tim. 1:10). There are two ways of interpreting this:

(1) When something is brought out into the light it is made clear and visible for all to see. The phrase: "brought ... to light" suggests that something which was hidden, concealed and not seen, was brought fully out into the open - into full view for all to see. The "something" that was brought to light was of course, immortality - true immortality which involves resurrection of the body. The Old Testament clearly taught this as we have seen, but after the last book of the Old Testament was written, Greek philosophy concerning the immortality of the soul started to take control, resulting in the true doctrine of immortality, fading away in the background and virtually getting buried. By the time Christ and the apostles came on the scene, Greek philosophy had been exercising its influence for several hundred years, so much so, that when true immortality was preached in the gospel, men mocked and regarded it as new and strange doctrine. In actual fact, it was an old truth revived! It was "brought to light" by the spirit through the gospel. And there are many circles today where it still needs bringing to light!

(2) True immortality - resurrection to an eternal spiritual body, up until the time of Christ, had only been spoken about in the Word of God. No one had ever witnessed it because no man had ever experienced it. When Jesus rose from the dead he became a living witness and demonstration of immortality. In him, it was brought to light and made plain for men to see. And many men did see!

As conqueror of death, Jesus has been authorised and empowered to unlock the gates of death and hell for others (Jn. 5:26-29. 11:24-25. Rev. 1:18). And this he will do at the last day when he returns (Jn. 6:39, 44. 1

Cor. 15:23).

Jesus, by virtue of his victory over sin, has been resurrected and has been given the power to pass on to others the eternal life he has received himself (Jn.17:1-3).

Our resurrection, like Christ's will be a public crowning - justification - vindication. It will prove, beyond all shadow of doubt, that sin and death had no power over us. It will reveal in the most manifest manner possible, the victory that belongs to all who belong to Christ Jesus!

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN RESURRECTION – THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL

Resurrection, without a doubt, constitutes the great hope of the gospel, and therefore of every enlightened Christian. This was precisely the apostle Paul's position as we have already seen in many of his writings, and as he is recorded as affirming in the book of Acts: "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question" (23:6). "But this I confess to you, that according to the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets, and have hope towards God ... that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Act. 24:14-15). "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers ... for which hope I am accused by the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" (Act. 26:6-8). "For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Act. 28:20).

Without the resurrection the Christian has no hope! The second coming of Jesus and resurrection constitute the "blessed hope" of God's people; it is the "one hope" that belongs to our calling (Eph. 4:4). Thus, when we die, or should I say: if we die (because the return of Jesus is near!) and our soul is buried in hell, our "flesh shall rest in hope;" because, as in the case of Jesus, God "will not leave my soul in hell." Even though we see corruption, and worms destroy our body, yet in our flesh we shall see God (Job 19:26).

Any other substitute for this hope, is an added extra; like the immortality of the soul; to make it more palatable to traditional taste and philosophical prejudice. It is no hope at all. It is foundationless and false, and constitutes "another gospel" which we are expressly forbidden to preach or receive (Gal. 1:6-). Denial of the second coming and resurrection, whether in word or principle, immediately places us in the position of "having no hope;" which means being "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise." In other words, as Paul puts it: "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

The expression: "without God" in the Greek is "a-theos" from which the English word "atheist" is derived. Scripture's own definition of the atheist is one who has no hope - one who has not embraced the true Christian hope.

Paul's earnest prayer for the church is still true today: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give you the spirit of

wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:17-18). And Peter tells us that we should always "be ready to give an answer to every man that asks you to account for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Being presented "holy and blameless and unrepensible" in the Lord's sight, depends upon "continuing in the faith grounded and settled, and not being moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23).

In the spiritual armour of the Christian warrior, "the hope of salvation" constitutes "a helmet." The helmet protected the head which houses the mind. We have already seen how important it is for the mind to grasp hold of the hope. Retaining our understanding and knowledge of the one hope is vital - like a helmet which protects a soldier's head.

Because of the second coming and resurrection then, it is obviously not for this life only that Christ has given us hope, as we read in 1 Cor. 15:19. If it was, we would be "of all men most miserable." If there is no second coming and resurrection to eternal life to look forward to, there is no advantage in being a Christian (1 Cor. 15:32). We might just as well live like an unbeliever and make the most of this life, adopting the godless philosophy: "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32).

But, says Paul in the next verse: "Be not deceived." Hope in Christ extends far beyond this life. It would need to, for this life is so short. In Christ we have "a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, which we have as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope which enters into the inner shrine behind the veil, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become an high priest ..." (Heb. 6:18-20).

Our whole hope centres in, revolves around, and is summarised in "Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 1:1). Until he returns from heaven as the antitypical high priest returning from the inner shrine; and confers the blessing through resurrection, eternal life is impossible. So then, because Jesus is our hope and is in heaven at the moment, our hope is aptly referred to in Col. 1:5 as "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." Our life is in heaven because Jesus is there, and we will receive it when he appears at his second coming. This is what Col. 3:4 says: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear (i.e. be manifested from heaven), then shall you appear (from the graves) in glory with him." The saints' reappearance from their concealed death bed depends on Christ's reappearance from his concealed position in heaven. His return will be a day of great manifestation, not

only of himself, but of his saints also - the "sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).

FULL GOSPEL OR HALF?

It is impossible to preach Jesus without the resurrection, and equally as impossible to preach resurrection without the second coming and judgement. Hence, we read that Paul "preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection" (Act. 17:18). The inseparable link between the two is further indicated in Jesus' own testimony: "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25).

A lot is said these days about preaching the "full gospel." A careful examination of many of the so-called "full Gospel" messages often reveals an almost total lack of emphasis on the second coming, resurrection and millennial reign on earth. More often than not, no reference at all is made to these vital aspects of the gospel. Often, when it all boils down, the gospel preached by many preachers tells people their immortal soul will go to heaven if they repent and live a good life. This is not even half of the gospel. It is no gospel at all. "Gospel" means "good news," and news can only be good when it is true and certain. If it is false, it is bad news and therefore not "gospel" at all. Man does not possess an immortal soul and neither does he go to heaven! To offer such a hope as an incentive and inducement to repent is to call on people to repent without giving them a hope.

These days, the emphasis in many gospel messages often centres very much on the temporal and material advantages that a man can have in Christ during this present life. It is true that many blessings accrue to a Christian in this life in the material realm, but these are things that we see, and they do not constitute our "hope." It is a very unbalanced gospel message that majors on the material benefits which a Christian can expect to receive during his mortal life. Remember, Paul said that if it is only for this life that Christ has given him hope, he is of all men most miserable. The whole emphasis in Paul's gospel was upon the better life and world that will come when Jesus returns. Paul's hope and desire always extended well beyond the present order and its temporal blessings. Short-sighted and materialistic minds look for everything now in this life, and many gospel messages these days are coming down to this level and majoring on it, in order to pander to the desire of the world.

To preach a gospel then, without strong emphasis on the second coming is to preach a gospel without hope. It is impossible to preach salvation properly without referring to the second coming and

resurrection. After all, it won't be till the second coming and resurrection, that our salvation and redemption will be properly realised and manifested in our changed, immortalised bodies.

The second coming of Christ and all of its accompanying spectacular events, all of which are so dramatically outlined in many portions of the prophetic word, clothes the Christian hope with substance and reality, and generates genuine excitement and eager anticipation which keeps the heart buoyant and the feet on tip-toes. But, alas, many Christians today are not seeking this kind of reality. In fact, it is commonly believed in some circles that true spirituality is devoid of all body and substance. It is often felt that anything which is physical or material cannot be truly spiritual. Many have virtually rejected the physical coming of Jesus, the physical resurrection and physical millennial reign on earth on these grounds. They prefer a hope that cannot really be defined - a hope full of mystery and uncertainty - nebulous, vague, indistinct, intangible, ethereal - a hope lacking really definable body or substance. They like to think of eternal life with Christ in terms of a spiritual "trip."

The true gospel is a concrete reality and is based on solid rock. The winds of philosophy and human reasoning are lighter than vanity and can never shake it or compare with it. The true gospel produces people who are spiritually natural and naturally spiritual. No "pie in the sky when you die by and by" for them, or strumming a harp on a cloud! The hope of the gospel is very practical and very down to earth. It appeals to a sensible and rational mind.

Jesus is coming again - physically, literally and visibly. Every eye shall see him. His feet shall touch and walk on the earth. The graves will literally open and the dead will arise - physically and visibly, and will reign with Jesus on the literal physical earth in a literal physical kingdom for a literal 1,000 years! The whole earth shall be filled with his glory. This is the hope of the gospel and the joy set before us which, as in the case of Jesus, enables us "to endure" not only persecution, but even death itself.

IMMORTALITY - PROMISED, NOT POSSESSED

There is a natural aspiration for immortality in most men - a natural craving for the perfect and unending. We seem to be mentally constituted for them. Death comes as an unnatural event in our experience. We dislike it; we dread it; we long for immortality; we aspire

to live forever.

Some argue from our desire for immortality that we are actually immortal. This is the principle argument used by Plato, who may be said to be the father of Christendom's doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The argument is universally employed by believers in the immortality of the soul to the present day. It is astonishing that its logic should pass unquestioned. It would readily appear absurd in the case of any other instinct or desire. A hungry man, for example, desires food; is this proof that he has had his dinner?

The argument turns the other way. If we desire a thing, our desire is evidence that we are yet without the object of desire; for, as Paul says: "Who hopes for what he can already see?" (Rom. 8:24). If we experience a longing for immortality, it is proof we are destitute of it. And this is precisely our position as we have already seen. Immortality is a conditional gift to be bestowed at the resurrection, and not a present possession in the form of an immortal soul or any other thing.

The existence of desire for immortality, strongly suggests it is a possibility in the economy of the universe. Instinct or desire rarely exists in our God-created nature without a corresponding object on which it acts. Are we hungry? There is food to be eaten. Are we curious? There are things to be seen and known. Have we benevolence? There is benefit to be conferred, need to be supplied, and suffering to be alleviated. Have we conscience? There is right and wrong. Do we marvel? There is incomprehensibility in heaven above and earth beneath. Have we veneration? There is God to adore. And so on, with every feeling throughout nature. On this principle, the spontaneous craving for immortality and perfection indicates the existence of the conditions desired, and the possibility of their attainment. And, though we may be ignorant of the "where," "when," "how" etc, relating to them; there remains the strong natural presumption that the condition thus desired cannot be altogether a dream, though at present beyond our reach.

We must, however use proper discrimination in the application of this argument. Desire for immortality does not prove that all will therefore attain it. The existence of a desire is no guarantee of its gratification! A man with a big appetite may be in circumstances where food cannot be obtained. He may be trapped in a coal-mine, with death as the consequence. His hunger points to food as its proper object, but does not ensure possession of it.

The logical deduction from this longing for immortality is, that as it is inconceivable that an instinct could exist which it was impossible to

gratify; immortality and perfection must be attainable conditions. However, fulfilment of the desire is dependant upon the proper relative circumstances. Whether immortality will be attained or not, depends on the nature of the circumstances governing its possession. The possession of immortality is governed by the second coming of Jesus and resurrection. No one will possess immortality, no matter how strong their desire, before the return of Christ. And, even then they will not possess it unless the judgement reveals that they have served the Lord faithfully and remained rooted and grounded in Christ.

Immortality is a conditional gift to be bestowed at the resurrection. It is not a present possession. No man today, except Jesus, is immortal. In relation to time; man's life, as things stand, is brief. In relation to death, man is mortal.

The brevity of life and frailty of man is a solemn fact of reality, otherwise the gospel would not be "good news." Serious reflection upon this truth should induce every person to prepare for God's perfect eternity, and induce him to lay hold on the "hope of the gospel." The brevity of man's life is emphasised constantly throughout the Scriptures:

Job 4:19-20: Dwell in houses of clay.

Job 14:1-2: Flower, shadow, few years.

Ps. 39:4-6: How frail I am.

Ps. 78:39: Wind that passes away.

Ps. 90:3-12: Watch in night, grass, tale.

Ps. 102:11: Shadow, grass.

Ps. 144:3-4: Vanity, shadow that passes away.

Isa. 40:6-8: All flesh is grass.

Jam. 4:14: Vapour.

1 Pet. 1:24: Grass, flower of grass.

In the Bible, God is compared to mountains which endure from generation to generation, and eternal life is compared to a river which flows on and on, century after century. Man however, in his present state, is never compared to anything durable; quite the opposite. His life is brief, transient, momentary. He is subject to change, suffering and death.

Man is wholly mortal and subject to death. The Bible constantly emphasises this:

"Shall mortal man be more just than God?" (Job. 4:17).

"Your mortal body" (Rom. 6:12).

"Your mortal bodies" (Rom. 8:11).

"This mortality" (1 Cor. 15:53).

"This mortal" (1 Cor. 15:54).

"Our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:11).

"Mortality swallowed up by life" (2 Cor. 5:4).

"What man is he who lives and shall not see death?" (Ps. 89:48).

"It is appointed unto man once to die" (Heb. 9:27).

"Corruption, thou art my father" (Job 17:14).

All men are mortal, and all of man is mortal. Mortality is not only universal among men, but also total within man. He is wholly mortal. No part of man is immortal. Not once in the Bible are we taught that man or any part of man is immortal. The phrase "immortal soul" never occurs in the Bible. It is totally unscriptural.

EXAMINATION OF "IMMORTAL" TEXTS

The word "immortal" only occurs once in the Bible, and "immortality" occurs five times. In each case it does not support the theory that man possesses immortality; quite the opposite in fact. A careful examination of every occurrence of the word reveals that man does not yet possess immortality. Consider the following passages of Scripture where the word is used:

(1) 1 Tim. 1:17: "Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God ..." Here, the word "immortal" is applied wholly and solely to God, and not man.

(2) 1 Tim. 6:15-16: "... the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality ..." This passage teaches that the Father alone is the original and only source or fountain of immortality. He only "hath" immortality in an underived sense. All others besides him who become immortal, receive and derive it from him. The Father alone has immortality in an underived sense. He is the "number one power" - the "first cause." His own son Jesus was raised by his power and made a "quickening spirit" by it. It is clearly stated many times in Scripture that Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of his father, and 2 Cor. 13:4 tells us that Jesus now "lives by the power of God." The Father's immortality now eternally pulsates through his son, and his son will be the channel through which it will be bestowed upon the saints at the second coming.

(3) Rom. 2:7: Here the apostle Paul informs us that eternal life will only be given to "those who by patient continuance in well doing seek for ... immortality." Here, immortality is clearly not presented as something that a Christian now possesses, but something for which he is seeking (i.e. desiring, inquiring, requiring), by patient continuance in well doing." In

other words, immortality is conditional upon continuing patiently in well doing. Verse 16 reveals when immortality will be bestowed: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." That is, at the second coming, when Jesus will say: "well done" to all who have continued patiently in "well doing."

Paul's reference to the Christian's "incorruptible crown" in 1 Cor. 9:24-25 confirms this. He draws an analogy between the athlete and the Christian: "Know ye not that at the sports all the runners run the race, though only one wins the prize. So run, like them, to obtain your prize. Every athlete goes into strict training and exercises self control. They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." The runner never receives his crown till he has finished the race and run it well. It is impossible to imagine a runner receiving his crown before the race or at the beginning of the race or even half way through. The whole course must be covered and the race completed according to the rules, before the crown can be bestowed. Paul teaches that the same applies to the Christian's incorruptible crown. They will not receive it till the end, when the great judge, Jesus Christ, will personally bestow it.

Thus, in his second letter to Timothy (ch. 4), Paul says that Jesus "shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom" - v6. Paul goes on to say that the time of his own death is close: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith: therefore there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing."

The apostle Paul was certainly under no illusion of being in actual possession of immortality. He says that he must finish the race before he can receive it. He says it is "laid up" (reserved, stored away), which is very different from saying that he actually possessed it. He says that the Lord "shall give" it to him, which would not make sense if he already possessed it. And when will the Lord give it to him? When his immortal soul ascends to heaven at death? By no means! The Lord will give it to him "at that day ... his appearing," which is his second coming. Peter taught the same truth: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 5:4).

(4) 1 Cor. 15:53: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Once again, the word "immortality" does not relate to present possession in the form of an immortal soul or any other form. It relates entirely to the believer's physical change which will occur when Christ returns. Immortality is clearly presented as

something that will be "put on" at resurrection and not something now possessed. This passage makes it plain that immortality is an impossibility till our body is changed.

(5) 1 Cor. 15:54: "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory ..."

What has been said in the preceding paragraph concerning 1 Cor. 15:53 also applies here. Immortality is not a personal possession at present: it is yet to be conferred - "put on" when the body is resurrected and changed into a "spiritual body." Then, and only then will the victory song be sung. If man's immortality consisted of an immortal soul which immediately left the body at death, then the victory song would apply the moment he died, and could justifiably be sung at funerals as if an accomplished fact, as it is common to do at traditional funerals. However, Paul is explicit as to when the victory song will be fulfilled, and the significance of his teaching cannot be missed by the careful student who examines it in its context.

Immortality then, is not some immortal, immaterial entity that man is supposed to inherit and possess from birth. It is something separate and external to himself - a gift of God which will be bestowed - "put on" the body at the resurrection. In 1 Cor. 15:50 Paul specifically states that "flesh and blood cannot inherit incorruption." Sometimes this is read to mean that immortality will not be experienced in a bodily state. Paul of course, is not teaching this at all as we have already had occasion to point out, and as even a superficial glance at the context reveals. By "flesh and blood," Paul means our present mortal, corruptible "natural body." It cannot inherit incorruption for the simple reason it is corruptible. A temporal body cannot enjoy an eternal kingdom! A body would need to be incorruptible to inherit an incorruptible kingdom. Therefore, if we are going to live in eternity as bodily beings, our present bodies will firstly have to be changed. This is Paul's argument, and it is this simple process of logic which leads him to speak about our present corruptible body being changed. And this "change" does not come naturally, but supernaturally through the power of God.

(6) 2 Tim. 1:10. This is the final reference to the word "immortality" in Scripture. It occurs in this context: " ... our Saviour Jesus Christ who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

This passage has already been considered at the end of chapter 16.

True immortality involves resurrection and a change of nature from a natural body to a spiritual body. Up until the resurrection of Jesus, no one had ever seen or witnessed such immortality in another man. Jesus was the first man to be immortalised - "the first fruits of them that slept." In him, and therefore the gospel concerning him, immortality was "brought to life" i.e. it was displayed, demonstrated, manifested and exhibited in his resurrection. This passage once again reveals the inseparable relationship between the "gospel" and "resurrection."

Now, if the immortality promised by God simply related to an immortal soul, how could Jesus have "brought it to light?" Greek philosophers like Plato and Socrates, not to mention Babylonian and Egyptian philosophers before them, had preached the immortality of the soul centuries before Jesus came on the scene! If immortality was something brought to light by Christ, the philosophers before him must have been mistaken. Their concept must have been false. Indeed it was! They denied the resurrection and immortalisation of the body.

Scripture's usage then, of the words "immortal" and "immortality," is very different from what we find in traditional theology. In all the verses where the words occur, the concept of present possession is not taught: quite the reverse. Immortality is not a natural possession of man. Through the grace of God, immortality has been promised to believers as the crowning part of salvation. This takes place at the second coming of Jesus.

* * * * *

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN ARGUMENTS AGAINST

In spite of the tremendous support from Scripture, some will still object to the propositions put forward up to this point of the thesis. Some will draw attention to a few statements in Scripture which speak in terms of the saints now having eternal life. For example: "He who believes on the son has everlasting life" (Jn. 6:47). However, Jesus made it clear that he was talking prospectively and did not mean actual present possession when he followed his statement up with these words: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (v54). The "eternal life" that Jesus spoke about related to the bestowal of immortality at resurrection on the last day. Resurrection to eternal life is so sure and certain for the true believer, that Jesus, speaking prospectively of that time, says the believer has it. It is as good as done because a divine hand will accomplish it, therefore no one can prevent it or forestall it.

The same applies to Jn. 5:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he who hears my Word, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life ..." But once again Jesus explains himself in his following remarks: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life ..." (v28-29).

In Jn. 10:28 Jesus says: "And I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish." This statement immediately takes us back to 1 Cor. 15:18 where Paul says that if there is no resurrection, then those who fall asleep in Christ perish. When Jesus said that he gives those "eternal life and they shall never perish," he assures us that the promise he has given of eternal life is sure and certain. He will not leave us in the grave, never again to be remembered or seen. We will not go into oblivion and perish in the dust. He will raise us up and make us immortal. Our original identity and personality - the "spirit of our mind," shall be restored in a new and glorious body. Jesus assured us on another occasion that it was his father's will that he "should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (Jn. 6:39-40). This implies that if we were not raised up we would be lost. Again, this hardly ties in with the immortal soul concept.

Tradition of course, applies these promises of Jesus to the immortal soul. When Jesus says that a man has eternal life if he believes in the son of God; because it is taken literally; it is immediately applied to the "soul" because the body clearly does not become immortal the moment one

believes. But this does not help us at all. In fact, it makes it more confusing than ever. If man has an immortal soul, then he has eternal life whether he believes in Christ or not. In this case, Christ's promise is not offering any more than what man possesses anyway, thus rendering it empty and superfluous. If Jesus is not referring to the body becoming immortal when he speaks about a man having eternal life as a result of faith, then he must refer to the "soul." And, if he refers to the soul, his words would have to read like this: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, hath an immortal soul, and I will raise him up ..." But, as already stated, if all men are born with an immortal soul, then Jesus is not offering any more than what we already possess! The only way in which one could retain the concept of the immortality of the soul and make sense of Christ's promise, would be to conclude that no one is born with such a soul, but Jesus immediately puts one in us when we believe! One thing is certain: if Jesus had an immortal soul in mind, his promise clearly implies that man could not possess one unless he believed.

The apostle John wrote: "And this is the testimony, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his son" (1 Jn. 5:11). However, in an earlier section of his epistle he made it clear that the eternal life was not an actual present possession but a promise: "And this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life" (1 Jn. 2:25). So then, when he later wrote saying: "God has given to us eternal life," he is referring to what he said earlier and means that God has given us the life in the form of a promise. Eternal life has been given by promise, and not possession. Compare the situation of a mother who promises to give a certain precious vase to one of her daughters when she passes away. Speaking to her daughter about this she points to the vase and says: "I have given that to you; it is yours." The daughter understands that she will inherit it when her mother dies.

NON EXISTENT THINGS REFERRED TO AS EXISTING

It is quite common in Scripture for future things to be spoken of in the present tense as if they were already an accomplished fact. God regularly employs this kind of speech in his communications with men. He knows the end from the beginning, and his future purposes are so sure of fulfilment, he often speaks of them as if they were already an accomplished fact. In doing so, he encourages men and inspires them with confidence.

An outstanding example of this can be seen in his dealing with

Abraham. At the beginning, God promised to build a nation out of Abraham, but as the years rolled by, Abraham was unable to have a single son through his wife Sarah due to her barrenness. Ultimately, Abraham reached the age when he was incapable of producing seed. However, although it was impossible from a natural point of view, it was not impossible from God's point of view. He still intended Abraham and Sarah to have a son and build a nation - nations in fact, out of that son.

So sure was God's purpose to do this, that he appeared to Abraham one day and said: "I have made you a father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5). Strictly speaking, what God really meant was: "I will multiply you exceedingly." In fact, this is how he expressed himself at first, (verse 2) before saying: "I have made you ..." (verse 5). Because his purpose was so sure, God spoke as if it was already accomplished, greatly encouraging Abraham and inspiring him with confidence.

The apostle Paul refers to this incident in Rom. 4:17. He quotes the words of promise: "I have made you a father of many nations;" and then explains that it must be understood on the basis that God "quickens (makes alive) the dead, and speaks about things that do not exist as though they already did exist."

Abraham and Sarah could not have the child of promise till their "dead bodies" i.e. dead reproductive powers were "quickened" - made alive - resurrected. The resurrection and rejuvenation of their dead physical powers was so certain in God's purpose that he spoke as if it had already taken place; and as if they already possessed not merely the son of promise, but all the nations that would ultimately spring out of him.

And so it is with our resurrection to life. It is so certain, that Scripture often speaks as if we already possess it. But to take these Scriptures literally without spiritual discernment, would be as foolish and unrealistic for Abraham to conclude, when he still had no children, that he did in fact already possess nations of people!

ALL LIVE UNTO HIM

It is according to the same principle outlined above that Lk. 20:38 and Matt. 22:32 should be understood. Jesus refers to the fact that long after the death of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; God spoke of himself as being their God. Jesus then said: "God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto him." Many have concluded from this that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob possessed an immortal soul which survived the death of the body. It is believed that they "live unto God" in a

disembodied state. However, a logical view of this statement made by Jesus does not prove the immortality of the soul at all; it indirectly establishes the contrary. It recognises the existence of a class of human beings who are not "living," but "dead." Who are they? According to tradition, there are no "dead" in relation to the human race at all, for it is believed that every human being possesses an immortal soul and therefore lives forever in some state or other. And it cannot be suggested that it means "dead" in the moral sense, because this is expressly excluded by the subject of which Jesus is speaking - the resurrection of dead bodies from the ground.

Quite apart from looking at the context of the statement, the fact that Heb. 11:13 specifically states that all three of these patriarchs "died in faith not having received the promise," and will not be made perfect without us (v40), should make us exercise a little care in the way we interpret the statement under consideration. Heb. 11:13 clearly states that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are dead and do not live; so how are we to reconcile this with the statement made by Jesus that they "all live unto God?"

It is all a question of context. A text without a context is a pretext! By completely disregarding the context, false interpretations can easily eventuate, causing Scripture to contradict.

The statement of Jesus under consideration forms part of a conversation between himself and the Sadducees who denied the resurrection. The passage has nothing to do with immortal souls, or disembodied existence in heaven or any other place. Not a word is said by Jesus to this effect in the whole narrative.

The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, approached Jesus and put a deliberately ridiculous hypothetical question to him, which they hoped and imagined in their blind conceit would belittle and undermine his teaching on resurrection. This was the sole motive behind the question they put to Jesus. They were not interested in questions relating to immortal souls, because Jesus had not been preaching or teaching on that subject and neither did they believe in it. The Sadducees' question put to Jesus was solely designed to negate his teaching on resurrection. Their question would have been totally irrelevant if they were seeking to refute immortal soulism.

Now the Sadducees only accepted as inspired and authoritative the writings of Moses. In order to successfully defend himself, Jesus would have to quote from Moses' writings to support his teaching on resurrection. This he did by quoting Ex. 3:6. His words are: "That the

dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now he is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live to him."

Now, the key to the proper understanding of this lies in the fact that the statement about God not being a God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him; is clearly to be understood in relation to the opening sentence: "that the dead are raised ..." It is in connection with proving the resurrection that Jesus makes the statement concerning God being a God of the living. The passage has nothing to do with immortal souls! Christ's argument for the resurrection of the dead is destroyed the moment we say that he was teaching that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive and never really died. For how could it prove the purpose of God to raise these men from the dead to assert that they were alive already? The very argument requires that they shall be dead at some time, in order to be the subjects of resurrection. Thus it is that the fact of their being dead at a time when God calls himself their God, demands the conclusion that God intends them to live again. And, seeing life after death necessitates resurrection, the doctrine of resurrection is established. But take away the fact of these men being dead, and you take away all the point of Christ's argument. Looked at the other way, the argument is irresistible, and explains to us how the Sadducees were silenced.

The essence then of Jesus' argument is this: God is a God of living people and not dead people, for the dead cannot praise the Lord. Therefore, the fact that he refers to himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob long after they had died, implies he must intend to raise them from the dead. So sure and certain is his purpose to do this, it is as good as done! They are as good as being alive already, for in his omniscient mind which sees the end from the beginning, they "live unto him;" as did Abraham's seed long before it was produced. Remember, God sees non-existent things as if they already exist, and speaks as if they already existed.

The Scribes who were listening to Jesus' discourse with the Sadducees said: "Master, though hast well said." The Sadducees were silenced. "And after that they dared not ask him any questions at all." Jesus' logical and coherent reasoning from Moses' writings was too much for them. They wisely closed their mouths and argued no more. But their desire to crucify Jesus and put him out of the way became more intense than ever. Such has always been the reaction of darkness towards light! If Jesus appeared among men again as an ordinary man and interpreted New Testament teaching in unambiguous language, many who profess to be his

friends would quickly crucify him afresh!

Another example of God speaking of things that do not exist as if they did, can be found in Lk. 1:68-69. When John the Baptist was born, his father prophesied saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of David."

Now, the "horn of salvation" referred to Jesus of course, who was destined to "redeem" the people. But, at the time the prophecy was uttered, Jesus wasn't even born! And, even when he was finally born, it took another 30 years before he commenced his redemptive work. Yet, the prophecy spoke about this in the present tense saying that God had done it. So sure was its fulfilment, God spoke as if it was already accomplished. Examples like this abound in Scripture, especially in Old Testament prophecy. Most of the prophetic messages speak in terms of God having actually accomplished things which were yet to take place in the future. It is a very popular mode of address with God. It is not surprising therefore, to find that eternal life is expressed in the same manner i.e. as if we already have it.

SALVATION - PROMISED OR POSSESSED?

The passages of Scripture which say the Christians have eternal life are by far in the minority compared with those that teach eternal life depends on the second coming and resurrection. The statements which say eternal life will not be bestowed till the second coming outnumber those that speak of us possessing it now. This in itself is a fairly good indication as to what view should be taken.

What has been said about the verses which say we "have" eternal life, also applies to other Scriptures which say we "have" been saved or redeemed. For instance, 2 Tim.1:9 says the Lord "has saved us ..." Also Tit.3:5: "He saved us ..." However, to isolate these statements from the rest of Scripture and entirely base a doctrine of salvation on them, without looking at the whole panoramic picture as presented in the New Testament, would be a mistake. Very few verses are complete in themselves and often need other supplementary and complementary verses to present a balanced and total picture.

For instance: some passages of Scripture say we are saved by faith. But do we conclude from this, without consulting other verses, that baptism and good works are not necessary? By no means!

Similarly, we do not conclude from those verses which say we have

been saved, that our salvation is so sure and fixed that there is nothing we can do to lose or thwart it. In other words, it is not a case of "once saved always saved." There are certain conditions tied up with salvation. Certain principles have to be maintained during our life and the purpose of the judgement seat at the second coming is to determine whether they have been maintained or not. God's grace is not so liberal and abounding that he will save us in spite of our attitude and conduct. Otherwise the philosophy: "let us sin that grace may abound," would turn out to be true after all.

We are only friends of Jesus if we do the things he has commanded (Jn. 15:14). "If we continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23); we are saved if we "keep in memory" the things preached to us, otherwise we will have believed in vain (1 Cor. 15:2). It is only "he who endures to the end that shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22. Rev. 3:5). "If any man shrinks back," God will have no pleasure in him, and he will be destroyed (Heb. 10:38-39).

There are many passages of Scripture which teach that salvation and eternal life is a conditional promise and not a present possession. If we look back after putting our hand to the plough we are not worthy of the kingdom. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." We shall not escape retribution if we neglect (become careless of - make light of) such a great salvation (Heb. 2:1-3). Also see Heb. 3:12-14. 6:4-6. 10:26-29. 12:14-17. Pr. 28:18. Ps. 7:10. 34:18).

For every verse which says we have been saved, there are dozens which say we shall be saved. And in the case of the phrase: "have everlasting life," salvation is also used in the same prospective sense. Here are just a few examples: Act. 15:11: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." Also see Matt. 10:22. 24:13. Mk. 8:35. Rom. 5:9-10. 10:9, 13. 1 Cor. 3:15 etc. We have been saved by promise, but the promise shall not be fulfilled till the second coming of Jesus.

The following illustration may be helpful: A shipwrecked sailor is drifting helplessly in the sea. His strength is ebbing away fast and death seems inevitable. Then he becomes aware of a ship not far away. He waves out and the ship turns in his direction. "Thank God," he says, his heart now full of hope, "I am saved." His hope of salvation is so real and certain, providing he holds on and does not allow himself to slip away into the miry depths of the sea, that he thinks of himself as already being saved. However, in reality, strictly speaking, his salvation does not

literally come till the ship arrives, draws along side, and lifts him on board.

So it is with our salvation: it is so sure, providing we hold on firm to the end and don't allow ourselves to slip away from our faith and hope, that we as good as have it already. And, in this sense there can be no objection to a Christian saying: "I am saved." In fact, a fully dedicated Christian whose conscience does not accuse him, should be confident of his salvation. If he isn't, how can he possibly look forward to the second coming? It would cease to be a hope for him. Instead of eagerly and joyfully anticipating it, he would anticipate it with fear and trepidation.

Salvation is a process which starts with justification by faith, and ends with "redemption of the body" at the second coming and resurrection. At the second coming, our mortal bodies will be delivered from their mortal and corruptible condition, and be fashioned like the glorious spiritual body of Jesus. Then, and only then, will the saints be saved and have eternal life in the full and complete sense implied in the gospel. This is taught in the following Scriptures: 1 Cor. 1:18. According to the original Greek text this verse reads like this: "But to us who are being saved, it (the gospel) is the power of God." The same applies to Act. 2:47 and 2 Cor. 2:15. These passages speak of salvation being a process and not a present possession. In Heb. 9:28 we read: "Christ was offered once to bear the burden of men's sins, and will appear a second time, sin done away, to bring salvation to those who are watching for him." This is very clear. Salvation will not come till the second coming of Jesus. Only those who are watching for his return will receive it.

Again we read in 1 Pet. 1:4-5: "The inheritance to which we are born is one that nothing can destroy or spoil or wither. It is kept for you in heaven, and you, because you put your faith in God, are under the protection of his power until salvation comes ... the salvation which is even now in readiness and will be revealed at the end of time." This coming salvation "at the end of time" refers, of course, to the time "when Jesus Christ is revealed," as mentioned in v7. Thus, verse 13 says: "Fix your hopes on the gift of grace which is to be yours when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Peter is extremely clear in what he says here: salvation comes at the coming of Jesus! We are therefore exhorted to fix our hopes on that event. Peter says nothing about immortal souls going to heaven at death.

Jesus himself taught that eternal life would not be possessed till "the age to come" (Mk. 10:30. Lk. 18:30).

Rom. 6:22 affirms that "the end is eternal life," and not the present.

1 Tim. 6:19 says: "Lay up in store for yourselves a good foundation for the time to come, that you may take hold of eternal life." "Therefore," says Paul, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10). Again, 1 Cor. 5:5 expresses hope "that the spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus." (And, if the "spirit" is to be understood in the traditional sense as an immortal soul, which has conscious existence after death and ascends to heaven, why would Paul pin all hope of its salvation on the second coming?)

Immortality is clearly something we "seek," as we read before in Rom. 2:7. It is not a present possession. We are "heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14) and not possessors. An "heir" is one who is entitled to receive an inheritance. An "heir" does not possess the inheritance, but is one to whom the inheritance is due at some future date. Therefore, the words "inherit" and "inheritance" are used many times in the Bible in relation to the future salvation, eternal life, and millennial kingdom. Jesus, for example, when speaking about the time of his second coming and millennial regeneration, promised that all true Christians who have made sacrifices for him, "shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19:28-30). If in fact they already possessed it, his statement would not make sense.

Writing to the Galatians, Paul stated that "he who sows to the spirit shall from the spirit reap life everlasting" (6:8). He did not say that the Christians have reaped life everlasting! In this passage, the apostle teaches that life everlasting is preceded by a "sowing" period or process. This process refers to the period of our present life which is a trial and development period. If we pass the test by living a life governed and influenced by the spirit and not the flesh, we will reap life everlasting. The word "reap" immediately suggests "harvest," which is quite a common figure in Scripture for the second coming of Jesus. We are therefore once again confronted with the inevitable conclusion that everlasting salvation and life, is not possessed at the moment, but awaits the return of Jesus.

The words of Jesus in Jn. 6:40 may be recalled here: "And this is the will of him who sent me, that every one who sees the son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life." And, in answer to the question: "When shall this everlasting life be received?" Jesus provides the answer in the following sentence: "And I will raise him up at the last day."

Seeing that salvation comes at the return of Jesus, we can more fully appreciate the statement of Paul in Rom. 13:11 that "now our salvation is nearer than when we believed." The whole verse reads like this: "Besides this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for

now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." But, if salvation was an actual present possession, how could the passing of time make it any nearer? It is only in the light of the second coming that this statement can make any real sense.

God then, has "destined us to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ;" as we read in 1 Thes. 5:9. Salvation is our destiny - objective - hope, and not a present possession.

SALVATION - A HOPE

Salvation is clearly something for which we "hope," and if we hope for it, then it is something we "wait" for and do not now possess. This is the fundamental teaching of the New Testament. For instance: "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thes. 5:8). Again, in Tit. 1:2 Paul says he is "in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." Also, in Tit. 3:7 he says: "so that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." It is interesting to note that this statement follows directly after v5 in which Paul said: "He saved us," which is often read to mean that salvation and eternal life are accomplished facts in our life. However, verse 7 indicates that eternal life is a "hope" of which we are "heirs." This rules out the present possession concept.

Seeing that the hope of salvation and eternal life will not be realised till the resurrection; if we die before that event our flesh will "rest in hope," because God's purpose is to save us and not "leave our soul in hell." If he did, we would perish for all eternity, because, apart from resurrection there is no other hope of life after death. There is only "one hope." Many Christians have two hopes! Realising that they cannot deny the hope of the resurrection of the body, yet desiring also to hold on to the departure of the immortal soul to heaven during the intervening period between death and resurrection, they have two hopes. If a Christian believes he is already saved and that he now possesses eternal life, he virtually has no hope, and the second coming of Christ is robbed of its most vital and fundamental purpose.

Rom. 8:24-25 clearly testifies that we have been saved, though only in hope: "Now to see, is no longer to hope: why should a man endure and wait for what he already sees (or possesses)? But if we hope for something we do not yet see, then in waiting for it, we show our endurance."

Paul's words here are made quite meaningless if we have already been saved and if we already possess eternal life. "Hope" means to "eagerly anticipate," and one cannot eagerly anticipate something that he has already received and possesses. This is common logic and Paul logically argues on this basis. He clearly did not believe that he possessed eternal life.

Let us examine his message in Rom. 8:18-25 a little more closely. Throughout this whole section he is very emphatic that the glory, manifestation and redemption of the saints is something that we "earnestly expect" - "hope" and "wait" for - something that "shall be revealed" and not something now possessed and visible. He speaks in v18 of the "glory" that shall be revealed in us. In v19-20 the "manifestation of the sons of God" (which occurs at the second coming - Col. 3:4. 1 Jn. 3:1-3), is referred to as something that we "wait" for and "hope" for.

In Rom. 8:21 he relates the "glory" and "manifestation" to the time of "deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." This is further explained and defined in v23 as "the redemption of our body," which of course, refers to the resurrection which completes the process of redemption. This great event constitutes the "earnest expectation" that all creation is waiting for (v19). It is the "hope" of the gospel (v20); and because it is a hope and not a present possession, "then do we with patience wait for it" (v25). More than that, we "groan and travail" for it (v22-).

In 2 Cor. 5:1-4, Paul again speaks about us groaning in this present mortal, corruptible body; earnestly desiring ("hope") to be clothed with the new eternal body ("house") which Jesus will bring to us from heaven at the resurrection, in order that "mortality might be swallowed up by life."

