

When A Man Dies

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1. The Mystic Realm of Death

WHEN a man dies, what becomes of him? Here is the question that has confronted the race of mankind from its beginning. It is the question which hovers in the background of every man's thinking during his entire life, and becomes more insistent and important as he advances toward the end of life.

For life does end for all men. That is the most positive and certain and inevitable thing in the world. We become increasingly aware of it as our years multiply. And we come to be more conscious of our need of an answer the nearer we come to the change from life to death. We know something of life, what it is and means and holds. But death-what does it hold? A great adventure? Or endless silence and oblivion?

On no other question have men set forth and toyed with so many theories or engaged in more speculation. And for most of mankind it has remained in the realm of theory and speculation and profound mystery.

The religions of the world have done their share of theorizing and speculating-and have arrived at no certainties. They leave the question still in the realm of mystery and fog, and provide no solid ground upon which a man can place his feet with assurance and confidence. None of them really answers the question of the ages, "Man dies, and wastes away: ... and where is he?" (Job 14: 10).

What awaits us in those shadows ahead? One replies, "Heaven." Another, "Hell." Still another, "Purgatory." And yet another, "Just oblivion." But who knows? And which answer is right? or is there another answer altogether?

What we need here is an authority, one that knows-an authority based, not on theory or speculation, not on theological claims or dogmatic pronouncements, but on experience.

The whole reach of human knowledge is bounded by death. We know what it is to be alive. Shot through with mystery as it still is, nevertheless we have experienced life. About death we know only one thing, that it is a fact and comes to all men. But what it is to die we do not know, for we have not died. What death holds for us or any other mortal we do not know, for we are not dead. Life is a present experience. Death is a profound mystery. Our area of knowledge does not project itself into the realm of death, does not extend itself beyond the mere fact of death. Up to the end of life we know. But the end of life is also the end of knowledge. Beyond that, with the beginning of death, all is unrelieved blackness. No one living on earth has passed into that realm, gone through it, explored its mysteries, and re-entered the realm of life to disclose what he there learned.

Sure and Reliable Knowledge Available

What we need is the testimony, the trustworthy and reliable testimony, the positively authoritative testimony, of one who lived on the earth and then died, who not only experienced death but entered and passed through its dread realm, exploring and learning all its secrets, and who returned to and re-entered the realm of life, willing and ready and able to make known what death is, what it means, what it holds, from the standpoint of actual experience and actual and unimpeachable knowledge.

Do we have any such testimony? Is such sure and reliable knowledge available? The answer is, We do, and it is. We do not need to rely on the sham, deception, and fraud of spiritualistic seances or the lying testimony of pretended spirits of the dead; that way lies confusion, worse confounded and unrelieved blackness. We have no need to rest on the unsupported speculations of dogmatic theology; that way lies continued conjecturing and unending contradiction. There is no necessity even to listen to the guesses and hopes and yearnings of the philosophies of men; that way lies endless uncertainty and lack of knowledge.

No, there is One who knows, and who knows because He has died; who is now alive, and has spoken; who has disclosed all that any man needs to know about death, and whose revelation has met every test of reliability, authenticity, trustworthiness, and authority.

All men die. Few have ever returned to life. Only one of those few learned anything or has disclosed anything of death. But One has. It is to Him we turn; it is to Him we look; it is to Him we go; it is He whom we are ready to believe. When He speaks of life and death, He knows.

He it is who accurately described His own qualifications to speak on this subject by the impressive statement: I am the first and the last: I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore and have the keys of hell [the grave] and of death” (Revelation 1: 17, 18).

2. The Inerrant Source of Truth

THE Son of the living God not only lived on earth among men and as a man but also entered the mysterious realm of death. He knows all its secrets. Not one is hidden from Him. He did not remain in that dread realm, however, as others have. He could not be held there; He broke its bonds, delivered Himself from its power, and returned to life. And He is alive forevermore. “Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death hath no more dominion over him” (Romans 6:9).

He had power to break the dominion of death; He has knowledge of all the secrets, both of life and of death. To supply that knowledge to men, and to impart that power, a revelation is necessary, an authoritative revelation. He has supplied that revelation and embodied it in a Book, the most reliable Book in the world.

For the first disciples, those who knew Him and companioned with Him, and saw Him meet death, and talked with Him after He came again to life, His very presence was a complete revelation. But we today do not have His visible presence, though He is alive. We do have His words. These are sufficient and adequate-and altogether reliable.

All Scripture Inspired

The revelation He has made of life and death and eternity is embodied in a Book. That Book is known as the Bible, the Holy Scriptures. And “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for instruction: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The authority and reliability of the Bible as a revelation of God and His Son Jesus Christ may be demonstrated with convincing certainty by its genuineness, its credibility, and its divine origin.

It is genuine, this revelation. The men wrote it who claim they wrote it. There is no fraud about it, no deception. For this we have the testimony of the church through the centuries. The direct testimony of its sixty-six books themselves; the confirmation of this testimony by the allusions to Jewish, Roman, and Greek history contained in them, allusions which could not have been made accurately by later writers; and the testimony of the opponents of Christianity through the centuries who, while opposing the teachings of the Book, have, by their very opposition, confirmed the truth that such writings by such writers existed in their day and were genuine.

The Book is credible. It is worthy of acceptance and belief. Other books may be genuine but not true. The Bible is both. Its credibility is evidenced by the untarnished character of its writers, its agreement with the established facts of history, the unvarying beneficial and helpful effects of its teaching, and the multiplying corroborations of archeological research. Of all the manifold discoveries of archeology not one is in conflict with the Bible. New discoveries consistently continue to confirm its truth and accuracy.

The Bible is of divine origin. No other conclusion is possible when its infallible accuracy in prediction and prophecy is considered; when its unique conception of the person of Christ, with His superhuman balance and combination of qualities, and the sinless perfection of His character, is examined; when its unvaryingly beneficial effects on human life in all centuries, all races, all places, all conditions, are taken into account.

This last is the great, the determining, the pragmatic test. “By their fruits you shall know them.” If you would know the divine or human character of a religion, look at what it does. If you would know the character of Confucianism, look at China. If you would know the character of Islam, look at Turkey and Iran. If you would know the character of Buddhism and Hinduism, look at India. Then look at Christianity, the religion of the Book, and the consistent, never failing effect it has on those who accept it and on the lands where it is given free course.

It is different. It is divine. In all others man is groping for and seeking God. In Christianity, God is seeking man. The others, all of them, are but human aspirations, poor, feeble, inadequate. Christianity, revealed in the Book, is a divine revelation supplying every human need.

God Has Spoken

So God has spoken to man. He has spoken to man in His Son and in His Word. And the revelation of His truth for us is in the Bible, as it is nowhere else. That being so, the question of the ultimate authority regarding truth is settled. The last and supreme word concerning God, man, life, death, and eternity has been spoken. That supreme authority is the Bible.

There are those who would have us believe that the source of final authority is to be found in human reason. They are wrong. I would not deprecate reason. It is valuable and altogether indispensable. To test the claims of any professed revelation, reason is necessary. It is wholly necessary in order to receive the revelation thus tested. Nevertheless, it is not the source of authority.

The reasoning faculties of mankind have been affected by the fall of the race. Sin has not left these untouched but has unsettled their delicate balance and accurate functioning. Absolute reliance cannot be placed on their operation. Even if this were not so, there is such a thing as truth and reality wholly apart from, and independent of, reason.

Truth is not what I believe. Truth is not even what I know. Truth is fact. I may not believe it. I may not know it. That does not change it. It is there nevertheless, waiting to be discovered and believed. Truth does not depend on the unsettled and changing opinions of men. It was truth before it was believed. It remains truth, whether it is believed or not. Reason does not originate or create it. It merely discovers it. Consequently, reason is not a source. Truth goes back beyond reason.

Others would have us believe that the church is the source of authority, particularly in matters of theology. They are wrong. The church is the product of truth. It does not originate it. It came into being by accepting divine revelation. It is not the source of that revelation. Truth goes beyond the church, is antecedent to it.

The Source of Authority

It is in the Bible that we have the source of authority. It is in the Bible that we have embodied and preserved the revelation God has made. That revelation is in this Book in its clearest, purest, its fullest form. The Bible is true, and it contains the truth. In it we possess the best available form of God's revelation to man.

It is not a Book of one age, one race, or one language. From its earliest years it has passed readily, by spontaneous reception, from race to race and from people to people. As the centuries have passed, it has migrated without violence into new regions, and found a home among widely different tribes, separated though they have been by every conceivable difference of climate, government, custom, culture, and religion. As it conquered the conquering Goths and other barbarians of the early centuries, so today its sway is felt throughout the whole world, heathen and civilized alike.

That its power is not derived from race or clime is demonstrated when it is taken to savage, cannibal islands and transforms barbarians into peaceful, law-abiding citizens; when it changes a wild, native warrior into the editor of a paper, and a Negro slave into the president of an African republic. It changes human lives for the better wherever its teachings are followed and its truths accepted.

It has stimulated the intellects and energies and attracted the love and veneration of men. The literary geniuses of the world, in struggling to give utterance to their thoughts, have drawn largely from this Book. The greatest masters of prose - Bacon, Milton, Ruskin, Macaulay - have, perhaps unconsciously but no less really, laid hold of Scripture phrase and metaphor. The influence of the Bible on Shakespeare's genius and writings is so striking as to have stimulated many writers to analyze and trace it.

The extraordinary influence and authority of this Book, as compared with that of any and all others, is seen, too, in other aspects of life, in sculpture, in painting, in music. It has stimulated genius in these fields as has no other agency. Its majestic scenes have become the outstanding themes of painting and music. The greatest masters of these arts never weary of embodying the ideas it suggests. Its altogether unique word pictures, its vivid narratives, its poetry and pathos, have served as an inexhaustible source of inspiration to painters.

Every event of outstanding importance recorded in its pages has been made the subject of some great oratorio, on which the gifts of their genius have been lavished by such masters as Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn. The greatest paintings of Raphael and Michelangelo can be traced to it. The greatest modern epic, *Paradise Lost*, and the greatest musical creation, *The Messiah*, are built on the mighty themes of the Bible.

The position the Bible has occupied, and increasingly occupies, amid such various circumstances, through such distant ages, among such different races, amid such fluctuations of taste, and in spite of all the opposition of its enemies makes it an altogether singular phenomenon.

For almost a thousand years the Sacred Scriptures have gone hand in hand with advancing civilization, with science, law, letters, learning, the arts - in brief, with the moral and intellectual cultivation of the human race, always stimulating and leading the way.

A Universal Book

So the Bible is one of the greatest facts in the history of mankind. It is universal in its appeal. Though it is Oriental in its origin and background, nevertheless its teachings carry a profound appeal to, and wield a powerful influence among, every people and race on earth. It influences every type of mind, every degree of intellect, every gradation of life. Prince and peasant, artisan and mechanic, ruler and subject, employer and laborer, learned and unlearned - all alike read its fascinating pages, study its profound truths, and are benefited thereby.

Its words are spirit and life. It is different, wholly different, from every human product. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is poetry. Shakespeare's writings are tragedy and comedy. Cicero's writings are eloquence. But Christ's word is life. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

The words of the Bible are filled with living energy, pointed with penetrating power. “The word of God is quick [living], and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Here, in this Book, is truth, authoritative and final truth, the words of Him who Himself is very truth, who was dead, and is alive, and who holds the keys of death and the grave.

Therefore, in searching for the truth of this question of death, of what becomes of a man when he dies, we go to this source with complete confidence. The authority of the Bible we take as supreme and final. It is above reason. Not that reason and the Bible must of necessity be in conflict. The Bible is the light of reason, of human thought; it comes from God. Reason may be, should be, employed upon it. Reason examines its claims, weighs its evidence, tests, sifts, inquires, studies, analyzes, but the moment it becomes convinced, accepts the truth, and then takes a subordinate place and makes the Bible, the revelation of God, supreme.

The authority of the Bible is supreme because it is divine. It is above the church. The church is a witness to the Bible; it is not its author. It is a keeper of the Bible; it is not its maker. The Bible is above creeds. Creeds are often very able, but they are the productions of men, and therefore fallible and liable to error. The Bible was produced under the control and guidance and direction of the Spirit of God, and is therefore inerrant in its teachings. The creeds are not binding upon the conscience; the Bible is. They contain only human echoes of the heavenly message; the Bible is that message.

It is, therefore, to this divine Source that we turn in our search for light and truth on this supremely important question of the condition of man in death.

3. Life and Death

As we turn now to the Bible to examine its inspired teachings regarding the condition of man in death, let us make sure our definitions are correct. We are unwilling to accept either forced and unusual meanings for the basic terms we are examining or the figurative meanings of traditional theology. Our words life and death are Bible words. Let the Bible place its own meaning on them, and all is well. But all is not well if they are given meanings that force them into supporting preconceived theological dogmas. The plain, simple, literal meanings of the words themselves must be allowed to prevail.