But how many Christians today share Paul's position of groaning and travailing, earnestly desiring and hoping for the second coming and resurrection? How many share his deep intense desire towards these great events? Many talk glibly about these events in a matter-of-a-fact way as if they can take it or leave it - as if it doesn't really make much difference whether these events take place or not.

Modern theology and tradition, with its doctrine of immortal soulism and heaven-going at death virtually says to Paul: "Don't make such a song and dance about the second coming and resurrection brother; you are being a bit short-sighted because you have already been saved and you now possess eternal life. You shouldn't keep pushing the second coming and resurrection, because they really aren't all that important

seeing we already have eternal life, and our soul goes to heaven to be with Jesus the moment we die. We don't mind you mentioning these things now and then, because, after all, we must admit, the Bible does say a fair bit about them; but don't major on them, because it makes people feel as if all the good things are in the future and they really prefer to believe that we can have them now. We feel that going to heaven to be with Jesus in a disembodied form makes a more interesting gospel than the doctrine of the second coming: it is more mysterious and intangible, and people are generally more attracted to the mysterious and "out of this world" things. The second coming of Jesus and physical resurrection is too practical - too materialistic - too down to earth. We could never fill a church with that kind of emphasis in our teaching. People today are basically selfish and impatient. They want everything now, so we must present them with the kind of message that suits their taste. We should bring the gospel down to their level rather than bring them up to the gospel's level. After all, this is the age of change and compromise, and we are sure God won't mind if we change the emphasis. After all, our intentions are good. We want full churches. Admittedly, the quality of hope and truth won't be quite what it should be, but the quantity of membership will be good and that will make up for a lot. Just think of the problems with which you would be faced at funerals with your understanding of life after death. The bereaved these days have got used to, and want to believe that those who have passed away haven't really died; but live on and immediately receive their reward in heaven. We couldn't possibly tell them the truth. They are much happier believing lies and being deceived ..."

When truth cuts across tradition it never appeals to churchmen who fear man and who place more importance on pleasing man than pleasing God. Truth that cuts across tradition becomes a great discernor of the heart and revealer of the motives - especially in the case of men in positions of honour and respect. When a man encounters the sharp sword of divine truth by feeling its cutting power in his life, he very quickly learns a great deal about himself.

It is easy to verbally express a desire to "go on for the Lord," so long as that desire does not lead us into areas of truth that contradict and oppose our own pre-conceived ideas! Too often our prayers for further revelation and understanding really mean: "Lord, don't take away anything in which I already believe; just give me more which harmonises with what I already have!" Unfortunately it is true of most people that "the old wine is better."

All error is darkness and bondage, and often a small error in one

department of theology leads to a big error in another. It is truth alone - the whole truth as it is in Christ, that sets a man free and gives him a sound mind. A true truth seeker welcomes truth and embraces it whatever the cost, when he recognises it. He sells all that he has to procure it and treasures it as a pearl of great price.

Every step in the Reformation movement and advance in the restoration process of divine truths has depended on men like this - men who place no importance on position and reputation before men, and who manifest the courage of their convictions to speak out and share the true revelation of God. Without these kind of men we would still be back in the dark ages, bound by the darkness of Romish superstition.

"Blessed are you when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets" (Lk. 6:22-23).

"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets" - v26. Though forsaken and black-listed by men, accused as heretics, they are the salt of the earth and church, sealed and known by God, and their names indelibly written in the book of life. May we not be afraid to follow them and join their ranks if the spirit calls us to add another link to the chain of restored truth.

Let us return for one last moment to the aspect of the second coming and resurrection being the hope of the true Christian faith. As pointed out before, "hope" means "eagerly anticipate." Hope is a psychological necessity in both natural and spiritual life. Any life without things to eagerly and joyfully anticipate, would be dull and boring and lacking in purpose. Such a situation leads to depression, inertia, and weakness.

If therefore, we have already been saved and already possess eternal life, the real need and purpose of the second coming and resurrection is ruled out or greatly minimised, and can no longer constitute a hope in the full and meaningful sense of the word. And, because hope is a psychological necessity, the removal of the true hope easily results in the creation of a different one. If a Christian really believes that he now possesses eternal life and has been saved, he has virtually nullified the "blessed hope" of the gospel, and will inevitably fill the vacuum with another one, which, almost inevitably will create "another gospel."

Without any shadow of a doubt, the heathen dogma of the

immortality of the soul, which is the root cause of most errors pertaining to salvation and eternal life, has created more mischief and "other gospels" than any other single error. The original lie of the serpent has coiled itself inside, and twisted itself all around the theology of Christendom in a way that can only be described as incredible.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

SOME REFORMERS' VIEWS ON IMMORTALITY

Many Bible students over the past few centuries have rejected the concept of the immortality of the soul. It has been recognised by quite a number of scholars that the only hope of life after death is in the second coming of Jesus and resurrection. We will now consider the testimony of some of these men. To start with, the following article, written by Christmas Evans concerning Martin Luther's view, is worth reproducing:

"In the Scandinavian countries, professing Christians seem to accept the idea of the immortality of the soul as an essential part of Christianity. An evangelist named Frederick Wisloff was exceedingly annoyed with me when I dared dispute that the wicked should be forever tormented in the eternal flames of hell, at the same time affirming most strongly he was a faithful follower of Luther in believing this. As a writer of many books and a preacher in Norway, Denmark and Sweden, he is much admired.

Feeling Wisloff was no authority, I took the advice so kindly given me by the Stiftsprovst (Archdeacon) Kaj Jensen, of the Cathedral, Aarhus (Denmark) University, whom he considered to be one of the greatest authorities on Luther. This professor I found to be most helpful when I spent the best part of two hours with him. Although he found it a little difficult to say in an unqualified way that Luther did not believe the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, there was no question in his mind that Luther did believe there was no conscious existence between death and resurrection, and that the Romish idea of Purgatory was a mere superstition.

When we remember that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not "dead" to God, we have what Luther taught.

On my return home from Denmark, I put to paper the thoughts that I received from the professor, and how he described Luther's teaching, and sent the notes to him for correction. These notes I give below:

"There seems to be a certain amount of ambiguity in Luther's works on the subject of immortality. Luther regarded man as being immortal only in the sense that he was related to God. One has to understand that this did not mean that Luther believed man to be in any way a conscious entity between death and resurrection. This condition was, to Luther, a state of sleep from which man would awake at the resurrection. The "sleep" he applied to both body and soul. Both in unity make up the conscious man. As such, he is earth-born, and the spirit brings him into

relationship with God. When the apostle wrote:

"...and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus ..." (1 Thes. 5:23), he referred to the whole man under the following definitions: flesh - man - body and soul; spirit - the man, body and soul, in relation to God. When the apostle writes of "flesh warring against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," Luther understood this as the body and soul in antagonism with God when a man resisted the influence of God's Word in his own being; but when the man accepted the Word of God, then the prayer was that the whole man be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord.

Martin Luther repudiated the idea of purgatory, and of the existence of a place where souls of the dead were kept in separate compartments awaiting the time when they would again inhabit earthly bodies. He did not seem to know - or if he did, entirely disregarded the idea of the immortality of the soul as taught in Greek philosophy. Danish Christians (and it may be presumed all others in Lutheran countries) through different causes, do not now as a whole accept Martin Luther's teaching on this matter. Unfortunately, they have lapsed into a state of corruption from Luther, and the majority would regard death as a portal to a state of bliss. In this, they have departed from their teacher, whom they profess to follow. So much is this the case, they would regard a teacher of the Lutheran idea as one who had departed from Christianity'.

So much for my notes, which the professor returned to me with his comments. Referring to my last paragraph on modern ideas, he said: 'This is perhaps a little too strong. Perhaps better: most ordinary people who do not go too deeply into such questions, do not hold the same view as Luther himself did. In many ways they have departed rather from Luther's original thoughts, confronted with some of Luther's ideas about death and resurrection, they would probably reject them as too radical and untraditional, perhaps even as unchristian. To the first part I have nothing to correct'.

WILLIAM TYNDALE

William Tyndale was a great English translator of the Bible who suffered much persecution for his preaching. He went to Germany in 1524, where he completed and published his translation of the New Testament and the Pentateuch. His Reformer's zeal aroused such hostility that he was arrested and later burned at the stake.

The following quotation can be read from his works in the British Museum: "In putting departed souls in heaven, hell and purgatory, you destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection. What God doeth with them, that we shall know when we come to them. The true faith putteth the resurrection, which we be warned to look for every hour. The heathen philosophers denying that, did put that the souls did ever live. And the Pope joineth the spiritual doctrine of Christ, and the fleshly doctrine of philosophers together - things so contrary that they cannot agree ... And because the fleshly minded Pope consenteth unto heathen doctrine, therefore he corrupteth the Scripture to establish it ... If the souls be in heaven, tell me why they be not in as good case as the angels be? And then what cause is there of the resurrection?"

No wonder Tyndale was burned at the stake! The truth of the doctrine of resurrection and his repudiation of the doctrine of immortal soulism meant so much to him as a Reformer that he laid down his life for it. He refused to compromise, and was martyred for the true hope of the gospel as a result. This reveals how fundamental and vital this whole question really is. In this respect, the side we take in this issue reveals where we stand in relation to the Reformation work.

Considering the general agreement which existed between Luther and Tyndale, and the unequivocal testimony of Tyndale quoted before, it becomes easier to believe that the two Reformers were at one on this subject. It may be added that they were contemporaries and that it was during their lifetime the current opinion "without a single exception" was that Tyndale went to Wittenburg to see Luther.

THOMAS HOBBS (1588-1679)

Thomas Hobbes was one of the greatest thinkers of the 17th century who was wearied with the incessant disputes which had rent his country of England into a group of warring sects. He brought his marvellous vitality and comprehensiveness to bear upon the distracting situation, the result being that we have his book: "Leviathan" which was published in 1651. This title arose in the author's mind from the conception that the state of the country could appropriately be viewed as a great living civic organism; a kind of multitudinous man, the people being considered as "all members of one (politic) body."

The ideas put forward by Hobbes were so arresting, and to some, so revolutionary and objectionable; that the author quickly found himself assailed and persecuted. He had to flee the country for a time. The

strongest opposition came from the ecclesiastics, and this can be understood when we realise the nature of Hobbes' attack on their position and their teaching.

It could not have been pleasant, either to the Roman or to the Episcopalian clergy, to be accused of abusing or misrepresenting the words or facts of the New Testament; in that they had assumed privileges and powers altogether at variance with the original Christian ideal. They were told by Hobbes that:

"Christ's commission to his apostles was to proclaim his kingdom, not present, but to come. Not to compel obedience by the sword; to persuade; not to exercise magisterial, but ministerial power."

To this general charge of the assumption of authority on the part of the clergy, Hobbes followed with an impressive examination of the doctrines they held and taught. They had, he said, corrupted the simple teaching of Christ and his apostles by introducing: "The demonology of the heathen poets, which were but idols or phantasms of the brain, such as dead men's ghosts."

The laity had thus led into a "kingdom of darkness," by being taught the erroneous pagan doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Against this great deception ("strong delusion") Hobbes laid his vigorous pen as follows:

"That the soul of man is in its own nature eternal and a living creature independent of the body, or that any mere man is immortal otherwise than by resurrection in the last day, is a doctrine not apparent in Scripture."

He then exposed some of the civil evils which followed the inculcation of such theories:

"This window it is (i.e. the dogma of the immortality of the soul) that gives entrance to the dark doctrine, first of eternal torments, and afterwards of purgatory; and to the doctrine of indulgences, that is to say, of exemption for a time or for ever from the fire of purgatory, where these incorporeal substances are pretended by burning to be cleansed and made fit for heaven."

These challenging statements naturally had an alarming effect on the minds of the clerical fraternity, whose stipends would be jeopardised if the people were affected by Hobbes. In his diary under the date September 3rd, 1668, Samuel Pepys wrote: "To my booksellers for Hobbes' "Leviathan," which is now mightily called for; and, what was heretofore sold for eight shillings I now give 24 shillings for at second hand, and is sold for 30 shillings, it being a book the bishops will not let be printed

again." It is not difficult to see why Pepys was so decidedly of the opinion that the bishops would not agree to a reprint of the book!

But something else, perhaps more devastating, was brought by Hobbes against the prevailing religious expectations concerning the future. If man had no immortal soul, then where would salvation be experienced? Here is Hobbes' answer to this question:

"Concerning the place wherein men shall enjoy that eternal life which Christ has obtained for them, the texts seem to make it on earth. The paradise of God, at the coming again of Christ, should come down to God's people from heaven, and not they go up to it from earth ... That the place wherein men are to live eternally, after the resurrection, is the heavens (meaning by the heavens those parts of the world which are most remote from the earth), is not easily to be drawn from any text that I can find."

Disconcerting as these bold assertions would be to the clergy, they would probably be considered as merely the opinions of one whom they looked upon as a heretic. In fact, they stigmatised Hobbes as an atheist.

Hobbes consequently prepared a constructive and undeniable thesis, a demonstration which could not be shaken, and which clearly showed that the popular concepts relating to the future were quite without foundation. By numerous quotations from the New Testament, he proved that eternal life was not a natural and universal attribute, but that it was a conditional gift to be bestowed by Christ on believers after the resurrection. This, as Hobbes pointed out, excluded the notion of "hellish torments and tormentors." (By "tormentors" he meant the supernatural devil and demons of traditional belief).

Having thus disposed of the heathen fancy of man's immortal soul, and of its imaginary transit at death into an equally imaginary hell, purgatory or heaven; Hobbes turns to another aspect of the true teaching of Scripture which had been obscured or perverted by the clergy. They had, he protested, ignored the supreme import of the covenants or contracts which had been made by the Creator with Abraham, the father of the faithful. These covenants of promise formed the basis of true religion, the object of which was the establishment upon the earth in the future of a righteous commonwealth, afterwards described as "the kingdom of God." How had the clergy diverted attention from this great future of God's revelation?

"In the writings of divines," said Hobbes, "and especially in sermons and treatises of devotion, the "kingdom of God" is taken most commonly for eternal felicity after this life, in the highest heaven, which

they also call the kingdom of glory."

This perversion of meaning of the phrase came under the strong censure of Hobbes:

"I find," said he, "the kingdom of God" to signify ... a kingdom properly so named. It is manifest enough that the kingdom of God is properly meant a commonwealth. It is a real, not a metaphorical kingdom, and so taken not only in the Old Testament but in the New."

He gives abundant evidence from the words of Christ and of the Hebrew prophets that this future kingdom was their only expectation and that it formed the main subject of their teaching. Quoting profusely from the Old Testament and from the New, Hobbes showed that the kingdom of God will be established upon, and will embrace the whole earth, having Jerusalem as its centre.

As already indicated, Hobbes' ideas, although put forward calmly, without rancour, and with the object of clarifying the discordant issues on religion; and so restoring peace to a distressed country, were received with vehement opposition. He was subjected to continual irritation and threats from his enemies, and would have continued to be, were it not for the intervention of King Charles II, to whom, when Prince of Wales, Hobbes had acted as a mathematical tutor.

JOHN LOCKE (1632-1704)

For over 2000 years, men have been disputing over the question: "Can matter think." Socrates (B.C.400) is largely responsible for having assumed that our thinking powers arise from the possession of an innate divine spirit which, he argued, being immaterial, was necessarily eternal and therefore had an existence before our birth and would survive our decease. Many notable men have given consideration to this subject. Among such men was John Locke, who frequently conferred on the question with his personal friends, including Sir Isaac Newton.

Locke lived in a time of intolerance, when the differing ideas on religion, science and politics aroused much bitterness. He was distressed by the acrimony displayed between the sects; and he also observed that often the disputations sprang from an illogical way of thinking. This led him to give attention to the methods of reasoning by which truth could be attained. As the results of his investigations, he published in 1690 the classic: "Essay on the Human Understanding." This work, which has passed through some forty editions, together with translations into many languages, is deemed of such importance that its author is acknowledged

to be "one of the most conspicuous figures in the intellectual history of modern Europe." "It was," states the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "the first extensive attempt to estimate critically the certainty and the adequacy of human knowledge when confronted with God and the Universe." This meant that the author had the task of investigating how far, through our consciousness; the human understanding can reach; the enquiry involving the examination of consciousness itself, as to what it really was in origin and in operation.

We are all aware of the fact that we can think; but how or by what means is this thinking done? Do our thoughts come - as alleged by most of the theologians - from the fact that we have had imparted to us, as part of our make up; an innate, separate and separable entity or spirit which memorises and reflects on its perceptions and recollections, and which wills or impels our physical bodies as it wishes? Or is there something in our composition which, whilst we call it "self" or "soul;" really is an accumulation of ideas made on our mental framework and the consciousness of which ideas can be retained only while we are alive? Reduced to a simple issue, the question is that discussed by Plato and others; as to whether matter can think or not.

In his essay, Locke surveyed the infinitely varied features associated with the human mind, tracing from the birth of a child the reception, retention, and growth of ideas. He showed how the "soul" was developed; when it began to have ideas; how perception came through the senses; how from the first we are surrounded with bodies, sights, and sounds which "force an entry into the mind;" and that "light and colour are busy everywhere, when the eye is but open." He granted that the creator could, if he wished, impart a separate spirit to us by which our movements and thoughts could be controlled; but he pointed out that we had no right to assume our possession of this without evidence, and the evidence for such a conception was not forthcoming. On the contrary, the facts were against the assumption. All our ideas were received or acquired by experience or tuition, by the gradual accumulation of knowledge and by our reflections on the information so obtained.

But against these arguments, Locke's opponents stressed the old Socratic dictum, "Matter cannot think." This forced him to deal with the very apparatus by which thoughts operate. He granted that we cannot understand how matter can think; but to contend from our ignorance of this mystery, that God cannot give to live matter the faculty of thinking; is limiting his omnipotence, and is bringing his power down to the size of our capacities.

We cannot, he says, conceive how matter can attract matter at immense distances; but it is clear that God has given it such a power in gravitation - which we name, without understanding its nature. Further, it is evident that self-consciousness, perception, emotions, and thinking; are powers possessed by animals; but this does not justify our concluding that they have immaterial or immortal souls. The opposition which the "essay" evoked, especially from church dignitaries; provoked Locke to publish another work which caused a further great outcry; for it assailed, on Scriptural grounds, the general opinion on the nature of the soul.

This book, which appeared anonymously in 1695, was entitled: "The reasonableness of Christianity." In his preface, the author tells us he "had found little satisfaction and consistency in most of the systems of divinity he had met with; and this had made him betake himself to the sole reading of the Scriptures for the understanding of the Christian religion." The result of his personal enquiry gave, he says, "a mighty satisfaction to his mind in the reasonableness and plainness of the discoveries he had independently made." "When I saw what a plain, simple, reasonable thing Christianity was; how suited to all conditions and capacities; how far it surpassed all that philosophy and human reason had attained to, or could possibly make effectual to all degrees of mankind, I was flattered to think my discoveries might be of some use to the world."

The first discovery he made was that "by reason of Adam's transgression, all men are mortal and come to die." This he found was the doctrine not only of the Old Testament, but also that of the New. But he realised that the theologians differed about the word "death." "For some would have it to be a state of guilt, wherein not only Adam, but all his posterity were so involved that everyone deserved eternal torment in hell-fire." Locke pointed out that this was "a strange way of understanding a law which required the plainest and directest words; that death should be meant eternal life in misery." Personally he confessed that by "death" here, "he could understand nothing but a ceasing to be, the losing of all actions of life and sense."

His next discovery was that from this state of death, there was no restoration except by resurrection; and that this could come about solely by the intervention of Jesus Christ. A startling revelation this, when so many clergy in his day were engaged in negotiating - for the inevitable ecclesiastical fee - the passage of the imaginary departed immortal soul through Purgatory into Heaven!

JUSTIN AND TATIAN

Testimony to the belief of the early church on the nature of man is given by the Swedish scholar, Anders Nygren, in Part 2 of his work: "Agape and Eros." His theme is the contrast between the Platonic idea of "eros," which stands for man's desire for heavenly things, and the Christian faith in "agape," the love of God which reaches out to save man. The Platonic idea assumes that there is a spark of the divine in man which reaches out towards God ("Eros is the soul's homesickness"). In sharp contrast to this, the Christian doctrine teaches the dependence of man on the bounty of God for his salvation. The bearing of this thought on the doctrine of resurrection as taught by the second century apologists, Justin and his disciple Tatian, is shown in the following extracts:

"The ancient church differs most of all from Hellenism in its belief in resurrection. Christian tradition affirmed the: "Resurrection of the flesh," which the Apologists opposed to the Hellenistic doctrine of the: "Immortality of the soul." The antithesis was conscious and intentional, for at no point so much as this was their opposition to the Hellenistic spirit felt by the early Christians. The Platonic, Hellenistic doctrine of the immortality of the soul seemed to the Apologists a godless and blasphemous doctrine, which above all they must attack and destroy. Their motto in this regard might well be Tatian's word: "Not immortal, O Greeks, is the soul itself, but mortal. Yet it is possible for it not to die" (Those who are alive at the second coming will not see death). The difference between Christian and non-Christian in this matter was so great that belief in the "Resurrection of flesh" could become a shibboleth. One who believes in the immortality of the soul shows thereby that he is not really a true Christian, because he does not subscribe to a most fundamental part of the Christian faith. As Justin says: "If you have fallen in with some who are called Christians ... and who say that there is no resurrection of the dead, but that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians."

"Belief in the "resurrection of the flesh" is not the complement of the immortality of the soul, but the contradiction of it. We are faced here with an "Either-Or:" either immortal life as something which belongs to the natural constitution of man, or eternal life as a gift of God, founded upon his work of grace and power, which calls into existence that which does not yet exist and summons the dead to life."

JOHN THOMAS

John Thomas was a doctor of medicine with a very keen mind, and a very keen student of the Scriptures. He lived during the 19th century and became the author of a number of books. In his book: "Elpis Israel" he wrote: "The dogma of an immortal soul in mortal sinful flesh has eaten out the marrow and fatness, the flesh and sinew, of the doctrine of Christ; and has left behind only an ill-conditioned and ulcerated skeleton of Christianity, whose dry bones rattle in the winds of doctrine that are blowing around us, chopping and changing to every point of the compass. The apostles taught two resurrections of the dead; one at "the manifestation of his presence" (1 Thes. 4:14-17. 2 Thes. 1:7-8, 2:8); the other, at the delivering up of the kingdom of God at the end of the dispensation of the fullness of times (Rev. 20:5, 1 Cor. 15:24). But this did not suit the theory of the dogmatists. They resolved the first into what they term "a glorious resurrection of spiritual life in the soul," and the second, into a re-union of disembodied ghosts with their old mortalities to be sent back where they came from. In this way they reduce the second resurrection to a very useless and superfluous affair. Their systems send "souls" to their account as soon as death strikes the bodies down. Some torment them in purgatory, or in an intermediate state; others send them direct into unmitigated punishment; while both, after they have suffered for thousands of years before trial and conviction, reunite them to their bodies. And if it be asked: "For what purpose?" System replies: "To be judged!"

"Punish souls first and judge them after! This is truly human, but it certainly is not divine justice. The truth is that this article of the creed is brought in to defend "orthodoxy" against the imputation of denying the resurrection of the body, which would be a very inconvenient charge in the face of the testimony of God. But this will not avail; for, to believe dogmas that make the resurrection of the mortal body unnecessary and absurd is equivalent to a denial of it ..."

THE NATIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND

We now turn to another article on the subject: "The Message of the Reformation" in the magazine of the National Bible Society of Scotland, for Oct. 1960. It is the report of an address by Dr. G.A. Knight. He points out that the Reformation was a return to the Bible in its original languages. The Old Testament had been translated into Greek between

200 and 50 B.C. This version, the Septuagint, contained the books called the Apocrypha. "Nowhere," says Dr Knight, "in the New Testament, is the Apocrypha specifically quoted, though, of course, some of its books are known, just as we know: The Pilgrim's Progress. Nowhere does our Lord say: "It is written," and then quote the Apocrypha. Nowhere does Paul say: "The Scriptures say," and then quote the Apocrypha.

I would mention four doctrines that have arisen from the Apocrypha which are not in the Old Testament nor in the New Testament. First: the immortality of the soul, as understood by the Greek philosopher Plato. Second: the pre-existence of the soul, an idea that came out of the East and not from the Old Testament. Third: Purgatory, which is not found anywhere in the Bible; and fourth: prayers for the dead. These are all in the Apocrypha. It is interesting that the church rejected some of these, but kept some of the others. (These comments recall what was said in an earlier section of this thesis on the intertestamental writings and their influence on Judaism).

"There is no need for the Apocrypha" says Dr Knight. "The Reformation was the rediscovery of the Bible." He then deals particularly with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. He says: "I want to mention a positive element in the Gospel which the Reformation rediscovered that has nothing to do with the Apocrypha, but comes straight to us from the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is the great hope of life after death. The Bible, without the Apocrypha, has nothing to say about the immortality of the soul; nothing about praying for the dead. The resurrection is the doctrine that comes to us from the Old and New Testaments - the resurrection of the body. We have to understand the word body too as we do in modern English. We ask: "is there anybody there?" We do not mean: "is there a corpse there?" We look for a living person. Our wholeness can only be known and expressed through our bodies as part of the whole persons that we are. Our physical bodies may be changed, but in the Resurrection it will be the whole of each one of us that is concerned - body, soul and spirit. This is his promise to us in the Bible, and not just the survival of a soul. That is good news; that is part of the good news that the medieval Church could not preach. No wonder that scholars before the Reformation were afraid of the Hebrew Bible. They were afraid that by going back to it, it might shake their faith, because they were preaching the immortality of the soul. When the Reformers came, returning to the original Hebrew or Greek of the Bible, their faith was shaken, but it was shaken into finding the Gospel!"

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The following statement is taken from the official Church of England publication, "Towards the Conversion of England:" "The idea of the inherent indestructibility of the human soul (or consciousness) owes its origin to Greek, not to Bible sources. The central theme of the New Testament is eternal life, not for anybody and everybody, but for believers in Christ as risen from the dead."

AN ARCHBISHOP

An independent thinker, reading the Bible, has again and again broken through the bondage of tradition on one or other point of doctrine. Thus, it would probably be possible, by gathering together the testimonies by different clergymen on the various major subjects, to find support for the whole truth as taught in apostolic times. But no one gathers together all phases and presents them as a system; perhaps that is why there is only a half-hearted assertion of the item of truth perceived. How otherwise can we explain the case of an archbishop who sees clearly that immortality is a gift, to be bestowed by resurrection on divinely imposed terms; and yet who evidently thinks its importance so small that he makes no effort to counter the erroneous doctrine of the immortality of the soul? Archbishop Temple believed in conditional immortality. A few statements, all taken from his book: "Nature, Man and God," and reprinted in: "Daily Readings from William Temple," are as follows:

"The Christian doctrine is a doctrine of eternal life; not of immortality but of resurrection. The difference is profound. The method of all non-Christian systems is to seek an escape from the evils and misery of life. Christianity seeks no escape, but accepts these at their worst, and makes them the material of its triumphant joy. That is the special significance in this connection of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ."

"The prevailing doctrine of the New Testament, as I think, is that God alone is immortal, being in his own nature eternal; and that He offers immortality to men not universally but conditionally."

"Annihilation is an everlasting punishment, though it is not unending torture."

"Hell has in effect been banished from popular belief; and as purgatory had been banished long before, we are left with a very widespread sentimental notion that all persons who die are forthwith in

paradise or heaven. And this seems to involve a conception of God, as so genially tolerant as to be morally indifferent, and converts the belief in immortality from a moral stimulant to a moral narcotic."

"Man is not immortal by nature or of right; but is capable of immortality and there is offered to him resurrection from the dead and life eternal if he will receive it from God and on God's terms. There is nothing arbitrary in that offer or in those terms, for God is perfect wisdom and perfect love."

"If my desire is first for future life for myself, or even first for reunion with those whom I have loved and lost, then the doctrine of immortality may do me positive harm by fixing me in that self concern or in concern for my own joy in my friends. But if my desire is first for God's glory, and for myself that I may be used to promote it, then the doctrine of immortality will give me new heart in the assurance that what here must be a very imperfect service may be made perfect hereafter."

THE REAL PROOF RESTS IN GOD'S WORD

We have seen that from Martin Luther down to our present time, various men have expressed the conviction that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is unscriptural and finds its source in Greek philosophy. All agree that it contradicts, and is incompatible with the doctrine of resurrection. Many other men down through the Reformation period have taken a firm and positive stand against the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and it would take up too much space to quote them all. A random selection has been presented simply to show that repudiation of this doctrine is far from being peculiar to the writer of this thesis or new or peculiar to the 20th century. "There is nothing new under the sun," and the arguments in this thesis have been presented many times by many men over the past centuries, right back to the apostles themselves who, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, had their eyes opened to all truth as it is in Christ Jesus; and went forth proclaiming his resurrection, and ours.

Quotations from other Bible students like the Reformers do not of course constitute proof of a doctrine. If they do, we would rightly be asked to accept views of an author which we may be sure are unscriptural. Proof of a doctrine rests in the final analysis, on God's Word alone; and in the preceding chapters many Scriptures have been presented to support the proposition set out at the beginning of the thesis. However, it is encouraging and helpful to many people when confronted with a new

concept, to be told that many Reformers held the same or a similar view. It is for this reason that reference has been made to other works.

* * * * *

CHAPTER NINETEEN THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

There are still a number of Scriptures which are often quoted to support the traditional concept that man has an immortal soul. Attention shall be given to these passages in the following chapters.

Quite a few Scriptural reasons are generally put forward to support the traditional view, some of which have already been considered in the preceding chapters. Those reasons are based upon certain passages that occur mostly in the New Testament; and of these passages it has to be remarked that, although they may appear on the surface to support the popular belief, not one of them, in fact affirms that belief. The evidence they are supposed to contain is purely inferential. That is, they make certain statements which are supposed to imply the doctrine sought to be proved, but they do not proclaim the doctrine itself. One needs to have a strong prejudice towards immortal soulism and a very good imagination in order to squeeze the doctrine out of Scripture. Now, it is important to note this general fact to commence with. Let it be emphasised that there is not a single promise of heaven at death in the whole Bible, and not a single declaration that man has an immortal soul; and that all the supposed evidence contained in the Bible in favour of these doctrines, only appears to be evidence when read superficially and with pre-conceived thoughts.

On the other hand, the testimony in favour of the opposite view (the one set forth in this thesis), is so clear and explicit that it cannot be set aside without the grossest violation of the fundamental laws of language. This consideration suggests an important principle of Scriptural interpretation, i.e. that plain testimony ought to guide us in the understanding of what may be obscure. We ought to procure our fundamental principles from teaching that cannot be misunderstood, and harmonise all difficulties therewith. It is unwise to found a dogma on a passage, which, from its vagueness, is susceptible of two interpretations; especially if that dogma is in opposition to the unmistakable declarations of the Word of God elsewhere.

Let us now apply this principle to the various Scriptures quoted by those who set themselves to justify the traditional theory, starting with the well known favourite - the thief on the cross who said to Jesus: "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Verily I say to you, Today you shall be with me in paradise." This passage is commonly interpreted to mean that the thief (or his immortal soul) accompanied Jesus to heaven that very day. This interpretation is

unacceptable for the following reasons:

(1) Jesus did not go to heaven that day! His own words were: "So shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40. 16:21). On the day that Jesus died and the two days following, Jesus was in the earth, not in heaven. He was in a death "sleep" as is clearly implied in 1 Cor. 15:20 which states he was the "first fruits of them that slept." After his resurrection, Jesus said: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my father" (Jn. 20:17). This clinches it. Jesus did not go to heaven until after his resurrection. He did not go the day he died!

Even the traditional interpretation of the "spirits in prison" in 1 Pet. 3:18-19 demands this same conclusion, and in so doing, contradicts its interpretation of the words of Jesus to the thief. It is commonly believed that after his death, during the three days that his body lay in the tomb, Jesus was down in some lower region of the earth called "prison" in a disembodied state; preaching to other disembodied "spirits." Yet, at the same time it is also claimed that he was in heaven with the thief. Now, the question is: where was he? Was he in the tomb, heaven or hell? Surely he wasn't in three places at once!

In the preceding sections of this thesis, it has been demonstrated that the whole weight of Biblical evidence is against the immortality of the soul and heaven-going at death. The constant, consistent teaching of Scripture is that at death man becomes unconscious and is laid to rest in the grave where he awaits resurrection which is his only hope of life after death. Man's only hope of life after death rests in the second coming and it would be superfluous to go over them all again. The promise of Jesus to the thief in no way contradicts this fundamental Bible theme when correctly interpreted. Unfortunately, tradition has "wrested" this passage in Lk. 23:42-43 to support a preconceived notion, and in so doing, has not only contradicted Scripture, but also contradicted its own teaching concerning the "spirits in prison."

Jesus clearly did not ascend to his father on the day that he died on the cross. He did not ascend until after his resurrection. Eph. 4:9-10 states this by saying he "descended first" before he "ascended." 1 Cor. 15:3-4 presents the order of events as death, burial and resurrection. Jesus himself - his "soul" lay dead in the grave (Act. 2:31) on the day of his crucifixion. The thief was laid to rest also, like all other dead men. Therefore, if the punctuation in the Authorised Version translation - "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise" - is correct, and if it has to be read to mean that the thief went to the same

place as Jesus that very day, then paradise must be in the lower regions of the earth where all the disobedient spirits go! Is that what the immortal soulist wants? By no means. He usually quotes 2 Cor. 12:2-4 to show that paradise is in the "third heaven." He does not believe that paradise is a "prison" down in the depths of the earth. Yet if it be insisted that the punctuation of Lk. 24:42-43 in the Authorised Version is correct, and that it means Jesus promised the thief that he would be with him in paradise that very day; then we must accept that paradise is in hell, because that is where Jesus was that day and the two days after.

RE-PUNCTUATION

The merit of re-punctuation of the text should be evident at this point, and welcomed, even by the traditionalist! It is important to realise that there were no commas in the Greek when the New Testament was written. The punctuation has been supplied by the English translators, and they, not being inspired, put commas where they thought they should be. And, where they thought they should be, in some cases, was governed by their doctrinal prejudices. In Appendix 94 of the "Companion Bible," Bullinger says:

"Punctuation, as we have it today (in the English Bible) is entirely absent (in the original Greek manuscripts). The earliest two MSS. (known as B, the MS. in the Vatican and the Sinaitic MS: now at St Petersburg) have only an occasional dot, and this on a level with the top of the letters. The text reads on without any divisions between letters or words until MSS, of the ninth century, when (in cod. Augiensis, now in Cambridge) there is seen for the first time a single point which separates each word. This dot is placed in the middle of the line, but is often omitted. None of our modern marks of punctuation are found until the ninth century, and then only in Latin versions and some cursives. From this it will be seen that the punctuation of all modern editions of the Greek text, and of all versions made from it, rests entirely on human authority, and has no weight whatever in determining or even influencing the interpretation of a single passage. This refers also to the employment of capital letters, and to all the modern literary refinements of the present day (such as are set forth in the "Rules for Compositors and Readers" at the University Press, Oxford)."

In Appendix 173, Bullinger comments on Lk. 23:43 and says: "The interpretation of this verse depends entirely on punctuation, which rests wholly on human authority, the Greek manuscripts having no punctuation

of any kind till the ninth century, and then it is only a dot (in the middle of the line) separating each word ..."

Many eminent Greek scholars have admitted that the correct interpretation of this passage depends mainly on the question of punctuation. It is determined by where the comma is placed, and this, of course, was subject to the theological bias of the translators. And, as already pointed out, their theological bias led them into placing the comma in a position which resulted in contradicting their theology elsewhere!

All difficulty in understanding what Christ meant in his answer to the thief disappears when the comma is placed after the word "today" instead of after "thee." This is in accord with the New Testament adverb "today," for out of its 221 uses, in no less than 170 the comma is placed before the adverb, and not after. In the Old Testament, the rule is the same; for instance, Deu. 8:19: "I testify against you this day."

So then, the original Greek text of Lk. 23:43, with this punctuation, reads as follows: "And he said to him, Truly thee I tell today, with me thou wilt be in paradise."

This re-punctuation is not merely tinkering with the text. The Greek word "semeron" translated "today," or "this day," is used as a term of emphasis. Bullinger re-punctuates and comments as follows: "And Jesus said to him, Verily, to thee I say this day, with me shalt thou be in paradise." Bullinger then comments: "The word "today" is made solemn and emphatic." (Ethelbert W. Bullinger, "A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament," eighth edition; London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Ltd; 1957, p.811).

In the following references, "semeron" qualifies the preceding verb: Lk. 2:11; 22:34; Act. 20:26; 26:29. 2 Cor. 3:14-15.

Rotherham in his translation places the comma after "this day" (Joseph Rotherham, "The Emphasised Bible": A translation designed to set forth the exact meaning, the proper terminology, and the graphic style of the sacred original: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1967).

There are a large number of places in the Septuagint translation in which the Greek construction corresponds to that of Lk. 23:43. "I say unto you this day" e.g. Deu. 6:6; 7:11; 8:1; 10:13; 11:8; 13,18.

By using the word: "today" when speaking to the thief, Jesus was stressing the time of his promise - not the time he would be in paradise! The thief asked Jesus to remember him when he comes in his kingdom. Jesus' reply was virtually this: "Let me assure you this very day that you

shall be with me in paradise then (i.e. when I come in my kingdom); so I assure you right now that you shall be with me in paradise on that day."

The word "today" or "this day" is clearly solemn and emphatic. The real pith of what Jesus was saying can only be appreciated when it is remembered that on the day he uttered his promise to the thief, they both hung upon a cross as condemned criminals; their bodies full of pain, and death staring them in the face. Jesus' promise to the thief could be paraphrased something like this: "Verily I testify to you this day - this day of what appears to be utter hopelessness, misery and despair - this day when the horizon seems so dark and empty - this very same day I assure you that you will be with me in paradise when I come in my kingdom!"

EMPHASIS ON A "COMING" NOT A "GOING."

It is vitally important to remember that the promise of Jesus to the repentant thief was a direct reply to the thief's question. This is really the key to the correct interpretation of the promise. Let us consider the question of the thief: "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

It is quite clear that the thief's mind was not fixed on the idea of going to heaven. He did not say: "Lord, remember me now that you are about to go into thy kingdom." No! Quite the opposite. He had a coming in his mind - not a going! And he looked upon it as a future event, and his desire was to be remembered when that future event should be accomplished i.e. "when thou comest into thy kingdom."

The thief was no fool! He had been around and knew a great deal about Jesus and his kingdom. A tremendous confession of faith was expressed by the thief in the question he put to Jesus. He confessed that Jesus had "done nothing amiss" and confessed that he was "Lord." This was more than what the bulk of the Jews and their religious leaders could confess. He believed that Jesus was going to "come" again to establish a kingdom. This implied that he believed that Jesus would rise from the dead, go somewhere (heaven) and then return to resurrect those like himself who believed in him, and set up a "kingdom" (millennial kingdom). At this point, the knowledge and faith of the thief exceeded that of Christ's apostles who lost all hope when he was crucified, and who did not expect him to rise from the dead and come back again. Yes indeed, the thief had a very penetrating knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. The thief was not some dumb ignorant sinner who had never come in contact with the light of the gospel. Somewhere, sometime, he had heard a thing

or two about the man from Galilee. He may have been among those who gathered to hear John the Baptist. He may have listened to Jesus himself on more occasions than one. Who can tell? For all we know, he may have even been, at some stage, either a disciple of John or Jesus. Jn.6:66 informs us that many disciples of Jesus fell away and walked no more with him because of his "hard sayings."