With regard to the words life and death, however, they are among the phenomenal words that require no definition or explanation. They designate and describe phenomena with which we are quite familiar. Etymologists and metaphysicians may analyze their derivation and interior signification, and argue about the real source, essence, and meaning of the terms. But for all practical purposes they require no definition. Their meaning is so obvious that any attempt to define them only obscures the subject and confuses the mind.

Life is a phenomenon of nature. It is everywhere visible. So is death. They are all about us continually. The one is set over against the other. Consequently, they are called antithetical terms. They explain each other. If we know one, we must also know the other.

The Antithesis of Life

Death, however, is not merely the antithesis of life, as darkness is of light, and cold is of heat. It is more. Death implies a previous life. It denotes the loss of what was once possessed. It would not be accurate to predicate death of a stone or lump of clay. They were never alive. Consequently, they never died. Rather than being dead they are lifeless.

Death is also an absolute and ultimate term. We cannot predicate degrees of death as we can of many other terms. Nothing is dead that contains any life. It may be almost dead, or about to die, or dying, but it is not dead until all life is gone, completely extinguished.

No words of the Bible have suffered more than these two words, life and death. They are its most important words. If they are allowed to have their plain, obvious meaning, we shall experience no difficulty in ascertaining the meaning, nature, and condition of death. But when the literal and ordinary meaning is taken out of them, and they are tortured into meaning something else, then confusion and error are bound to ensue.

Why should anyone be unwilling to believe that Scripture means exactly what it says when it employs the words life and death? It sets forth death as the certain result of sin. It declares perpetuity of life to be the portion only of the righteous. When God promised Adam perpetuity of life on one condition, obedience, He meant just what He said, and just what Adam must have understood Him to mean.

Adam could not have understood these words in any other sense than simple life and death. Nor did he understand them otherwise until the great deceiver, the “liar from the beginning,” suggested another meaning, a figurative meaning, which is not the true meaning at all, but which has come to be accepted by most of Adam's descendants, and, unfortunately, has found its way into the theology even of Christian churches.

God plainly meant, and Adam understood Him to mean, that when men die as a consequence of sin, they actually die. They do not live on somewhere else. They die, really die. And death is the exact opposite of life.

Man Not Deathless

But the devil's philosophy meant, and still means, that God was wrong, that man would never die but live on with a perpetuity of life like that of God. “You shall not surely die” but “shall be as gods” (Genesis 3:4, 5).

The devil taught that man is a deathless being; that he is not mortal and transitory, like all other things in nature with which we are acquainted. He cannot lose his life. Whether sinful or holy, saved or unsaved, man will live on and on, as long as God Himself shall live.

That teaching originated with the devil. He has met with the most phenomenal success in having it accepted by mankind. It is taught now in Christian churches. But it is just as much the devil's lie now as it was when he originated it wherever it is taught. It was a lie to begin with. It has been a lie ever since. It is a lie now. No amount of acceptance in the creeds of Christendom will ever make it anything else but a lie.

The Christian Scriptures teach the exact opposite and they teach the truth. In the plainest possible words they teach that man, though he might have lived forever had he lived without sin, fell under the sentence of death the moment he sinned, and became a mortal, transitory creature.

When death overtook him as a consequence of sin, and he passed into its realm, he would not live somewhere else, he would not live in torment and misery, he would not live at all, in any condition whatever, good or bad.

The Scriptures plainly teach that man, with this mortal, transitory nature, possesses no hope at all of continuing life save through redemption from death by a divine Savior. That under sentence of death as he is, he may nevertheless find a new life, but only through Christ, who has died in man's stead.

The Bible Easily Understood

The Scriptures plainly teach that all those who die unredeemed, all the wicked, are "lost," shall be "cast away," shall be "blotted out of the book of life," "shall be destroyed," "shall be burned up," "shall be consumed," "shall utterly perish in their own corruption." This is taught in every variety of language possible, throughout the whole Bible, from beginning to end, and in the plainest words that can be used.

It takes no special learning or education to understand words such as the Bible uses to explain the meaning and condition of death. The reader of Holy Scripture does not require a theological training to take in the meaning of the plain words of the Bible. The Word of God was not written especially for preachers or philosophers or theologians or poets, but for men of all classes and conditions of life. Its teachings are for all men, and it is adapted to the understanding and mental grasp of all men. Although it contains poetry, prophecy, parables, and proverbs in which the use of figures of speech, symbols, and types should be expected, such as are common in other similar writings; nevertheless, by far the larger part of the Bible is in clear, simple, easily understood prose.

It was written for the people generally, and it may be, and should be, understood without the aid of highly trained exegetes and metaphysicians.

Unfortunately, many theological school men, commentators, and creed makers have contrived to make "the Word of God of none effect" by inventing fantastic meanings for plain, simple words of Scripture, meanings directly contrary to the words themselves. It is an old device. Christ denounced it in His day. Jehovah condemned it in Job's time when He asked the searching question, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"

As a matter of fact, the practice may be traced back to the beginning of the human race, to the Garden of Eden, where the great adversary of truth is seen endeavoring to convince our first parents that God falsified when He declared death to be the consequence of sin. The "liar from the beginning" did this by construing the threat of death to mean, "You shall not surely die: you shall be as gods," who are immortal. That lie is being taught as truth today-and in Christian churches and Christian creeds. Instead of being believed, it should be driven out of existence, certainly out of the Christian church, by the plain testimony of the Word of God.

The Devil's Lie

Many Christians have been led to believe the devil's lie that death does not mean death but rather life somewhere else. Man, they claim, is immortal, just as Satan declared. He cannot actually die. The death which the Creator threatened cannot mean actual death. It must mean something in the nature of "an unchanging, eternal state of misery and wretchedness" or something else. Anything but death.

But Jehovah said death, not life in misery, or in any other condition, but death. And death is not life-anywhere. It was against this sort of perversion of the plain meaning of the Word of God that Paul warned the early believers when he wrote: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

Paul refers specifically to this very act of the devil by writing: "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your mind should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

Honest treatment should be given the Word of God. We may be warranted in indulging our fancy when fiction or poetry is read. The authors invite us to do so. But when we read a volume of history or law or science or biography, we are bound to construe the language in its plain, literal sense. That is what should be done when the Bible is read. No man will be led into paths of error who will make that the rule of his reading.

Who would think of giving a fanciful, "spiritual," meaning to the Constitution of the United States, or to the laws of the country? When the law declares death to be the penalty for capital crimes, who understands that to be a figurative expression for some other punishment? When a judge solemnly pronounces the sentence of death upon a guilty criminal, who understands him to mean perpetual and lifelong imprisonment with torture?

A False Theology

But when many read the constitution of God's government and the laws which He has instituted and declared in the most solemn manner, they construe His words in exactly this fanciful way. They understand the penalty of death which He threatens, as meaning, not death at all, but rather "the destruction of the sinner's well-being," "a forlorn and wretched existence endlessly perpetuated."

Some understand death to be endless torment in the fires of hell; others, endless life in the bliss of heaven; others, the wretchedness of purgatory. What a strange understanding it is that requires death to mean life, somewhere! But that is what follows the practice of putting strange and fanciful meanings on the plain words of Scripture.

The salvation which is offered in the gospel is not salvation from torment, from suffering; it is salvation from death. "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death" (James 1:15). There are pains and sorrows and miseries, of course, that sin produces, that are sin's inevitable accompaniments and results. But these are not the death which is threatened.

And it is from this death that Christ saves those who accept Him. These two words, life and death, are the crucial words, the principal words, the distinctive words, that mark the difference between the two classes of mankind known in the Scriptures, the righteous and the wicked. These are referred to by a large variety of titles, such as the righteous and the wicked; the children of God and the children of the world, or of the devil; spiritual men and natural men; the saved and the lost; the elect and the reprobate. But the specific reward promised to the saved is life, life forevermore, life without end; and the specific doom of the lost is death, death. These are the words used throughout all the Bible to declare the lot, the portion, the end, of these two classes. The word signifying "to die," or death, occurs at least one thousand times in the Scriptures; and the word signifying "to live," or life, occurs nearly as many more.

Though there are examples in Scripture of the figurative use of life and death, because there are parts of the Bible which are wholly figurative and use metaphors, it does not follow that its plain, sober prose, its didactic instructions, its judicial utterances, its gospel promises, are to be treated as tropes and metaphors, and that the plain, ordinary meaning is to be taken out of them and another put in.

No book more than the Bible demands of its readers honest, reverent treatment. We should come to its perusal saying, "I will hear what the Lord will speak," and be determined to lay aside all human philosophies and traditional dogmas, and come as children to the reading of the Scriptures, desiring to know what the Master Himself would teach us. Then we shall believe the divine word that "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

To Die Is to Stop Living

It is not alienation from God, with torment, which is the wages of sin; it is death. It is not union with God, with happiness, which is the reward of righteousness; it is life itself. So when a man dies he does not live somewhere else. He is not in heaven, not in hell, not in purgatory. He is not alive at all, anywhere, in any condition whatsoever. He is dead. And to be dead does not mean to be alive.

To be dead does not mean to go to heaven; it does not mean to go to hell; it does not mean to go to purgatory. Indeed, it does not mean to go anywhere at all. It means simply an end of life.

Death is not a modification of life. It is not life at all. It is not a continuation of life in altered conditions. It is not a release into a fuller life. It is not life in misery, or life in happiness, or life in any condition. To die is not to live. It is to stop living.

Death is a cessation of life, an absence of life, the exact opposite of life. So in death there is no life. The man does not live; the body does not live; the soul does not live; the spirit does not live; the mind does not live. Intelligence ends, consciousness ends, memory ends, knowledge ends, thought ends. All that has comprised the man ends.

This does not mean that there will be no future life. That will be discussed later. It is not now under consideration. There will be a future life. But this will not be a continuation of the life that now is. It will be a new life, another life. And it will begin, not when a man dies, but when he is raised from the dead, at the resurrection.

Between death and the resurrection where are the dead? This, too, is fully answered in the Bible.

4. Where Are the Dead?

LIFE and death, we have seen, are antithetical terms. They are so understood in reading all literature. They must be so understood when the Bible is read. Death is not life in any condition. It is the loss or ending or extinguishing of life, not its continuance. It does not mean "separation from God," or "loss of the divine favor," or "a state of sin and misery," or anything and everything dreadful, but simply what it does actually mean—death, the extinction of life itself.

We turn now to the Book of God and observe how plainly all this is stated, that death and destruction are the portion of sinners.

Look first in the oldest book in the Bible, Job, and observe the plain meaning it gives death:

"How oft is the candle of the wicked put out!" (Job 21:17).

"They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carries away" (verse 18).

"They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them" (verse 26).

“Do you not know their tokens, that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction?” (verse 30).
“By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed” (4:9).

“He shall perish for ever like his own dung” (20:7).

“He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night” (verse 8).

“If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and men shall turn again unto dust” (34:14, 15).

“He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down: he flees also as a shadow, and continues not” (14:2).

“There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again.” “But man dies, and wastes away: yea, man gives up the ghost, and where is he?” (verses 7, 10).

“As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decays and dries up: so man lies down and rises not: ... they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep” (verse 11).

Complete Cessation of Life

The writings of Moses in the first five books of the Bible, known as the Pentateuch, contain many passages emphasizing the truth that death is a complete cessation of life. He entreated, warned, and threatened the Israelites, using constantly the words destroy and perish and die and be brought to naught.

But the truth we are emphasizing is adequately demonstrated in these writings when we look merely at Jehovah's words of warning in the beginning: “You shall surely die”; then at the positive announcement to Adam of the fatal consequence of his sin. “Dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return”; then at the record of his exclusion from the tree of life, and the reason therefor: “Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.” This is enough to establish the truth that man cannot live forever in sin, that sin is bound to cut him off from life.

The book of Psalms is full of such passages as these:

“The way of the ungodly shall perish” (1:6).

“The ungodly ... are like the chaff which the wind drives away” (verse 4).

“Thou shall destroy them” (5:6).

“The wicked shall be turned into bell (the grave), and all the nations that forget God” (9: 17).

“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” (37:20).

“As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God” (68:2).

“For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish” (73:27).

“When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever” (92:7).

“For, lo, your enemies, O Lord, for, lo, your enemies shall Perish” (92:9).

“For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not W' (37:10).

“His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (146:4).

“The redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceases for ever” (49:8).

“Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations. Nevertheless, man being in honor abides not; he is like the beasts that perish.” (verses 11, 12).

“Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.” “He shall go to the generations of his fathers; they shall never see light” (verses 14, 19).

“Man that is in honor, and understands not, is like the beasts that perish” (verse 20).

“Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more” (104:35).