The thief could easily have been one of those who fell away. As a result of that he would naturally become a backslider in which state thieving would not be difficult. He was finally caught and crucified. At first, as he hung upon the cross next to Jesus he was angry and bitter. But, as he continued to hang there in the presence of Jesus, he came to his senses and repented. Maybe he received a flash of inspiration - a divine quickening for his own and Jesus' sake, reminding him that Jesus had referred to a forthcoming sacrificial death and a resurrection during his ministry. Maybe the "penny dropped" as he hung there next to Jesus. Anyway, he came under conviction and the hope of the gospel, and was re-born in his spirit causing him to reaffirm his faith to the Lord. And Jesus accepted him and assured him of salvation. Such is his wonderful mercy which rejoices against judgement. So the thief's crucifixion, which started out as an act forced on him against his will, turned into a voluntary denial and crucifixion of self with Jesus. His cross became his baptism! It became his altar and meeting place with the Lord, and on it, in the most literal and personal way possible, he shared the sufferings and death of Christ.

So then, Jesus really did answer the thief's request to be remembered when he comes into his kingdom. The thief knew that Jesus would judge the living and dead at his appearing and kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1), at which time he would give each faithful believer a "crown of life" (v 8).

There is another good reason for believing that Jesus was not telling the thief that he would be with him in his kingdom that day. With regard to his second coming and kingdom, Jesus made it clear during his ministry that: "of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but only the father" (Mk. 13:32). Even after his resurrection, when his apostles asked him if he would then restore the kingdom, he answered by saying that it was not for them to know the times and seasons which were totally in the father's control (Act. 1:6-7).

Now, if Jesus really knew and believed that the day he died on the cross, his kingdom would be established, he could not have said that he did not know the day as he did earlier. This confirms that the comma is in

the wrong place in the English translation of Lk. 23:43, otherwise it involves us in another contradiction. Jesus clearly did not know the day of his coming and kingdom so he could not have promised the thief that he would be in the kingdom that day.

It should hardly be necessary to point out that nothing is said in this passage under consideration about an immortal soul or spirit departing from the body at death. The thief did not express a desire for his spirit to go to heaven. It is common for the passage to be read that way, but it is in fact quite devoid of any reference to disembodied existence. As pointed out in an earlier section, Christ's "spirit" (life-breath) was committed to the father's control when he died on the cross (Lk. 23:46), and his "soul" (himself) was buried in "hell" (grave) from which it was resurrected three days later (Act. 2:31-32). The hope expressed by the repentant thief was: "Lord, remember me when you come ..." His hope was in resurrection of his body. He looked to the time when he - body, soul and spirit would be with the literal, physical Jesus in his millennial kingdom. His hope harmonised with the hope taught in the gospel as preached by Jesus and the apostles.

The idea that on the very day of death upon the cross, the thief had conscious existence in paradise in a disembodied state, clashes violently in the most fundamental way possible with the teaching of Scripture on the subject of the death state. This has been covered in previous sections and needs not to be repeated again. Suffice it to quote Ps. 146:4: "His breath goes forth, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." This testimony, along with many others that could be added to it, again confirms that Christ's promise to the thief could not have meant that on the very day of his death he would enjoy conscious existence in the kingdom.

PARADISE

In answer to the thief's question: "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom," Jesus replied: "You shall be with me in Paradise." From this we learn that the millennial kingdom which Jesus will establish upon earth at his second coming will be "paradise."

It is an instructive fact that in the Greek the article is pre-fixed: "the paradise," thus showing that it was a locality, or condition of things, regarding which definite ideas were entertained, as they must have been by those who were familiar with the splendid prophecies of the subject contained in the Old Testament.

We read in Rev. 2:7: "To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." This is an obvious allusion to the garden of Eden in Gen.2, and is very helpful. For one thing, this promise makes it quite clear that the paradise of God is that arrangement of things called "the restitution of all things," in which Jesus will bestow the "more abundant" life which he promised, upon those who are remembered by him (i.e. those written in the book of remembrance Mal. 3:16) when he comes into his kingdom. It has been proved beyond all doubt that this bestowal of life upon the saints (i.e. eating of the "tree of life" in the paradise of God), takes place immediately at Christ's return, and therefore, this verse in Rev. 2:7 confirms that "paradise" is merely another name for the "kingdom" into which Christ comes.

The promise in Rev. 2:7 is given to the Church at Ephesus. But, in actual fact, seven churches are addressed altogether in Revelation chapters two and three. In each case a promise is given to them, and it always relates to their future reward of ruling with Christ forever in his kingdom. However, this reward is described by a variety of expressions and symbols, but all relate, in the final analysis, to the same one hope of the Christian. Different churches are not given different hopes! There is only "one hope" and the spirit, in typical style, avoids repetition by expressing the one hope to each church in a variety of ways, each of which emphasises a particular facet of the one hope.

Thus, the church at Ephesus was promised access to the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God if she overcame (a strange promise to make if the church already possessed eternal life!). The same promise was given to the church at Smyrna but in different symbology, namely: "A crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). The church at Thyatira was told that Jesus would give each overcomer "power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ..." (Rev. 2:26-27).

Now, it should be evident that the church at Ephesus won't be going to heaven to a place called "paradise" while the church at Thyatira stays on the earth to rule the nations! These promises run parallel with each other and all relate to the same time, place and circumstances, namely: the millennial reign of Jesus on earth which constitutes the "one hope" of the gospel. Paradise will be upon the earth! It will be paradise (the garden of Eden) restored: in other words, heaven on earth. The second Adam (Jesus) with his bride (the church) will live and reign on a glorified and perfected earth. The allusion to the garden of Eden in Rev. 2:7 is unmistakable.

The Greek word from which "paradise" has been translated is "paradeisos" which most authorities say was used by the Greeks to

describe a large pleasure-garden with trees, or park.

The Septuagint translation uses the same word "paradeisos" for the garden of Eden in Gen.2:8, Ezk. 28:13 and 36:35. "Paradeisos" is also used by the Septuagint in Num. 24:6. Neh. 2:8. Ecc. 2:5. Song Sol. 4:13. Isa. 1:30. Jer. 29:5. Ezk. 31:8-9.

Solomon's gardens at Ethan and the hanging gardens at Babylon are called "paradises" ("paradeisos") in the Greek text of Josephus (Antiq.viii.7,3;con. Apion. I,20).

Vine's expository dictionary says that paradeisos "is an Oriental word, first used by the historian Xenophon, denoting the parks of Persian kings and nobles. It is of Persian origin (Old Pers. 'pairidoeza', akin to Grk. 'peri', around, and 'teichos', a wall) whence it passed into the Greek."

The I.V.F. dictionary agrees, saying: "Paradise is a loan word from ancient Iranian ("pairidoeza") - and means a garden with a wall. The Greek word "paradeisos" is used for the first time by Xenophon for the gardens of the Persian kings."

The Hebrew word for paradise is "pardes" and is rendered "forest" in Neh. 2:8, and "orchard" in Ecc. 2:5 and Song Sol. 4:13. Pardes only occurs in these three places in the Old Testament, and is nowhere used in an eschatological sense.

However, in most places where the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) uses "paradeisos", the Hebrew equivalent is another Hebrew word, "gan". This word has been translated "garden" 42 times, and is definitely used on several occasions in an eschatological sense, referring to the millennial kingdom on earth. In the Hebrew Old Testament, "gan" is the word used in relation to the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8).

The prophet Isaiah makes it clear that when the Lord shall comfort Zion: "He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden ("gan") of the Lord" (Isa. 51:3). The force of this prophetic allusion arises from the fact that this beautifying of the earth is unquestionably one result of Christ's appearing in his kingdom, and from the fact that the word "paradise" in Arabic and Persian signifies a garden.

In Ezk. 36:33-36 the earth in the millennial kingdom is referred to as having become "like the garden ("gan") of Eden." In that day there will be a new heavens and a new earth. Old things will have passed away and all things will be made new:" "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind" (Isa. 65:17- 66:22).

THE THIRD HEAVEN

We have seen that the word "paradise" simply relates to a garden or park, and finds its origin in Scripture in the garden of Eden - the perfect domain in which Adam and Eve were placed. Originally the whole earth was a "paradise" - "very good" in the sight of God. However, as a result of sin, paradise was lost; the earth, with man, was subjected to a process of degeneration - a process which only the "second Adam" (Christ) can arrest and reverse. At his second coming he will do this and restore the earth to its original condition as a beautiful garden. Through him, Paradise shall be restored.

The word "paradise" only occurs three times in the New Testament: in Lk. 23:43, Rev. 2:7 and 2 Cor. 12:4. We have seen that in Lk. 23:43 it refers to the kingdom which shall be set up on earth at the coming of Jesus. And we have seen that it refers to the same thing in Rev. 2:7. It would be reasonable to suppose that the third and final reference in 2 Cor. 12:4 harmonises with the other two. Let us see:

In 2 Cor. 12 we read that Paul was "caught up to paradise" in ecstatic vision. In verse 2 he refers to this as being "caught up to the third heaven." This immediately suggests an inseparable connection between "paradise" and the "third heaven." This immediately raises the question: "What is the significance of the third heaven?" If paradise is God's kingdom on earth, how could it be styled a "third heaven?"

"Third heaven" is usually interpreted in a geographical or topographical sense. The phrase has led many to believe that there are three different levels or locations each styled "heaven." The "first heaven" is regarded as the atmosphere or air that surrounds the earth. The "second heaven" is regarded as the space beyond the atmosphere which consists of the sun, moon and stars. And the "third heaven" is regarded as some unknown realm beyond space which man cannot see, even with the most powerful telescope. This realm is supposed to constitute "paradise" - the "third heaven."

There is, of course, no Scriptural justification for this interpretation. It is purely assumption and conjecture. Nowhere in the Word of God is the air designated a "first heaven," and space as "second heaven" etc. Certainly, the Bible never teaches that "paradise" is some location beyond the stars! As we have already seen, the other two references to paradise place it firmly upon the earth.

The phrase "third heaven," only occurs in 2 Cor. 12:2. We must be very careful therefore, to not allow one obscure phrase to influence our

understanding of other clear phrases elsewhere. Rather, we should seek to interpret the obscure phrase by the clear ones. There are only three places in the New Testament where the word "paradise" occurs. They must not contradict each other. They must all refer to one and the same place. If two of them clearly relate to the renewed earth, then the third one should be interpreted in a way that is consistent with this concept.

Now, in a number of Scriptures, the future paradise ("third heaven") is referred to as a "new heavens and a new earth" which the Lord is going to create and make (Isa. 65:17. 66:22. Rev. 21:1). We are told in these passages that the "former" heavens and earth will pass away and be remembered no more. These expressions "former" and "new" heavens imply several different heavens. But it is not suggested that these "heavens" all exist at the same time, one above the other in a geographical sense. The "new" heavens are clearly yet to be made and created! They will replace the "former" or "old" heavens and embrace the same area. This immediately suggests that the phrase "third heaven" is not to be understood in a geographical sense but in a chronological sense. It will be the "third" in order of time.

Now there is a clear enumeration of three heavens and earth in 2 Pet. 3:5-16 which the New English Bible in particular brings out very well: "... there were heavens and earth (the "first") long ago, created by God's Word out of water and with water; and by water that first world was destroyed, the water of the deluge. And the present ("second") heavens and earth, again by God's word, have been kept in store for burning; they are being reserved until the day of judgement when the godless will be destroyed. And here is one point, my friends, which you must not lose sight of: with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. It is not that the Lord is slow in fulfilling his promise, as some suppose, but that he is very patient with you, because it is not his will for any to be lost, but for all to come to repentance. But the Day of the Lord will come; it will come, unexpected as a thief. On that day the (second) heavens will disappear with a great rushing sound, the elements will disintegrate in flames, and the earth with all that is in it will be laid bare. Since the whole universe is to break up in this way, think what sort of people you ought to be, what devout and dedicated lives you should live! Look eagerly for the coming of the Day of God and work to hasten it on; that day will set the (second) heavens ablaze until they fall apart, and will melt the elements in flames. But we have His promise, and look forward to new heavens (third) and a new earth, the home of justice. With this to look forward to, do your utmost to be found at peace with Him,

unblemished and above reproach in his sight. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience with us is our salvation, as Paul, our friend and brother, said when he wrote to you with inspired wisdom. And so he does in all his other letters (like 2 Cor. 12) wherever he speaks of this subject (of three heavens), though they contain some obscure passages, which the ignorant and unstable misinterpret to their own ruin, as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:16).

In this passage, Peter enumerates three heavens and earth. The first heaven and earth was the first and original heavens and earth created long ago by God as recorded in Gen. 1. The New English Bible refers to it as the "first world" i.e. the antediluvian world or order of things. That first world was destroyed by a flood in Noah's day. Every living creature that flew through the heavens (firmament) and walked upon the earth, perished, except for those tucked safely away in Noah's ark. The judgement of the flood not only changed the earth; it also changed the whole constitution of the heaven, i.e. the firmament or atmosphere. Prior to the flood, "the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground" (Gen. 2:5-6).

The first reference to rain in Scripture is in Gen. 7:4 where God told Noah about the impending judgement by flood. If it had not rained up until that period, it would have taken real faith to believe the warning. Thus, we read in Heb. 11:7 that: "By faith Noah, being warned by God of things not seen (rain?) ..." Surely, if there had been plenty of rain before the flood, the appearance of a rainbow would have been a regular occurrence. Where there is rain and sunshine there is sooner or later a rainbow somewhere to be observed, unless we are to suppose the laws of refraction of light were inoperative till the time of Noah's flood, for which supposition there does not appear to be any reason at all. The fact that it was not till after the flood that God said he would set the rainbow in the sky as a sign of his covenant; strongly suggests there had been no rainbow before the flood, which, in turn suggests there had been no rain. Thus, the "heaven" or "firmament" which had existed from the time of Adam to Noah "passed away" and was replaced by an entirely different constitution. Scientists believe that tremendous convulsions took place at the time of the flood. Some in fact believe that the whole earth shifted to a different position on its axis resulting in great upheavals and dramatic changes in atmospheric conditions. The Word of God does not attempt to be scientific in its terminology, being written for the ordinary individual, and simply describes the event in terms of the heavens and earth passing away - not meaning for one moment, that the earth and surrounding

atmosphere ceased to exist. No, it was the existing order or system of things that ceased to exist.

Coming back to 2 Peter 3, we read in verse 7: "But the heavens and earth which exist now, have been kept in store, reserved for fire against the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men." This is a reference to the "second" heavens and earth which are viewed as the system stretching from Noah's day after the flood to Peter's day right through to the coming of the Lord. When that day comes, the "third heavens" will be established. The second heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.

Such will be the end of the second heavens and earth. Verse 13 says: "Nevertheless we look for a new heavens ("third") and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." This implies that unrighteousness exists in the present "second" heavens and earth.

The "new" heavens and earth are clearly the "third" in order of time. The "first" was from Eden to the flood; the "second" was from Noah to the second coming of Christ; and the "third" is from the second coming through to the end of the millennial reign. This third period, being the millennial reign, constitutes "paradise." And this is precisely the teaching of 2 Cor. 12:4 where Paul refers to paradise as the "third heaven." And it agrees with what we read in Lk. 23:43 that paradise will not come till Jesus comes back to the earth. Peter is quite emphatic in his testimony that the new heavens will not be established till the return of Jesus. When this basic truth is understood, everything falls into place beautifully. But once we start trying to superimpose immortal soulism and heaven-going at death upon the text, the result is confusion and contradiction.

Today, mankind is desperately in need of a new heavens and earth. He has filled the heavens and earth with unrighteousness. The "heavens" or atmosphere is rapidly filling up with pollution, along with the earth, and needs renewing in a way that is now only possible for God to accomplish through his purifying fire. During the past century man has been using the heavens on an increasing scale for destructive purposes. It has become the most effective sphere through which man sends destruction upon his neighbour. And now he threatens to use the heavens for germ warfare. But all will be to no avail in his power-struggle against his brother. He may fill the heavens with pollution, radio-activity and germs, not to mention guided missiles etc, but Jesus will return and put an end to his vanity and pride and create a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell.

If man imagines that he can escape the divine judgement by taking to the air in planes and rockets, he will be sadly mistaken. Both the heavens and the earth will be shaken at the second coming, along with the seas and deserts (Hag. 2:6). No one will be able to escape.

OUT OF THIS BODY

The passage in 2 Cor. 12:1-4 reads like this: "I must boast, there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who, about 14 years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such an one caught up into the third heaven. And I know that this man, (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows) that he was caught up into paradise, and heard indescribable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter"

This passage is sometimes quoted as proof that a man can exist without a body, implying that the real personal being does not depend on having a body. It is thought that it supports the concept of the immortality of the soul. It is also argued that since reference is made to going to the Lord in paradise, this implies that paradise is a place that will be experienced in a disembodied state: in other words - not on the earth.

However, several things are assumed which are not taught in the passage at all. They are as follows:

(1) Whatever Paul means by being caught up to paradise, he does not teach that every Christian can expect to have the same experience that he had. Quite the opposite in fact! He talks about it in terms of being a very unusual and exceptional experience, and therefore uses it as his ground for "glory" or "boasting." If every Christian had the same experience, Paul would no longer have any ground for boasting.

(2) It is assumed that when Paul speaks about being "out of the body," that he referred to a literal departure of some disembodied entity from his body. We have already seen in earlier sections that Scripture does not teach or support such a concept.

It is generally believed in traditional circles that when the "spirit" leaves the body, the body dies. Jam. 2:26 says: "The body without the spirit is dead." If the spirit of the person referred to in 2 Cor.12 really did "depart" or was "caught up," then he must have surely died. How then, was Paul able to recount afterwards what the spirit of this dead man saw? Dead men tell no tales!

Even if it was possible for some part of our body to literally detach

itself from the body and float off into space in a conscious state; 2 Cor. 12 still could not be quoted as support for the concept. Paul said he wasn't sure if the man was in the body or out of the body. If the inspired writer didn't know for certain, how can this reference be cited to prove that he was "out of the body?" In fact, one would be equally justified in arguing the other way from this verse; affirming that he was "in the body," because Paul also said that he wasn't sure whether he was "in the body" when he had his experience.

Another point: if paradise is somewhere beyond the stars, and can only be reached in a disembodied state, why would Paul say he wasn't sure if he was there in the body or out of the body? If it was a well established doctrine that no one could go to paradise in a body, then surely Paul would immediately conclude that he was "out of the body" when he was taken there!

(3) It is often assumed that the man Paul knew died; but the passage does not say so. Until it is proven that he did die, there is no warrant for the sweeping generalisation that the souls of any righteous dead persons go to heaven. This passage has nothing to do with what happens to a person when he dies. Nowhere in the text before us does the word "soul" or "spirit" occur. Not a word is said about death or the death state. Death or the death state is totally irrelevant, and to quote it as applying to this is to lift it right out of its context.

The contextual evidence strongly suggests that the "man in Christ" that Paul "knew," was none other than Paul himself. Most reliable authorities agree with this. This means that his reference to being "out of the body" does not mean death, for Paul, although he came close to death on several occasions (e.g. Act. 14:19), never actually died, and was still very much alive when he penned 2 Cor. 12. Yet, if being "out of the body" means the departure of the "spirit," and if that is what actually happened; death would have inevitably been the outcome. The expression clearly does not relate to detachment and separation of spirit from the body. Up until the time of penning these words, Paul had never died.

What then does Paul mean when he speaks about being caught up to the third heaven and paradise; "whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell;" causing him to hear indescribable words which it was not possible for a man to express?

The key is really provided in verse one which is the springboard of his discourse. He refers to the fact that he had experienced "visions and revelations of the Lord." These visions and revelations were so real and vivid, Paul did not know for certain whether he was actually there in

person, or whether his mind had been transported there in vision. He did not know for certain whether he was transported to participate in them objectively, as did Daniel (Dan. 10), or whether his experience was subjective; as was Peter's vision of the sheet let down from heaven (Act. 10:10-11, 17). Later, when Peter was let out of prison by the angel, he "wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision" (Act. 12:9). Peter thought his objective experience might only be subjective - that what was actually occurring might only be transpiring in his mind. When Peter was "come to himself" he said: "Now I know for a surety ..." (Act. 12:11). Similarly, Paul was unable to know for certain whether he was in the body (actually there in person participating) or out of the body (i.e. his mind projected in vision).

It was pointed out in an earlier section of this thesis that through its ability to imagine, the mental faculty can form images of external objects that are in some far distant place, and not present to the senses; but it is still inexorably fixed in the body framework, and never leaves it while life continues. The spirit of the mind is located in the body. It is not a loose ethereal thing, capable of detachment from the material person.

The ability of the mind to form pictures in the imagination is so real, particularly in vivid dreams; that when dreams or deep meditation projects our thoughts to some far-off place, the experience is as if we have left our body. It is not uncommon to hear someone say: "I went on a trip last night," when referring to a vivid dream they had about being in some far-off place. It is through the same faculty that the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, is able to quicken our mind and thoughts either by dream or vision; and show us things, and take us to places that are far removed from our senses. Visions of the Lord can be so real that it is difficult to tell whether or not it was experienced in person, or just a projection of the mind beyond the senses of the body. "Whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows"- but, in all cases, the body is still very much alive. Not one case can be cited from Scripture of a man having visions and revelations after his body and brain died!

Paul was given a vision and revelation of the millennial kingdom (paradise) and all its glory. The things that he saw as the Lord gave him a "bird's eye view" in the new heaven; and the things that he heard were so wonderful that they were indescribable - impossible to utter and explain in words. Words failed him to describe what he saw as he was taken into the city of God exalted over the regenerated and glorified earth. It was a case of: "Who can put into words the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise?" (Ps. 106:2).

Paul's reference to being "caught up" can be compared with the experience of the prophet Ezekiel. He was among the Jewish captives in the land of Chaldea (Ezk. 1:1-3), and while he was there, he had many visions. In chapter 8:3 we read that the spirit "put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem ..." And in 11:24 we read: "Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the spirit of God back into Chaldea ..." Then again in 40:1-2 the spirit took him back in the vision of God to Jerusalem and placed him on a high mountain from which he was shown, in vision, the future millennial temple.

It is hard to know whether Ezekiel had these experiences "in the body or out of the body" i.e. whether he was literally and physically transported to Jerusalem to participate in them objectively, or whether his experiences were subjective. Reference to the spirit taking hold of him by a lock of his head and lifting him up into the air suggests physical transportation, yet the emphasis upon him seeing things in the visions of God hardly seems appropriate, if he literally saw them with his own eyes. It almost seems as if he wasn't sure himself whether it was "in the body or out of the body," that he had his experiences. One thing is certain: his last journey to Jerusalem as recorded in ch. 40 could not have been literal and physical, because he saw the millennial temple there; and at the time it did not exist - except in the mind of the spirit. Hence, on that occasion at least, we can be sure that it was a subjective experience - Ezekiel's mind was transported in vision far into the future of God's purpose and he saw things which, at the time did not physically exist.

Although physically transported; in actual fact, his body probably never shifted at all. The experience was so real - so like being there in person, that it is described in those terms of the body being transported. The same no doubt applies to the apostle Paul when he refers to himself being "caught up" to see the new heavens and earth. The millennial heavens, having been purified by the divine fire of the second coming, will sparkle like a diamond and will be like a "sapphire stone and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness." Paul was transported in vision by the spirit through the new millennial atmosphere, and had a survey of the paradise of God. The air and the sea were as clear as crystal and the inhabitants of the earth were pure and holy. The whole earth was full of righteousness and the glory of the Lord. Even the bells upon the horses and the pots were holy. Such will be the paradise kingdom. Well might we say with the thief upon the cross: "Lord remember me when thou comest

into thy kingdom."

THE EARTH ... BURNED UP

We read earlier from 2 Pet. 3:10 that "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." It is sometimes argued that since the earth is referred to here as being destroyed by fire, the future inheritance must be heaven, and not the earth.

However, Peter also states that "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved" (v12). Are those who argue for the annihilation of the earth prepared to allow for the annihilation of the heavens?

When Peter speaks about the earth and its works being destroyed, he does not mean that the whole planet will just melt away and dissolve into nothing. Why should it? There is nothing wrong with the earth. The problem rests in the way it has been constituted and organised by man. Man has misused and abused the earth, filling it with innumerable evils. It is these evils and works of man that the second coming will destroy. The present constitution of the earth will be destroyed but the planet itself will abide and remain.

This is illustrated in Gen. 6:13 where God said to Noah: "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold I will destroy them with the earth." God did not mean that he would annihilate the planet itself, causing it to disappear from the solar system, but that he would terminate its existing constitution and wipe out its evil inhabitants.

Peter stated that "the world that then was" in Noah's day "perished." But the literal "world" in the sense of the planet did not perish. It was "everything living" that perished (Gen. 7:21), along with their evil works.

When the flood waters abated, Noah and his family embarked upon a "new earth." It had been "baptised in water," giving birth to a new order and constitution - a "second" heavens and earth.

A similar thing will take place at the second coming of Christ. The earth will be "baptised in fire," giving birth to a "new heavens and a new earth" which will constitute the third new order in human history.

In Isa. 24:19-20 the old earth system is likened to a drunken man who totters and sways and finally falls down. And so it will be with the present world order and constitution. It is intoxicated with the spirit of evil; violence is filling the earth again as in Noah's day; its cup of iniquity is almost full. It is tottering under the heavy load of sin and will collapse

under the scorching judgements of God.

The rebirth of the earth is sometimes referred to in Scripture in metaphorical terms; as changing a garment. The old earth system is referred to as an old garment which shall be taken away to be replaced with a new garment (Ps. 102:25-26. Isa. 51:6).

Jesus is not coming back to patch up an old system! He will completely divest the earth of its old system, rolling it up like a scroll (Isa. 34:4); and will clothe it with a new system. The glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the deep (Hab. 2:14). At the moment, the earth's "covering" is man's glory. When Jesus returns it shall be unclothed of this covering and be clothed upon with God's glory. The saints also, as pointed out before in a previous chapter, will also be "clothed upon" with a new covering from the Lord when he returns; namely, an immortal body like his glorious body.

So then, rather than being destroyed in a great conflagration, planet earth is to become filled with the glory of the Lord! After all, as mentioned before: it is the ultimate inheritance promised to Abraham and his seed. God would hardly promise to give something that he intended to destroy. However, the land promised to Abraham was a "heavenly country," and this is what it will become when Jesus returns and transforms the earth.

That planet earth will always abide and never be destroyed is taught in the following Scriptures:

1 Chr. 16:30: "The earth ... stands firm never to be moved."

Ps. 78:69: "The earth which He hath established forever."

Ps. 104:5: "God set the earth on its foundations that it should not be removed forever."

Ecc. 1:4: "One generation passes away, and another generation comes, but the earth abideth forever."

Isa. 45:18: "God himself formed the earth; He has established it, He created it not in vain; He formed it to be inhabited."

Peter's quotation from Isa. 65:17 and 66:22 also reveals that the literal earth will not be destroyed. The "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13), is portrayed in Isaiah as a time on earth when Jerusalem will be a rejoicing, and the nature of the animals will even be changed (Isa. 65:18-25). The prophecy requires the continued existence of planet earth.

Isa. 65:17-25 teaches that the new heavens and earth is the creation of "Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy" in which "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." This reveals that in the former

"heavens and earth" there was hurt, destruction and no joy. It clearly relates to a constitution - order - system pertaining to our planet, and not the actual planet itself.

In these testimonies Isaiah is emphatic about Jerusalem's future existence, except of course, under an entirely different constitution and administration. Many other prophecies back this up. Zec. 14, for instance, after speaking about the mighty upheavals and convulsions the earth will experience, when the birth pangs of the new birth take place at the second coming; says that Jerusalem "shall remain aloft upon its site ..." (Zec. 14:10). This would not be possible if planet earth was destroyed.

A spirit of escapism could very well be behind the traditional teaching of heaven-going. Throughout history, the spirit of escapism has induced men to believe and do unusual things. The spirit of escapism could easily deceive a man into thinking that the planet earth is the cause of all of his problems and that real happiness and contentment is impossible, so long as he remains upon it. Nothing could be further from the truth. Man's whole problem is himself - his own self-desire which asserts itself against God and rejects divine principles of living. Man alone is responsible for all the wickedness in the earth, and not the planet itself. As it was in the days of Noah, so it is today: "God saw that the wickedness of man was very great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man ..." (Gen. 6:5-6).

God formed the earth to be inhabited and to be full of his glory, and this purpose will be fulfilled. Paradise was lost through the sin of the first Adam and his bride, but shall be restored by the second Adam and his bride. Righteousness in their hands will prevail and peace will flood the earth. The judgements of God will fall heavily upon man and humble him, ultimately resulting in every knee bowing to Jesus and every tongue confessing him as Lord. This is the divine programme for the earth for at least the next 1,000 years; so the sooner man gets his head out of the clouds, and comes down to earth, the closer he will be to the purpose of God.

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CHAPTER TWENTY MANY MANSIONS

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:1-3).

This passage is often quoted to support the view that souls of the righteous go to heaven at death. The "many mansions" are assumed to refer to heaven i.e. God's house.

Before this text can be used to support this belief, it must be shown that heaven is the "Father's house" and that our "soul" or "spirit" departs there at death.

Nowhere in Jn. 14 or any other part of the Bible is it taught that the "Father's house" is heaven, and Jn. 14 says nothing about our "soul" or "spirit" going there. As we have seen in earlier sections; the concept of disembodied entities departing to heaven at death is unscriptural. Not a single hint is dropped in Jn.14 that Jesus was promising the saints a "mansion" in heaven the moment they died. The immediate effect of death is not the subject of his discourse at all.

Heaven is never referred to in Scripture as the "Father's house." The following selection of Scriptures reveals the true nature of God's house:

1 Tim. 3:15: "The house of God, which is the church of the living God."

1 Pet. 4:17: "For the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God, and if it first begin with us (Christians) ..."

Heb. 3:5-6: "But Christ is a son over God's house, whose house are we ..."

1 Pet. 2:5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices..."

1 Cor. 3:9: "ye are God's building."

Eph. 2:19-22: "Ye are ... of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together growth for an habitation of God though the spirit."

1 Cor. 3:16-17: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God ..."

2 Cor. 6:16: "Ye are the temple of the living God."

Rev. 3:12: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God."

From these New Testament statements it should be apparent that the Father's "house" or "temple" is the church in which he dwells by his spirit. His house is to be understood spiritually and relates to people - the Christian community. Even in the Old Testament times, heaven is never referred to as God's house. On many occasions however, the nation of Israel is referred to as a "house" (e.g. Ezk. 12:2). Scripture abounds with examples of the word "house" referring to a "household" i.e. people or community e.g. Act. 10:2 etc.

However in the Old Testament, the house of God refers mostly to the temple at Jerusalem in which God dwelt by his spirit. For example: "Then David said, Here (on Mount Moriah) shall be the house of the Lord" (1 Chr. 22:1). The prophet Micah (3:12) predicted the overthrow and destruction of this house, but went on to say that in the last days (when Jesus has returned) it shall be re-established in Jerusalem (4:1). It will be the temple for mortal worshippers during the millennial age. The throne of David will be situated there upon which Jesus will sit when he visits the temple. Even Jesus referred to the temple at Jerusalem as his Father's "house" (Jn. 2:16 Lk. 2:49).

However, the temple at Jerusalem in Old Testament times not only pointed forward to the greater temple which Jesus, the greater than Solomon, will establish at his return; but also pointed forward to the greater community of "Israel" - the church of Christ. In every respect, the Old Testament temple was a shadow of greater things to come in Christ. It was not God's intention to confine his spirit or glory to a house made with hands out of wood and stone. He purposed to take up residence in people - to dwell in a community of living beings. The temple of Old Testament times, which was made out of wood and stone by human hands, typified greater things to come in Christ as indicated in the Scriptures already quoted from the New Testament.

This is what Stephen said: "... Our fathers ... desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him a house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool, what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hands made all these things?" (Act. 7:46-50). "God that made the world and all things therein, being Lord of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands ..." (Act. 17:24).

Coming back to Jn. 14 with these thoughts, we read that there are "many mansions" in God's house. Now, the passage does not necessarily refer to literal mansions in the ordinary sense of the word as we use it

today: for a mansion, by definition, is larger than a house, and it would be impossible to have mansions in a house!

The word "mansions" has been translated from the Greek word "mone," which means a staying, dwelling, abiding. The same Greek word is translated "abode" in Jn. 14:23.

The R.S.V. translates the word as "rooms" instead of "mansions," and the Jerusalem Bible agrees. The New English Bible gives "dwelling places." Moffatt gives "abodes." Rotherham: "dwellings."

So then, Jn. 14:2 teaches us that there are many "rooms" or "abiding places" in the Father's house. In Old Testament times this was true of the literal physical temple. Solomon's temple had many rooms into which only the priests were allowed to venture, and these rooms represented positions of authority.

Today, God's house or temple is the church, and there are plenty of rooms - plenty abiding places in it for all who want a position in his kingdom. All who desire abundant life and a share in God's kingdom must secure an abode in God's house. All must "abide" in Christ. This is what Jesus went on to say: "Abide in me and I in you ..." (Jn. 15:1-7). "Brethren, let every man, whatever state (occupation) he is in when he is called, stay there and abide with God" (1 Cor. 7:24). Also compare 2 Jn.9.

Jn. 14:2 then, can be related to positions in the church or God's kingdom on earth. Even Vine, in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says: "There is nothing in the word ("mansions") to indicate separate compartments in heaven, neither does it suggest temporary resting-places on the road." Heaven is not an unprepared place! It is the Father's throne (Ps. 115:16. Matt. 5:34), where his will is already done - finished, complete and accomplished (Matt. 6:10).

What then, did Jesus mean when he said that he was going to heaven to "prepare a place" for us? The answer is quite simple. Christ is preparing a place for his followers in the church by his high priestly mediation and intercession. See Heb. 3:1-6. 7:24-25. 9:24. 10:19-22. Since Jesus ascended to heaven, he has, as High Priest, been building the church through the Holy Spirit. In heaven, Jesus is building God's house! But this does not mean that the house is in heaven!

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is building the house of believers, preparing the lively stones and shaping them for their various places of honour in the kingdom; God being judge of their worthiness. Jesus said to the mother of Zebedee's sons: "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared by my Father" (Matt. 20:23).

When Jesus returns to the earth, as King of kings, and establishes his millennial reign, he will tell his saints: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you ..." (Matt. 25:34). And the Word of God tells us that they will rule all nations here on earth, having positions of authority in God's kingdom. Jesus is now, while in heaven, preparing us all for those positions by subjecting us to trials by which he, as a master builder, shapes and fashions us, shaping us into lively precious stones that will fit together to form one glorious habitation of God.

I WILL COME AGAIN

When Jesus said: "I go to prepare a place for you," he was of course referring to his ascension to heaven. This is evident in verses 12 and 28 where he says: "... I go to my Father." "You have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you. If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I said I go to my Father: for my Father is greater than I."

However, Jesus not only spoke about going to his Father in heaven, but also said: "I will come again" (Jn. 14:3). Now if the "going" of Jesus meant ascending from earth to heaven, his "coming again" surely means descending from heaven back to earth. We have already seen that this is taught clearly and constantly throughout the Word of God. The second coming of Jesus back to earth is, as emphasised earlier, an outstanding Bible doctrine; and Jn. 14:3 is just one of literally hundreds of references to this great event.

Speaking to all his faithful saints, Jesus went on to say that when he comes again: "I will receive you unto myself." This is often interpreted to mean that when Jesus returns he will stop in the atmosphere, suspended above the earth's surface, gather up all the saints, and whisk them all back to heaven in some far off galaxy. But, as pointed out in an earlier section, nowhere in Scripture is this concept taught, and Jn. 14 certainly does not teach it. Jesus comes to reign on earth for 1,000 years. Heaven comes to earth and is the inheritance promised to Abraham's seed. And, because Jesus is the chief of that "seed," we find that the earth and its uttermost parts is promised to him by his father in Ps. 2.

When Jesus comes again, accompanied by the city of God, his feet will touch down on a specific geographical location on the earth - the very locality from which he ascended to heaven, namely: the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem (See Zec. 14:4 and Act. 1:9-12).

Jerusalem is a city of remarkable destiny. It is to be the "city of the

great king" - the metropolis of a brand new world order - the kingdom of Christ and his saints. Not the Jerusalem of today of course, but a "new Jerusalem" - a "heavenly Jerusalem" in which will no longer dwell the filth and corruption that has been so characteristic of it in the past.

Jesus will, in accordance with the promise given to his mother prior to his birth, set up the throne of David and reign upon it as king over the whole earth; and his saints will reign with him! The land promised to Abraham and his seed will become the "first dominion" of the new world order. In relation to the new world empire of Christ, Palestine's position will be similar to that of Great Britain and the Commonwealth. In other words: the "mother country."

How fitting that Jerusalem, the city of Christ's shame, agony and humiliation; should become the city of his power and glory. The place of the cross will be turned into the place of his crown!

Now when Jesus descends from heaven, the time will have arrived for all his saints, living and dead, to be gathered to accompany him and assist him in his mission. They will "reign with him" because they have "suffered with him." When he returns, he will not send a letter or e-mail or toll-call to his followers throughout the earth telling them to catch the next plane to Jerusalem. By no means! In his own words: "I will receive you unto myself." The saints, living and dead, will be supernaturally air-lifted i.e. "gathered" up by the angels and transported to meet Jesus in the air, to accompany him on his victorious entry to the promised inheritance. Many Scriptures speak about this gathering of the saints: 1 Thes. 4:16-17. 2 Thes. 2:1. Matt. 24:30-31. Lk. 16:22. Ps. 49:15. Ps. 50:3-5. Also compare the type in Ex. 19:4.

Jesus said that the purpose of receiving the saints to himself was "that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:3). Now where will Jesus be when he comes again? The answer clearly is - "on the earth at Jerusalem." His purpose for gathering the saints when he returns is so that they can be with him there in triumphant glory. "So shall we ever be with the Lord" says Paul, after speaking about the gathering of the saints in 1 Thes. 4:17. Rev. 14:4 puts it like this: "These are they which follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth."

In Jn. 13:36, which is only a few verses before the text under consideration in Jn. 14:1-3, Jesus said to Peter: "Whither I go you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow me afterwards." Peter was unable to go to heaven and follow Jesus, but afterwards, when Jesus comes again, Peter, with all the saints will be gathered to Jesus and will then "follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth." Jn. 14:1-3 is really an elaboration of Jesus'

reply to Peter's question in ch. 13:36.

Reference in Jn. 14:1-3 to Jesus going to heaven to prepare a place for God's people and then return, is an allusion to the High priest's atonement under the law of Moses. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, the high priest went into the most holy place once a year to make atonement for the people. He mediated and interceded for them, thus preparing and securing a place for them in God's house - which Israel was, as we read in Heb. 3:5. (In fact, Israel was God's "Church" during Old Testament times, Act. 7:38). The High priest, after completing his "preparation" work, returned from the most holy place to the people who had "gathered" to him to receive the divine blessing.