Destroyed Without Remedy

Solomon, in the book of Proverbs, declares:

“The lamp of the wicked shall be put out” (13:9).

“He that speaks lies shall perish” (19:9).

“He, that being often reprov'd, hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (29: 1).

“The expectation [thread of life] of the wicked shall perish” (10:28).

“There shall be no reward [literally, no hereafter, no futurity] to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out” (24:20).

The prophets declare:

“The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4).

“The destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed” (Isaiah 1:28).

“They shall be as though they had not been” (Obadiah 16).

“For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, said the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Malachi 4:4).

Turning now to the New Testament, we find the same truth taught. Passages cited are sufficient to establish the New Testament teaching of the condition of man in death.

“Destroy both soul and body” (Matthew 10:28).

“Shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire” (Matthew 13:41, 42).

“Cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:5).

“Every soul, which will not hear ... shall be destroyed” (Acts 3:23).

“As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law” (Romans 2:12).

“Vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Romans 9:22).

“Whose end is destruction” (Philippians 3:19).

“Who shall be punished with everlasting [not torment, but] destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9).

“Which drown men in destruction and perdition [complete ruin]” (1 Timothy 6:9).

“Whose end is to be burned [destroyed as chaff]” (Hebrews 6:8).

“Sin when it is finished, brings forth death fit does not stop short of death” (James 1:15).

“Utterly perish in their own corruption.” (2 Peter 2:12).

Not Alive Somewhere Else

The force of these passages all points in one direction, and leads to one conclusion: When a man dies his life is ended. He is not alive somewhere else. This is asserted in every way in which it is possible for language to assert it, positively and negatively, by parable and by every variety of figure of speech.

The wicked when they die are said to perish, to be destroyed, become like chaff and stubble, to be utterly consumed root and branch, to be dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel, to be ground to powder, thrown away as bad fish, thrown down like a house without foundation, to wither like a branch that has been cut off, to consume away into smoke as the fat of rams, to perish like brutes in their own corruption, to become as ashes, to be devoured, to be as nothing, to be as though they had not been, to be no more, not to be, and a host of like expressions.

While these fearful figures express pain and suffering, and the utmost anguish, they express more than this. They express death and utter destruction as the end and the ultimate consummation of all these afflictions of the divine wrath.

That we be not required to fill all the available space at our command with the quoted words of Scripture, and because the Bible is accessible to all, and because of the profound conviction it will bring to every searcher for truth to look at the Bible words for himself, we urge you now to take your Bible in your hands and be prepared to look into its teachings on this subject.

Death in the Bible is represented by sleep; by a negation of all life, thought, and action; by rest, resting place, or home, silence, oblivion, darkness, destruction, and corruption.

The question no doubt will arise in the mind of the reader, either here or elsewhere, Are these things so? My reply is, Search and see. I would not believe upon the testimony of others, nor do I ask you to. Take your Bible and search it. Under the guidance of Him who is the way, you may hope to arrive at the truth here, and share the life hereafter. And remember, as stated in one of the great creeds, that “Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” - Articles of Faith of the Church of England, art. 6.

Death a Sleep

In the case of good men the Bible represents death as a sleep. Deuteronomy 31:16; 1 Kings 1:21; 2:10; 11:43; 15: 24; 22:50; 2 Kings 15:7, 38; 2 Chronicles 9:3 1; 14: 1; 16:13; 21:1; 26:23; 27:9; 32:33; job 3:13, 14; 7:21; 14:11, 12; Psalms 13:3; 17:15. Matthew 27:52; John 11:11,13; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Corinthians 15:6, 18, 20, 5 1; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15; 5: 10; 2 Peter 3:4.

Death in the case of bad men is also represented as a sleep. 1 Kings 14:20, 31; 16:6, 28; 22:40; 2 Kings 8:24; 10: 35; 13:9; 14:16, 29; 15:22; 16:20; 21:18; 24:6; 2 Chronicles 12:16; 27:9; 33:20; 1 Corinthians 11:30.

The same representation is made in the case of all men. Daniel 12:2; John 5:27, 29.

Death is represented in the Bible as a negation of all life, thought, and action, even to good men. Job 3:11, 13, 16; 14: 10, 14; Psalms 6:5; 30:9; 88:10-12; 115:17; 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10; Isaiah 38:18, 19; Acts 2:34.

Death is represented in the Bible as a rest, and the grave as a resting place, house, or home. Job 3:11-13, 17, 18; 17:13, 16; Ecclesiastes 12:5, 7; Isaiah 57:2. It is also represented as corruption and destruction. Job 4:19, 20; 26:6; 28:22; Psalms 16:10; 49:9, 12-14, 19, 20; Proverbs 15:11; 27:20; Acts 13:36.

In accordance with these representations of the unconscious state of death, the Bible makes it plain that the dead do not awake, nor are they made alive, until the resurrection. Psalm 17:15; John 6:39; 11:24-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; Romans 4:17.

The wicked and the righteous, the lost and the saved, are not separated, but remain together until the resurrection at the return of Jesus to the world. Matthew 13:30, 40, 41, 49; 24:31, 32; Mark 13:26, 27.

Human beings are on trial, or in a state of probation, until the resurrection at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:20; Philippians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Timothy 6:14; Titus 2:12, 13; Hebrews 10:35, 37; James 1:12; 5:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 2 Peter 3:11, 12, 14; Revelation 2:25.

The saved who die do not join “those who have gone before” in heaven; the righteous of all past ages will not be gathered until the resurrection. Matthew 24:31; Mark 13: 26, 27; 2 Thessalonians 2: 1.

Wicked men are not to be punished in judgment before the Advent of Jesus and the resurrection. Matthew 12:36; 16:27; John 5:28, 29; 12:48; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:5, 6, 16; 1 Corinthians 3:13; 4:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 6A, 2; 2 Peter 2:6, 9; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 1: 7; 6:16, 17; 20:12-15.

The saved of all generations will not be rewarded until the return of Christ and the resurrection. Matthew 13:43; 19:28; 25:19-21, 23, 31-34, 46; John 5:28, 29; 6:40, 44, 54; 16:22; Acts 3:19; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 15:52-54; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 5:14; Ephesians 4:30; Revelation 11:18.

The righteous are not to put on immortality or be received into the presence of Christ or enter into His joy or behold His glory or become like Him, until His second coming and the resurrection. John 6:54; 17:24; Acts 3:20, 21; Romans 8:17-19, 23; 1 Corinthians 15:52-54; Philippians 3:20, 21; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 4:14-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6, 7, 10; 2 Timothy 1:18; 4:8; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:4; 1 John 3:2.

The faith of the righteous, together with their labors and sufferings, is lost, perished, unprofitable, if there be no resurrection. John 6:39; 1 Corinthians 15:17, 18, 32, 58; Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:6.

Supreme Object of Hope

The resurrection, not death, is the supreme object of our hope and comfort. Acts 23:6; 24:15; 1 Corinthians 1:7, 8; 2 Corinthians 15:9, 10; 4:10, 14; Philippians 3:11, 20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10; 4:17, 18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 3:5; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:18; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 11:35; 1 Peter 1:3-5, 13; 2 Peter 3:13; 1 John 3:2, 3; Revelation 1:18.

These many passages disclose that in dealing with the connection between the present and the future being of men the Scriptures do not take into account the intermediate state of death; no more than we, in considering the course of any man's actions, take into account the time he sleeps. Consequently the Scriptures in many passages affirm an immediate connection between death and the judgment. Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:8-10.

When, therefore, we consult the Bible on this great question of what becomes of those who die, and what their condition is in death, we learn, without the slightest equivocation or ambiguity, that they are not with Christ in heaven. John 3:13; 7:33, 34; 8:2 1; 13:33; Acts 2:34.

They are not in the fires of hell. If so, what need of a future judgment? Job 21:30; 2 Peter 2:9.

They are in their graves. John 5:28, 29; Acts 2:29. They are all in one place. Ecclesiastes 3:20. They are in the dust. Genesis 3:19; Daniel 12:2; Psalm 22:15; Job 7:21.

The place of the dead is one of darkness, silence, and repose. Job 3:11-19; 10:21, 22; Psalm 88:12; Ecclesiastes 9:10.

They praise not the Lord, and exercise no mental powers. Psalms 6:5; 88:10-12; 115:17; 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:6; Isaiah 38:18, 19; Job 14:21.

They sleep. Deuteronomy 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 2:10; 11:21, 43; 2 Kings 20:21; 2 Chronicles 9:31; 32:33; 26:23; Job 3:13; 7:21; 14:12; Psalm 76:5; Matthew 27: 52; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Corinthians 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thessalonians 5: 10; 2 Peter 3:4.

They know not anything. Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Job 14:21.

Death Not Life in Another Sphere

Here, then, is the plain teaching of the Bible, expressed in positive and unmistakable language, concerning the meaning and condition of man in death. No words can be more explicit, more expressive. Nothing can more clearly indicate the truth that death is a sleep, not life in another sphere.

By sin death came. It passed upon all men, for all have sinned. “The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). Certainly this is a subject that concerns us all most deeply. No wonder that the Word of God so urgently presses upon us the work of diligent and persevering effort for the salvation of men, and commends to us as a potent motive the fact “that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death” (James 5:20).

For, thanks be to God, a new and holier life is revealed in the gospel of Christ, as also a more fearful mortality than we have already possessed is shown to be the consequence of the rejection of this gift of life, called “the second death.”

What, then, shall that life be which shall know neither grief nor gloom, and shall be as interminable as the years of God? And what shall that death be whose darkness shall be unbroken throughout the everlasting ages?

How these truths should impress our hearts! Christ has died to save us from death. His resurrection makes accessible to us a new and boundless life. Can we be indifferent to such possibilities? Shall we make no effort to escape that death?

The blood of the divine Redeemer has been poured out for the teeming multitudes that throng the path to death. Can we forbear to repeat in their ears those words of tender and mournful entreaty which God has uttered, “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?”

And we who read these words, how shall we live before that God who has set before us “life and death,” bidding us meanwhile to “choose life,” that we may live?

Are not these things calculated to operate as a restraint upon sinners when they learn that “the wages of sin is death?” Are they not sufficient to cause Christians to forsake sin and live lives of holy self-denial and patient endurance? Let us all give heed to the solemn words of the apostle, declaring with an emphatic and authoritative voice:

“If you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live” (Romans 8:13).

5. Sin and Sinners Not Immortal

MAN was created with a capacity for an endless life. He was created with a desire for immortality. But he was not created with an endless life, nor was immortality made a part of his nature when God brought him into being. Whether he should obtain what God had in mind for him, however, was made dependent on the outcome of a test, a trial, a probation, to which God put him.

His immortality was conditioned on sinlessness, holiness, a retention of the image of God in which he was created. He did not successfully meet the test. He did not carry out the condition. He sinned, and sin brought death. Sin robbed him of his destiny. Sin prevented his immortality. Sin kept him from obtaining that for which he was constituted.

Immortality in Christ, Not in Man

It is because of this tragic loss that a Redeemer came into the world. Christianity is the religion of redemption. What mankind lost in Adam may be regained in the second Adam.

And from this emerges the great truth that immortality is in Christ; it is not in man. If man is to obtain immortality, he must obtain it in and through Christ, its source. Out of Christ man is lost, with no prospect of an endless life. Immortality, so far as humanity is concerned, is conditional, conditioned on union with Christ. Endless being is dependent on absolute and endless sinlessness; and, failing that, upon reconciliation with God and the impartation of the life of God through the redemption of Christ.

Sin, in its very nature, is disorganizing and destructive. It is destructive not merely of happiness but of life itself. It is bound to bring to death those who persist in it and who reject the salvation from it which is provided in the gospel. “Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death” (James 1:15). Nothing can exist eternally that does not conform to the will of God. There will be no eternal sinners. Everything in existence now that remains out of harmony with God's purpose will sooner or later go to utter ruin, pass out of existence, and give place to that which is loyal and pure.

When man sinned he became, in the essential nature and necessity of things, a mortal creature, even though he was constituted for immortality. He did not become partially mortal; that is, actually perishable so far as his body was involved but retaining immortality for his soul. He became mortal throughout-body, soul, and spirit-the whole man. He lost all reasonable hope, and even the possibility of immortality in any sense, except by some divine and supernatural remedy.

His Thoughts Perish

Nothing is more common in our churches than to hear religious teachers speak of the “immortal soul. The immortality of the soul. The never-dying soul.” Nothing like this, however, can be found in the Bible. It is in the creeds; it is not in Scripture. The soul of man in the Word of God is everywhere represented as mortal and transitory, sharing the fortunes and destiny of the body. It comes with the breath; it goes with the breath. It is imprisoned with the body, killed and poured out in the blood. It has no function or power of manifestation or of action, no existence, apart from the body. “His breath goes forth; he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146:4).