REVELATION CHAPTER FIVE

Another argument in favour of the popular theory is often advanced from Rev. 5:9. In this chapter, the apostle John records that he saw the redeemed of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, standing before the throne of God, and giving glory. It is often argued that these were the righteous whose immortal souls had gone to heaven at death. However, Rev. 4:1 clearly says that the things which John saw were the "things which must be hereafter." The sights which John witnessed were representations of things which were to be at a future time. The multitude that John saw praising God was the assembly of the resurrected as they will appear at the second advent!

Whether heaven-going at death is true or not, it must surely strike every reflecting mind as an exceedingly discordant element that the righteous; after enjoying years of celestial felicity, should have to leave the abode of their bliss on the arrival of the day of judgement, to come down to earth and re-enter their bodies for arraignment at the bar of eternal judgement. What is this judgement "according to what they have done," for? It seems natural to suppose that admission to heaven in the first instance is proof of the fitness and acceptance of those admitted. And the same would surely apply to those who are supposed to have descended to the fiery regions beneath the earth. Why then, the trial afterwards? Judgement in such a case seems redundant - a mockery in fact.

What is the escape from this distracting inconsistency? It is to be found in the recognition of the unfounded character of the whole idea of heaven-going at death. This going to heaven is purely a gratuitous speculation. There is not a single promise throughout the whole of the Scriptures to warrant a man hoping for it. It is a foundationless and false

hope, and diverts people's attention from God's real purpose, which centres in the second coming of Jesus and a new and regenerated earth.

There are doubtless, phrases which; to a mind indoctrinated with the idea; seem to afford countenance to the heaven-going theory; such, for instance, as that used by Jesus when he said:

"GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN"

The point has already been made before that, if our reward is in heaven, this does not prove that we must go to heaven to receive it.

There are two possibilities:

(1) The righteous go to heaven to obtain their reward.

(2) The reward will be brought from heaven to the righteous.

Nowhere is it taught in Scripture that the righteous go to heaven at death to receive their reward. But it is emphasised many times that Jesus will bring the reward with him when he returns to the earth: "For the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). "And when the chief shepherd shall appear you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 5:4).

In 1 Pet. 1:4 we read that our reward is "reserved in heaven." Jesus of course, is the pledge of our reward - the very germ of it. As long as he is in heaven, our reward is there! He is our life (Col. 3:3). Our "life is his (God's) son" (1 Jn. 5:11). Our reward is in heaven because Jesus, who is our life, is there. He alone has the power and authority to raise the dead and confer immortality. Therefore, as long as he remains in heaven, our immortal life remains there with him. It has no other kind of existence anywhere else at present. It is safe and secure in heaven, unaffected by moths and rust!

It is only in heaven in "reserve;" "reserved in heaven" is the way Peter puts it. When a thing is reserved, it is implied that when it is time for it to be brought forth, it will be brought forth. And so it is that Peter speaks in the very same chapter, saying that the salvation which is reserved in heaven, is a "salvation that is to be brought unto you at the revelation (second coming) of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). And it is stated in verse 5 that this takes place at the "last time."

We are therefore exhorted to: "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven where neither moth or rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not

break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19-20). This obviously does not mean literally ascend to heaven and deposit literal treasure there like silver and gold. Jesus is clearly talking parabolically. No man can ascend to heaven, and even if he could, the depositing of silver and gold or any other kind of material wealth would do him no good. Jesus, in fact, in the context, is speaking against the gathering and accumulation of material treasure, for he says: "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth."

Our "treasure" and "reward" is eternal life. This eternal life is bound up in Christ who is in heaven. By setting our affections on him, and getting our eyes off earthly carnal things, we secure and establish our reward in our Master. To get our eyes off him means loss.

It is worth noting that the statement in Lk. 12:33 to "provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not;" is followed by the exhortation to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord when he will return" (v36). "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching."

It is in the light of all this that Paul's statement in Col. 1:15 should be understood: "For the hope that is laid up for you in heaven." Once again, this passage says nothing about believers going to heaven; it only asserts that our hope is laid up in heaven. As pointed out before; the Christian "hope" is eternal life which shall be bestowed by Jesus at the resurrection when he returns. In the meantime it is "laid up" in heaven while he is there. In the words of Heb. 10:34: "... knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." (The words "in heaven" are not in the original manuscript and the Revised Versions have omitted them, but the writer no doubt intended to convey that idea). In Heb. 10:35 the "enduring substance" is defined as "great recompense of reward."

OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN

Plp. 3:20 in the A.V. says: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

The word "conversation" has been translated from the Greek "politeuma" which means, according to Vine, "the condition, or life, of a citizen, citizenship; it is said of the heavenly status of believers in Plp. 3:20: "our citizenship" (A.V. "conversation") is in heaven."

This statement concerning our citizenship being in heaven, is sometimes quoted as proof that Christians go to heaven at death. However, such a conclusion is only assumption, for nothing is said in the

text at all about Christ's citizens going to heaven. In fact, the emphasis in this verse is on Christ's return to his citizens! After saying that our citizenship is in heaven, Paul added these words: "... and from it (heaven) we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body ..." Instead of saying that the citizens go to heaven at death in a disembodied form, Paul teaches that they await the return of their Saviour from heaven to give them a new resurrection body! As usual, Paul makes no reference to souls leaving the body and departing to heaven at death. His whole hope is in the resurrection of the dead at the return of Christ. A little further back in his same epistle, Paul expresses hope of attaining to the resurrection of the dead himself (Plp. 3:11). Jesus also emphasised in the parable of the Nobleman that "his citizens" would not be rewarded till he returned from the "far country" (Lk. 19:11-).

In what sense is the believer's citizenship in heaven? Philippi was a chief city and a colony of the Roman Empire (Act. 16:12). A Roman colony was a miniature Rome, a reproduction and outpost of the city. The Roman citizens attempted to reproduce the life and customs of Rome. Their citizenship and commonwealth was in Rome. Rome was the centre and source of their principles, policies and laws - the seat of government and authority.

To be a citizen of "Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony," was legitimate cause for no little pride. Whatever precise interpretation is to be placed upon the term "chief city," the special dignity of Philippi as a Roman colony is beyond dispute. Its benefits included the use of the Roman law in legal affairs, exemptions from some taxes and, above all, the privilege of being regarded as citizens of Rome itself.

In the Church at Philippi were many Gentile converts; for whom to behave as citizens of the kingdom of heaven instead of the Imperial city, must have meant a great effort of will and determination. Their civic pride had to yield before the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and the things that had been gain to them were to be counted well lost for Christ.

They no longer looked to Rome as the centre of authority and direction for their life; for they now had a heavenly citizenship. They no longer looked to the Roman way of life as an example to emulate. Instead, their lives were governed by entirely different principles - principles which pertained to a heavenly citizenship. Instead of allowing Roman citizenship to reproduce a Roman way of life, they yielded to the heavenly citizenship which produced citizens whose life was a reflection of their

King and Emperor - the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hence, in Plp. 1:27 Paul says: "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." The Greek word for "conversation" in this verse is "politeuo" and, according to Vine, "is used in the Middle voice, signifying, metaphorically; conduct, characteristic of heavenly conduct." The R.S.V. renders it: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ."

The Christians at Philippi, being residents in the Roman colony were well aware of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. A Roman colony was expected to represent, faithfully reflect, and look to the mother city of Rome; and the citizens' "manner of life" was expected to conform to the demands and requirements of the mother city.

The citizen life to which the apostle Paul refers is not that of Rome but a higher relationship. Philippian believers had become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" like the Ephesians (Eph. 2:19). They had to behave as citizens worthy of this citizenship. They were to let their "manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ."

In Plp. 3:19-20 Paul is contrasting those whose interests are fixed on the earthly, carnal things; with those whose citizenship is in heaven, and whose lives therefore, manifest heavenly principles. Just as the Philippian colonist was a part of an outpost of Rome, so the believer looked to heaven as the centre of his government from whence would come the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Church and individual life were therefore to be patterned after the heavenly, not Rome.

Believers were commanded by Jesus to "be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). The disciples were instructed to pray for the kingdom to come that God's will might be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). In so doing, believers were "outposts" of heaven! Moffatt, in his translation, paraphrases Plp.3:20 like this: "We are a colony of heaven." Ultimately, the whole earth, when filled with God's glory, will be a colony of heaven in every respect. Heaven, the holy city, will in fact come to earth!

MEN IN HEAVEN

In Rev. 5:3 we read that "no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon."

This passage is, on rare occasions, quoted to prove that the souls of men go to heaven at death. It is usually assumed that the statement refers to human men, quite forgetting that there are literally dozens of references

in Scripture to angels being described as "men" or "man." There are many examples of angelic men going to heaven, but not one example besides that of Jesus, of a man born of a woman going to heaven. (Attention will turn to Enoch and Elijah shortly!). Also, it should be pointed out that Rev. 5:3 says John saw men, not "souls" or "spirits."

YOUR NAMES WRITTEN IN HEAVEN

Rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Lk. 10:20). Though this text is sometimes cited as proof for the dogma of heaven-going at death, it affords no evidence of it whatever. To have one's name written in heaven is a very different concept from immortal souls going there. The High priest of old had the names of the 12 tribes inscribed on his ephod when he went into the holy place (Ex. 39:6), although the 12 tribes never went there themselves. In the same way, our names are borne by our High priest, the Lord Jesus, in heaven.

In Mal. 3:16 we read that the names of those who fear the Lord are written in a book of remembrance before Him in heaven. And the Lord says: "They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts in that day when I make up my jewels ..." (v17). "That day" when the Lord claims the saints as his jewels, is referred to in the following verses (Mal. ch.4), as the day of Christ's second coming. The same day is referred to in Mal.3 as "the day of his coming" (v2).

The day that the Lord makes up his jewels and forms them into the eternal crown and glory of Jesus Christ, will be the resurrection of the last day. On that day the "books will be opened," and all whose names have been written in the book of life will receive everlasting life (Rev. 20:12. Dan. 12:1-2. 7:10). They will then gain entrance to the holy city.

Until the second coming of Jesus and resurrection, the names and characters of the saints are written up in the book of remembrance. But why write their names in a book of remembrance if they never really die, and if their character and personality lives on in heaven in a disembodied state?

SHALL NOT DIE

"This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die" (Jn. 6:50).

"Verily, Verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (Jn. 8:51).

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (Jn. 11:26).

In preceding sections of this thesis, attention has been drawn to the overwhelming emphasis and evidence in Scripture that endless life (immortality) is to be bestowed at the resurrection and not before. It has been demonstrated that immortality has been promised and is not yet possessed. When Jesus returns and bestows the reward of eternal life, the saints will enter into their inheritance and never again die, or see death. Once the promised immortality has been bestowed on the last day at the resurrection, the saints will never see death again. It is in this ultimate sense that the statements of Jesus, quoted above, must obviously be understood. If not, Scripture will seriously contradict itself on a very fundamental issue. For instance: Rev. 2:10 exhorts the saints to be "faithful unto death." Death was impending; they were expected to die; and many of them did die. But, in the ultimate sense, as far as the purpose of God and hope of the gospel is concerned, they shall never die; for Jesus will raise them from the dead and give them endless life. After saying: "... be faithful unto death ..." Jesus adds: "... and I will give thee a crown of life." They obviously did not already possess eternal life, otherwise it would have been unnecessary for Jesus to promise to give it to them. The crown of life will not be given till the second coming as we read in 2 Tim. 4:8.

Now let us examine the statements of Jesus quoted from the Gospel of John, in the light of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Jesus promises that those who believe in him shall not die. Because the body of each believer still dies, tradition applies the promise to the "spirit" or "soul." In other words, it is believed that Jesus was saying that the spirit of those who believe in him will never die. But, if this be the case, we are forced to conclude that up until the time of Christ, the "spirits" of all men died. But, if as tradition teaches, all "spirits" are immortal by nature, how could they die? And, if they were of an undying nature, then of what advantage was Jesus' promise that they would never die if they believed in him? He would not be promising or offering them any more than what they already possessed! His promise would be utterly superfluous.

READER, DON'T MISS THIS POINT! It is very simple yet very important. Let it be emphasised - If, when Jesus promised believers that they would not die, he meant their soul would survive the death of the body, then it is clearly implied that up until that time souls were mortal and not immortal, and that right up to our present time, the souls of all who do not belong to Christ die. And, if it be argued that all souls are immortal and have always lived on after the death of the body, then

Christ's promise (if it relates to disembodied existence), does not offer man any more than what he already possesses, and becomes a farce.

However, if man is wholly mortal and at death ceases to exist, then Christ's promise when related to the undying "spiritual body" that shall be received at resurrection, makes perfect practical sense. This is the hope of the gospel - that man shall never see death. But we must understand such statements in their proper perspective in the context of resurrection. A little bit of spiritual discernment is required, particularly when interpreting statements in the Gospel of John. They must be made to harmonise with the rest of Scripture and not be pinned against it.

How easy it is to fail to plumb the depths of the teaching of Jesus. It is fatally easy, through a superficial reading of his teaching, to reach wrong conclusions which cause him to contradict himself. An example of this can be seen in Jn. 21:22-23. Jesus told the apostle John to "tarry till I come." The other disciples immediately interpreted this to mean that John would not die. "Yet Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Jesus was referring to the fact that he would appear to him with a special Revelation before he died. Although an exile on the island of Patmos at the time, he tarried till Jesus came. But, when Jesus told him to tarry till he came, he also made it clear he did not mean that John would not die. Yet, in the statements of Jesus quoted at the beginning of this section, he said that those who believe in him "shall never die." The apostle John died and many other faithful saints were "faithful unto death," so the statements of Jesus which say a believer "shall never die" must be harmonised with these facts. It will not be till immortality is bestowed upon the saints at the second coming that they "shall not die," and all the statements of Jesus make sense when read in this ultimate sense.

There is also another way of looking at this subject. In Mk. 5:23 we read that Jairus' daughter was "at the point of death." In verse 35, a message came to Jairus saying: "Thy daughter is dead." But, when Jesus arrived on the scene he said: "The damsel is not dead but sleeps" (v39). Because Jesus intended to raise her from the dead and restore her life, he refused to apply the word "dead" to her situation, but preferred to use the word "sleep" instead. As far as he was concerned the girl never saw death! Yet she clearly died!

There is something too final about the word "death," that Jesus preferred to not use it when describing the state of those whom he intends to restore to life. It is in this sense that his other statements can be understood, when he promised that all who believe in him will never die

or see death.

Another example is found in connection with Lazarus. In Jn. 11:4, Jesus says that his friend's sickness "is not unto death." However, Lazarus did die, but Jesus said to his disciples: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (v11). The disciples took Jesus literally and thought he meant that Lazarus was having a rest. "Then Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead" (v14).

Failure to spiritually discern this section of Scripture will create contradiction, because in verse 4 Jesus said: "This sickness is not unto death," and then he later said plainly "Lazarus is dead." To take these statements at their face value and place a literal construction on them would create contradiction and confusion. They cannot be taken at their face value. Spiritual discernment must be exercised by comparing Scripture with Scripture, seeking to establish proper harmony in the Word of God.

In verse 25 Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in me (like Lazarus did) though he were dead, yet shall he live." Here again, speaking plainly, Jesus not only affirms that Lazarus is indeed dead, but also implies that other believers besides Lazarus will die also. However, they will live again, at the resurrection, after which they "shall never see death."

Verse 26 says: "And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die." In this statement, Jesus could very well be referring to those who will be alive at his second coming - those who won't need resurrection. In 1 Thes. 4:15 Paul says: "For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the lord ..." Paul's reference to "the Word of the Lord" on which he bases his teaching on this occasion, could very well refer to the special revelation Jesus gave in the twenty sixth verse of Jn. Ch 5. There is no doubt that all believers who live contemporaneously with the second coming will not see death, but will be instantaneously "changed" from a mortal body to an immortal body (1 Cor. 15:51).

PASSED FROM DEATH INTO LIFE.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believes on him who sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is come and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God: and they that hear shall live" (Jn. 5:24-).

The way in which Jesus says: "... the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear ..." reveals that he is not referring to the physical resurrection which takes place at his second coming. He is referring to those whose are dead spiritually; i.e. those who are oblivious and insensitive to spiritual realities - blind and ignorant of the gospel. Death and extinction is so sure for those who remain in this state that they are referred to as being dead already. The word "dead" is used in this spiritual sense a number of times in Scripture: Matt. 8:22. Lk. 9:59-60. 15:24, 32. Eph. 2:1-5. Col. 2:13. 1 Tim. 5:6. 1 Jn. 3:14-15. Rev. 3:1. Also compare Gen. 20:3, 7.

Jesus passes on from spiritual rebirth in Jn. 5:24-25 to physical rebirth in verses 28-29 i.e. physical resurrection: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (i.e. "condemnation" v24. All who experience the spiritual rebirth and hold on to it, "shall not come into condemnation." They must of course stand before the judge on the last day, but not to hear words of condemnation, but words of approbation and vindication: "Well done thou good and faithful servant ...").

So then, verses 24-25 and verses 28-29 of Jn. Ch 5 are clearly referring to two quite different experiences and epochs in the dispensation of God. Verse 25 says "the hour is coming and now is," whereas verse 28 only says "the hour is coming" and does not add the words "and now is." It is evident why: it refers to resurrection which is an end time event, whereas spiritual rebirth is happening all the time.

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CHAPTER TWENTY ONE ELIJAH AND ELISHA

And it came to pass, as they (Elijah and Elisha) still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kng. 2:11).

This passage is often quoted as evidence that when righteous men die, their immortal souls are taken by angels up to heaven! The passage, of course, teaches nothing of the sort. The narrative tells us that Elijah was taken while still alive and not after death. Also, it is clear that the man Elijah - body soul and spirit - the Elijah who wore the mantle, was taken up to heaven. This is entirely different from tradition's concept of the immortal soul separating itself from the body. One would be hard pressed to quote this incident to support the immortal soul theory.

Now in view of the fact that Elijah was taken up into heaven as recorded in 2 Kng. 2:11, what are we to make of the statement in Jn. 3:13 that "... no man has ascended into heaven but he who came down from heaven, even the son of man?" The "heaven" referred to in this verse is where God's throne is located, to which Jesus ascended after his resurrection. The statement that no man besides Jesus has ever ascended there must surely include Elijah. Not only Elijah but David also (Act. 2:34), and all other saints like him. Only our High priest, Jesus Christ, has entered into the holy of holies. He was accompanied by no other man and no man preceded him or went there after him.

In view of this, it should be evident that the "heaven" into which Elijah was caught up, was not the same "heaven" into which Jesus ascended. In other words, the statement that Elijah went "into heaven" does not imply that he went to the actual throne of God.

"Heaven" is used in a general sense in Scripture to designate the firmament over our heads, which, as we know, is a wide expanse (Gen. 1:8). In Ps. 148:4, reference is made to the "waters (clouds) that be above the heavens." The "heavens" refers to the expanse between the sea and the clouds as in Gen. 1:8. In Jer. 4:25, the "heavens" refer to the sphere in which birds of the air fly: "And all the birds of the heavens were fled." Jer. 8:7 makes mention of "the stork in the heaven." And Jer. 15:3 speaks of the "fowls of the heaven." The tops of tall trees are referred to in Dan. 4:19-23 as reaching unto heaven i.e. they reach up into the sky. The builders of the tower of Babel wanted a "tower whose top may reach to heaven" (Gen. 11:4). The cities of the Canaanites are referred to in Deu.

9:1 as being "fenced up to heaven." The walls of Capernaum were very high too: "... exalted to heaven" (Matt. 11:23). The walls of Babylon also "mounted up to heaven" (Jer. 51:53).

The Edomites, who dwelt in the high clefts of the mountains, are referred to in Obadiah verses 3-4 as flying high as the eagle, and setting their nests among the stars. In Isa. ch 34 her armies are referred to as "all the host of heaven" which shall be dissolved in a divine judgement. "For," says God, "My sword shall be bathed in heaven, behold it shall come down upon Edom ..."

It should be clear from these examples that the word "heaven" does not always, by any means, refer to the throne of God. It often simply relates to the firmament - sky - air.

The word "heavens" has been translated from the Hebrew word "shameh" and its simple basic meaning is "aloft." It is the antithesis of "earth." Anything that is above the earth, whether a short or long distance, is in "heaven."

If Elijah was caught up into "heaven," yet did not ascend to God's throne, he must have simply been caught up into the air and no further. This seems to be a reasonable conclusion in view of all the facts. He was caught up into the air by the angels, who, in Ps. 68:17 and 2 Kng. 6:17 are referred to as the Lord's horses and chariots. They are also "flames of fire" as we read in Heb. 1:7. Elijah was taken through the air by these divine beings but not up to the throne of God.

There is no evidence in Scripture that Elijah was taken to the throne of God. The evidence, in fact, all points in the opposite direction. A careful examination of all the facts more than strongly implies that he was placed back on the earth after he was caught away.

For instance, after Elijah was taken away, the sons of the prophets made this request to Elisha: "Behold now there be with thy servants fifty strong men (a good hunting party, able to endure rugged tramping); let them go, we pray thee, and seek (search for) thy master; perhaps the spirit of the Lord has taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley" (2 Kng. 2:16). After much pressure and persuasion, Elisha yielded to their request. So the hunting party searched for 3 days but could not find Elijah.

Their desire to search for Elijah indicates they did not believe he had gone to the throne of God! Elisha was reluctant at first, to give the men permission to search for Elijah, but nothing is said to suggest his reluctance was due to believing Elijah had gone to God's abode. Had he really believed this to be the case, he surely would have said so and

pointed out how absolutely futile a search would be. However, as the A.V. puts it: "And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, send." The New English Bible reads: "They pressed him, however, until he had not the heart to refuse." But, if Elisha really believed that Elijah was with the Lord, surely he would have said so and not found it difficult to refuse the prophet's request.

Could we imagine the apostles giving permission to disciples to search for the body of Jesus among the rocks and tombs when they knew he had gone to heaven? Their reaction would surely be: "You must not say in your heart, who shall descend into the deep to bring up Christ ..." (Rom. 10:6-7). When all the facts are taken into account, it is strongly implied that Elisha himself knew that Elijah had simply been caught away through the air to be taken to some other location upon the earth. Deep down in his own heart he may have also been curious to know where.

Another reason for believing that Elijah was back on earth after being taken away from Elisha is as follows: It can be shown that a letter was received by Jehoram, King of Judah, from Elijah, after Elijah was caught away into the air. Either the letter was written before he was taken away and delivered to a messenger, or Elijah was "caught away" as was Phillip from the Gaza Road to Azotas, (about 17 miles, Act. 8:39), for an unspecified purpose, and was transported to some other place in the land. The saints will have a similar experience when caught up into the air to meet Jesus when he returns (1 Thes. 4). They will be caught up into heaven (the air) and transported with Christ to Jerusalem.

It is important to note that nowhere in the account of Elijah is it taught that he never died. Certainly his death is not recorded, but this does not give us license to assume he never died. It is a fundamental teaching in Scripture that from the time of Adam's transgression "all men have sinned" and therefore "sin has reigned unto death" over all men. No man - Elijah included, has lived a sinless life. Jesus is the only exception. Therefore, every man has died, whether his death is recorded or not, for "the wages of sin is death."

Are we to make an exception with Elijah? Dare we say that here was a man who obtained immortality without the redemptive work of Christ? Even Elisha, who had a double portion of Elijah's spirit and performed twice the number of miracles - even he died and was buried! John the Baptist also, who ministered in the power and spirit of Elijah (Lk. 1:17) could not escape death. And Jesus said that John was the greatest among men born of a woman (Matt. 11:11). Yet, in spite of this,

death eventually claimed him even though he was living contemporaneously with Jesus. In view of all this, it is most unlikely that Elijah also did not die.

Elijah was "subject to like passions as we are" (Jam. 5:17) and he experienced fear and doubts like every other descendant of Adam. We read, for instance, in 1 Kng. 19 that he was afraid of Jezebel and fled to Sinai with a spirit of self-righteous indignation. He was rebuked by God. Being a man subject to like passions as we all are, he must have been a sinner like all of us, and therefore subject to death. "All in Adam die" (1 Cor. 15:22): Note the word "all" - no exceptions!

Elijah was under no illusion that he would never see death. When fleeing in fear from Jezebel, after going a day's journey into the wilderness, he "sat down under a broom bush: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, I have had enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers" (1 Kng. 19:4-5). It was a rather strange request to make if he was fully persuaded that he was the privileged exception of God's rule, and, unlike his fathers, would never see death. It is significant that it was not long after this request to die that Elijah was caught up and taken away!

It is this writer's conviction that Elijah was taken away by the Lord in the chariot because the time for his death had arrived. It was time for his mantle to pass on to a younger man - Elisha. The Lord took him away and buried him in a secret place, much in the same way that he buried Moses in a secret place in the valley of Moab (Deu. 34:6). The desire of the prophets to search for Elijah was made on the ground that the spirit of the Lord "may have cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley." The word "cast" comes from a Hebrew word which means "to throw out, down or away, hurl, throw." The same Hebrew word is translated "cast down" in Josh. 10:11 where we read that: "The Lord cast down great (hail) stones from heaven." It seems that the prophets thought it was possible that the Lord threw Elijah out of the chariot down upon a mountain or into some valley.

Now it is most unlikely that they thought the Lord would do this to Elijah while he was still alive! They surely believed Elijah would be dead. In other words: they believed the Lord took Elijah away because the time had come for him to die, and they thought that his dead body may have been thrown down on some mountain or into some valley. This suggests they thought the Lord would not have sufficient grace or decency to bury the body! They wanted to send out a search party to find out. No wonder Elisha was so reluctant to give them permission. Their action was a

reflection on the love, grace and wisdom of God.

Why would the spirit terminate Elijah's life and secretly bury him in such an unusual manner? We can only conjecture for we are not told. It is clear that at the time, Jezebel was determined to get her hands on Elijah and do her worst to him (1 Kng. 19:2). She was extremely hostile towards him and would stop at nothing to bring Elijah to an ignominious end. In view of the circumstances, had Elijah died in a normal manner, it was quite likely that Jezebel, upon hearing about his death, would be infuriated to learn that the prophet died a quiet peaceful death, depriving her of the satisfaction of terminating his life in a bloody and violent manner. In order to satisfy her deep hatred and revenge, she was just as likely to go to Elijah's tomb or grave, dig up his body and make an ignominious spectacle of it. Such sadistic actions were quite common among the pagans towards their enemy if they died before they could put them to death themselves. If this is how Jezebel would have reacted, the Lord certainly prevented it from happening by depositing Elijah's body in a secret place. Elijah, like Moses, died, and was buried, "but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

One final consideration: Moses and Elijah were two of the greatest prophets that ever lived. They were held in very high esteem by the Israelites throughout Israel's history. Had their burial sites been known to the Israelites, the tombs could easily have become the centre of all sorts of unseemly and ungodly practices and ceremonies. They could have easily become the centre and stage of veneration and pagan-type religious ceremony, to a people who always manifested a weakness towards the ways of idolatry. In other words: they could have become a snare and a stumbling block, so God, in his wisdom, concealed them.

It was fitting also, in view of his future purpose with regard to the transfiguration scene, that the Lord should bury Moses and Elijah in a secret place.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

In Matt. 17:1-3 we are told that Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus to a high mountain (Tabor), and while they were there, Jesus "was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as light. And, behold, there appeared unto them, Moses and Elijah talking with him."

This passage is sometimes quoted to prove that the immortal soul of the righteous leaves the body and departs to heaven at death. It is difficult

to see how it can be used to support this. Peter, James and John did not see disembodied spirits in heaven, but bodily beings on the earth. They saw and recognised the two men with Jesus as being Moses and Elijah. How did they know their identity? Was Moses holding a rod and Elijah wearing a rough garment - two distinctive features of the two men in their time?

Tradition assumes that because Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain, they must never have died. But the passages does not say this, and neither does any other Scripture in the Word of God. Quite the opposite in fact. Deu. 32 clearly teaches that Moses died and was buried by the Lord. And, after speaking about Moses in Heb. 11:23-29, the writer says: "These all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." The same point is put even more precisely in Heb. 11:13: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises ..."

Now, if Moses and Elijah died and were buried, and then reappeared many centuries later; who would be so foolish to conclude that they must never have died? This is not a natural or logical conclusion at all. Surely a more natural and logical conclusion would be that either:

(1) God raised them from the dead as in the case of Samuel, or...

(2) He created a vision of them specially for the transfiguration event.

And, if Moses and Elijah were miraculously resurrected before their proper time (or miraculously preserved) for the transfiguration, their experience offers no grounds for present believers to expect an identical experience or privilege. It offers even less ground upon which to build a doctrine of heaven-going at death in a disembodied form! Moses and Elijah did not appear in a disembodied form, neither were they in heaven!

It is an open question whether Moses and Elijah were actually present in person at the transfiguration. The testimony of Matt. 17:9 is that the things seen were "a vision."

Now we saw earlier from Act. 12:9 that a vision is sometimes the opposite of reality - that is, something seen after the manner of a dream - something apparently real, but in reality only exhibited visionally to the beholder. The audibility of the voices settles nothing one way or the other, because in vision, as in a dream, voices may be heard that have no real existence, except in the aural nerves of the seer. The word "vision," as in Matt. 17:9 could very well imply that Moses and Elijah were not in reality bodily present, but what occurred, transpired as a subjective experience. A vision does not always have objective reality and there are many examples

which bear this out.

However, sometimes visions do have objective reality as when Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus (Act. 26:19. compare v13-18), and when the women at the tomb of Christ saw "a vision of angels" (Lk. 24).

It is therefore possible that Moses and Elijah were really present on the mountain with Jesus, but the use of the word "vision" unhinges the matter a little and makes it impossible to use the event to support the immortality of the soul or heaven-going at death.

The actual purpose behind the transfiguration scene is indicated in the statement made by Jesus which immediately precedes the scene: "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). The transfiguration comes immediately after this in the gospel record, indicating that it pertained to the coming kingdom of Christ. It was a vision of things to come when Jesus returns to be re-united with all the faithful saints, and to reign in glory.

The actual significance of Jesus' statement concerning "coming in his kingdom" is revealed in the preceding verse: "For the son of man shall come (second coming!) in the glory of his father (as manifested in the transfiguration) with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works." Without any shadow of a doubt, Jesus is referring to his second coming and millennial reign on earth. And the way in which the transfiguration scene immediately follows his statements strongly suggests that it is a pictorial illustration - a prophecy in action of that coming kingdom and glory when the saints will be in company with Jesus in immortal splendour and shining glory.

During the transfiguration, the appearance of Jesus' face altered and shone as the sun. His clothing also became dazzling white, with a whiteness no bleach on earth could equal (Matt. 17:2. Mk. 9:3. Lk. 9:29). He was, as it were, changed from a natural body of flesh and blood (which he was during his earthly ministry) into a glorious spiritual body (which he became after his resurrection).

The spiritual body, as we read in Dan. 12:2-3 and Matt. 13:43 shall "shine as the sun," and shall be glorious and bright as other Scriptures testify. The transfiguration was a foretaste of forthcoming resurrection nature and power. Jesus did not necessarily literally become a spiritual body at the time. He did not become that in reality, till he was raised from the dead. But, in "vision" his future glory was dramatically manifested. Not only his, but also that of all who are identified with the "law and

prophets," as represented by Moses and Elijah. They too, were seen "in glory" on the Mount (Lk. 9:30-31). As in the case of Jesus, it was a foreshadow of the glory to come through resurrection, as a result of Christ's sacrificial death and decease. The whole scene unquestionably speaks of the hope of the gospel - the resurrection to glory. The very presence of Moses and Elijah - men who had died centuries ago, clearly implies resurrection. And if resurrection is the main lesson in the whole transaction, then it is negated the moment we try to prove that Elijah never died.

The millennial kingdom of Christ will be the fulfilment - the grand finale of all God has promised in the law and prophets. None of his promises shall fail! The presence of Moses and Elijah is no doubt, among other things, intended to teach us this. Moses was the great law giver and Elijah was the great prophet. Together they represent the "law and the prophets" which constituted the whole revealed Word of God at the time. In those days, if a man refused to hear "Moses and the prophets," he would not be persuaded by anything else, not even by a person rising from the dead (Lk. 16:29-31). The law and the prophets (Old Testament Scriptures) clearly testified of Jesus (Jn. 5:39), and it was the custom of the apostle Paul to expound and testify the kingdom of God and persuade people concerning Jesus, "both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets" (Act. 28:23).

The law and the prophets not only spoke about the coming glory of Messiah's kingdom. They also spoke about his suffering and decease which would precede it. Significantly enough, when Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain with Jesus "in glory," they also "spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:31). The transfiguration experience was therefore an exhortation and an encouragement to both Jesus and the apostles. By speaking about his decease in the midst of a scene of glory, Jesus and his friends were reminded of the glory that would follow his suffering. The vision emphasised that a crown would follow the cross.

And so Jesus, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross ..." He must have been greatly encouraged and strengthened by the transfiguration experience! Speaking with Moses and Elijah, reminded him in a very dramatic manner that the fulfilment of all that the law and prophets had spoken depended upon his coming decease. Without him going through the shame and pain of the cross, there could be no glory; and faithful saints like Moses and Elijah would never live again. The whole of the Old Testament saints were relying and depending upon

Christ's sacrificial death. What an inspiration this transfiguration experience must have been to Jesus as he was so dramatically reminded of the vital issues that were at stake. How he must have been encouraged to "set his face like flint" and head for Jerusalem with single-mindedness, and without faltering steps.

PETER'S COMMENT

That the transfiguration scene was a foreshadow of the coming millennial kingdom is actually taught by Peter in his second epistle, chapter 1:16-18. He interprets the transfiguration and explains it to be a prophecy of the power and coming of Christ: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' And this voice came from heaven and we heard it when we were with him in the holy Mount."

Here, Peter clearly indicates that he regarded the transfiguration as a prophecy (in action) of the glory to be revealed at the power and coming of Christ. Thus, instead of proving the immortality of the soul and heaven-going at death, it teaches the opposite. The whole scene revolves around and reinforces the second coming of Christ and resurrection - the only Scriptural hope of life after death.

ENOCK

And Enoch walked with God ... and all the days of Enoch were 365 years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:22-24).

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5).

These passages are often cited to prove that man has an immortal soul that departs to heaven at death. However, neither passage says anything about an immortal soul or spirit. The words do not occur in either text. Enoch, as a living being was translated that he should not see death. He was not translated after death! How can his experience be cited as proof for what happens after death?

Neither is anything said in the passages quoted above about Enoch

going to heaven. Certainly, it says that God "took him," but to say that God took him to heaven is to assume something that is not stated in the text, or taught anywhere else in Scripture. There are many different places to which God can take a man, and it is purely assumption based on prejudice which affirms Enoch was taken to heaven. True, Enoch could not be found after God took him, but neither could Moses or Elijah be found, and they certainly were not taken to heaven but were buried in a secret place on the earth.

Let it be emphasised once again that, except for Jesus, "no man hath ascended to heaven," and this must include Enoch.

Let it also be emphasised that "all in Adam die." There are no exceptions! The wages of sin is death and all men have therefore died. Even Jesus, although sinless, tasted death. No man, including Enoch has avoided death. Every man, including Enoch, depends upon the atoning work of Christ and resurrection for eternal life. Eternal life is an impossibility without the shedding of his blood. This is extremely fundamental, and is violated by the doctrine which teaches that Enoch (and Elijah) never died.

Heb. 11:13 puts an end to all argument. After speaking about the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah (verses 4-12); verse 13 concludes by saying: "These all (which includes Enoch) died in faith." Enoch clearly died! From this it is evident that whatever the writer meant by Enoch being translated that he should not see death, he did not mean that Enoch never died! Those who affirm that the passage means Enoch never died, are reading something into it which the writer had no intention of teaching.

Enoch, along with all the other heroes of faith, died. This is the plain, straightforward teaching of Heb. 11:4-13. There are therefore no exceptions to the statement in Rom. 5:14 that: "Death reigned from Adam to Moses." Enoch lived during this period and died during this period. Scripture therefore harmonises once this is acknowledged.

It is evident then, that the statements which say Enoch "was not, for God took him" and "was not found, because God had translated him;" do not mean that he never ever died. Tradition's approach towards this subject is very similar to those referred to in Jn. 21:22-23 which was quoted earlier. Because Jesus told John to "tarry till I come," some jumped to the conclusion that John would never die. "Yet Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" How easy it is to draw wrong conclusions by reading into statements, things that were never intended.

Let us see then if we can work out what happened to Enoch. Gen. 5:23-24 says that "all the days of Enoch were 365 years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." It seems reasonable to conclude from this that for 365 years, Enoch "walked (by faith) with God," and at the age of 365 he "was not" for "God took him."

In Heb. 11:5, instead of saying, "God took him," it says "God translated him." Instead of saying "he was not," it says "and was not found." And Heb. 11:5 states that the reason why God "took" or "translated" him was so "that he should not see death."

By putting these points together, the following picture emerges: At the age of 365 Enoch could see death staring him in the face, so God intervened and "took him" i.e. "translated" him so that he should not see death at that stage. The result of God translating or taking him was that he could no longer be found in his locality. He disappeared. This immediately suggests that it was something or someone in Enoch's locality that threatened his life. This threat was so real that Enoch had to be removed and hidden by God. In view of the circumstances, it is therefore most unlikely that it was sickness or disease that threatened his life.

It would have been most unusual for Enoch to have died at the age of 365. The section in Gen. 5 which deals with Enoch is part of a long genealogy which reveals that men during that period lived to at least 900 years of age. Enoch, at the age of 365, would have been quite a young man, equivalent to a 25 year old in our own day and age. There was obviously no need for God to intervene in Enoch's 365th year to stop him dying from old age, for the average life-span was around 900.

So then, at this relatively early age, Enoch could see death staring him in the face, so God took him - "translated" him. The word "translated" comes from the Greek "metatithemi" and, according to Strong's concordance, means to: "transfer, transport, exchange, change sides, carry over, remove." The word basically means: "change of place or position." The same Greek word is rendered "carried over" in Act. 7:16, where reference is made to Jacob's body which was "carried over (from Egypt) into Shechem." Jacob's body was taken away from Egypt into Canaan in a literal, physical, geographical sense.

When all the facts concerning Enoch are put together, it is evident that God took him away - translated him in a physical, geographical sense. He was bodily removed - carried away from his normal place of abode to some undisclosed place. This is indicated by the fact that he "was not found." His absence was noted and a search was made, but to no avail. He

completely disappeared.

It is possible that the Lord took him away in a dramatic way, similar to the way in which he swept Elijah up into the sky in the chariot. (Also compare Act. 8:39-40. Ezk. 8:3). One thing is certain: it was common knowledge that the Lord had taken Enoch, so somebody must have witnessed the event; and the event must have been of such a nature to indicate it was "of God." When a man goes missing, it is not customary to conclude that the Lord took him away. It is more customary to attribute his absence to an accident, foul play or suicide. Special revelation or manifestation must have accompanied Enoch's departure for men to know God had taken him. And the fact that they searched for him, indicates that they did not believe he had been taken to the throne of God. They believed, as in the case of Elijah, that he was placed back on the earth somewhere.