I am not unaware that this will be called heresy in certain quarters, for the accepted philosophy has attached such odium to this teaching as to frighten many from seeing or acknowledging the plain teachings of the Scriptures. But it is not heresy-or, if it is, then it is the heresy of the Bible, and will stand in spite of all the hard names that may be given it.

The Bible may be examined from Genesis to Revelation with scrupulous and searching care, as I have done for half a century, and no other conclusion can be arrived at than that the soul of man nowhere is represented as a separate, conscious part of man existing as such when the body sleeps in death. The current theology on this point is not sustained by facts, true philosophy, logic, common sense, or the Bible.

Immortality Not a Birthright

Christian men should be willing to subordinate their speculation concerning the human soul, and the nature of man, to the Word of God. When they consent to do that, and receive its plain and positive teachings with respect to the mortal effect of sin, and the necessity of another and higher life than that received from Adam, they will discern that in order to have eternal existence and perpetuity of life, they must obtain the life of God Himself. And outside the gospel of Christ, that is not possible. Immortality is not inherent in man; it is not a birthright; it is conditional.

When the mortality and the transitory nature of man, constantly affirmed throughout Scripture, is accepted, it puts beyond all controversy or question-that is, to all who are willing to receive the testimony of God's Word as the truth -the fact that there is no immortality for man except in the possession of the eternal life which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). Without that, men must remain mortal, must perish and become extinct.

The Bible tells us how we have become mortal and transitory. It makes plain that perpetuity of life was expressly conditioned on perpetual holiness; that the boon of continued life was lost in Adam. That the very reason why he was put out of Eden was “lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever,” after he had become a sinful creature (Genesis 3:22). It discloses how the blight of sin, like cancerous blood, has come upon the whole of Adam's race, and that it is inevitable, sooner or later, that it will develop until it ends in death and oblivion -unless some divine remedy be provided. It shows that holiness is necessary not

only to happiness but also to an endless life; that sin is destructive not only of well-being but of being itself; and that “sin, when it is finished, brings forth death” (James 1:15).

Notwithstanding all this, however, the Bible also makes it plain that the condition of man is not hopeless. God in His mercy has provided a ransom and a remedy. The desires and aspirations of perishing man are not altogether unwarranted or futile. God designed man for immortality, constituted him for it-but not in sin. How, then, shall this great possibility, lost by sin, be recovered? How shall man be lifted up from the mortal condition into which he has fallen, and come into fellowship with God, his Maker? How shall the life of God be imparted to his soul? How shall man become a subject of the everlasting kingdom of God?

Repeating the Devil's Lie

The tempter assured our first parents that they would not lose their lives even by disobeying God, that is, by sin. They chose to believe him, notwithstanding God's positive word to them. He has been repeating this lie to their posterity ever since, even to this day. Philosophers and theologians have had glimpses of the possibilities of man's nature, and have interpreted these as evidences of his inherent immortality, even without a Savior. So have their willing disciples in all ages. But none of them has been able to tell men how to make sure of the good for which they yearn.

It is not in philosophy, or in nature, or in theology, to teach this truth. It can be taught only by a divine revelation. There is nothing in the natural endowment of humanity that would enable men to grasp it without such a revelation. It is supernatural-the gift of God through Jesus Christ. It is not within the reach of men by any effort of their own. It cannot be earned by good works.

It is a free gift to all who will receive it as such. This is the eternal life that is brought to light in the gospel. It was for this that the Son of God came from heaven and died, not merely to save us from sin and suffering, but from that to which sin and suffering inevitably lead-death. That life, that escape from death, is in the gospel of our divine Lord.

The Ultimate Loss of Life

The doom pronounced upon Adam and his posterity was the ultimate loss of life. He was to have a transitory life of pain and sorrow on earth until he returned to the dust from which he was taken. Look now at the execution of that doom, the carrying out of that sentence of death.

If Adam had possessed immortality as an endowment from his Maker, he might have been capable of transmitting it to his posterity. But Adam did not have it to transmit. And as a stream can rise no higher than its source, so the posterity of Adam, inasmuch as he had no immortality to transmit, are born without everlasting life. They receive by birth, by inheritance, only the transitory and perishing life that Adam had to transmit. He could beget children only in “his own likeness of sinful flesh.” He had no immortality. Consequently his posterity are born without immortality. If they obtain it, they must get it from Him who alone has it.

Death Inevitable

This is in harmony with the clear and uniform teaching of God's Word. Men possess, like their fallen progenitor, only an earthly and transitory life. Sooner or later death is the inevitable lot of the whole race of man.

If men ever come to have any other life than the transitory, perishable life inherited from Adam, it must be by the quickening power of the Spirit of God. This blessing will be supernatural, not natural. This spiritual and supernatural life, which is immortal, is revealed in the gospel of Christ.

Even when the sentence of death was passed upon our first parents, they were allowed a glimpse, and given a hint, of this possibility. Intimation of it became clearer and more distinct as man passed over the course of time from age to age. Growing brighter and brighter, it bursts into assured certainty of life and immortality through Jesus Christ the Redeemer.

It is this that was offered to give man hope after the Fall. It is this that was designed to keep him from utter despair and demoralization, and to encourage him to look heavenward in expectation. It is this that drew out his soul in longing for the coming of the Life-giver, the Messiah.

It is because of this that “the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God,” while “the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.” It is this that lay at the foundation of the faith which characterized the patriarchs and prophets and other men of God, to whom He more plainly revealed His purposes of grace. This is the otherwise undefined “better thing” which He had provided (Hebrews 11:40). It was in anticipation of this that the ancient worthies, placed on the roll of honor in Hebrews 11, were enabled to live as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” though they died “not having received the promises.” It is because of this that there has been an unbroken succession of faithful ones, till in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, and the veil is rent, and the future life of His people through Christ as the second Adam, which is immortal life, is fully disclosed in the gospel.

Let it be clearly understood that this future, immortal life is no part of the old life; it is not the continuation of the natural life into another state. It is an altogether new life, another life through the Spirit.

The former passes away. This, dating from the new birth, endures forever. The first was natural and perishable. This is supernatural and imperishable. The first was mortal. This is immortal. In order to possess it one must become a new creation, or rather, the very possession of it makes one a new creation. He is “quickened” by the Spirit of God. He is “born again not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).

It is clear from what we have learned that the decree of death pronounced upon our first parents because of their sin, and which has passed upon their descendants, the whole race of men, is God's method of protecting His universe from sin's becoming

immortal. His original purpose of a clean, sinless world will yet be carried out. There will be neither immortal sin nor immortal sinners.