Scripture is silent as to the place God took Enoch and the period of time he lived after his removal. This is one of the "secret things that belong unto the Lord our God" (Deu. 29:29). Why was Enoch removed from his place of abode? This reason is given in Heb. 11:5: "That he should not see death." That is, God removed him to prevent him from seeing death prematurely, which would have been the case had he died at the age of 365. Notice that Scripture does not say he would "never die." Heb. 11:13 indicates that Enoch did eventually die. Death then, was threatening to cut Enoch down at the peak of his manhood, so the Lord intervened and removed him. He put his faith in the Lord to preserve and protect him, so the Lord saved him. The Lord was not ready for him to die. Enoch's "hour had not come."

OTHER DETAILS

By gathering together a few other relevant Scriptures, we are provided with a few extra details which suggest the situation could have been something like this:

In Jude verses 14-15 we read: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these (ungodly men) saying, Behold, the Lord comes with 10,000 of his saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convict all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Enoch uttered this prophecy against his own contemporaries. It is a hard, cutting prophecy accusing and condemning them for their

ungodliness and wickedness. Notice the repetition on the word "ungodly" in his prophecy. It occurs four times. The times in which Enoch was living were obviously extremely ungodly. It was the ripening up stage of ungodliness and violence which ultimately brought the judgement and destruction of the flood in Noah's day.

Jude verse 14 says Enoch was "seventh from Adam." And so he was, through the line of Seth (Gen. 5:1-18).

There was also another man who was "seventh from Adam, namely: Lamech. He was seventh, not through the line of Seth, but through the line of Cain (Gen. 4:17-18). Lamech and Enoch were contemporaries.

Lamech, like Cain, was ungodly, cruel and vindictive, as can be seen from Gen. 4:23-24, where he boasted to his wives about killing a young man, simply because the young man hurt him in some small way. Lamech craved "seventy and sevenfold" revenge. He and his sons showed a capacity for invention of those things which encourage people in the paths of pleasure and aggressiveness.

This man Lamech and his sons lived contemporary with Enoch. Enoch's prophecy against the ungodly would have been aimed directly at their class, and would incur their wrath. If Lamech had no compunction about killing a young man for wounding him physically, he would probably react in much the same way to a young man like Enoch for wounding his spirit with a condemning prophecy. There are many examples in Scripture of men, less ungodly than Lamech, putting a prophet to death for his hard message.

Enoch's prophecy would infuriate men like Lamech and induce them to take action against him. We can almost hear their cry: "Crucify him, crucify him." Had the Lord not intervened, Enoch would have suffered the same fate as Abel. Cain's seed, the seed of the serpent, was about to kill the woman's seed, but this time the Lord would not allow it, so he stepped in and prevented it. Why? Because Enoch lived by faith and walked with God. His trust was so great that he boldly and fearlessly uttered his hard and challenging prophecy even though he knew it would endanger his life. Because of this, and because he was young, God stepped in and took him away to a safe place. No wonder Enoch is given a place among the great heroes of the faith in Heb.11.

A TYPE AND EXAMPLE

Enoch stands forth as a wonderful type and example of the people of God living during the end-time prior to the second coming of Christ. Enoch's prophecy has a very real and special application to our time. We are living in the days "like unto Noah's day" when iniquity and ungodliness abounds. During such times the Christian must follow Enoch's example by walking with God by faith, fearlessly proclaiming the gospel, speaking out against ungodliness and witnessing strongly to the coming of the Lord with his 10,000 saints.

Enoch's name means "dedicated," "trained," "disciplined." Dedication only comes through proper spiritual training and discipline. Enoch was so disciplined in the Lord that he was prepared to die for him. He loved not his own life, even unto death. He made God's will his own will.

Two can only walk together when they agree (Am. 3:3). Enoch agreed with everything God commanded and put it into practice, and therefore "walked with God." His life was spared a violent death because of this. The "hope" of Enoch's preaching was the second coming of our Lord, and Enoch positively and fearlessly proclaimed this. He believed and therefore he spoke! He probably had no idea that several thousand years would pass before his prophecy would be completely fulfilled. However, had he been aware of it, he still would have preached it!

What a tragedy that, even though we are now living on the very threshold of that great event of the second coming, many preachers give it little emphasis. They are not of the same faith and spirit of Enoch. Their "walk" with God in terms of ministry is different from Enoch's.

Enoch was the seventh from Adam. Those who live in the end-time are living in the seventh millennium from Adam. When the Lord intervenes, those who are alive at the time and have been walking with him, will be taken away by the Lord and will not be found in their locality. They will disappear and will not, in a literal sense, see death. They will be "changed" from a mortal body to an immortal body, which will be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Jesus.

Enoch, in every respect was a type of those living during the period when his prophecy will be fulfilled, and it is more than likely that the record concerning him is deliberately expressed the way it is for this purpose. There is no actual record of his death, as in the case of Melchisedec. Like Melchisedec, Enoch therefore appears to "abide forever." Melchisedec, of course, was a type of Christ, who, as high priest,

abides forever. Melchisedec's death is deliberately not recorded in Scripture to give the impression that he had an everlasting priesthood. In actual fact, like all other men "in Adam," Melchisedec died, but because he typified the priesthood of Jesus, his death is not recorded. The same applied to Enoch. Because he typified the saints who live around the period of the seventh millennium from Adam, who will be "taken" by the Lord at his second coming and not see death; Enoch's death is not recorded. He appears, in Scripture, to abide forever.

ANOTHER VIEW

Some may still insist that when it says God "took" Enoch and he "was not," it means Enoch went to heaven and lived eternally there. To support this, proof would have to be provided from Scripture showing that the phrases "and he was not" and "God took him" convey this meaning.

As it happens, there are many examples of the phrase "was not" referring to the very opposite i.e. to death! See Gen. 37:30. 42:36. Isa. 17:14. Jer. 31:15 etc.

The same applies to the phrase: "For God took him." This phrase is frequently used in relation to death. See Ps. 52:5. Job. 32:22. 1:19-21. Isa. 57:1-2.

In view of these applications of the phrases in Scripture, one school of thought in relation to Enoch is that the reference to him being taken away so that he "was not" is to his death. This particular school of thought believes that his death is referred to in such a different way because the manner of his death was different from the others. It is believed that the statement that Enoch was translated that he should not "see death" means he was spared not only the knowledge of dying, but all the declining faculties of a slow old age. His days were cut short in the full vigour of life - a reward which would have been welcomed by very many people on many occasions. Most people "see" death in the lingering consciousness of dying through the slow process of old age. They "see" death coming and hovering over them, sometimes for years. Enoch, in this view, is believed to have been spared all that by being instantaneously "taken" by God.

A similar meaning of "not seeing death" is given in Gen. 21:14-16. Hagar "cast the child under one of the shrubs, and went down over against him a good way off, for she said, let me not see the death of the child." This did not mean she believed the child would not die. Quite the opposite: she believed he was about to die and did not want to see it. Isa.

57:1 says: "Merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous men are taken away from the evil to come. They shall enter into peace." This could very well have been Enoch's reward. He was living in evil times and, left in the land of the living, could have suffered a terrible fate. God spared him by taking him when his mission was accomplished.

Whatever view we take of the two, doesn't really matter. One thing is certain: there is no Scriptural justification for the view that Enoch never died, and that he was taken up to heaven.

ISAIAH 14:9-10

In this passage we read: "Hell from beneath is stirred up to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. And they shall speak and say unto thee ..."

This passage, which refers to the dead in hell being stirred up to speak, is sometimes quoted to prove that death is not an unconscious state, and that the spirit or soul of man survives the death of the body. In view of the large number of Scriptures which positively and unambiguously teach that death is a time of unconsciousness - a state in which there is no knowledge or memory, love, hatred or envy; it is most unlikely that they could be off-set and negated by this statement in Isa. 14. Looking at it superficially, Isa. 14:9-10 may appear to contradict those other Scriptures, but when it is carefully examined in its context it soon becomes apparent that it is not at variance at all.

The key to the correct understanding is provided at the beginning of the section where it is stated that it is a "proverb against the king of Babylon." In other words, Isa. 14:9-10 forms part of a proverb against the king of Babylon. Now, according to Strong's Concordance, the Hebrew word "mashal" which has been translated "proverb," relates to a "pithy maxim, usually of a metaphorical nature ... like a parable." Most Bible students, familiar with Scripture's proverbial utterances, would agree with this. Proverbial language is usually of quite a metaphorical nature, very similar to parabolic utterance. Proverbial language often consists of highly descriptive terms which are not expected to be accepted on their face value or to be interpreted literally. It is fatal to try and interpret proverbs and parables literally, and any attempt to do so will create many absurdities and cause Scripture to contradict.

The fact that reference is made in Isa. 14:9 to the dead kings in hell being "raised up from their thrones" immediately indicates that we are

dealing with highly metaphorical language. The ancient pagans, like the Babylonians, literally believed that when their kings died they were transported to thrones in the underworld; but very few Christians would give credence to such a concept. Isaiah's prophecy is directed against the kings of Babylon and is a satirical indictment.

Verse 8 of Isa. 14 also makes it clear that we are dealing with parabolic narrative, for it says: "Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, since you are laid down, no woodcutter has come up to fell us."

Now in reality, trees, like dead people, cannot speak; and to read such a statement literally without exercising a little spiritual discernment, would result in making a mockery of the Word of God. Such language can only be satisfactorily interpreted when the key in the opening statement is applied, namely: that it is a proverbial or parabolic utterance.

Verses 9-10, which immediately follow, and which refer to the dead speaking; are obviously to be interpreted in the same light. It is not literal narrative and cannot be literally interpreted. A taunt is simply put into the mouths of the dead to emphasise the futility of the king of Babylon's pride and ambition.

* * * * *

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Lk. 16:19-31 refers to: "A certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar name Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores. And, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom ..."

This account of the rich man and Lazarus is one of the principal strongholds of traditional belief. It is commonly believed that the reference to Lazarus being carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom after his death, proves the departure of the immortal soul to heaven the moment the body dies. However, this is all based entirely on assumption. There is not one single reference in this whole story to heaven, soul or spirit. These words do not occur in the whole passage. Nowhere in this passage or any other in Scripture is it taught that "Abraham's bosom" is in heaven! Such an idea is read into the narrative and assumed as a result of traditional prejudices.

If it be insisted that the passage is a literal description of actual events, it soon becomes evident that even immortal soulists cannot accept it as a literal description. A little consideration soon reveals its unsuitability to the purpose for which it is used by the immortal soulist.

NO REFERENCE TO A DISEMBODIED STATE

The passage says nothing about a disembodied state. It speaks about bodies and not immaterial entities. All the incidents of the story are incompatible with the traditional theory. Consider:

(1) The one who was taken to "hell," or hades, was a "rich man" clothed in purple. The one taken to Abraham's bosom was "the beggar" i.e. Lazarus himself. Nothing is said about their "spirit" going.

(2) Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. If souls are immaterial, how then could Lazarus be carried by angels? And what do we make of "Abraham's bosom?" Does tradition accept this literally? Is it believed that immaterial souls have bosoms? Is it believed that every single righteous soul ends up in Abraham's literal bosom? How big is his bosom? Or, how small are "souls"?

(3) The rich man "lifted up his eyes" in hell and could "see Abraham afar off." Do souls have eyes? Does popular theology admit to the possibility of conversation passing between the occupants of the two places? Is heaven literally a place where conversation can be carried on between those enjoying bliss and those agonising in flames of fire?

(4) The rich man pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus: "that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue." Do souls have fingers and tongue? The passage is clearly speaking about bodies and not a disembodied state.

(5) Reference is made to a "great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot." Is a "gulf" any obstacle to the transit of an immaterial soul? No! The passage unquestionably relates to bodies.

(6) The rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus to his 5 brethren, to testify to them lest they should come to the same place of torment. Did his request mean that he wanted the immaterial soul of Lazarus to float invisibly alongside his brothers and whisper the message in their ears? By no means! Listen to Abraham's revealing reply: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (v31).

This is highly significant. It is really the key to the correct interpretation of the whole story. The statement: "though one rose from the dead" refers to Lazarus. Lazarus was, in the story, alive after death as a result of resurrection. He was not a disembodied immortal, but an immortal body! The reference to resurrection in verse 31 is the story's own interpretation of verse 22 where it states that Lazarus "died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Being carried into Abraham's bosom after death, signified resurrection. It has nothing to do with the departure of a disembodied soul or spirit.

A PARABLE

So then, if tradition insists that the story in Lk.16 is literal narrative, it commits itself to many particulars which are thoroughly at variance with its own popular theology.

It is clearly not literal narrative. Even many traditional believers refer to it as a parable, which it doubtless is. "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them" (Matt. 13:34).

It might be argued that it is nowhere stated in Lk.16 that the story of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable. This is true, but we have already

seen the insuperable difficulties that face even the traditional view, if it is not accepted as a parable. Jesus did not always commence his parables with an official statement, declaring that what he was about to say was a parable. A number of his stories are accepted universally as parables, yet it is nowhere stated in these stories that they are a parable. See Matt. 21:28-33. Lk. 15:11-32. 16:1-8.

THE BACKGROUND

There is an easily traced sequence in Lk. 15-16 which needs to be considered to properly appreciate the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Luke says that the publicans and sinners drew around Jesus to hear him. This led to the murmuring of the Scribes and Pharisees who said: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" (15:1-2). Jesus therefore addressed to the murmurers, the three parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and the Prodigal. The last of these left the elder son outside the house, angry, and churlishly refusing to go in. That was precisely the position of the Scribes and the Pharisees. Turning to the disciples, Jesus then told the parable of the unjust steward. Drawing the lesson of the faithful use of riches, warning them that it was impossible to serve God and money, and pointing to a still greater stewardship in which faithfulness was equally necessary.

The parable of the steward and the comments of Jesus stung the Pharisees. They were "lovers of money" says Lk. 16:14; and since a man cannot love money and love God, as Jesus had just said; they could not be true lovers of God. Instead of receiving the admonition of Jesus, they hardened their hearts and "derided" him. Jesus replied: "Ye are they who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (Lk. 16:15). This tore away their rags of self-righteousness. They performed their prayers and alms that men might see them. They sought the esteem of men and received a receipt in full, as Jesus many times told them. There was nothing owing to them from God for anything they had done. But God was not indifferent; he did not esteem them, but regarded them as an abomination.

Jesus then adds three sayings in Lk. 16:16-18, just before he launches into the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The connection of the three sayings is not at first obvious, but is traced out more fully in the parable of the unjust steward. Really, these sayings are an indictment of unfaithfulness on the part of the Scribes and Pharisees. The law and the

prophets were until John: they had not kept the law. Since John, the kingdom was preached, but they did not seek to enter (v16). Yet not the least detail of God's law would fail (v17). In one respect (perhaps particularly so as rich men), they flagrantly set aside the law by the rules which made divorce easy and common (v18).

Against this background of the tense feeling of the rulers, and plain speaking on the part of Jesus, he adds the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The "rich man" in the parable clearly refers to the rich money-loving Scribes and Pharisees. They lived a self-centred life of luxury and ease: "clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day." They loved money; grasped at it to their own advantage, while all the time pretending to serve God. They were unfaithful as stewards of the riches that were given them and could never therefore attain to the true riches of the spirit. They used their wealth to gratify their own selfish desire. Opportunity was at their gate, but they were so self-centred, they ignored it. The poor and sick Lazarus class would have welcomed even the crumbs from his table (v20-21). Instead of helping the poor, they despised them.

Lazarus represented the "publicans and sinners" class upon whom the Jewish leaders looked with self-righteous contempt. They were the "sick" whom Jesus, the divine physician, came to heal and feed. It is interesting to note that in Mal. 1:7, "table" refers to the altar of the Mosaic Law, upon which "bread" (food) was offered by the priests. The altar was for sacrifice, and was supposed to teach the Jews the principles of sacrifice towards God and their fellow-man. In the time of Jesus, the Jewish leaders ignored this. They heaped their offerings upon the Lord's table and their own, and had a time of feasting themselves, but ignored the poor and needy brethren. They failed to discern the "Lord's body." As far as the Lord was concerned, their tables were not pleasant or satisfying at all: "Their tables were full of vomit and filthiness" (Isa. 28:7-8). Their tables became a "snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block" (Rom. 11:9).

Lazarus' desire for "crumbs" carries with it an interesting parabolic significance. The Oracles of God are sometimes referred to metaphorically in Scripture as "bread." In Matt. 15:26, Jesus referred to his ministry to the Jews as "bread." On this occasion, a gentile woman sought ministry from Jesus and his reply was: "It is not right to take the children's (Jew's) bread and cast it to dogs" (gentiles). The woman's reply was: "Truth. Lord, yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." She was seeking a small, overlap portion of ministry from Jesus and described it in terms of "crumbs."

It is not difficult to see an association of thoughts and ideas in this episode which correspond with the section under consideration, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In both cases we are presented with a "table," "crumbs" and "dogs."

The gentiles were regarded as "dogs" by the Jews, and were treated with contempt by them. The Jews refused to have dealings with the gentiles and were never over-anxious to share the oracles of God's Word with them. Yet, the gentiles showed a great interest and manifested a strong desire for the Word of God. Jesus no doubt included the gentiles among the Jewish "publicans and sinners" when referring to "Lazarus" in the parable. The rich Scribe and Pharisee class looked down on both classes with equal contempt, yet it was these two classes (the gentiles and poor among the Jews) who qualified for the kingdom of God. The gentiles and sinners among the Jews were regarded as being "unclean" by the self-righteous Pharisees. This "uncleanness" is suggested in Lazarus being "full of sores" which the dogs licked.

LAZARUS DIED AND WAS CARRIED...

“**A**nd it came to pass that Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (v22). As pointed out before, this is interpreted in verse 31 to signify resurrection from the dead. Tradition usually reads it to mean that the moment Lazarus died, he departed to be in Abraham's bosom. However, this is obviously an incorrect interpretation in view of the fact that it is explained in the text to be resurrection.

Nowhere is it taught in Scripture that a man departs somewhere the moment he dies. As it stands, Lk. 16:22 merely expresses a certain sequence of events, without indicating whether there is any actual interval between the events or not. Lazarus died first and then went to Abraham's bosom; but whether immediately after death, or some time later, there is nothing in the expression to tell. If we understand that death is cessation of life, then the question to settle is: what is provided in the Christian system as the means of introducing a dead person to living bodily existence? The answer is resurrection. It might appear that two things so far apart could not be brought together as they are in the language of Lk. 16:22; but it must be remembered that the thing is described from the point of view of the person dying.

If the dead "know not anything," which the Scriptures declare; it follows that dying and being resurrected would, to those dying, appear

instantly sequential events; and therefore, perfectly natural to be connected the way they are in the parable. In an earlier chapter we saw how Paul's statement about departing and being with the Lord fits into the same category. Also Heb. 9:27 which reads: "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after that the judgement."

One thing is certain: Lazarus "died" (v22). And it is also certain that he lived again with a body after his death. Verse 31 clearly states he "rose from the dead." Hence, the word "and" in the statement: "the beggar died and was carried by the angels ..." bridges the gap of time between death and resurrection.

So then, Lazarus died and was later resurrected. He was "carried by the angels." This harmonises perfectly with the teaching of Jesus who said that when he returns, he will send his angels out with a great sound of the trumpet and gather together his elect from the four winds of heaven (Matt. 24:31). It is clear from 1 Cor. 15:52 and 1 Thes. 4:16 that the time of the trumpet sound will witness the resurrection. The angels will be sent by Jesus as he descends from heaven, throughout the four corners of the earth, to resurrect the saints and gather them to himself to accompany him to Jerusalem. This "gathering" is the "rapture," referred to as being "carried by the angels" in the parable, and "our gathering together unto him (Jesus)" in 2 Thes. 2:1.

ABRAHAM'S BOSOM

The parable in Lk. 16:22 says that Lazarus was carried into "Abraham's bosom." As stated earlier, this is a parabolic statement and cannot be literally interpreted. Very few Christians would seriously believe that all the righteous are literally deposited in Abraham's bosom!

The expression: "Abraham's bosom," alludes to the posture used by the Jews at table. This was reclining on couches after the manner of the Romans, the upper part of the body resting upon the left elbow, and the lower lying at length upon the couch. When two or three reclined on the same couch, some say the worthiest or most honourable person lay first (Lightfoot says, in the middle); the next in dignity lay with his head reclining on the breast or bosom of the first, as John is said to have done on the bosom of Jesus at supper; and hence is borrowed the phrase of Abraham's bosom, as denoting the state of celestial happiness. To the Jew, Abraham was esteemed the most honourable person, and to be next to him with head resting on his bosom would mean being in the highest possible position of honour.

Abraham is "father of the faithful," and among the Jews is esteemed the most honourable person among men. To sit or recline with him with head on his bosom, was a coveted honour and was regarded as the ultimate of spiritual blessings. To rest in his bosom would be to have a close and loving relationship with him, as in the case of John, who leaned on the bosom of Jesus at the last supper (Jn. 13:23-25). Jesus' position of perfect relationship with his father is described in Jn.1:18 as being "in the bosom of the father." And Jesus' care and love for his followers is referred to in Isa. 40:11 in terms of carrying them "in his bosom."

The true Christian and Jewish hope is to be united with Abraham, and receive with him the promised inheritance. Referring to the time when this takes place, Jesus said: "Many (Jews and Gentiles) shall come from the east and west (carried by angels!) and shall sit down ("sit at table" R.S.V) with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom ("rich man" class) shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:11-12).

Jesus' reference to sitting i.e. "reclining" at table with Abraham in the kingdom, is significant in the light of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In the parable the rich man sat at table and feasted sumptuously every day, imagining in his pride and conceit that he was Abraham's friend and that he would join Abraham in the afterlife and sit with him at table. In the kingdom however, the tables have turned: Lazarus is at table with Abraham and the rich man is cast out. The position of Lazarus is well described in Ps. 23:5-6: "Thou (God) preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

In the parable, Lazarus was "laid at his (the rich man's) gate full of sores," but in the kingdom; "at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which the Lord has laid up for his beloved" (Song Sol. 7:13). "Blessed are they that ... enter in through the gates into the city. For outside are dogs (now representing the rich man class!) ..." (Rev. 22:14-15).

A deliberate contrast is made throughout the parable between the two positions of the rich man and Lazarus, before and after resurrection. The positions of the two classes are completely reversed at the second coming of Christ. Jesus will balance the account at the judgement!

RICH MAN DIED - LIFTED UP HIS EYES IN HELL

As far as the rich man is concerned, it is recorded that he "also died," and was "buried." This is straightforward enough: he simply experienced death and burial. Then, at some undisclosed period after his death, "he lift up his eyes" from his burial place - "hell" (the grave). Now when a man dies and is buried, his eyes are closed and he cannot see anything. He is dead. The only way in which his eyes can open and see again is through resurrection! The phrase "lift up his eyes" obviously speaks of resurrection. When his eyes opened from their death sleep he saw Abraham and Lazarus. This proves that it was the time of resurrection because as we have already seen, it was only through resurrection that Lazarus got back into the land of the living. The rich man, like Lazarus, was raised from the dead. But, instead of being at table with Abraham, enjoying the peace and prosperity of the kingdom, he was "afar off" and in "torments." Obviously the judgement had taken place and the rich man had been rejected. He could see that Lazarus was accepted, and that he was in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The sight of this and the knowledge of his own rejection, filled him with fear and torment.

At the judgement, the wicked will be separated from the righteous and will be "cast out into outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12. 22:13. 25:30). And in all these verses it is emphasised that there shall be great "weeping and gnashing of teeth" by those who are rejected. "The wicked shall see it and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish" (Ps. 112:10). "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, (carried by angels?!) and shall sit down at table in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 13:27-29).

TORMENTED IN THIS FLAME

Scripture tells us that "fear hath torment" (1 Jn. 4:18). When the rich man class realise that they have been rejected, their hearts will be filled with fear and torment, knowing that they have failed to qualify for eternal life. Those rejected at the judgement seat who believe in the immortality of the soul, will particularly be filled with fear, believing as they do that they will suffer eternally in a fiery abyss. The rich man class -

the Scribes and Pharisees believed this also.

The word "torment" in Lk. 16:23 and 28 comes from the Greek word "basanos" and only occurs in one other place, namely Matt. 4:24 where it refers to physical pain caused through certain diseases. The pain that Lazarus suffered with his sores was nothing compared to what the rich man will suffer!

Lk. 12:47 informs us that those who knew to do the Lord's will (like the Scribes and Pharisees) but refused to do it, shall be "beaten with many stripes" i.e. "flogged severely" (New English Bible). Yes, physical as well as mental pain and torment awaits all whom are rejected by Jesus on judgement day. When their body is beaten they will know what it is like to be "full of sores" and, although Rev. 22:15 refers to dogs being outside the city, it is doubtful that they will lick the sores better!

The complete reversal of the ultimate position of the rich man and Lazarus class is particularly emphasised in Lk. 16:24, where the rich man "cried out and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

Now, it should be evident to every thoughtful reader, that if the rich man was placed in a literal fire; his body, being mortal, would soon burn to ashes and he would have no voice to cry out or tongue to be touched or cooled. And if the account must be read to mean that he was standing near a hot flame and was thirsty as a result, then how could a drop of water on the tip of a finger possibly be sufficient to cool his tongue or quench his thirst?

It is vitally important to keep in mind that we are dealing with parabolic narrative and not literal fact!

The rich man was no more in a literal flame than was Lazarus in Abraham's literal bosom. The "flame," like Abraham's "bosom," is to be understood metaphorically, although, as will be pointed out later when attention is given to the subject of "hell fire;" the ultimate destiny of the wicked is to be thrown into literal fire.

The rich man's desire for a drop of water on the tip of Lazarus' finger is a deliberate contrast with the previous situation when Lazarus desired a crumb from the rich man's table. Abraham's reply to the rich man suggests this: "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted and you are tormented." The rich man never "lifted a finger" to help Lazarus, and now he desires Lazarus to lift a finger for him! Water is a common commodity. Even the beggar Lazarus would have had free access

to that. The rich man's inability to procure water indicates his final state is infinitely worse than what Lazarus experienced beforehand.

"Water" is often used as a symbol in Scripture for the blessings of God - especially the kingdom blessings which come through the spirit (Jn. 4:13-15. 7:37-39. Rev. 7:16-17. 21:5-8. 22:1-2,17). Viewed in this light, the rich man's request for a drop of water could be regarded as a desire to have just a little taste and touch of the kingdom blessings that he had missed out on.

Anyone acquainted with the Scripture will know that "fire" or "flame" is used in many different ways. Jam. 3:6 says the "tongue is a fire," meaning that, like fire, it can cause a lot of trouble and destruction. Maybe the rich man's tongue was "on fire" as a result of his weeping and gnashing, swearing and cursing. Divine trial and affliction is often referred to in Scripture as "fire." The rich man was certainly under affliction!

In Isa. 42:24-25, God's punishment of Israel is referred to as "setting him on fire round about, yet he knew not (did not learn the lesson); and it burned him, yet he did not take it to heart." In Ps. 66:10-12, divine affliction is referred to in terms of Israel passing "through the fire."

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the "flame" refers to punishment and affliction, causing the rich man to be "tormented." The word "tormented" in verse 24 and 25 comes from the Greek "odunao" and means "sorrow," "grief," "anguish," "distress." The only other places where the same word occurs are: Lk. 2:48 and Act. 20:38 where it is translated "sorrowing;" and Rom. 9:2 and 1 Tim. 6:10 where it is translated "sorrow." In each of these places it relates to mental or emotional grief.

Regarding the "great gulf fixed: so that those who desire to pass from hence to you cannot ..." - it is evident from Scripture that there will be a period after the judgement in which the rejected will remain alive, suffering the pain of their "beating," and suffering the torment of knowing they have been deprived of eternal life and kingdom blessings. This is quite fitting and just, for they, during their life, enjoyed blessings and deprived others of blessing. Attention has already been drawn to Rev. 22:14-15 where reference is made to the righteous entering in through the gates of the city (of new Jerusalem) and of the unrighteous having to remain outside the gates. The "great gulf" seems to be part of the metaphorical language in the parable indicating the impossibility of passing from one side to the other. Once the separation has been made between the sheep and the goats, they can never come together again.

The "great gulf" could also have a connection with the valley of Hinnom which is outside Jerusalem. Fires continually burned in this valley and the bodies of criminals used to be thrown into it. As shall be pointed out later, the Greek word translated "hell fire" is "Gehenna" and literally means "valley of Hinnom." It is strongly suggested in Scripture that the final destiny of the wicked, after suffering a period of shame and ignominy; will be extermination in a roaring fire in this valley. Those who go there will never be able to pass back into the city of God with Abraham and the righteous.

FIVE BRETHREN

The rich man in the parable asked Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brethren, to testify to them lest they should come to the same place of torment. Abraham answered: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

The real force and significance of Abraham's reply can only be appreciated when it is remembered that the whole parable is initially directed against the Scribes and Pharisees. As pointed out before: they trifled with the law of Moses and the prophets to make room for their own traditions. Much in the same way that many of the clergy in modern times, have tampered with the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, superimposing upon them or replacing them with their own philosophies. Many today who claim to revere the Scriptures, unwittingly ridicule and repudiate them by their traditional doctrines, making the Word of God null and void. This is what Jesus was condemning when he affirmed in Lk. 16:16-17 that "the law and the prophets were until John" i.e. in full force and binding. "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." The laxity of the marriage law in particular, as interpreted by the Pharisees, was a direct violation of the Mosaic precepts, and is referred to in verse 18.

This was, as we have seen, the situation which the parable was introduced to illustrate. The words put into Abraham's mouth in the parable really constitute one of the greatest lessons of the parable: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

The Scribes and Pharisees had compromised themselves, for they had the law and the prophets, and made them their boast, but did not listen to them as God intended. They searched the Scriptures of the law and prophets, for in them they thought they had eternal life; yet rejected Jesus

to whom those Scriptures so plainly testified. And so Jesus said on one occasion: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the father: there is one who accuses you, even Moses, in whom you trust. For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" (Jn. 5:39-47).

That the writings of the law and prophets spoke about Jesus is particularly obvious by the fact that the apostle Paul, who was a Pharisee before his conversion, persuaded the people concerning Jesus, "both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets" (Act. 28:23). The Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees placed all their confidence in the presumption that "we have Abraham to our Father" (Matt. 3:7-9). It was, however, an empty and futile boast, for in reality, Abraham would not recognise them as his seed, for they rejected Christ, the true and chief seed.

So full of confidence were they of their interpretation of the law, that it never occurred to them that they could possibly be wrong. They were blind leaders of the blind, teaching for doctrine the traditions of man. If the truth of God provided in the law and prophets was neglected and rejected, further revelation could serve no further purpose and would be withheld by God. Hearts that refuse to respond to the present revelation of God's Word, will pay no heed even if a miracle is performed and someone is sent to proclaim it to them. God will not perform special miracles for those who tamper with and compromise his revealed Word!

The story of the rich man and Lazarus was even more than a parable: it was also a prophecy with an almost immediate fulfilment. The rich man's plea had been: "Send Lazarus to them!" Lazarus raised from the dead to be a witness to his five surviving brothers! Was it a matter of chance or coincidence that Jesus introduced the name "Lazarus" in that parable? It is most unlikely! Rather does it show the skill of Jesus in bringing home to them, and to the nation, beyond any possibility of doubt; their responsibility in rejecting the witness of God through his son, for not many days after this parable was spoken by Jesus, Lazarus of Bethany was raised from the dead by the son of God, "that the son of God might be glorified" (Jn. ch. 11). The request of the rich man in the parable was granted in the resurrection of Lazarus and the words of Jesus proved only too true.

Lazarus is the only character personally named in the parables of Jesus, implying that Lazarus must have been known to the audience. The parable might have been uttered after he received news of the death of his friend, Lazarus. The parable was given at Perea, east of the Jordan at Bethabara (where news of Lazarus' death came to him Jn. 11:6. Cp. Jn.

10:40; 1:28). It was an easy day's journey from Bethabara to Bethany.

Was it also a matter of chance or coincidence that Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest at the time (Jn. 18:13), had five brothers-in-law? Caiaphas was son-in-law of Annas who had been deposed by the Romans for openly resisting them. Josephus records: "Now the report goes, that this leader Ananus (Annas) proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons, who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and he had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other high priests ..." (Antiquities, Book XX ch.9, section 1. p.423). Elsewhere, Josephus gives the names of Annas' five sons as: Eleazar, Jonathan, Theophilus, Matthias, and the younger Annas.

In this light, the parable condemns Caiaphas as Chief Shepherd of Israel for his selfish irresponsibility in neglecting the spiritual and material needs of Jews in Israel. Lazarus represents this neglected class. The parable is a further indictment of the Sadducees (who denied the resurrection of the body and were to reject the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus), in their disbelief of Moses and the prophets. Caiaphas was actually a Sadducean High Priest! The parable's condemnation of this chief shepherd should be compared with Ezk. 34:2-4.

Instead of repenting, they sought more determinedly to get Jesus put to death as a result (Jn. 11:47-57). Also: "The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus to death; because by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus" (Jn. 12:10-12).

Were they persuaded by the raising from the dead of one even greater than Lazarus - the son of God himself? Again they refused to believe: "They gave a large sum of money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept ... and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matt. 28:12-).

The Pharisees were always clamouring for a sure sign from Jesus that he was the Messiah, but when the great sign of the prophet Jonah was given, they took no notice, but went their own self-centred way as before. So they brought upon themselves "the days of vengeance" (Lk. 21:22) and the desolation of their city and nation.

(One school of thought suggests that Lazarus, in the parable, represents Christ who was, at the instigation of the Jewish leaders, taken outside the gate of the city and treated worse than a dog. He was inflicted with "sores" as a result of flogging, buffeting and crucifixion. The name "Lazarus" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Eleazar" which means "God is helper." God was certainly in Christ seeking to help mankind by

reconciling them to himself. And he certainly laid his help upon his son in his life and ministry through the Holy Spirit. Under the law of Moses, Aaron the high priest was superseded by his son Eleazar, and some believe this foreshadowed the Lord Jesus Christ whose priesthood stripped away and replaced the Aaronic).

Coming back to the parable: The Pharisees were clearly covetous, and centred their lives on the present. Observe Abraham's answer: "thy good things" - the possessiveness of present things and the blindness to any future good, is clearly indicated. They might gain the world, but their lives were forfeit; the future was not theirs. The despised outcasts, pressing into the kingdom in response to the teaching of Jesus, would inherit the Abrahamic blessings.

The story then of the rich man and Lazarus, is a parable, and is to be parabolically interpreted. Its message, when correctly interpreted, harmonises with the rest of the teaching of Scripture as one would expect.

ANSWER A FOOL ACCORDING TO HIS FOLLY

Although the story of the rich man and Lazarus is clearly a parable, it is interesting to note that the story, as literally told, without being parabolically interpreted; would not have surprised the Scribes and Pharisees, for it actually embodied their own belief. The groundwork of the parable, as it literally stands, was one of the Jew's own imaginings and fables. The story, taken as it stands, was a common belief of the Jews, and Jesus deliberately uses it as the basis for his parable. By doing this, Jesus achieved two purposes:

(1) He answered the foolish Jewish leaders according to their own folly and condemned them by it.

(2) He reinforced the faith and hope of his true followers who accepted the story as a parable and who interpreted it accordingly within the framework of the doctrine of Christ.

Edersheim wrote: "We must not look in this parabolic language for Christ's teaching about the "after life" ... As regards the details, they evidently represent the views current at the time among the Jews."

The Jews had rejected the teaching of Jesus and refused to hear him, so he sets out to warn them from their own traditional beliefs! This might impress them where the message of salvation had failed. So Jesus selected one of the Pharisees own fables and used it against them - a fable which, however parabolically interpreted, also reinforced the faith and hope of the Christian. The Pharisees, whose eyes were blinded and whose ears

were dull of hearing, would interpret the story literally because it conformed to their traditional theology. The true followers of Christ, whose eyes had been opened and anointed by the eyesalve of divine wisdom and understanding, spiritually discerned it and interpreted it parabolically. Speaking to this class, Jesus said: "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven" (Mk. 4:11-12).

That the story of the rich man and Lazarus is a faithful representation of current Jewish thought is confirmed by the Jewish historian Josephus, himself a Pharisee, born about A.D. 37 and who therefore lived just after the time of the ministry of Christ. In his: "Discourse to the Greeks concerning Hades," Josephus states:

"Now as to Hades, wherein the souls of the righteous and unrighteous are detained, it is necessary to speak of it. Hades is a place in the world not regularly finished; a subterraneous region, where the light of this world does not shine ... This region is allowed as a place of custody for souls, in which angels are appointed as guardians of them ... the just are guided to the right hand, and are led with hymns sung by the angels appointed over that place, unto a region of light ... with whom there is no place of toil, no burning heat, no piercing cold ... while they wait for that rest and eternal new life in heaven, which is to succeed this region. This place we call the bosom of Abraham. But as to the unjust, they are dragged by force to the left hand, by the angels that are set over these souls, who drag them into the neighbourhood of hell itself; who when they are hard by it, continually hear the noise of it, and do not stand clear of the hot vapour itself; but when they have a nearer view of this spectacle, as of a terrible and exceeding great prospect of fire, they are struck with a fearful expectation of future judgement, and in effect punished thereby ... even hereby are they punished; for a chasm deep and large is fixed between them; insomuch that a just man that hath compassion upon them, cannot be admitted, nor can one that is unjust, if he were bold enough to attempt it, pass over it." (Josephus Complete Works, trans. by William Whiston).

It should be clear from this that the story of the rich man and Lazarus, as it literally stands, embodied the belief of the Scribes and Pharisees. This "doctrine," based on the immortality of the soul which they borrowed from the Greeks, became part of their "vain tradition." It was the result of trifling with, and neglecting the "law and the prophets."

Through abandoning the revelation of the Old Testament on the subject of life after death, and submitting themselves to the influence of pagan philosophy, such foolish doctrines like this emerged. Such teaching is totally foreign to the Word of God. All truly enlightened will reject it as utter nonsense, and in doing so, will stand aside from the darkness of the superstitious beliefs of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Nothing is said in the law and prophets (Old Testament) to justify a literal interpretation of the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It is clearly a parable and must be parabolically interpreted i.e. "spiritually discerned." Those like the Scribes and Pharisees, who believe in the immortality of the soul, will fail to do this and will end up with concepts that belong to the realm of pagan mythology.

When Christ had occasion to speak plainly of the death of Lazarus "He said unto them plainly, (indicating that the word "sleep" as applied to death is not "plain" or literal language), Lazarus is dead." "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" i.e. by resurrection, for Jesus had said just before: "I am the resurrection and the life." "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation." It is in these plain words of Christ that we are to seek for his real idea on the subject of the dead, and not in a parabolic discourse.

It would be strange indeed if so important a doctrine as the immortality of the soul should have to depend upon a parable! Those who insist upon the parable for this purpose have to be asked what we are to do with all the testimony already advanced in proof of the reality of death. Are we to make a parable paramount and throw away plain, unequivocal testimony? Are we to twist and violate what is clear to make it agree with what we think is meant by that which is obscure? Is not the opposite rather the course of true wisdom, determining and solving that which is uncertain by that which is unmistakable?

And, if it may be argued, as it sometimes is; that it was unlike Christ to perpetuate delusion, and withhold the truth on such an important question as that involved in the parable used, it is sufficient to quote the following reply: "Then the disciples came and said unto him, Why do you speak to them in parables? He answered them, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not

see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. With them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says: You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn to me to heal them" (Matt. 13:10-15).

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

We cannot miss a further application of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus from a national point of view. Israel was a rich nation: they had advantages "much every way" as Paul said. But the wealth was not for themselves. They were appointed a priestly kingdom, and they should have let the light and hunger-satisfying power of the light of God's holy Oracles shine to others and feed them. They were advantageously placed for so doing. They were not pushed away in some obscure corner, hidden under "bed or bushel," but set on the candlestick of the hills of Palestine, where all could see them and learn from them. Solomon had this in mind when he prayed that the stranger, coming from a far country for "Thy name's sake," should be heard, "that all peoples of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as doth thy people Israel" (1 Kng. 8:41-43). But Israel became self-centred and proud, and despised the Gentiles at their gates. But a change came - the Jewish nation was cut off, and has been through the fires of persecution - the "iron furnace," while the stranger at the gate has been introduced into the covenants of promise and has become a partaker of the "living water."

When the change of heart is given to Israel (not included in the parable as it does not come within its purpose), they will recognise that their Redeemer would be raised from the dead, and they will find that Jesus of Nazareth is he. The veil will then lift from their eyes in the reading of the law and the prophets, and their knee will bow to Jesus and their tongue confess him as Lord. Meanwhile, continuing in unbelief, there is no respite from the torment and suffering the nation undergoes, and two thirds of the nation is yet destined to perish in the fires of the end time invasion of their land (Zec. 13:8-9).

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CHAPTER TWENTY THREE WHERE AND WHAT IS HELL?

The old serpent's lie: "Ye shall not surely die," is also at the bottom of the traditional doctrine of "hell." This is where the root of the mischief lies. Without this, the foundation could never exist.

If man possesses an immortal soul, a place must obviously be found for it after the death of the body. Traditional theology has provided heaven for the souls of the righteous and, considering it would be incompatible to consign the souls of the wicked to the same place, another less congenial abode must be found. And if such a place can be found, someone must also be found to be in charge of it. If God is in charge of the righteous souls in heaven, someone must be given jurisdiction over the place to which wicked souls are consigned. Or, as Voltaire very characteristically pointed out: "So soon as men began to perceive that some of their enemies flourished as the green bay tree in this life, they had to cater for them after death." Hence the Platonic idea of the reversal of fortunes in the next world. To men steeped in such ideas it was a very easy matter to develop from the Bible similar ideas of heaven and hell.

The popular traditional belief is that the place to which wicked souls are consigned is "hell," and that a supernatural fallen angel called the "devil," encircled by other fallen angels called "demons," is in charge of it, harassing and tormenting all who end up there.

The immortality of the soul is the foundation on which this doctrine rests. Prove the one, and the other follows. Disprove the one, and disproof of the other follows! Failure to deal with the argument at this vital point, means all endeavour throughout will result in failure. It leaves the flank unprotected and turns the whole position in the opposite direction. If man does not possess an immortal soul, then the doctrine of future punishment is placed on an entirely different footing. It is for this reason that the subject of the nature of man was dealt with at length in this thesis before approaching the subject of hell.

We have seen that there is no foundation in Scripture for the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. This being the case, a foundation no longer exists upon which the doctrine of eternal conscious suffering after death can be based, which means the "hell" of tradition is different from the "hell" of the Bible. What then, is the hell of the Bible?

CONFLICTING VIEWS

Regarding the actual nature and locality of hell, there is tremendous confusion and contradiction in Christendom. If a Gallup survey were taken, asking people the question: "What do you think hell is, and where do you think it is located?" Many confused and conflicting answers would be given. Some would think of it as a place of fire and brimstone under the earth where the devil, with horns and pitchfork reigns, torturing all who go there throughout eternity. Others would think of it as being in the heart of a huge volcanic mountain, surrounded by burning craggy rocks. Others would picture it as a huge burning desert place. Some think of it as below the ground; some think it is not down in the ground, and others think it is in the heart of the sun or some other volcanic planet. Many believe it is not a geographical location at all, but just a state of mind - what you make of life. Many are persuaded that hell is not a reality. It is the conviction of many that the popular teaching on hell is just a means of scaring people - inducing them to be faithful to the church and live a godly life - particularly good propaganda for keeping children on the "straight and narrow" - but something a person grows out of as he does with Father Christmas!

There is tremendous confusion and contradiction among theologians on the subject. Many today are rejecting the old traditional concept, and others are waxing more eloquent than ever before on the old theme.

There are two extremes concerning hell, and most people fit into one or the other. One group totally denies that hell exists. They reject it as an ancient pagan superstition that has no relevance to true Christianity. The other group regards hell as a very real place of never-ending torment where the devil and his demons rule, roasting sinners' "souls" in their billions like a wiener on a barbecue spit. According to this concept, it is a place of intense weeping and wailing, agonised screams, swearing and cursing and excruciating pain. This particular concept of hell has been in the past dark age, and still is today in many churches, a "skeleton in the cupboard" whose bones are occasionally rattled to frighten people into submission. During the dark ages this doctrine was exploited by the rich ecclesiastical oppressors of the poor.

It is remarkable how eager many sincere believers of the Bible even in our present, modern, "enlightened" age are to prove that God consigns billions of their fellows to endless torture. They insist that today's message to the world is that if man does not receive the gospel (whether he is fortunate enough to hear it or not) during his time upon the earth, the all-

righteous, merciful, just Creator will heap pain and torture upon him throughout eternity - because of several score years of sin.

In many circles this concept is the very power of their gospel! It is almost thought that if the torture of hell and everlasting pain was removed from the gospel message, no one would be induced to seek and serve God! In such cases, fear, and not love, forms the basis of the gospel message and relationship with God. The whole concept is unreasonable and violates every sense of justice. If it was true justice, the penal institutions of the world (which are less just than God) would surely follow a similar example by subjecting criminals to incessant torture instead of putting them in jail or inflicting the death penalty. Today, most reasonable men look on the tortures of the Inquisition and Nazi camps with horror and detestation, even though that torture was very brief compared with eternity. Even under the law of Moses, which was notable for its strictness in dealing with violators; placed a limitation on the number of stripes that could be inflicted when a man was flogged.

The Encyclopaedia Americana summarises the popular view of hell as follows: "As generally understood, hell is the abode of evil spirits; the infernal regions ... whither lost and condemned souls go after death to suffer indescribable torments and eternal punishment ... Some have thought of it as a place created by the Deity, where He punishes with inconceivable severity, and through all eternity, the souls of those who through unbelief or through worship of false gods have angered Him. It is the place of divine revenge, untempered, never ending. This has been the idea most generally held by Christians, Catholics, and Protestants alike. It is also the idea embodied in the Mohammedan's conception. The main features of hell as conceived by the Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, and Christian Theologians are essentially the same."

The last sentence in the quotation above is very significant, for it suggests that the traditional concept of hell originated in paganism. This is not surprising. In fact, it is to be expected, seeing that its basis - the immortality of the soul started there. The belief that the soul at death went either to eternal happiness in heaven, or to torture in some lower region of fiery torment called hell; was taught and believed by practically all pagan nations. It was established on the unscriptural foundation that man possessed an immortal soul capable of surviving the death of the body. Without that foundation it could never have existed. Together with that doctrine, it was taken over by certain of the early fathers in the church from Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek sources, and read into Holy Writ by these seekers after an attempted reconciliation between man's philosophy

and Christian truth. Doubtless these earnest thinkers acted in all good faith and were blind to the fact that in attempting such a reconciliation, they were trying to establish an agreement between the revealed will of God and the times of ignorance he had "winked at." The Gnostics, those mystics who claimed some kind of supernatural ability to deal with such subjects, rejected the truly Christian eschatology. Origen and Clement and Alexandria followed, developing their own peculiar varieties of theories as to the destiny of man.

The modern use of the word "hell" is not, as we shall see, the Scriptural use, but the old mythology of the heathen - the fabulous theory according to which they fitted and furnished the vast subterranean we have supposed, with flames, sulphur, brazen-throated dogs, furies, and such like. Plato, speaking of all this mythological apparatus and the legends appended to it, says: "Which, under the name of "Hades" and similar titles, men (i.e. pagans) greatly fear, and dream about living in dissolved of bodies." This last expression is explained by what he says elsewhere: "For be well assured, O Socrates, that when any one is near the time in which he thinks he is going to die, there enter into him fear and anxiety. For then the old stories about Hades, how that the man who has been guilty of wrong must there suffer punishments, torture his soul. Wherefore he who in the retrospect of his life, finds many crimes, like frightened children starting from their sleep, is terrified, and lives in evil forebodings."

INFLUENCE OF AUGUSTINE AND DANTE

A few prominent leaders of the Middle Ages left writings and teachings which were so universally believed that they became the accepted doctrine of the Christian-professing world. Two of the most important of these influential writers were Augustine (345-430A.D), and Dante Alighieri (1265-1321A.D.).

Augustine reasoned that there should be a temporary cleansing of imperfect souls in purgatorial fire. He, like other influential men of the Christian-professing church, was influenced by "pre-Christian doctrine" - the doctrine of the ancient pagan philosophers (See Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed; article "Purgatory").

Dante wrote a tremendously popular poem: "The Divine Comedy," in three parts - Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. "Of all the poets of modern times," says a modern author, "Dante Alighieri was, perhaps, the greatest educator. He possibly had a greater influence on the course of civilization

than any other man since his day ... He wrote, in incomprehensible verse, an imaginative and lurid account of a dismal hell - a long poem containing certain phrases which caught the attention of the world, such as 'all hope abandon ... ye, who enter here!'. This had a tremendous impression and influence on the popular Christian thought and teaching. His 'Inferno' was based on Virgil and Plato." (Dante and His Inferno).

Dante is reported to have been so fascinated and enraptured by the ideas and concepts of the pagan philosophers Plato and Virgil, that he believed they were divinely inspired (which is much the same attitude of many theologians today who place more importance on Plato's teaching than the teaching of Scripture).

Who were Plato and Virgil?

Says the Encyclopaedia Americana: "Virgil, pagan poet, 70-19B.C.; belonged to the national school of pagan Roman thought, influenced by the Greek writers. Christians of the Middle Ages, including Dante, believed he had received some measure of divine inspiration."

Plato, born in Athens, Greece, 427B.C. was a student of the renowned Socrates. Plato's famous literary work "Phaedo" taught the immortality of the soul, the foundation for Dante's doctrine of an eternal hell where wicked "souls" are supposedly punished forever.

The imaginations of many artists were fired up by the medieval poet Dante, and countless illustrations and paintings were produced as a result. One depicts Dante, on an imaginary tour of hell, peering into a burning brimstone pit from a steep narrow path winding around a craggy rock. Another shows Dante viewing sinners doomed to writhe eternally upside down in a burning pothole! The whole pagan concept of hell, fired up the baser imaginations of man and provided an effective basis on which his lower sadistic tendencies could be exercised. The many crude and horrific drawings and descriptions of hell do not represent the place to which the inspired Word of God consigns the wicked, but the place to which the uninspired and carnal imaginations of ignorant pagans consign them.

The world's concept of "hell" is clearly a product of human thinking - pagan speculation - as men puzzled over the eventual fate of the wicked. As we shall see, the teaching of Scripture on the subject is diametrically opposed to such a view.

Some suppose hell to be surrounded by a brazen wall, and its entrance continually hidden from view by a cloud of darkness, which is said to be three times more gloomy than the obscurest night. Virgil says that hell is surrounded by three impenetrable walls and the impetuous and burning streams of the river Phlegethon. The entrance is by a large and

lofty tower, whose gates are supported by columns of adamant, which no power, human or divine, can open. This is described as heaving within with molten surges of glowing lava, whose flaming and sulphurous fires roar with horrific blast. To this place of torment, we are told, vicious immortal souls are consigned for ever and ever. It is no wonder that Heaven, for the medieval believer, was more escape from hell than some positive prize to be gained!

The popular doctrine of hell being a place of everlasting woe and torment is not so prevalent today as it was in bygone days. Various causes have contributed to its decadence. As was foretold by Daniel: "Many" have "run to and fro (i.e. made thorough investigation) and knowledge has increased." This of course is the vital key to any increase in knowledge. Investigation is the vital prerequisite. Those who are lazy in the mind and self-satisfied in tradition will refuse to question and investigate, and will do their utmost to discourage others from doing so. To them, ignorance is bliss and "knowledge" is only for fools. Scripture says: "Fools despise knowledge" and: "My people are destroyed through lack of knowledge."

One of the chief items of knowledge that has been re-discovered in recent times is that the traditional doctrine of hell is not a Bible doctrine, though the word "hell" is a Bible word. The unscriptural nature of the doctrine has become manifest in various ways: First, by a study of the use of the word "hell" in the Bible, and second, by a consideration of what the Bible teaches concerning the destiny of the ungodly. As regards the use of the word hell; while one or two instances might superficially appear to fit the traditional idea, the majority of the instances are incapable of being so adjusted as we shall see.

It is very sad and unfortunate that the majority of people do not think for themselves in Scriptural matters, but leave it all up to the opinions of men who prefix "Rev" to their names. The class in question are seldom authorities on the subject in any sense. They are often the reverse, as in the case of the religious leaders at the first coming of Christ. They are often not even good judges. Their training disqualifies them. They are brought up to think a certain way, and in that way they think, according as they were when lads sent to a Roman Catholic, an Episcopalian, a Dissenting, a Baptist, or a Methodist college. The serpent's lie, which has produced the immortality of the soul, has twisted itself and wrapped itself in a tight knot around all these theological institutions, and throttled the truth out of them. But though they are neither authorities or good judges, they are men who exert a wide and powerful influence. The state of their mind has therefore a tremendous

influence as regards the attitude of the public.

For centuries they believed in immortal soulism and hell torments: and like priest, like people. The persistent attacks of the truth from the Reformation period on, have done something to undermine these dreadful doctrines when warfare has taken place. The end-time restoration programme of God will witness a great warfare also in this area of theology!

SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF TRADITIONAL VIEW

Before consulting the Scriptures to see what hell really is, let us consider for a moment where the traditional concept, if true, would lead us.

The traditional teaching on this subject reduces the Bible to an absurdity. As pointed out before, it is commonly believed that when God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, he imparted to him a particle of his own essence - immaterial, and of course a nature kindred to himself, which tradition styles the "immortal soul." If this be true, what is it that sinned against God? A particle of God sinned against himself. What became liable to the pains of hell forever? The immortal soul. Then a particle of God became liable to the pains of hell for ever! Does the immortal soul in rebelling against the law of God show that it is of a kindred nature to the Deity? What is to be subjected to glowing torments in hell for ever? The immortal soul, says tradition. Then God consigns a part of himself to eternal misery for disobeying his own appointments! If this be wisdom, it certainly is that wisdom which the Scripture described as "earthly, sensual, and devilish."

Another point: if souls go to God in heaven and to the devil in hell at death, then what purpose would be answered by the resurrection of the body? Some, to get out of this difficulty, say that the happiness and misery of souls is not perfected until united to the body; hence the necessity of the resurrection. This is about the only hypothesis they can take refuge in and it is manifestly of a very flimsy texture. There is no such doctrine taught in Scripture, as the partial, or incomplete happiness or misery of immortal souls immediately after death. If such a dogma be taught, direct testimony from the prophetic and apostolic writings must be produced. If souls go to God and the devil at death, then there is no use in resurrection and judgement. Resurrection is life; how then can the immortal soul be said to arise to life, when it has been living in heaven or hell for thousands of years? As emphasised throughout this thesis (and which constitutes the

main point seeking to be established); the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is totally incompatible with the doctrine of resurrection and judgement. It makes resurrection superfluous and judgement a farce. In short: it makes the Word of God, in its most fundamental area, null and void.

It is clearly taught in Scripture that men are not judged and rewarded at the time of their death. Judgement is after death, as stated in Heb. 9:27: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgement." And many Scriptures have been presented in earlier chapters to show that judgement awaits the second coming of Christ. In the meantime the dead are unconscious, and cannot experience joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain.

WICKED PUNISHED AFTER RESURRECTION

The righteous are not rewarded the moment they die, but at the resurrection when Jesus returns. Resurrection, not death, is the true Christian hope. The wicked are likewise not punished at the time of the first death. They will be judged and punished after they have been resurrected. How then, can an immortal soul be said to arise for judgement and punishment, when it has been agonising in flames for ages? Punish a soul first, then judge him later is certainly typical of human justice but not divine.

Many Scriptures speak about the punishment of the wicked, but not one teaches that the punishment takes place the moment they die. The punishment takes place at the resurrection when Jesus comes to judge the world. Moreover, the punishment is received "in the body" and not a disembodied state: "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). It is difficult to imagine a disembodied entity receiving "stripes." "Stripes" necessitates a "body" and they will be inflicted upon the wicked at judgement, and not before.

The inseparable connection between resurrection, judgement and retribution is taught in many parts of the Word of God. For example:

(1) Jn. 5:28-29: "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." This clearly teaches that the righteous do not enter life, nor the wicked into condemnation, until they come out of the grave. They do not enter into

reward or punishment when they die!

(2) Matt. 13:41 declares that it will not be until "the end of the world" when Jesus "sends forth his angels" that the wicked will be gathered out and "cast into a furnace of fire." This depicts the judgement as a specific event which occurs at the end of the dispensation, and not something that has been happening century after century throughout history as men die.

(3) Matt. 25:46 informs us that "when the son of man shall come in his glory" then the wicked will be sent away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. Amazingly enough, tradition often quotes this passage to prove that the wicked enter their punishment the moment they die!

(4) Lk. 12:47 says that "When the Lord cometh" the servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, shall be beaten with many stripes. Once again it is clear that punishment comes at the second coming of Jesus, and not at death.

(5) Rom. 2:12-16: "As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law ... in the day when God shall judge the secrets of man by Christ."

(6) 2 Thes. 1:8-9: "When the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." Here again it is evident that punishment of the wicked takes place at the second coming.

(7) 2 Pet. 2:9: "He reserves the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished." Chapter 3:7 says: "reserved unto the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men."

(8) Jude. v13: "The Lord cometh to execute judgement upon all."

It is evident then, from these testimonies, that:

(1) Punishment awaits the wicked, and ...

(2) The punishment is inflicted at the second coming of Jesus when the dead are raised and judged.

It is also important to note that none of these passages describe the punishment as being conscious eternal torment. The actual nature of the punishment is not referred to in any of these verses as being eternal suffering, torture and pain. There is no doubt that the wicked will be punished and that their punishment will produce pain and agony for a period, but not throughout endless eternity.

It is also important to note that none of these passages say anything

about the punishment being inflicted upon disembodied spirits. There is not a single reference in the Bible to disembodied spirits being punished. The punishment always relates to people - living, physical human beings.

TWO DEATHS

Two deaths are mentioned in the Bible. The first death is for all men (excluding the saints living at the time of the second coming). The second death is only for the wicked. The first death is only temporary - a "sleep;" the second death will be eternal. The first death will end in resurrection; the second death will never end. For this reason, as explained before, Jesus sometimes refused to refer to the first death as "death," but rather "sleep." It is merely a temporary cessation of life out of which the saints will be awakened to everlasting life, never again to see death. Thus, in this sense, as Jesus put it on several occasions, they will "never die." That is: they will never experience real death - the final, permanent and eternal second death.

The first death comes to all men alike and makes no distinctions. Men die the first death because they are mortal, as we have seen. This mortality is not our fault but rather our misfortune as a result of being descendants of Adam. As a result of his sin he became mortal and we all inherit that mortality by virtue of the organic unity that exists between us and him. It is impossible, due to certain fixed laws of heredity, for a mortal body to produce an immortal body. Divinely implanted laws in nature causes like to produce like. A mortal mother cannot produce an immortal child. Immortality necessitates the intervention of God to change our present mortal body into an immortal body.

All of Adam's natural descendants have inherited the consequences of his sin, but not the guilt. A mortal nature containing impulses and propensities which have a strong bias towards sin is inherited by all men as a consequence of Adam's sin. But it is only when we allow our own impulses to lead us into sin that we become guilty. All of us are called upon to suffer in this life for the original sin of Adam as far as the laws of heredity operate, but we are not called upon to suffer a future punishment for them. We will only suffer punishment for sins personally committed. And we won't even suffer for those if we have availed ourselves of the divine grace and forgiveness available in the atoning work of Christ Jesus.

All men then, die the first death because of the results of Adam's sin. Even believers who have had all their sins washed away in the blood of Christ still die the first death, but this death is not in payment for their

personal sins. The personal sins of the saints have been forgiven and they stand before God without condemnation. Therefore, if the first death were the payment of their personal sins, they should not die the first death! But they do, which proves that the first death is not related to personal sins.

This truth shows the need for the second death, in which the wicked will pay the penalty for their personal sins. The first death is "appointed unto all men" (Heb. 9:27); the second death is only intended for the wicked. Men die the first death because they are mortal and physical descendants of Adam; men will die the second death because of their own personal sin and rebellion.

Jesus died to atone for the believer's sins so that the believer will not need to die the permanent and eternal second death. The second death will have no power over true believers, who will be made immortal. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power" (Rev. 20:6).

Scriptures have already been advanced to show that punishment will be inflicted upon the wicked at the resurrection and judgement. "They that have done evil shall come forth (from the graves) to the resurrection of damnation" (Jn. 5:29). This "resurrection to damnation," however, is not a resurrection to unending life, or to hell fire in the popular sense, as we shall see. They rise to the shame and confusion of a divine and frowning rejection in which "stripes" are inflicted, according to their deserving, after which they will finally be engulfed in the "second death" which obliterates their wretched existence from God's creation. Being of no use, they are put out of the way, and disappear forever, "where the wicked cease from troubling." They shall of the flesh, to which they have sown, reap corruption (Gal. 6:8), which ends in the triumph of the worm and fire over their being - i.e. in death.

This will become evident from numerous testimonies which shall be presented shortly. A paganised theology delights in assigning them to an endless existence of torment. This idea is based upon a few obscure New Testament expressions which are supposed to countenance it, but which, when properly understood; have no such terrible significance.

OTHER SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS

Another serious implication that arises out of the traditional teaching on hell is this: If the wicked live eternally in hell, they must have eternal life! This violates the very important and fundamental teaching of Scripture that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life

through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Eternal life is a gift of God, given by Jesus to his faithful servants at this second coming. Immortality is never promised to sinners in the Bible. In fact, the concept of an immortal sinner is a contradiction. The wages of sin is death, and not eternal life.

Ps. 145:20 states: "The Lord preserves all them that love him, but all the wicked will he destroy." Here are two opposites, "preservation" and "destruction." The one cannot be the other. That which is destroyed no longer exists. That which is preserved exists as long as the preservation processes continue. This will be forever in the case of the saints because God will clothe them with immortality. The destruction of the wicked is therefore the opposite to this. The same applies in Rom. 6:23 where "eternal life" and "death" are presented as opposites. They cannot, by any form of twisting of words, mean the same thing. "Eternal life" means "continued existence" and "death" means "discontinued existence."

Tradition has completely confused and contradicted this simple concept in order to uphold the immortality of the soul. Eternal life is assigned to saint and sinner alike! This indiscriminate distribution of eternal life contradicts all that Scripture affirms on the subject. We read in 1 Jn. 3:15 that: "No murderer has eternal life abiding in him." But tradition has furnished him with eternal life by giving him an immortal soul. Eternal life therefore ceases to be a special gift of God bestowed on the basis of faith in the atoning work of Christ. It becomes something freely and indiscriminately bestowed on all men, murderers included - something that all men inherit from birth, whether they like it or not - something they would possess whether the atoning work of Christ was accomplished or not. Such is the position in which the doctrine of the immortality of the soul places those who believe it. It seriously violates the atoning work of Christ, making it virtually of no effect. Any doctrine which gives eternal life to sinners and murderers must be rejected as the most serious violation possible of the purpose and promise of God.

The teaching of the pagan philosopher Plato, which is echoed in tradition's doctrine of the immortality of the soul, differs radically and conspicuously with the New Testament's doctrine on eternal life. The synonymous words, "life" and "immortality," denote always in the New Testament a state of blessing; except where the words "life" and "living" refer to our present bodily life. The future state of the lost is never once called "life": it is the "second death," which, like the "first death" is a time of unconsciousness.

"They who, by perseverance in good work, seek for glory, honour

and incorruptibility will receive eternal life." But the disobedient will not receive or see that life. Plato, on the other hand, attributes immortality to the souls of all the lost, but speaks of it as in their case, a curse, and not a blessing. Such is the vain philosophy held firmly today by large numbers of educated and intelligent Christians and Christian teachers, on the mistaken assumption that it is taught in the Bible. However, it is derived only from Greek philosophy and superimposed on certain Bible statements, resulting in a veil being put over men's eyes and depriving them of the vital key required to unlock the true significance of the purposes and promises of God. And the experience of all who cling tenaciously to this philosophical lie will be, as the apostle Paul expressed it: "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7).

The ecclesiastical leaders and system prior to the second coming of Jesus has fallen into exactly the same condemnation as what took place prior to the first coming: "Woe unto you ... for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves (into newly revealed knowledge) and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Lk. 11:52). No wonder the end-time church is referred to as being "blind" and in need of anointing its eyes with eyesalve so that it might see (Rev. 3:17-18). The gentiles have just as effectively corrupted God's Word of truth as did the Jews in their time. And, in both cases, it has happened as a result of embracing pagan philosophy. No wonder the apostle Paul speaks so strongly against philosophy!

The gentiles have no ground for boasting against the Jews. All have fallen short and apostasised. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whoever you are that judgest; for in judging another you condemn yourself for you do the same things." Jeremiah predicted that at the second coming of Jesus the gentiles would come to him and say: "Surely our fathers (tradition) have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer. 16:19).

Another problem that the traditional view of hell presents is this: During the 6000 years of man's history, literally billions of people have lived and died without knowing anything about "salvation" - without ever having seen a Bible. Now think what this means. If all the "unsaved" go immediately to a place of fiery torment in hell at death, then the majority of people who have ever lived on the planet have been consigned there without ever having had a chance to escape it. It is hard to believe that this could be the purpose of an all wise, all merciful loving God. Yet tradition often tells us that God, in his eternal counsels of wisdom and mercy, has

decreed this awful triumph of devilry!

Do we believe it? There are certain elementary truths, that by an almost intuitive logic, exclude the possibility of it being true. If God is the merciful being of order, justice and harmony, exhibited in the Scriptures; how is it possible that, with all His foreknowledge and omnipotence; He can permit the bulk of the human race to come into existence with no other destiny than to be eternally tortured? The Calvinistic theory has of course its answer but its answer is mere words; it does not touch, or alter, or even soften the difficulty - the dreadful difficulty remains to agonise the believing mind that really grasps what the popular idea of hell-torment means. The effect on the majority of reflecting minds is disastrous, in a too easy revolt against the Scriptures.

Rather than believe such a doctrine, most men reject the Bible altogether, and even dispense with God from their creed; and take refuge in the calm, if cheerless, doctrines of Rationalism. This is what many are driven to, in unfortunate ignorance of the fact that the Bible is not responsible for the doctrine. It is a pagan fiction which has grown out of the root of immortal soulism. It ought to be known, for the comfort of all who have been perplexed with the awful dogma, and yet who have hesitated to renounce it, in fear of being also compelled to cast aside the word of God; that it is as thoroughly unscriptural as it is distressingly dreadful.

The doctrine then of endless torture of the unsaved, is based on the false teaching of the immortality of the soul. Man, however does not have a conscious, immortal, immaterial nature that survives the death of the body. A person must be alive as a bodily being to experience torture and pain. If a dead person were placed in a burning hell, he would not know anything about it, because Scripture clearly teaches that "the dead know not anything." A living man can experience pain through the function of his nervous system and brain, but when that system ceases to function at death, he cannot feel anything - pain or pleasure, as many Scriptures testify.

DESTINY OF THE WICKED

Contrary to the teaching of the endless torture of the unsaved, the Bible clearly teaches that they will be completely destroyed, obliterated - annihilated. Extinction of being is their final destiny. Not one Scripture can be produced which teaches that the unsaved continue to live throughout eternity in a disembodied form in "hell."

Consider the following passages of Scripture which deal specifically with the final fate of the unsaved:

Job. 20:4-8: "... he shall perish like his own dung for ever: those who have seen him (the wicked man) shall say, Where is he? He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night ..."

Job. 21:13: "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave."

Ps. 1:4-6: "The ungodly ... are like the chaff which the wind drives away ... they shall not stand in the judgement - they perish."

Ps. 21:9: "Thou (the Lord) shall make them (ungodly) as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them."

Ps. 37:20: "But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away" ... "Transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off" (v38).

Ps. 49 is very clear: it states that it is impossible for the soul of the ungodly to be redeemed so that he might live forever and not see corruption. In other words, the soul of the ungodly dies so that he cannot live for ever; he sees corruption. Verse 11 states that the inward thought of the ungodly is to continue for ever, but verse 12 provides God's reply: "Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not (does not live forever): he is like the beasts that perish ... Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death (worms) shall feed on them ... their form shall waste away and the grave shall be their home (v14) ... He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not is like the beasts that perish" (v20).

Ps. 68:1-2: "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God."

Ps. 73:18 says God will cast the ungodly "down into destruction."

Ps. 88:10-12 speaks of "destruction" being the state of the dead from which they cannot "arise." They are in "the land of forgetfulness" i.e. a state in which there is no remembrance; a state of unconsciousness and "oblivion" (Jerusalem Bible).

Ps. 92:7: "Though the wicked spring as the grass, and all the workers of iniquity do flourish, they are doomed to be destroyed forever."

Ps. 104:35: "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let

the wicked be no more."

Ps. 145:20: "The Lord preserves all those that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy."

Pr. 2:21-22: "For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it." (Tradition has completely reversed this truth by saying the righteous depart from the earth to heaven while the wicked are left in the earth in "hell").

Prov. 10:25-29: "As the whirlwind passes, so is the wicked no more - destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity."

Isa. 1:28: "And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinner shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed."

Isa. 26:14: "They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: to that end hast thou (God) visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish."

Jer. 51:57: "... and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake."

Ob. v15-16: "... and they shall be as though they had not been" (i.e. the final state of the wicked will be the same as it was before they existed, namely: non existent!)

Mal. 4:1-3: "... all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch ... they shall be ashes ..."

Matt. 7:13: "For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

Plp. 3:19: "Whose end is destruction."

2 Thes. 1:9: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction" (here, in the simplest terms possible, the "punishment" of the ungodly is defined as "everlasting destruction").

Jn. 3:16 presents man's two alternatives: perish or have everlasting life. But, by giving the wicked an immortal soul, tradition negates this simple truth. According to tradition, the wicked also have everlasting life, but will spend it in a different place. In other words: the wicked don't perish at all, but live on throughout eternity.

2 Pet. 2:7 and v9 also teach that the final destiny of the ungodly is to be destroyed and perish. Matt. 21:44: "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" i.e. "miserably destroy those wicked men" (v41). This is reminiscent of the prophecy in Dan. 2 where the second coming of Christ

is likened to a stone being hurled down from heaven upon the metallic image, striking it on the feet and causing it to crash to the ground. After this, the stone increased in size and became a great mountain, filling the whole earth. The metallic image, which represented the kingdoms of the world which are in opposition to the kingdom of God, were "broken to pieces together, and became like chaff on the summer threshing floor: and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them." Such is the destiny of the ungodly. Thus, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he shall reign forever."

Matt. 3:12: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Matt. 7:15-20: "... Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

Matt. 13:30: "... In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn ..."

Throughout all these Scriptures dealing with the destiny and fate of the wicked, the various similes and metaphors used in relation to their death speak of utter destruction and total extinction of being. It is impossible to read the concept of continued existence in a disembodied state from any part of this wide range of Scriptural evidence. Certainly, nothing is said in the passages quoted about the wicked suffering pain and agony throughout eternity in a disembodied state. Such a concept is totally foreign to the teaching of these verses.

A quick summary of the destiny of the wicked is as follows:

They shall perish like their own dung forever - disappear like a dream - blow away like chaff before the wind - perish - swallowed up and devoured in the fire of God's wrath - like the fat of lambs in the fire shall they consume - they will not "abide" or live for ever but die and see corruption - perish like the beasts - driven away like smoke and wax that melts in the fire - go into destruction - a land of forgetfulness and oblivion - rooted out of the earth - "shall not live" - sleep a perpetual sleep - be as though they had never existed - punished with everlasting destruction - ground to powder - blown away like chaff - burnt up like chaff - consumed in fire like an unfruitful tree - burnt up like tares.

The concept that the wicked live on endlessly throughout eternity, suffering pain and torment is totally foreign to the teaching of these Scriptures quoted above. Does dung, dreams, chaff, dead beasts, smoke and powder exist eternally? By no means! They are among the most transitory and impermanent things that pertain to this life. The Word of

God would never use such examples to demonstrate the destiny of the wicked if the wicked survived throughout eternity.

Is chaff, the fat of lambs, wax, tares and branches put into the fire to survive eternally? Or are they put into the fire to be burned up - consumed - destroyed - perish? Do they become ashes and non-existent or not? Indeed, they become ashes and non-existent. And this, precisely, is the destiny of the wicked. Mal. 4:3 clearly makes the point that the wicked shall become "ashes."

Surely, if the wicked are cast into the fire to live forever in torment; such things as chaff, tares, and wax etc. would not have been used as an example of their fate. One would have expected something more permanent like stone or some metal to be used instead.

The whole teaching of the Bible regarding the destiny of the wicked is summed up in four words from Ps. 37:20: "The wicked shall perish." Paul explains this in Rom. 6:23: "The wages of sin is death." Death, the extinction of being, is the predetermined issue of a sinful course. "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6:8). It is evident from Rom. 8:13 that reaping corruption is equivalent to death: "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die."

Because the righteous as well as the wicked die, it is sometimes argued that there must be some other death than physical death. The answer is, as pointed out before, that the death which all men die (i.e. the "first death") is not a judicial death - not the final death to be dealt to those who are responsible for judgement. Ordinary death is but a "sleep" which closes a man's mortal career. There is a "second death" - final and destructive, from which there will never be an awakening. In relation to this, the saints will "never see death."

The unjust are to be brought before Christ for judicial arraignment, and their sentence is, that after the infliction of such punishment as may be merited ("few stripes" or "many stripes"), they shall, after considerable weeping and gnashing of teeth, be destroyed in death a second time by a violent and divinely-wielded agency. To this Jesus refers when he says: "He that loses his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it; but he that (in this present life) saveth life, shall (at the resurrection) lose it" (in the second death). All the phraseology of the Scripture is in agreement on this subject as already pointed out. The wicked shall be destroyed - exterminated.

The teaching of the Scriptures quoted earlier concerning the destiny of the wicked is self-explanatory; it is expressed with a clearness of language that leaves no room for comment. The wicked, who are an

offence to God, and an affliction to themselves, and of no use to anyone; will ultimately be consigned to oblivion, in which their very name will be forgotten.

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CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR HADES AND SHEOL

The word "hell" is used frequently in the Bible and is used in connection with the destiny of the wicked. It may seem to some readers that the word "hell" is employed in Scripture in such a way as to present an obstacle to the views advanced in this thesis. Let us then have a look at the word and search into its proper meaning and significance.

The original word "hell" does not carry with it the idea popularly associated with it. The original word has no affinity with its modern use. One does not require to be a scholar to see this. A due familiarity with the English Bible will carry conviction to this point, though conviction is undoubtedly strengthened by a knowledge of the original Greek and Hebrew.

It is vital to start any Bible study with a true and Scriptural definition - a true and faithful description of the thing in question. Usage is the basis of language, and a correct definition of that language must precede a correct conclusion of the way that language is employed. A true definition is arrived at by a process of examination and elimination. A good illustration is that of the child learning the meaning of the word "white." A lump of sugar was given to the child with the information that it was "white." The child tasted the sugar and hastily concluded that white meant sweet. Next some salt was given to the child, who, by the next experiment of taste, very promptly eliminated "sweet" as a true definition of "white." Then "soluble" was tried, which fitted very well until a bit of marble was introduced as "white," when "soluble" also had to be eliminated. So on till at length the child arrived at the true definition, and its relation to colour.

The case of the word "hell" in the Bible is not quite so simple as that of the word "white," because it is cumbered with questions of translations, and of ambiguities which have been improperly introduced by translators. Mr F.B. Meyer, in page 4 of the book: "Is there a hell?" has quite correctly told us that: "The word "hell" comes from an old English or Teutonic word, "he-lan," and means "any covered place." It was used to denote the dark hole into which a tailor flung his waste shreds, and even the retired spot to which, in a popular game, a lad led a lass to exact the forfeit of a kiss. But these associations have long since been dissipated from the word, which now denotes exclusively the place of future punishment to which at death the wicked are consigned."

The old Englishmen and Tautens were right enough however, until

the theologians came along and turned "white" into "black."

Instead of allowing the Bible to interpret itself on the question of hell, the style of argument which is known as "reasoning in a circle" is often adopted. A pre-conceived sense as taught by tradition is applied to the word, and then that word is quoted to prove the sense, which leaves the matter exactly where it was. This kind of argument has an appearance of force which is very telling with a certain class of minds; although in reality it proves nothing. Terms which have not been properly defined, strung together in categorical array, may be very weighty with those who assume a meaning to them; but they are utterly valueless as evidence, until their meaning is demonstrated, which more often than not, traditional theology fails to do.

A classical example of this is seen in the bishop who, to prove the episcopal practise of "confirmation," quoted all the texts where he could find the word "confirm," leaving his hearers to assume that the word in the text was used in the ecclesiastical sense he wished to establish. The bishop's evidence was soon gone when it was shown that the word was used in its primitive sense.

So it is with the word "hell." The word in its original primitive sense had no connection with the doctrine of hell as taught by tradition today.

"Hell," is an English word derived from the Anglo-Saxon word "hel-an" which simply means to cover, or "hide out of sight." Thus, the word "helmet" describes a head cover. In 1611 when the King James Version was translated, the Englishman spoke of putting his potatoes in "hell" for the winter - that is, simply in a "hole" in the ground.

Dr Adam Clark, in his commentary states that "the word "hell" used in the common translation, conveys now an improper meaning of the original word ... But, as the word "hell" comes from the Anglo Saxon "hel-an," "to cover," or "to hide," hence, the tiling or slating of a house in some parts of England (particularly Cornwall) is called "heling" to this day; and the covers of books (in Lancashire) are called the same name ..."

It is important to remember that "hell" is an old English word. It is not the original word that the inspired writers used when they wrote the manuscripts from which our Bible has been translated. "Hell" is a translated word and not the original. It is the word chosen by the English translators as the English equivalent for the original Hebrew and Greek words. In its original ancient form, "hell" simply means "to cover." Had this simple, primitive meaning of the word been retained, all would have been well. However, as on so many other occasions, the Church has twisted and changed the true and original meaning of things into

something quite foreign to the Word of God. And this twisted state of things has become a firmly embedded tradition to which many hold with rigid tenacity, imagining it to be gospel truth, causing many to look upon those who say otherwise as intolerable heretics. Fortunately however, wisdom is justified by her children.

Now, there are three different Greek words, each having a different meaning, which have all been translated by the same English word "hell" in the King James Version.

Listen to what "A Dictionary of the Bible" edited by James Hastings, says about the use of the word "hell" in the Old Testament. It must be constantly kept in mind that the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek; so that the terms used there must be understood as they would have been by the Hebrew and Greek peoples at the time. Hastings says: "In our Authorised Version the word "hell" is unfortunately used as the rendering of three distinct words, with different ideas (or meanings). It represents:

(1) The "Sheol" of the Hebrew Old Testament, and the "hades" in the New Testament ... The word "hell" is used:

(2) As equivalent to (the Greek word) "tartaros" (2 Pet. 2:4) ... and:

(3) More properly as the equivalent of (the Greek word) "gehenna" ..."

So then, the English translators have indiscriminately translated one Hebrew word and three Greek words into the one English word "hell." The one Hebrew word is "Sheol" and the three Greek words are "hades," "tartaros" and "gehenna." These three Greek words have been confused with each other because the translators have attempted to make one English word "hell" cover all three. What do these words mean?

SHEOL - HADES

The Hebrew word translated "hell" is "sheol." Sheol means the underworld, a hollow subterranean place. It is derived says Gesenius from the verb "shaal" - to dig, to excavate, to hollow out; with a secondary significance - to ask, to enquire. Thus the Hebrew word sheol is properly translated "hell" if intended to mean the original Anglo Saxon idea of a "covered place."

Sheol occurs 65 times in the Old Testament, and has been translated "hell" 31 times, "grave" 31 times and "pit" 3 times.

By carefully reading the 65 verses where sheol occurs, one can readily see that it refers to the grave. This is particularly evident by the

fact that the translators themselves have translated sheol as "grave" the same number of times that they have translated it "hell." Hell and the grave have been translated from exactly the same word "sheol" and refer to the same place, namely: "a covered place." They are synonymous expressions! The grave is a "pit" and therefore sheol is also translated "pit" in Num. 16:30, 33 and Job. 17:16.

It is vital to continually keep in mind that "hell" is an old English word, and over 350 years ago when the King James Version was translated, the people of England commonly talked of "putting their potatoes in hell for the winter" - i.e. a hole in the ground which was covered up - a dark silent place - a grave or pit. But traditional teaching gaining popular acceptance has caused people to misapply the old English word "hell" to the lurid imaginations of Dante. The original word has no affinity with its modern use.

A careful study of all the verses in the Old Testament where the Hebrew word "sheol" has been translated "grave" and "hell," soon reveals that hell is synonymous with the grave, and means nothing more than a concealed or covered place. It is the resting place of both the righteous and unrighteous where they dwell in unconscious sleep, awaiting the resurrection and judgement. It is not some fiery inferno underground to which disembodied spirits are consigned for endless torment. Consider the following examples where reference is made to righteous men going to "sheol" i.e. "hell" - "the grave."

Gen. 37:35: Jacob went to sheol.

Job. 14:13; 17:13: Job went to sheol.

Ps. 49:15; 88:3: David went to sheol.

Isa. 38:10: King Hezekiah went to sheol.

Ps. 16:10: Jesus went to sheol.

All five of these righteous men went to sheol - hell. They did not go to a place of fiery torment deep beneath the surface of the earth. They simply went to the grave.

In the following passages of Scripture we are informed that the wicked join the righteous in sheol at death. All go to the same place:

Num. 16:30, 33: Korah and his rebels were plunged into a "pit" (sheol).

1 Kng. 2:6: Joab, a merciless man of blood ended up in sheol.

1 Kng. 2:9: Shimei, who cursed David with a grievous curse went to sheol.

Job. 21:13; 24:19 says that all the wicked who reject God go to sheol.

Ps. 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into sheol."

Ps. 31:17: "Let the wicked be ashamed and let them be silent in sheol."

Isa. 14:9,11,15. The ungodly king of Babylon went to sheol. Verse 11 described sheol as a place where "the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee."

Sheol is clearly the abode of the dead - the grave. Righteous and wicked alike go there at death till the resurrection and judgement. Ps. 49:14-15 makes it particularly clear that the righteous and wicked alike go to sheol. Verse 14 says that the wicked are laid in sheol like sheep. Verse 15 speaks about God redeeming the soul of the righteous from sheol at resurrection, indicating that they were there prior to resurrection. When resurrection takes place, "the upright shall have dominion over them" (the ungodly) v14, for God shall "receive" the upright (v15) and reject the ungodly.

So then, the Hebrew word sheol is properly translated "hell" when it is understood that the original Anglo Saxon word meant a covered place. The grave is a covered place, the covered receptacle of all the dead, where good and bad repose together in a state of unconsciousness. But the word "hell" is very improperly used if a place of conscious torment is meant.

Some students, without the slightest reservation have condemned the translators for using the old Anglo Saxon word "hell" at all, even though its original meaning harmonises with the truth. Some have accused the translators of attempting to obscure the true sense of the Hebrew word sheol by translating it as "hell." Some believe that by doing this they sought to uphold their own traditional meaning of hell at the expense of truth and uniformity. Had sheol been uniformly translated "pit" or "grave," no such absurd idea as that of a place of conscious torment could ever have been associated with it.

The following remarks on the word "hades," translated "hell" in the New Testament, by Dr Campbell, a Presbyterian commentator, are interesting: "As to the word hades, in my judgement it ought never to be rendered hell, at least in the sense where the word is now universally understood by Christians. In the Old Testament, the corresponding word is sheol, which signifies the state of the dead in general, without regard to goodness or badness of the persons."

Other facts mentioned by Scripture about sheol confirming our conclusions, are as follows:

(1) Ezk. 32:27: "And they (certain heathen nations) shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to

hell with their weapons of war, and have laid their swords under their heads."

Do men's immortal souls take swords and spears with them when they go to hell? Hell is obviously not a place of fiery torment to which disembodied spirits are consigned at death. The hell of the Bible is a place to which military weapons may accompany the wearer. The nature and locality of this hell may be gathered from a statement only four verses before the passage quoted: "Asshur is there and all her company; his graves (sepulchres) are about him, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave." The references point to the Eastern mode of sepulchre, in which a pit or cave was used for burial - the bodies of the dead being deposited in niches cut in the wall. As a mark of military honour, soldiers were buried with their weapons, their swords being laid under their heads. They went down to "hell" (a "covered place") with their weapons of war.

Once again it becomes evident that hell is synonymous with the grave. Ezk. 31:15-18 confirms the same point: In verse 14, reference is made to going down to the grave (sheol) which is further defined in the same verse as descending into the pit; namely, "the nether parts of the earth." ("Nether" has been translated from a Hebrew word which means "below," "underneath," which brings us back to the original meaning of "hell," namely: "a covered place" or "hole").

(2) Amos. 9:2 refers to men digging into hell, again revealing that its nature and locality relates to the grave.

(3) Ps. 141:7 speaks of men's bones being scattered at sheol's mouth. The reference is to the indignity of a dead body being denied burial in the grave. The A.V. correctly renders it: "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth."

(4) Ps. 139:8 refers to the dead making their bed in sheol, pointing to the fact that sheol is a resting place - a place of unconscious sleep, which of course, is what the grave is. One could hardly liken a place of conscious torment and agony to a bed! (Unless it was a bed of nails!).

(5) Ps. 31:17 says the wicked are silent in sheol. This hardly harmonises with the traditional view of the wicked screaming out with loud screams in a painful fiery hell.

(6) Ecc. 9:10 says there is no work, thought or knowledge in sheol to which all men go. Once again, this hardly squares with the traditional view of conscious existence ("knowledge") in sheol.

(7) Ps. 6:5: "For in death there is no remembrance of thee (God); in sheol who shall give thee thanks?" Here, the words "death" and

"sheol" (hell) are synonymous. The verse teaches us that the faculty of memory ceases in sheol. This confirms the statement above from Ecc.9:10 that there is no knowledge in sheol. Those who go to sheol also cannot, by reason of their unconscious state, give thanks to God.

(8) Isa. 38:18: Here again it is affirmed by Hezekiah that those in sheol cannot praise God. It was for this reason that he appealed to God to heal him of his sickness and give him an extension of life.

(9) Ps. 49:14: Like sheep, the wicked are laid in sheol. Do sheep go to fiery regions below the earth to suffer eternal torment? Are sheep conscious after death in a disembodied form?

(10) Job. 24:19: "Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth sheol those who have sinned." What happens when the drought consumes the snow waters? Does it preserve the waters in some dark hidden place and torment it eternally with heat? Of course not! The waters evaporate and completely disappear, leaving no trace. According to Job, sheol does exactly the same to the wicked: it consumes them, causing them to completely disappear. This is a totally different concept from the wicked being preserved in hell to endure endless torment.

(11) Isa. 41:11 says that sheol is a place where worms spread under the dead and cover them. Job. 24:20 agrees by saying that in sheol the worm feeds sweetly on the dead. Also Job. 21:13-26 mentions that in sheol "the worms shall cover them." This all makes sense when it is understood that sheol is the grave.

(12) Ps. 16:10. 30:3. 49:15. 86:13 all refer to the resurrection of the righteous from sheol. Seeing it is the body that will be resurrected, it is evident that sheol is the place in which dead bodies are deposited. This of course presents no difficulty when it is understood that sheol is the grave. It does however present many problems, the moment it is said that sheol is some deep abyss to which immortal souls are consigned.

HADES

The Greek word "hades" occurs 11 times in the New Testament. In Greek it signifies "the unseen place," "concealed place," "invisible world." In the Authorised Version, hades has been translated by two English words. It has been translated "hell" 10 times and "grave" once (1 Cor. 15:55).

Hades is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word sheol. Hades and sheol have the same meaning and refer to the same place - both words refer to the grave. The Old Testament writers like Moses, Job, David,

Solomon and Isaiah, recorded the fact that men are buried in sheol, as we have seen. New Testament writers, like Matthew, Luke, Paul, and John taught that the dead are buried in hades. Had the New Testament writers been living in Old Testament times, when Hebrew was the commonly spoken language, they would have used the word sheol. And, had the Old Testament writers been living in New Testament times, when Greek was the commonly spoken language, they would have used the word hades.

That the Greek word hades is equal to the Hebrew word sheol is shown by the fact that the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Hebrew Scriptures uses it as an equivalent. This truth is also shown by the fact that the New Testament writers use the Greek word hades when they quote verses from the Old Testament where sheol occurs in the Hebrew.

This truth can be seen by comparing Act. 2:27-31 and Ps. 16:10. In Ps. 16:10, the word "hell" is translated from the Hebrew "sheol." When this verse is quoted in Act. 2:27 the word "hell" is translated from the Greek "hades." This reveals that the two words have the same meaning. Both refer to the grave or concealed place of burial.

This same truth is further illustrated by making the same comparison between 1 Cor. 15:55 and Hos. 13:14. 1 Cor. 15:55 is a quotation of Hos. 13:14. Sheol and hades are made equal in these two passages.

In the R.S.V. the words "sheol" and "hades" are not translated; they are carried over - transliterated into the English Bible and are made to appear as they were originally written in the inspired manuscripts. Less confusion would have resulted had the King James' translators followed the same course.

The Hebrew word "sheol" then, translated "hell," refers to the grave. "Hades" is the Greek equivalent and means the same - the grave. Thus, in 1 Cor. 15:55 hades is actually translated "grave;" "O death where is thy sting? O grave (hades) where is thy victory?" And if hades may be translated "grave" here, then why not anywhere else?

1 Cor. 15:55 not only reveals the impossibility of understanding hell (hades) in the traditional sense, but also reveals the true significance of the word. It is interesting to note that the translators, perceiving the inapplicability of their concept of "hell" to a place from which the righteous are liberated, gave us the word "grave" instead! That the words would have this meaning, is according to its etymological derivation, whether in Hebrew (sheol) or Greek (hades), whose meaning is that of a covered or concealed place in which the contents are invisible to common gaze. When a man is put in the ground, he is invisible. The grave is the

hell of these passages undoubtedly; really the invisible state.

Hades then, translated "grave" in 1 Cor. 15:55 is simply the grave and not some place deep under the surface of the earth to which disembodied spirits depart. The passage in 1 Cor. 15 is devoid of any reference to disembodied spirits! It is talking about resurrection of the body. Hades is the place in which bodies are deposited at death and from which they rise at the resurrection. When the resurrection takes place, the victory song will be sung: "O grave (hades) where is thy victory?"

In Matt. 16:18 we read that the "gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against" Christ's church. This confirms the passage in 1 Cor. 15 that at death, Christians go to hell (hades). But they will not remain there. They will be resurrected at the second coming at which time the victory song will be sung: "O death, where is thy sting? O hades where is thy victory?" Indeed, the gates of hell will not prevail against Christ's church! Jesus has the keys to hades: "I am he that liveth and was dead (in hell) and behold I am alive forever more and have the keys of death and of hell" (Rev. 1:18). One who has a key has the means of unlocking a door or gate, and is able to release those detained within. In this case, Jesus has the power and authority to bring saints (the Church) out of hades through resurrection at his second coming - out of the place where he himself had been when he was dead.

Hades then, is the place to which all Christians go at death - the place of which Christ is jailer, "having the keys." And one thing is certain: Christians do not descend to a fiery inferno at death to be tormented. Christ as jailer of such a hell would be an inadmissible idea in the hottest of sectarian conceptions. Hades is clearly the grave.

Jesus was the "first fruits of them that slept." He was the first man to be resurrected to eternal life, and the saints will share his experience when they are raised at his second coming. Their dead bodies, like his, will not be left in hell. Like him, they will, as a harvest following the first fruits; rise like their Master and live with him for evermore.

Peter quoted David's prophecy of the resurrection of Christ in these words: "... my flesh shall rest in hope, because thou (God) wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption ..." (Act. 2:25-28). Verse 31 states that the words: "his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption" refers to "the resurrection of Christ."

Once again it is apparent that hell (hades) simply means the grave, in view of which we can see the sense and point of Peter's argument. But if hell is regarded as some place deep down in the heart of the earth to

which the wicked are consigned; and if the "soul" is regarded as a disembodied spirit that departs there at death; then there is no point in Peter's argument at all; for the resurrection from the grave, of the body is an entirely different concept from the escape of a disembodied spirit from the abyss of a fiery inferno. The subject of Peter's preaching is clearly the resurrection of the body from the grave. "Soul" refers to body, and "hell" refers to the grave.

A careful reading of Act. 2:26-27 reveals that "sepulchre" in v29 is used synonymously with "hell" in v27. Peter's argument in this section is that David was not initially referring to himself when he spoke of God not leaving "my soul in hell," because "David is both dead and buried and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." If "hell" and "sepulchre" were two entirely different places, it would be pointless for Peter to state that David was still buried in his sepulchre, in order to prove that David was not referring to himself when he spoke of God not leaving "my soul in hell." In Peter's view, hell (hades) and "sepulchre" were one and the same thing: namely, "a covered place."

It is affirmed many times in Scripture that Jesus, after death, was laid in a sepulchre (Act. 13:29. Mk. 15:46 etc). However, he was not left in the sepulchre to see corruption but was resurrected on the third day. Or, as Peter put it when quoting David's prophecy: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." "Hades," "hell" and "Sepulchre" refer to one and the same thing - the grave!

The word "sepulchre" is also used synonymously with "sheol" in the Old Testament. In the Psalms (49:15. 88:3) David refers to sheol (hell) as the place to which he will go at death. In Neh. 3:16 the same place is referred to as "the sepulchres of David." And, as already pointed out, Peter also refers to David's "sepulchre" in Act. 2:29.

Hell then, is very clearly defined in the Word of God when we allow Scripture to interpret itself. It is not left to the imaginations of men. It is not some mysterious place deep down under the earth where disembodied spirits are supposed to be imprisoned, writhing in torment. It is merely the resting place of all who have died - good and bad. All who go there are in an unconscious sleep from which they would never awake unless resurrected by the son of God. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, or wisdom in sheol (hell) ..." (Ecc. 9:10). "For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished" (Ecc. 9:5-6).

The Bible is very clear regarding the state of the dead. The grave -

"hell," where all go at death, is a place of neither physical nor mental activity of any kind. "His (man's) breath goeth forth, he returns to his earth, in that very days his thoughts perish."

JEWISH FABLES AND TRADITION

According to Josephus, hades is a subterraneous region where the spirits of the departed live till the day of judgement (either in a state of happiness or misery); a very different place to the grave, which is a receptacle for dead bodies only.

The testimony of Josephus is valuable on matters within his personal knowledge, such as the existence and character of contemporary authors, or the incidents of the siege of Jerusalem, at which he was present. But in matters of opinion, especially on life after death, he is of little value. He was a Pharisee and, like the rest of the Pharisees, of whom he records his admiration, but of whom Jesus said they had taken away the key of knowledge, and starved the people with the husks of human tradition instead of feeding them with the wholesome realities of revelation contained in Moses and the prophets; he was blind. "Thou blind Pharisee!" is Christ's summation of the class. To tell us then, what he thinks of hades as against the general evident sense of the Scriptures is to say nothing of weight. The Jews had a wonderful facility for believing "Jewish fables," to which Josephus was no exception. The process commenced before Josephus' day in fulfilment of Isa. 29:10-14: "For the Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes ..."

"A subterraneous region, where the spirits of the departed live till the day of judgement" has no affinity with the "hell" (hades) of Scripture. Such a place only exists in Jewish imaginations, and they borrowed it from the Greeks. No such account as Josephus gives is supported in the law or prophets. The grave we know is not a matter of imagination; and we also know that sheol and hades are Biblical designations of the grave throughout, as anyone may satisfy himself by looking at the concordance. What is the situation then? That we have to choose between the Bible and Jewish fables, or Pagan philosophy and superstition. About the true choice, there will not be the least hesitation on the part of those who have a genuine desire to know "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" of Bible teaching, to accept it whatever the cost might prove to be.

TARTAROS

The second Greek word translated "hell" is "tartaros." It only occurs once in the Bible in 2 Pet. 2:4: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell" (tartaros).

Now the Greek word translated "angels," literally means "messengers," and is frequently applied to human messengers in Scripture as well as divine. The Greek word "angelos" is used equally for both classes of messengers and the context of the word in each case determines its application. As far as 2 Pet. 2:4 is concerned, tradition has assumed that the reference is to divine beings, but the text itself does not teach this at all. It simply says that "messengers sinned," but says nothing as to whether they were human or divine messengers.

Seeing that it is impossible for divine messengers to sin (as is clearly implied in Lk. 20:36), Peter's reference to sinful messengers must be to human beings. He is in fact, referring to the rebellion of Korah the Levite, and others with him, against Moses as recorded in Num.16. The Levites were "messengers" (angels) of the Lord (Mal. 2:7) and occupied a high estate or position before the Lord as his ministers. Not being satisfied with the estate God had given them, they left it and reached for a higher position which the Lord had reserved exclusively for Moses and Aaron. As a result of their pride and rebellion, the Lord caused the earth to open up under them, and they were swallowed up. They plunged down into the "pit" ("sheol") Num. 16:29-33.

The "pit" into which these men were cast was obviously very deep - much deeper than a normal grave. Peter, therefore, when referring to this incident, very appropriately used the Greek word "tartaros" which, in Greek, refers to the "deep abyss" - the region lower than the grave.

It is important to note that nothing is said in 2 Pet. 2:4 about disembodied spirits descending to Tartaros! Neither is anything said about tartaros being a place of fiery torment.

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CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE GEHENNA – HELL FIRE

The third Greek word translated "hell" in the New Testament is "gehenna." Gehenna occurs 12 times in the New Testament. It is used eleven times by Jesus and once by James.

The English translators used the same old Anglo Saxon word "hell" to translate the Greek word gehenna, and it is unfortunate that they did, for it has added much confusion to the subject. The word ought not to be translated at all. It is a proper noun, and like all other proper nouns or names, should have been transliterated. This is actually done in some of the modern translations. Instead of giving us "hell" they give us "gehenna."

Gehenna is a Greek compound signifying: "valley of Hinnom." "Ge" signifies "valley," and "henna" signifies "Hinnom." This Greek word is derived from the Hebrew "Ge" (valley) "Hinnom."

We learn from Josh. 15:8 that Hinnom was a Jebusite who originally lived in Jerusalem and owned a valley just outside the walls of the city to the south. Nothing is said about this Jebusite, except that he had a son (or sons) who inherited the valley after whom it was named. This valley is frequently referred to in Scripture as: "The valley of the son (sons) of Hinnom." The phrase "Ge Hinnom" became "Gehenna" in Greek, and simply means: "valley of Hinnom." The King James translators have confused this by giving us the old Anglo Saxon word "hell."

In 2 Kng. 23:10 we read that the valley of Hinnom was once the scene of terrible heathen practices. At a particular place in the valley called "Topeth" (derived from the Aramaic root "tpt" signifying "fireplace"), children were passed through the fire as a sacrifice to the pagan god Molech. Israel was influenced by this terrible heathen practice and degenerated to the same level, particularly during the reign of Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Kng. 16:3. 21:6. 2 Chr. 28:3. 33:6). Severe indictments were levelled against the nation by God through the prophet Jeremiah for committing such terrible acts (Jer. 7:30-34. 19:1-7). This burning of human beings in fire was repugnant to God and he said that it was something that "I commanded not, nor spake of, neither came it into my mind" (Jer. 19:5). His abhorrence towards such burning of human beings in fire makes it difficult to believe that he could consign men to endless torment in fire.

During Jeremiah's time, the valley of Hinnom was associated with the worship of Molech. However, Josiah defiled this shrine, and put an

end to the human sacrifices there. He gave the valley over to pollution, and appointed it as a repository of the filth and garbage of the city (2 Kng. 23:10-14).

The object in rendering the valley unfit for ritual use was not wholly achieved, for human sacrifice was revived in the reign of Johoiakim (Jer. 11:10. Ezk. 20:30-31), but from then on, Hinnom was regarded as a place of divine retribution for the defilement of God's reign.

The valley of Hinnom became the receptacle of rubbish in general and received the carcasses of men and beasts. To consume the rubbish and prevent pestilence, fires were kept perpetually burning in it. In the days of Jesus it was the highest mark of ignominy that the council of the Jews could inflict, to order a man to be buried in Gehenna. Reference is made in Jer. 31:40 to this valley as: "The whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes ..."

It was in the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna), that Sennacherib's Assyrian army was destroyed, leaving 185,000 corpses scattered in the valley (2 Kng. 19:35. Isa. 37:36). With the destruction of 185,000 men, just outside the walls of Jerusalem, one would think that there would be such a stench to make life impossible; and would not epidemics be inevitable? Isa. 33:11-12 supplies a possible answer. The dead bodies were consumed with lime and burning. It was a case of Hitler's holocaust in reverse! Isa. 30:30-33 clearly teaches that the Assyrian army was consumed through fire in the valley of Hinnom: "For Tophet has long been prepared; yea, for the king (of Assyria v31) it is prepared; He (God) has made it deep and large, piled high with fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone will set it on fire."

Here, the valley of Hinnom is likened to a huge fire-pit stacked up with wood ready to be set alight to consume the ungodly hosts of the enemy. A careful study of this passage in its context reveals that it specifically relates to the end-time, when Jesus returns to destroy the anti-God armies that gather against Jerusalem. It will be the battle of Armageddon. Joel ch.3 prophesies concerning this and speaks about God gathering all nations down into the valley of Jehoshaphat to enter into judgement with them ("Jehoshaphat" means "judgement of God"). Many scholars believe the valley of Jehoshaphat was the valley of Hinnom. Joel saw in his vision "multitudes, multitudes, in the valley" which he named "the valley of decision" i.e. the place ordained of old - the place where God decided to end man's rebellion. It is better translated "threshing," as many modern translations do, implying the idea of judgement. The judgement by fire of the ancient Assyrian army in Gehenna, was clearly a

type of the final judgement that takes place at the second coming of Jesus! The king of Assyria represented the latter day "king of the North" or "man of sin," who will lead his armies against Jerusalem and meet Christ in battle. He will be destroyed with his armies and the fire of Gehenna will rage once more and consume their dead bodies.

The valley of Hinnom also became a valley of slaughter for many Israelites during the Babylonian invasion. Jeremiah warned his apostate nation of the Babylonian invasion and told them in no uncertain terms that they would be severely judged because of their abominations: "And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind. Therefore, behold, the days come, says the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter; for they shall bury (the slaughtered Israelites) in Tophet, till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth, and none shall frighten them away. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness ..." (Jer. 7:31-34. 19:5-7). Instead of mirth, there shall be "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Such was the terrible fate of the rebellious Israelites during the days of Jeremiah. Jeremiah lived in a very similar situation to Jesus and, in many ways, his life foreshadowed the life of the great prophet who was to come. In verse 11 of Jer. 7, Jeremiah told the Jews that judgement would come upon them because they had corrupted God's house, making it a den of thieves. Jesus quoted this very passage when rebuking his contemporaries for committing the same sin (Matt. 21:13). Because of this, Jeremiah said that God's judgement would be poured out upon them and "shall burn and not be quenched" (Jer. 7:20). Then, in the verses already quoted (v31-34), Jeremiah proclaimed that God's judgements would lead to slaughter and burial in the valley of Hinnom (Gehenna). Jesus preached a very similar message to the rebellious Jews of his time, warning them that they would be cast into Gehenna.

And it did happen; history repeated itself. In A.D.70 the Romans attacked Judea and besieged Jerusalem. The judgements of God came forth like fire and the city and temple were burned to the ground. The valley of Hinnom once again became a valley of slaughter.

Finally, in the end-time, anti-God armies will gather against, and encircle Jerusalem; their hosts spreading out through the valley of Hinnom. At that time the Lord Jesus returns in flaming fire and Gehenna

will become a "lake of fire," burning and devouring the ungodly hosts that have assembled in it and around it. It will be the "valley of judgement" into which those offensive to God will be cast and destroyed, as in former judgements which foreshadowed it.

The literary evidence for the Jewish tradition that the valley of Hinnom received the refuse of Jerusalem in continually burning fires, is unfortunately no earlier than about 1200A.D. when Rabbi David Kimchi writes: "Gehenna was a place set apart into which they threw refuse and dead bodies, and there was a continuous fire there for burning the refuse and bones; because of which it is spoken of metaphorically as Gehenna the place of judgement" (Translated by E.J.N. from the Latin as quoted in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible). The translation is nonetheless reasonable, and Sir Charles Warren, in Hastings' Dictionary Bible, says: "This may be accepted as the most probable method of disposing of the immense masses of refuse which required to be destroyed for the sake of the health of the city." It receives some support from Jer. 31:40 (already quoted) where the word rendered there is a hint of it also in the fate foretold for king Jehoiakim: "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer. 22:19).

By Talmudic times - from the third to the fifth centuries - the valley of Hinnom had given its name to a mythological region which was credited with fantastic features later borrowed to adorn the hell of an apostate Medieval Christendom. It would be foolish to dogmatise as to how early these characteristics were acquired; much depends on the doubtful dating and uncertain text of the so-called "pseudepigrapha" - the Book of Enoch, and the rest. Legend would grow more easily away from Palestine, especially where Judaism was corrupted by Greek influences; and the fourth Book of Maccabees has reference to "eternal torture by fire" and "interminable (or indissoluble) torments" - 4 Macc. 9:8-10. 10:10). 2 Esdras also teaches eternal torments; but is a late work of around about the first century A.D.

For the hearers of Jesus - Palestinian Jews of the first century; it is likely, if not certain that Gehenna already stood for the final retributive scene and condition. They would know that Jesus was talking about the issue of final judgement, but the nature of that issue must be discovered from the Word of God and not the convictions and conclusions of Jewish, or any other tradition.

Gehenna then, was the valley of Hinnom used in times past as a valley of judgement and a garbage incinerator. Rubbish, refuse, dead bodies, offal of Jewish sacrifices etc were thrown into this valley to be

consumed in the fire. The fire continued burning as long as there was material for it to consume. The rubbish itself was consumed, but the fire continued to burn as it consumed additional rubbish. Because rubbish was continually fed into the fire, the fire never went out. It was a continuing fire - an "everlasting" fire.

During the earthly ministry of Jesus, criminals who died after crucifixion were cast into the Gehenna fire as a final indignity, to be totally destroyed. It was felt that those who were crucified were unworthy of a proper and decent burial. Many Bible scholars believe that Jesus would have been cast into this fire had Joseph of Arimathea not gone and begged permission from Pilate to bury the body in his own tomb.

There is no fire in the valley of Hinnom today; it was extinguished centuries ago. The valley is no longer used as an incinerator. The following interesting newspaper item appeared in the Wanganui Chronicle on the fifteenth of May 1970:

"HELL - NOW IT'S A PARK"

"Jerusalem (P.A. Reuter). Hell became a national park in Israel yesterday. Hell, or "Gai-Hinnon" in Hebrew, is a narrow valley at the foot of Mt Zion, along the former no-man's land between Arab and Israeli Jerusalem. The 20 acre area was officially dedicated as Wolfson Park, in honour of British philanthropist Sir Isaac Wolfson."

However, end-time events will present some dramatic changes!

TWO DIFFERENT HELLS

It should be evident from what has been said that the Greek word "hades," translated "hell," refers to the grave. "Gehenna" however also translated "hell," refers to the "valley of Hinnom," where fires kept burning as they consumed refuse from the city. The clear distinction between hades and the lake of fire can be seen in Rev. 20:14 where reference is made to hades being thrown into the lake of fire (which is just a symbolic way of saying that death is going to be "swallowed up" i.e. there will be no more death). If hades referred to the place of fire to which disembodied spirits are sent to be tormented, how should we understand the statement that hades is cast into the lake of fire? It would have to mean that the disembodied state is to be swallowed up and destroyed by the lake of fire. Or, that disembodied spirits pass from one fire to another - from one disembodied state to another. Either way we are faced with confusion

and contradiction, as is usually the case when the immortality of the soul is involved.

The translators have confused and obliterated the two entirely different meanings of these words "hades" and "Gehenna" by indiscriminately rendering them by the same old Anglo Saxon word "hell."

Hades is the grave into which all are placed at the first death, both righteous and unrighteous. It is the place where they "sleep," awaiting resurrection. Even Jesus went there and "slept."

Gehenna fire, however, is the second death into which all the unrighteous will be cast after resurrection and judgement. It is the place where they will be totally destroyed and annihilated.

Tradition of course teaches that sinners go directly to the "fiery tortures of hell" the moment they die. But, as pointed out before, this would mean that they are condemned to "hell" before they are properly and formally judged and sentenced, and Scripture does not support such a system at all as we have seen.

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT GEHENNA

Several important points emerge from a careful study of all the verses where Gehenna occurs in the New Testament:

(1) In all 12 passages where the word Gehenna occurs, not a single hint is dropped to suggest that it refers to some fiery abyss deep down under the surface of the earth. Superstitious pagans originated this idea back in the dark ages and, in many circles today, tradition still reads this concept into the word.

If Jesus had in mind some such underground abyss, it is most unlikely that he would refer to it by the name "Gehenna" without explaining its deeper significance. Gehenna simply means valley of Hinnom, and the Jews to whom the words of Jesus were addressed, and who always interpreted his teaching literally, would naturally conclude that he was referring to that valley which was well known to them. Gehenna was a common word with a simple meaning. It was as well understood as a geographical location near Jerusalem as was other geographical designations such as "valley of Kidron."

One thing is certain: everything that was cast into the fire of Gehenna in Christ's day was literally and completely destroyed, and not kept alive to be endlessly tortured.

That Gehenna should be translated "hell," and thus be made to

favour popular tradition, is simply due to the opinion of the translators that ancient Gehenna was a "type" of the hell of their creed. There is however, no true ground for this assumption. The common mistake made by tradition is of begging the question to begin with. Let the traditional hell be proved first before Gehenna is introduced in the argument as a type. If it is a type of anything, it must be interpreted as a type rather of the judgement revealed elsewhere in Scripture, than of one imagined and assumed by tradition.

Someone may argue, saying: "It does not follow that there is no deeper, true meaning to Gehenna than the valley of Hinnom." The answer to this must be in the same shape: "It does not follow that because some have thought Gehenna is merely a type of the hell of their creed, that Gehenna must therefore be that traditional place of torture of disembodied spirits." It is the only answer to such a limited argument. The weakness of the case for tradition is very evident when a man has nothing stronger at this really vital point in the argument. It certainly proves nothing by affirming that the Jews understood Gehenna in certain other senses, for they were declared by Jesus to have made void the Word of God by their tradition. If the local Gehenna of Jerusalem was used by Jesus as a type or emblem at all, it was surely an emblem of the death and corruption that reigned in it, and not of a torment that was impossible to the dead bodies cast into it. Surely he used it to illustrate the destiny and fate of the wicked as revealed in all the Old Testament Scriptures - rejection, dishonour and destruction, and not that imagined by tradition - objectless sufferings throughout endless eternity.

(2) The second important point that emerges from a study of all the verses where Gehenna occurs is that not a single hint is dropped to suggest it is a place to which disembodied spirits are sent to suffer endless pain and agony.

Quite the opposite in fact is taught. For instance, Matt. 5:29-30 says the "whole body" shall be cast into Gehenna fire. Matt. 10:28 says that "both soul and body" shall be destroyed in Gehenna. Other passages refer to eyes, hands, and feet being cast into Gehenna (Matt. 18:9. Mk. 9:43, 45, 47). Gehenna is clearly a place into which the "whole body" - "body and soul" of the wicked will be cast, resulting in destruction.

In an earlier section, Scriptures were quoted in which it is plainly taught that the ultimate destiny of the wicked is destruction. For this reason the casting of the wicked into Gehenna is likened to the casting of wood, chaff and tares into the fire. Wood, chaff and tares are not cast into the fire to be tormented, but to be burned up and consumed. The "wide

gate" leads to "destruction" and not eternal life in hell or any other place. The ultimate fate of the wicked is the same as wood cast into the fire, namely: ashes (Mal. 4:1-3).

When Jesus referred to the fire that burned the refuse in the valley of Hinnom as the fate of the wicked, he clearly meant complete destruction. The wicked will "perish" (Jn. 3:16). "Perish" means to cease existing - extinction of being. It does not mean to continue living. Life in eternal torment is not what God has decreed for the wicked. The punishment is death - cessation of life forever.

FINAL LOCALITY OF GEHENNA

Prior to the birth of Jesus, Mary was told that it was God's purpose to "give unto him the throne of his father David" (Lk. 1:32), which, of course, was at Jerusalem. The Bible contains many prophecies which teach that God's ultimate purpose is for his son to establish his throne in Jerusalem, in order that he might sit upon it and reign over the whole earth. Jesus never established his throne during his earthly ministry. Instead, he yielded up his life as an atonement for sin, and after being raised from the dead, ascended to his Father's right hand and sat next to him on his throne (Rev. 3:21 makes it clear that Jesus, at the moment, is sitting on his Father's throne).

Ultimately, Jesus will return to Jerusalem and establish the throne promised him from birth - David's throne - and reign from it over the whole earth. The throne will, as in the days of David and Solomon, constitute: "The throne of the Lord" on earth, only in a much greater and glorious way. Its establishment awaits the second coming of Jesus: "When the son of man shall come in his glory ... then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." At the moment he is sitting upon his Father's throne. He will not sit upon the throne of promise till he comes again to Jerusalem in power and glory.

Matt. 25:32 goes on to say that when he has returned and established his throne, he will gather "all nations" before him for judgement and separation. He shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on the left. The sheep will inherit the kingdom and the goats will depart "into everlasting fire" (v41).

The "everlasting fire" of course, is none other than Gehenna (hell), conveniently situated just outside the city of Jerusalem. A lake of fire will rage there to consume and destroy the wicked as they are rejected at the judgement seat. As pointed out before, Gehenna is the place "ordained

long ago" for the end-time anti-God forces which shall be destroyed there at the battle of Armageddon. Gehenna will be "deep and large, piled high with much wood and fire ..." (Isa. 30:33). Thus, all the unfaithful who are rejected at the judgement will be cast into the same fire in which the anti-God "beast" was destroyed. And it is not difficult to imagine the weeping and gnashing of teeth that will take place when they see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom and themselves rejected, destined to total extinction in the Gehenna fire.

Tradition has interpreted the various "weeping and gnashing of teeth" passages to mean agony proceeding from disembodied spirits as they roast eternally in the fire. Scripture does not teach this. The weeping and gnashing of teeth takes place after rejection at the judgement seat before being cast into the fire. Scripture does not teach that the weeping and gnashing takes place in the fire!

The future judgement is clearly related to the locality of Gehenna. The judgement seat will be at Jerusalem, and Gehenna - the valley of Hinnom" - "hell," is just outside the city.

This is confirmed in Isa. 66:20-24 where we read that those who go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord during the millennium "shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me (i.e. against the Lord); for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched: and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Jesus obviously referred to this passage when he said: "Where the worm dieth not and the fire (Gehenna fire v43) is not quenched."

The fact that those who come up to Jerusalem see the carcasses of the rejected in Gehenna confirms that its locality is closely related to Jerusalem.

IMMORTAL WORMS?

'' **A**nd if thy hand causes you to sin, cut it off: it is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Gehenna, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not ..." (Mk. 9:43-48).

This passage is often quoted as proof that the wicked continue to live in hell-fire. However, even a superficial reading of the passage reveals that this concept is not taught there at all. It does not say that the life of the wicked will never be quenched, but that the fire shall never be quenched. It is the fire and not those cast into it that shall never be quenched. Likewise, it does not say that the wicked "dieth not," but that

"their worm dieth not." It is the wicked's worm that dieth not and not the wicked themselves.

Someone might try to argue that Jesus referred to people as "worms," and that he was teaching their continuance in hell-fire. However, Jesus clearly does not call the wicked people "worms," but instead speaks of "their (the wicked's) worm." And if it be contended that "their" refers to immortal souls or disembodied spirits, then we must conclude that worms will feed on them. It is a little difficult to conceive of worms eating something immaterial that cannot be seen or touched!

As already mentioned, the teaching of Jesus concerning the worms was taken from Isa.66:24. Most marginal references indicate this. Starting at Isa. 66:23, we read: "And it shall come to pass that month by month at the new moon, and week by week on the Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me (at Jerusalem v20) says the Lord. On their way out (from the city of Jerusalem) they shall see the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched and they shall be an abhorrence unto all flesh" (i.e. a continual warning of the outcome of rebellion). Notice particularly in this passage that:

(1) "Undying worms" and "fire unquenched" are applied to the carcasses of men. The passage says nothing about living, disembodied spirits! The verse makes no mention of live people, but the carcasses of dead people. The language is very similar to Jer. 7:33: "For they shall bury in Tophet (Hinnom) till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls ..." (and worms!). As pointed out earlier, this particular passage refers to the destiny of the wicked who were destroyed at Jerusalem when the Babylonians invaded. Many were burnt in the fire and the carcasses of many that were not engulfed by fire were consumed by birds, beasts and worms.

(2) It is plainly stated in Isa. 66:24 that people are going to see - "look upon" those who have transgressed. How is it possible to look upon these transgressors if they are immaterial disembodied spirits?

(3) The locality of the unquenchable fire (Gehenna) into which the transgressors are cast, is clearly just outside the city of Jerusalem. In other words: Gehenna is not some mysterious place in the centre of the earth's crust, miles away from view. If it was, how could those who go forth from Jerusalem look upon the carcasses of the transgressors?

Now concerning the reference to "worms": The Hebrew and Greek word translated "worm" in Isa. 66:24 and Mk. 9:48 means "maggot" or "grub." Christ's reference to the worm in connection with the bodies

thrown into Gehenna, would not have surprised his contemporaries to whom he preached. Gehenna, or the valley of Hinnom, as already pointed out, was a narrow rocky valley outside Jerusalem into which trash, filth, and dead bodies of despised criminals and animals were thrown. If a dead body landed on one of the rocky ledges or on the fringe of the fire, it would soon be infested by worms and maggots. In places where the fires were not burning, this other destroyer - "worms" - was at work. Maggot-ridden carcasses would be a familiar sight to any traveller who passed by the appropriate region of this valley. Flies breed rapidly and constantly in masses of refuse which would become seething heaps of corruption, as the worms ate their way through the dead carcasses. It was simply these worms to which Jesus referred when he said: "their worms dieth not."

But Jesus didn't mean that each individual worm continued to live for ever! He was not propounding some new doctrine on immortal worms! Maggots are the larvae which develop from eggs deposited by flies. They hatch from the eggs, eat the flesh, continue in the larval form only a few days, then go through pupation or metamorphosis and finally emerge as flies. The worms don't die - they become flies! Later, the flies die. Thus, these worms "die not" but continue to develop into flies just as any normal, healthy worm! The flies continue to deposit their eggs as long as there are dead bodies or other matter for the larvae to feed on.

These are well established facts known by any student of biology, and Jesus was not ignorant of them. He was not ignorantly teaching that these larvae continued to live forever in that stage of development! How careful we need to be to use wisdom and common sense when studying God's Word. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of a "sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

UNQUENCHABLE FIRE

Gehenna fire is referred to as "unquenchable fire" in Matt. 3:12, Lk. 3:17. It is referred to as "everlasting fire" in Matt. 18:8; 25:41. And in Mk. 9:43-48 it is referred to as "fire that shall never be quenched."

Tradition has made the mistake of assuming that because the fire is "everlasting" and "unquenchable," the life of those cast into it will also be everlasting and unquenchable. The passages however, do not teach this.

Many have also carelessly assumed that the "unquenchable fire" is a fire of torture which has existed for centuries, into which the wicked have been cast at the moment of death. However, it is plainly taught in the Bible that the fire will not commence till judgement day, and any visitor to Jerusalem can quickly verify that there is no roaring inferno in the

valley of Hinnom today.

How then are we to understand the expressions quoted before concerning "unquenchable fire" and "everlasting fire?" Are we to conclude that Gehenna fire will burn for all eternity? According to one prophecy in Jer. 31:40, the ultimate destiny of the valley of Hinnom is to be "holy unto the Lord." This is hardly possible while rotting corpses and burning carcasses are lying there as "an abhorrence to all flesh" (Isa. 66:24). It seems reasonable to conclude on this basis, that the fire and worms will not exist perpetually throughout all eternity in the valley. After all, Scripture clearly states that the fire and worms devour the "bodies" and "carcasses" of sinners, and the body (flesh) of a sinner is mortal and not immortal. Only an immortal body could withstand fire and worms throughout eternity. And seeing that only the righteous are to be clothed with an immortal body, it is impossible for them to be subjected to the devouring influence of worm and fire.

In view of this, it seems reasonable to conclude that the expressions: "unquenchable fire" and "everlasting fire" should not be interpreted to mean perpetual burning throughout eternity. Scripture actually justifies this conclusion in a number of places.

A limited sense to an apparently absolute expression is frequently exemplified throughout Scripture. For instance, in the days of Josiah, Huldah the prophetess said: "Thus says the Lord ... Because they (the Jews) have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place (Jerusalem), and shall not be quenched."

Jeremiah uttered a similar prophecy: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched" (Jer. 7:20).

"But if ye will not hearken unto me ... then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jer. 17:27).

Jer. 17:4 says the Lord will send Judah into captivity "for you have kindled a fire in mine anger which shall burn for ever."

"Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings" (Jer. 4:4).

Isa. 1:28-32 refers to the transgressors as "tow" (flax) which shall be set alight by the fiery judgement of God, causing them to "burn together and none shall quench them."

In Ezk. 20:45-49, a prophecy is given against southern Judah in which the transgressors are likened to trees: "Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall destroy every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming fire shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein. And all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it: it shall not be quenched. Then said I, Ah Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?"

Now, most of these references to fire which would "burn forever" and "not be quenched," relate to the destruction by fire of the city of Jerusalem along with many of its inhabitants by the Babylonians. The Lord sent the Babylonian army against Jerusalem as a punishment for its transgression. The Babylonians besieged the city and finally burnt it to the ground.

However, it is common knowledge that the fire kindled by the Babylonians did not continue to burn throughout eternity! All the references to the fire being "unquenchable" and burning "forever," obviously did not mean that the fire with reference to itself would never go out. But in relation to the object of its operation (the burning of the city), it would not be quenched till the operation was accomplished. A fire was kindled in Jerusalem, and only went out when Jerusalem was burned to the ground. The fire continued to burn until it completed its work of total consumption. No man or body of men could extinguish it in order to escape its destruction. A careful reading of the Scriptures quoted before reveals that the expression: "unquenchable fire" simply means "no man can quench it." It does not mean that the fire will never go out. It simply means that no man can put it out till it has completed its work. As far as man is concerned, it is "unquenchable." The fire burned "for ever" and was "unquenchable" because it could not be extinguished until its destructive work was completed.

The fire was not perpetual, as all students of history know. The fire that razed Jerusalem to the ground in 587 B.C. finally went out when its work was completed, and Jerusalem was rebuilt in later times and became holy to the Lord.

The same applies to the statement quoted earlier from Jer. 17:4 concerning God sending the Jews into captivity, causing His anger to "burn for ever." This did not mean that his anger would continue throughout eternity, forcing the Jews to remain in captivity, never

allowing them to return to their own land. As it happened, after 70 years of captivity, God's mercy rejoiced against judgement and he allowed them to return from their captivity, and rebuild and restore their nation. Reference by the prophet Jeremiah to the Lord causing his anger to burn "for ever," simply means that his judgement would continue for a specific age, or period required to fulfil its purpose.

In Scripture, "for ever" and "everlasting" do not always mean "unending." These terms, according to Parkhurst: "... denote duration or continuance of time, but with great variety." These terms simply and basically, in their original form, mean "age-lasting" without fixing duration. The duration is determined by the scope of that of which it is affirmed. If it is affirmed of God it is obviously to be understood in the sense of being unending. If it is affirmed of fire burning a city or mortal bodies it is obviously of restricted duration. These terms are used in both ways in Scripture, referring to limited and unlimited duration, and the context in each case determines it.

For instance: God is often referred to as being "everlasting." He lives "for ever." These terms when applied to him, obviously mean that the age he lasts is unending.

But, when we read that God instituted circumcision as an "everlasting covenant," (Gen. 17:13) it is evident in view of the fact that it has been superseded by the new covenant in Christ, that "everlasting" simply meant an age that would last for considerable time, but which would ultimately end. The same applies to the Levitical priesthood which was also referred to as an "everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15. Num. 25:13). Since the advent of Jesus Christ, who established a new priesthood "after the order of Melchizedec," the old Levitical priesthood has been "changed" (Heb. 7:12) and superseded.

In Ex. 21:6 reference is made to a master boring his servant's ear with an aul, resulting in service "for ever." Philemon was told to receive his servant Onesimus back "for ever" (Philemon v15). Daniel said to King Darius: "O king, live for ever" (Dan. 6:21). The Israelites who came out of Egypt with Moses were told to obey the law "for ever more" (2 Kng. 17:37). Failure to be obedient would result in the nation being "oppressed and spoiled evermore" (Deu. 28:29). Jer. 23:40 refers to this as "an everlasting reproach unto you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten."

In all these cases it is evident that the terms "for ever" and "everlasting" do not represent unlimited duration. The terms simply mean "age-lasting" - "a space or period of time" - "indefinite period." Their

scope is purely determined by the subject with which they are connected.

In the case of the subject before us concerning "everlasting" and "unquenchable fire," it is evident that a limited period is involved, otherwise the fire would have been raging in Jerusalem from the time of the Babylonian invasion, right through to our present time - a period of over 2,500 years! It should be evident that the fire could only burn for a limited period because of the limited supply of fuel that fed its flames. The fire was "everlasting" and "unquenchable" in relation to its mission - it outlasted and triumphed over that which it had been created to destroy. But the fire was not endless in itself.

Thus we read in Jude verse 7 that Sodom and Gomorrah "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire." Are these cities still burning and being consumed today? Of course not! "Eternal fire" signifies a fire whose results are permanent, and not a fire that burns on endlessly. Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly destroyed centuries ago and have never been rebuilt. They are not burning today as any visitor to the Dead Sea region can testify. These cities were overthrown "in a moment" (Lam.4:6); they were turned to "ashes" (2 Pet. 2:6. cp. Deu. 29:23); and be it noted: Jude says that the "eternal fire" suffered by Sodom and Gomorrah is set forth as "an example" of the fate awaiting the wicked on judgement day. Hence, it is testified that on that day the wicked will become "ashes" (Mal. 4:3).

These same principles are further illustrated in Ezk. 21:3-5 where the Lord states that his sword will go forth out of its sheath against all flesh, "and shall not return any more." It should hardly be necessary to point out that ultimately, God's loving kindness will triumph over all exhibitions of anger. In the absolute sense therefore, his sword of vengeance will return to its sheath, but not in the sense of failing to accomplish its purpose. Christ's reference to Gehenna fire "that shall never be quenched," is to be understood in the same light.

So then, the worms that prey upon the wicked will ultimately disappear when death is destroyed, and the fire that consumes their corrupt remains will die when it has exhausted the fuel it feeds on: but in relation to the wicked themselves, whom the worms and fire outlasts: "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Herod's worms died not, and the consequence was that he died (Act. 12:23). If the worms had died, Herod might have recovered!

If the fire is not quenched, there is no escape from its consumption. The fire will continue to burn until it has consumed all the wicked. No man will be able to extinguish the fire in order to escape its destruction. Not even a shower of rain can put it out. The fire cannot go out

prematurely. It is unquenchable! Ultimately, when its work is complete and all the wicked have been totally consumed, the valley of Hinnom will become "holy unto the Lord." Death itself will be no more, after the last of the wicked have been cast into the lake of fire. As the last victims are cast in and destroyed, death itself will be destroyed. This is symbolically presented in the book of Revelation by hades being cast into the lake of fire.

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

The statement in Matt. 25:46 that: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," is often quoted to support the traditional view of eternal torments. In answer to this the following points should be noted:

(1) The "punishment" of v46 is inflicted by Christ after he has returned to the earth and established his throne (v31). This conflicts with the general view that the wicked are punished at death.

(2) Taken as it stands in the English Bible, the phrase "everlasting punishment" does not define the nature of the punishment, but only affirms its perpetuity. It expresses the punishment which is future, but does not define it. This is indefinite. "Everlasting punishment" is by no means the synonym of "everlasting misery." "Punishment" may take a variety of forms. Its meaning here is subject to whatever clearer information we may get in other parts of Scripture. That information is abundant. Paul gives it in a condensed form in the following statement: "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction" (2 Thes. 1:9). From this it is evident that "everlasting punishment" and "everlasting destruction" are equivalent terms. The "punishment" of the wicked has no affinity with the "damnation" which lights up Spurgeon's sermons with such glowing colours!

It is no accident or good luck that Paul explains "everlasting punishment" to be "everlasting destruction." Exactly the same answer is given to us when we ask the broader question: What is the Scripturally revealed punishment - penalty - wages of sin? This is answered categorically by Paul: "The wages of sin is death." Now destruction is death, for to destroy a creature is to kill it; and as death is the wages of sin, it follows that it is the punishment of it, and thus "everlasting punishment," "everlasting destruction," and "everlasting death" are interchangeable terms. It is the punishment from which, above all others, most men shrink. Indeed, it is no uncommon thing for those who oppose

the doctrine of destruction, to say they would rather live in hell for ever than be totally annihilated. Life and consciousness is so precious to man that he would prefer to retain his life and consciousness in a place of misery, than suffer total extinction of being. Eternal and endless death is a terrible punishment, make no mistake about it!

Fire will destroy the wicked as it destroys wood, chaff and tares, and as it destroyed the Sodomites, turning them into ashes. The mind conceives a wise object in this consummation; for with the destruction of the wicked, wickedness disappears, and both men and God are delivered from its sore evils. But the traditional view presents the opposite picture, to the great perplexity of those who cannot see their way out of the mist of horror of great darkness. An eternal hell shows us evil permanently triumphant, in its most perfect form, with the sanction and even the intention of the creator (as some say), and belies the teaching of Scripture, which assigns to Jesus the work of destroying the devil and all his works, taking away all vestige of sin and death, and all curse.

(3) The whole text in Matt. 25:46 reads: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Tradition argues that if it be admitted that the "life" is everlasting, so also must the "punishment" be, since the adjective (in the original) is used to define it. If the argument stopped at this point all would be well and properly Scriptural. However, tradition takes it a step forward by affirming that the nature of the punishment is eternal conscious misery in Gehenna. It is at this point of assumption that the disagreement arises.

Jesus is clearly contrasting "eternal life" for the just, with "everlasting punishment" for the unjust. Now, "life" or "eternal life" is frequently promised to the righteous, but never to the wicked. If it was, then eternal life would no longer constitute the reward of the righteous; and reward would merely be the happiness super-added to that life. This point should be emphasised. If both righteous and unrighteous alike have eternal life, then it is only the happiness added to that life that constitutes the reward of the righteous, and not the eternal life itself. And this concept, which the traditional view forces upon us, is completely contrary to the teaching of Scripture on the subject of eternal life.

"Death" and not "life" in everlasting misery, constitutes the punishment of the wicked. Life signifies conscious existence, and death non-existence and unconsciousness.

"Life" and "death" are clearly the two alternatives presented before man from which he must choose. When Jesus contrasted "eternal life" with "everlasting punishment," the punishment was clearly "death" or, as

Paul put it, "everlasting destruction."

(4) There is a vast difference between the phrase "everlasting punishment" and "everlasting PUNISHING." The former is Scriptural and the latter unscriptural. The former speaks of a final decisive act, and the latter speaks of a never ending process. Tradition reads it in the latter sense and assigns to the wicked an endless existence of pain and suffering. In so doing a serious disservice is done to the nature and character of God whose purpose has never planned endless torture for any man, not even the worst sinner. God's mercy is so great that if he didn't exterminate the wicked, but preserved them in a place of misery, his mercy might eventually rejoice against judgement and set the wicked free, giving them another chance. This of course, would be contrary to his declared purpose, and the total extinction of the wicked will ensure that it could never happen.

Let it not be supposed for a moment that this thesis deprives the wicked of any pain or misery; far from it. There will be very real conscious suffering, mental and physical, of a very terrible kind; but it will end in the "second death."

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Many stripes" or "few stripes" will be proportioned to degrees of wickedness, bringing profound anguish and humiliation. Who could imagine anything more humiliating and soul-destroying than to be flogged by the angels in the presence of Jesus and the saints, knowing that this will be followed by a journey to the fire of Gehenna where total extinction will take effect in the raging fire? But once the body is cast into the flames, all anguish and torment will end as body and soul are destroyed. And this is humane and just, as all men with any spirit of justice will agree - God is not a sadist!

In passing, it should be pointed out that if, as it is sometimes affirmed, the "stripes" inflicted on the wicked refer to "eternal torments," there could be no such thing as "many" or "few" stripes. There would be no scope for variation. Hell would damn all its inhabitants alike forever.

It is also possible that the "many stripes" and "few stripes" point to differing periods of shame and suffering during the interval between rejection at the judgement seat, and final disappearance in the second death. This interval may be longer for some and shorter for others. Individual cases may differ, and the suffering more or less severe.

So then: "everlasting punishment" is quite a different concept from "everlasting punishing." The "punishment" is destruction - death - "the second death."

The same applies to Jn. 5:29 where Jesus says that those who have

done evil shall come forth to the resurrection of damnation i.e. condemnation. Is this necessarily eternal torture? Is not a man "condemned" who is sentenced to be hung? And is not his sentence "condemnation?" And will not a sentence to second death be condemnation?

The same applies to the statements that "the wrath of God abideth" on the wicked (Jn. 3:36). On this occasion the "wrath" is not defined and it is purely assumption to assert that it refers to unending misery in hell. Jesus himself, in the very same chapter, has already defined this wrath for us in the word "perish" (v15-16). Scripture abounds with many examples of the wrath of God taking effect and, more often than not, it was issued in death. If the "wrath" of God spells "death," then abiding (unending) death would be signified by the phrase "the wrath of God abideth."

Death is darkness, and for that reason the second death is referred to as "outer darkness" in Matt. 8:12. A hell of bright glaring flames could hardly be described as "darkness."

Dan. 12:2 teaches that the wicked shall get "everlasting contempt." But notice that it is the contempt that is everlasting and not the people themselves.

TORMENTED WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

It is usual to quote, in support of the traditional doctrine of eternal torments, the following statement from Rev. 14:9-11: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and the presence of the lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

On the face of it, this form of speech may seem to lend countenance to the popular idea, but we must not be satisfied with looking at the face of it in this instance, because the statement forms part of a symbolic vision. The statement occurs in a highly symbolical book, in reference to a symbolical object and is a symbolical expression. It is dangerous to quote such a passage without care or without candour, as if everything is literal. Otherwise we would have to conclude that the "wrath of God" is literal "wine" which shall literally be "poured out" for the wicked to literally "drink." We would also have to conclude that the wicked worship a literal

animal - "beast." And how could we make sense of a literal interpretation of the expression: "the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever?" How can an abstract thing like torment be burnt and produce smoke?

Such symbolical passages of Scripture as this in the symbolical book of Revelation must be "spiritually discerned" - interpreted in harmony with the other similar visions in the Word of God.

This passage in Rev. 14 is the only one in the whole of Scripture that comes anywhere near supporting the traditional concept. This immediately casts serious doubts upon the traditional concept. Any major doctrine that relies on the literal interpretation of a single passage in an obviously enigmatical and symbolical section of the Word of God is based on very tenuous ground and is suspect. One would expect, as in all other cases of major Biblical doctrine, that if the traditional interpretation of Rev. 14 was correct, it would be supported by clearly defined statements in other less enigmatical parts of the Word of God. The fact that it isn't, suggests that it is incorrectly interpreted.

The only other passage, besides this one in Rev. 14 which superficially appears to support the traditional view, is the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Lk. 16; but here again, as already pointed out, the whole story is clearly a parable, based on Jewish fable, and has to be parabolically interpreted. Also, in the story; the word "hell" is not Gehenna, but hades, and refers to the grave from which both the rich man and Lazarus were resurrected.

Surely, if the traditional concept of unending, conscious torture of the wicked was true, it would be stated at least once in some section of plain, straight forward Biblical narrative - but it isn't. The few verses which are usually quoted to support the concept belong to parabolic and symbolic sections of Scripture. On the other hand, it is plainly and categorically stated in literally dozens of sections of unambiguous Biblical narrative, that the destiny of the wicked is total destruction and extinction of being. One who sets a couple of doubtful passages of Scripture, against a whole host of clearly defined Scriptures is hardly "rightly dividing the Word."

Now strangely enough, it is possible to accept a great deal of Rev. 14 on its face value without supporting the traditional view! The traditional view of hell-fire is that it is in some deep abyss beneath the surface of the earth, and that the disembodied spirits of the wicked are sent there. However, nothing is said in Rev. 14:9-11 to support such a concept. The passage clearly teaches that those who are tormented with

fire and brimstone have a "forehand" and "hand" (v9). Not a single hint is given anywhere in this section of Scripture (or any other) that disembodied spirits were tormented in the fire.

Also, verse 11 clearly states that the fire and brimstone is "in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the lamb." And one thing is certain: Jesus and the angels will not be living down in the lower regions of the earth! If the fire and brimstone is in the presence of Jesus, it must be on the earth, and not under it, because Jesus will be reigning on, and not under the earth. This harmonises with what was said earlier about Gehenna being the valley of Hinnom just outside the city of Jerusalem.

So then, nothing is said in Rev. 14 about disembodied spirits being tormented in fire, and nothing is said about the fire being in some deep, underground chasm.

It is vital to allow Scripture to interpret itself when the interpretation is provided. In this particular case before us, the significance of the fire and brimstone is interpreted for us in Rev. 21:8: "The lake which burns with fire and brimstone is the second death." This is the key to our passage in Rev. 14.

Now, it is established in an earlier section of this thesis that death is a state of unconsciousness. The second death will be total extinction of being. This being so, once the body is cast into the fire and the second death takes effect, all consciousness will cease. Once this happens, all previous mental and physical torment will end. Both mental and physical torment will be an impossibility once the body is consumed by fire. A superficial reading of Rev. 14:9-11 might seem to support the view that the wicked continue to suffer after being thrown into the fire, but a closer examination of the passage, especially with the vital key that the fire and brimstone represent the second death, reveals a totally different picture. Let us examine it:

Verse 10 says the wicked shall be "tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the lamb." Seeing that the second death (extinction of being - unconsciousness) results from being cast into the fire, this "torment" must take place before the body is cast into the fire.

Fire is quite capable of tormenting a person before he is cast into it - especially when that person knows he is going to be cast into it and suffer extinction! In this light, Rev.14:10 can be read quite reasonably to mean that as the wicked stand in the presence of Jesus and the angels, with the terrible prospect of the fire and brimstone before them, they will suffer mental torment and anguish - "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Verse 11 says "the smoke of their torment ascended up for ever and ever." If the passage said "the cry of their torment ascended up for ever and ever," the traditional view might have some justification. However, it does not put it that way at all. Instead, it says: "the smoke of their torment ascends up ..."

Now, "torment" is suffering; it is a human emotion - an abstract thing. It is pain, either of a physical or mental nature. It is not something physical and tangible like wood or coal that you can take hold of and put on the fire causing it to burn and produce smoke. How then, are we to understand the statement which says "the smoke of their torment ascends up ..?"

Seeing that it is difficult to conceive of an abstract thing like torment being burned and producing smoke, it seems reasonable to paraphrase the statement like this: "The smoke (from the fire) which caused their torment ..." The "smoke" is produced by the bodies of the wicked as they are cast into it. As the wicked, in turn, are brought to the city to stand before the judgement seat, they have no doubt already seen the fire of Gehenna and the smoke billowing up, and possibly witnessed some of the wicked being dragged away to be cast into it. Knowing that it is the place of their final destiny, such smoke would certainly torment their mind, knowing that they would finally be turned into it themselves. (Many Jews had a similar experience as they entered Nazi concentration camps and saw the thick smoke billowing out of the furnaces. Such smoke was a torment to them, knowing that their life was about to be terminated and that they would be cast into the ovens to be totally exterminated. Many of those who were put to death in this manner had hope of life after death, and this took some of the sting out of dying. However, no such hope or comfort will exist for those who are rejected at the judgement seat of Christ. Their death will be absolutely final, with no hope of seeing life again. This will be a far worse torment than any other kind of death experienced up to that time).

In the light of the following Scriptures, which many of the unfaithful followers of Christ would know, the smoke from Gehenna would certainly torment their minds: "The wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; they will vanish in smoke" (Ps. 37:20). "As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God" (Ps. 68:2).

When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone, "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (Gen.

19:28). And as pointed out before, Jude verse 7 says "they are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." But the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah are not still alive suffering torment in the fire! No doubt many of the tribes and villages which saw the smoke ascending up from Sodom and Gomorrah were "tormented" by it, wondering if they might be destined to a similar fate!

The latter part of Rev. 14:11 says: "And they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." This period of no rest is experienced during the time that the beast is worshipped and the mark of his name received. It does not refer to the period after being cast into the fire. The passage clearly says that the unrest is experienced by those who worship (not "worshipped") the beast, and receive (not "received") the mark of his name. The language is in the present tense, not the past tense, indicating that the unrest is experienced during the period that the beast is worshipped and his mark received.

The reference is back to the oppression suffered by all who yield themselves servants to the beast. The system represented by the "beast" is a hard taskmaster, and the foolishness of coming under his power and influence is emphasised here. It results in oppression and hard servitude while the beast remains in power, and destruction in Gehenna fire after his power is broken. Either way, there is nothing to be gained.

The contrast is provided in Jesus Christ who said: "Come unto me all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ..." There is "rest" day and night for those in Christ, and "no rest" to those who yield to the anti-God system styled the "beast."

Refusal to come under the power of the beast will result in much tribulation and deprivation (of goods and life) for many saints, and they will need much faith and patience to stand firm in that period. Thus, Rev. 14:12 continues by giving a word of exhortation: "Here is the patience of the saints ..." But, if the period of "no rest" in verse 11 referred to endless torment of the worshippers of the beast in the fire and brimstone, what possible relevance could this exhortation have to that? Surely the period of "patience" will be over for the saints once the anti-God system has been judged and consigned to the flames. Christ would have returned and rewarded his saints, investing them with power over the nations.

REV. 20:7-10

“**A**nd when the thousand years (millennial reign of Christ) are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city (Jerusalem): and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

This passage is sometimes quoted to support the traditional view that the unsaved will be endlessly tormented in fire. In reply to this the following points should be noted:

(1) Once again there is no mention of disembodied spirits of men being tormented, and nothing is said to support the idea that hell is deep down under the earth.

(2) The passage has nothing to do with what happens to the unsaved when they die prior to the second coming of Christ, and neither does it have anything to do with what happens to the unsaved at the return of Christ. The passage is dealing exclusively with what happens to the nations that rebel against Christ's reign at the end of the millennium.

(3) The passage does not say that the rebel nations are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. It is the "devil that deceived them" that "was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" (v10). And, seeing that this thesis is only concerned with ascertaining the destiny of the unsaved from among the descendants of Adam, it will not concern itself with the destiny of the "devil." Suffice it to say that my concept of the devil is completely different from the traditional concept, and a separate thesis dealing with the subject is available.

So then, it was the "devil" that was cast into the "lake of fire and brimstone" and not the rebel nations themselves. The rebel nations were clearly "devoured" by the fire which God sent down direct from heaven: "And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (v9), as they gathered around the city of Jerusalem. No mention is made of them remaining alive in the fire, being tortured eternally. These nations that gathered against Jerusalem were "devoured" by the fire, and not kept alive in it. Otherwise we would have to conclude that Jerusalem will be surrounded eternally with fire in which the rebellious nations will suffer

unending torment. Not a very grand picture at all! Who can imagine the city of the great king where Jesus sits upon his throne in company with his redeemed saints, surrounded on all four sides with a roaring fire in which the wicked are crying and screaming out in pain? Away with such nonsense! Cast it back to the dark superstitious ages from which it came!

(4) Rev. 20:10 in the King James Version says: "The devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are ..." This translation, by the usage of the word "are," tries to suggest that the beast and false prophet, who were cast into the fire at the beginning of the millennium, are still there at the end of the millennium when the devil was cast in. If so, it would suggest that they were not exterminated in the fire, but lived on, thus providing evidence for the eternal torment concept.

In actual fact, the truth of the matter is the very reverse. It is important to note that the word "are" is in italics, indicating that it is not in the original manuscript. And if someone asks: "Why introduce such words at all if they are not in the original?" The answer is that they are often needed to complete the expression in the sense of the original. The structure of the Greek and Hebrew languages is so different from English as to make a word-for-word translation impossible; and it often happens that additional words are needed in English to complete the expression of an idea which in the original is only hinted at. In the majority of cases the necessity for the additional words is so self-evident that the added words legitimately form part of the translation, and need not be italicised: in some cases however, there is room for doubt, and therefore the safe rule is adopted of italicising in all cases where the words used in the translation, have no corresponding terms in the original.

Naturally, when there is some doubt as to what word should be added in italics to give reasonable sense in English, the translator's doctrinal prejudices will influence their choice. If the adding of one word in a specific text results in supporting one of their major doctrinal concepts, the temptation to do so would almost be irresistible! Rev. 20:10 is a case in point.

Many modern scholars and translations agree that the word "are" gives the wrong sense. The Revised Standard Version, Amplified, Weymouth, Rotherham, Emphatic Diaglott etc give the word "were" instead. And this completely changes the sense: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet were." In other words: the beast and false prophet were once in the fire but are no longer. Why? Because they have been

consumed and destroyed! This puts another death-blow on the doctrine of eternal torments.

PURGATORY

The twenty second Article of Religion of the Church of England very truly describes "the Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory," as "a fond thing vainly invented." However, it must be confessed that it was not "vainly invented" as far as vast pecuniary profit to Romish Priests is concerned.

But many of the clergy of the Church of England today are by no means so sure that Purgatory is a "fond" or foolish thing, as were some of their predecessors. There are those who believe that even after death there must be some conscious growth and development in the intermediate state between death and judgement, seeing that spiritual growth is gradual from the cradle to the grave, thus allowing the soul to become more and more prepared - more and more fitted to be with Christ. Some clergymen believe that they can believe in this spiritual development in the intermediate state without believing in what their article calls: "The Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory."

One vicar is reported to have said that "it is a matter of common knowledge that out of a thousand men who die, 999 are much too good for hell, and not nearly good enough for heaven."

From this piece of human philosophy this "reverend" gentleman draws the conclusion that purgatory is a wise and necessary provision for the reformation and ultimate salvation of the 999 moderate sinners out of every 1,000 men who "are much too good for hell." The vicar is very modest. He does not claim a monopoly of this valuable and interesting information; he puts it as a matter of quite above the necessity for evidence - everybody knows it! He says it is "common knowledge." The statement and the doctrine it maintains are an example of the expedients to which religious teachers are put, as a consequence of their theory of the immortality of the soul.

The contemplation of the horrible and immoral proposition of eternal suffering which their spiritual ancestors passed on to them, leads them to take this silly alternative. It is silly because it implies that men are not to be redeemed because Christ destroyed sin and its power, but because of so many centuries of purgatorial pains. Having failed, or not attempted during life upon the earth to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, these evils are to be roasted out of them under the earth!

Augustine believed in the possibility of an alleviation of the punishments, and Gregory ratified and developed that belief, and so purgatory became more important than hell. The story of the interplay of hell and penance; and purgatory and indulgences; is a very long one. Suffice it to say, that in an age when all education was controlled by the Church, when printing had not yet been invented; the Church kept its masses in ignorance, and showed considerable psychological insight by playing on the fear of the believers, more than on their hope - that less powerful factor in uneducated minds. Their mystery plays were directed to the inclination of fear, and once that fear was offered a refuge in the shape of purgatory, through the channel of indulgences; considerable revenues were assumed to the Church. Thus in the Middle Ages much greater stress was laid on hell than on heaven.

Hell was both the means by which the Church maintained its influence, and the cause of its prosperity. The Protestants rejected purgatory, and insisted on the immediate transference of the soul at death to heaven or hell. That fact, together with man's increasing respectability and the growth of the capitalist system, explains the change of stress from hell to heaven which dates from the Renaissance.

These century-old ideas about heaven and hell retained much of their pristine force until towards the end of last century. Up until that time the fear of eternal punishment still possessed the minds of the "orthodox" devout. Since that date, a further move in the Restoration programme has taken place, the full effect of which is still yet to take place. From that time many men have had their eyes opened to the real truth about hell and have fearlessly preached and published their message. The result has been that "hell-fire" sermons have been preached less and less frequently in many circles. Today, they are quite rare. The Catholic Church of course still holds to its old belief. Nor has any official alteration been made in the Church of England Prayer Book, in the passages relating to heaven and hell. But the Spirit of God is moving and stirring among many dead bones, and ultimately, when the Restoration programme runs its course, and all the vain traditions of men have been cast aside; the fullness of the Holy Spirit will operate as in days of old.

MANKIND DIVIDES INTO THREE CATEGORIES

Mankind can be divided into three classes:

- (1) Those who hear the gospel and obey it.
- (2) Those who hear the gospel and do not meet its demands.

(3) Those whom circumstances preclude from hearing the gospel at all, and who therefore, fail to believe and obey it.

The first class of course attain to eternal life.

The fate of the second class is plainly revealed in Scripture. They will be rejected at the judgement and consigned to Gehenna-fire: "the second death."

The third class, forming by far the largest part of mankind, have never heard the gospel, and for the most part (excluding the short period of modern enlightenment) have been in the darkness of complete heathen barbarism or pagan philosophy. What is to become of them? Popular theology sometimes says they will go to hell. Sometimes it says they will go to heaven. Sometimes it says they will go to purgatory. Believing that all men possess an immortal soul forces tradition into finding some place to put them after death.

The first assumption outrages justice. Who can entertain such a view that a righteous God would consign men to endless torture, for not believing and obeying a gospel that circumstances prevented them from even hearing?

The second assumption violates every principle of divine justice also. Who can entertain such a supposition in view of the fact that they are sinners, and already excluded from life? Besides, if darkness and unenlightenment be a passport into the kingdom of God, why did Jesus send Paul "to turn the Gentiles from darkness to light - that they might receive inheritance among them who are sanctified"? (Act. 26:18). If salvation in barbarism is certain, it would be better to let men remain in ignorance than imperil their eternal destiny by the responsibilities of knowledge.

The rule of responsibility is "light" i.e. enlightenment makes a man responsible. This is also according to reason, for knowledge is the ground of responsibility in all transactions, human and divine. To hold a man responsible who did not know and who had not been told, would be cruelty and injustice. "If ye were blind (ignorant), you would have no sin: but now you say, We see, therefore your sin remains" (Jn. 9:41). "If I had not done among them the works that no other man did, they would not have sin: but now they have both seen and hated me and my Father" (Jn. 15:24). "Where there is no law, (or knowledge of it), there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15).

So then, those who never hear and therefore never believe or obey the gospel, are not responsible for judgement and condemnation. On the other hand, they also do not qualify for eternal life. Scripture clearly teaches that "without faith it is impossible to please God, for those that

come to Him must believe he exists and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Faith and obedience are two vital requirements for eternal life, and many Scriptures could be quoted to illustrate this, as all Bible students will know. It would be incongruous to admit an ignorant and unbelieving pagan into the kingdom of God simply because he never heard the gospel!

This class of people obviously cannot attain to eternal life. Having never seen the light, they have never accepted or rejected it, and for that reason cannot be liable to the judgement that awaits those who have. They are exempted from all responsibility and there is therefore no ground on which they can be judged. They have none of the responsibilities of the rejecters of the gospel, but they also have none of the privileges of its enlightened and obedient believers. What, then, is to become of them?

On the strength of the following passages of Scripture, it is evident that being exempted from all responsibility, they cannot be judged and therefore will not be resurrected. They will never see life again, but pass away as though they had never existed. They will never see the light of resurrection, but continue in the sleep of death.

Paul deals with this issue in Rom. 2:12: "As many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law." Resurrection does not take place in their case. Death passes upon them under the only law they were ever related to i.e. the law of Adam; and they sleep, never to be disturbed. Their position is described in Isa. 26:13-14: "O Lord, our God, other lords beside Thee have dominion over us (i.e. ignorant pagan rulers) ... They are dead, they shall not live: they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore, Thou has visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish."

Then reading on from verse 19 the prophet Isaiah provides the contrast by affirming that God's "dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise ... the earth shall cast out the dead."

A similar declaration is made in Jer. 51:57 regarding the aristocracy of Babylon, who belonged to the identical class of whom we are speaking: "... they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake, saith the king, whose name is the Lord of Hosts" (also v39).

God is just, and in all this His justice is made manifest. He could not punish them with justice, and He could not reward them with justice; therefore He puts them aside.

Speaking about the same class, Isa. 43:16-17 says: "they shall lie down together (i.e. ignorant men and animals); they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched like a wick."

Again: "... they shall never see light (i.e. never be resurrected). Man that is in honour (full of pride), and understands not (ignorant) is like the beasts that perish." "Like sheep they are laid in the grave ..." (Ps. 49:14). Again the contrast is made in verse 15: "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for He shall receive me." Two distinct classes of people are referred to here. Those who are ignorant of God and die like animals, never again to be resurrected and see light, and those like the Psalmist who know and love God and will be redeemed from the grave.

Job. 15:20-30 is an interesting passage for it speaks about the wicked man who is opposed to having faith in God. As a result, such a man "does not believe that he shall return out of darkness (death)" - v22. That is, he does not believe in resurrection. Thus, when he dies, "he shall not escape out of darkness" (v30). Such men are referred to in Ps.88:5 as those whom God "remembers no more."

Failing Scriptural evidence to prove the immortality of the soul, some take refuge in the fact that it is a wide-spread belief. This is a fact, but cannot be used as an argument, for ignorance is usually more wide-spread than knowledge. The vast majority of mankind are content with that which they attain without effort, and to leave unattended that which involves labour. A wide-spread belief, on the basis of history, especially a belief that requires discernment, is likely to be a wrong belief. History provides many illustrations in the superstitions that have prevailed. There was a time when many believed the world was flat and that the sun travelled around it. It is still a wide-spread (and spreading) belief that the stars influence destiny. Even when bacteria were seen under a microscope, men refused to believe it had any association with disease. It means very little to say therefore, that the immortality of the soul is correct simply because it is such a wide-spread belief.

Some take refuge among "the ancient Egyptians, Persians, Greeks etc," and among "the wisest and most celebrated philosophers on record." All these people - the superstitious and dark minded heathen of every land, the founders of the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God - all these believed in the immortality of the soul, and therefore, it must be true!

Logic extraordinary! One would think that the opinion of the ignorant and superstitious in favour of the immortality of the soul would rather be against, than for, the likelihood of its being true. The Bible does not rate our ancestors very highly as regards their views and ways in religious things. Paul speaks of the period prior to the preaching of the

gospel (when Greek philosophy prevailed) as "times of ignorance" (Act. 17:30). Of the wisdom which men had accumulated for themselves, through the reasonings of "the wisest and most celebrated philosophers," he says: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 1:20. 3:19). Wise men will take their stand with Paul and repudiate all human philosophy.

The orthodox believer so often glories in the wisdom of ancient philosophy which Paul pronounces foolishness. This present writer attended a public address recently to hear an Orthodox minister of high esteem throughout the country, set out to prove that man has an immortal soul. Not one Scripture was quoted to establish the doctrine! In fact, the speaker went so far as to say that we shouldn't treat too seriously many of the things that Abraham and Paul taught! The Bible was laid aside, and in its place a great deal of reference was made to the writings of Plato and Socrates. The whole talk was purely "vain philosophy" and human reasoning.

Paul says that immortality was brought to light by Christ in the gospel. If so, how can we believe in the version of it put forward by the pagan philosophers centuries before Christ appeared, whose wisdom; Scripture declares to be "foolishness?" Either Christ brought the truth of the matter to light, or he didn't. If he did, then the philosophical doctrines up to that time were darkness, and not light.

Immortality is seen in its true light in the resurrection of Jesus. Immortality is a conditional gift to be bestowed at the resurrection when Jesus returns. It is not a present possession in the form of an immortal soul. The proposition is plain and the evidence conclusive. May it be the happy lot for all of us to inherit it on the last day!

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