The Offer of a Higher Life

The first pair of our race had their genesis on this earth. Though they were the highest of all its created beings, nevertheless, like all animal creatures, they were made of and from the earth. They were given the name Adam-earth made-because they were essentially earthly. They were of the same physical organization as all other earthly creatures, made of the same materials and designed to breathe the same air, subsist on the same food, come into life by successive generations in the same way; but they differed from the animals in possessing reason and the power of choice. They were candidates for immortality, but not yet possessed of it.

Their character was yet undetermined and immature. They must first submit to a period of probation to demonstrate their fitness for immortality. If they gave themselves to obedience, they would prove themselves worthy of the endowment of immortality offered to them, as well as capable of enjoying it. On the other hand, if they turned away from Him who is the source of life and blessedness, and went contrary to His will in disobedience, then they must lose their right to the tree of life and continued existence.

The test was applied. They failed. Instead of believing God, they chose to believe the tempter. God warned of death as the result of disobedience; the devil declared that God was wrong, that they would "not surely die." The penalty threatened by God, he assured them, would not be executed. Instead of suffering the loss of life, they would be great gainers by transgressing, would gain the knowledge they desired, and become as gods, knowing good and evil, and they would never die. They believed this lie, and disobeyed God. As a consequence the penalty threatened was executed upon them. They fell under the sentence of death, and with them the human race which was in their loins.

The Penalty Visited Upon Sin

The penalty visited upon the race was precisely that which had been threatened-death. It was not eternal torment; it was not continued life in misery. Every principle of honor and of truth demands that God should have said what He meant, and meant what He said, in announcing to them the penalty for their disobedience. The supposition that He had in His own mind a penalty wholly different, indeed one so terrible as to shock the moral sense, and that He covered it up and concealed it, revealing it only when the offense was committed, can be credited only by those who repudiate the truth and justice of God.

We have God's own interpretation of His meaning when He declared, "In the day that thou eats thereof thou shalt surely die." They lost at once and forever all claim to immortality. They fell immediately under the sentence of death. However long their transitory existence might continue, it would surely end in returning to the earth from which they came.

From that moment of their sin they became subject to death, and continued in a dying state until death itself overtook them. They passed from a state in which death was not the necessary end of their days to a state in which the seeds of ultimate death began to work in them. They passed from a state of access to the tree of life, continuance in which could have conferred immortality upon them, to a state in which they were barred from that tree, and thus became wholly mortal and perishable.

That literal death was meant by God, and all that accompanies it of the dissolution of the entire being, is manifest when we are assured, in Genesis 5:5, that Adam "died."

Unfit for Immortality

The human race thus proved itself unfit for immortality, and has never had this attribute. If mankind had not, because of the mercy and grace of God, been granted another probation, immortality would have been forever denied the human race.

6. The Bible and Immortality

IMMORTALITY is an attribute of God. It is not an attribute of man. Man is not born with it as an inheritance. He does not have it by nature. He does not have it at all, except as he obtains it from God. He can obtain it from God only on conditions which are plainly set forth in the Book of God.

Man's relationship to immortality is that of a seeker. The idea of natural immortality is something quite unknown to the Bible. The teaching of the immortality of the soul is wholly unscriptural. No such expression is found within the pages of the Bible. Man is said to be mortal, never immortal. And this is true throughout the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. There is not even the slightest hint in the Scripture of the inherent immortality of the human soul.

On the contrary, the teaching of man's natural immortality is uniformly and constantly denied in the plainest of terms on almost every page from Genesis to Revelation. Indeed, one of the main objects of the Word of God appears to be to make plain how brief, vapory, shadowy, evanescent, transitory, the life of fallen man is; and how enduring, substantial, and eternal is the immortal life which is God's, and which may be imparted to the souls of His children on the conditions laid down.

Those who have taken the pains to examine the matter declare that the human soul is spoken of in the Bible more than sixteen hundred times. Not in one solitary instance of these sixteen hundred references is the soul spoken of as immortal or deathless in its

nature. It is always described as short-lived and perishable. Its only hope of an eternal future existence is the hope held out to it in the offer of salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Rule of Faith

It is neither my desire nor my purpose to put forth any philosophy of my own. My sole aim is to point to the teachings of revelation as set forth in Scripture. I have no theory or hypothesis to offer, no new definitions to give. My simple desire and object is to know and believe what the Bible, which is the rule of faith for every genuine Christian, has to teach regarding this, and every other subject.

After the most careful and earnest examination of the Word of God no other conclusions can be arrived at than those which have been set forth, and which may be summarized thus:

Man was created with a capacity for an endless life, and a desire for it.

It was assured to him, however, only on condition of perfect obedience and sinlessness.

By a law of his being, and of all being, sinlessness is absolutely and basically essential to perpetuity of existence.

In its very nature sin is disorganizing and destructive, not merely of well-being, but of being itself, when it is finished.

Nothing can exist eternally that does not conform to the law of its own being and the will of God, its Creator. It must, sooner or later, go to utter ruin, pass out of existence, and give place to that which does conform to the will of God, the loyal and the pure.

When man sinned, as sin he did, he failed in the test or probation applied to him to determine his fitness for immortality, for which he was constituted. He lost all hope, and even all possibility of immortality, unless some divine and supernatural remedy should be provided. By sin he became a wholly transitory creature, subject to death and extinction.

Life Out of Death

God's purpose in man's creation, however, was not to be foiled by the malice of Satan or the folly of man himself. God's plans were laid deeper and reached farther than at first appeared. God had taken into consideration the possibility of human sin.

God has power to bring life out of death, salvation out of ruin, and make what seemed a great and remediless disaster contribute to the display of the riches of His wisdom and grace through Jesus Christ His Son, and even to the higher glory and blessedness of man himself. This He has set Himself to do.

The purpose of God is to lift man out of the ruin into which he precipitated himself by sin; to set before him again the possibility of eternal life through a second Adam and a new birth. To give him another life; to make him a new creation, a spiritual being; and ultimately to place him in His own everlasting kingdom.

This purpose was hinted, though but vaguely, immediately after the Fall. It was prefigured in the sacrificial system in the death of the victims on the altar. It was foreshadowed in the Mosaic ritual, and gradually unfolded to the faith of the patriarchs and prophets as that "better thing" which God had provided for His people.

It was fully revealed in the coming of the redeeming Messiah Himself, through whom life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel.

The Unspeakable Gift

This was the purpose for which the Son of God came to earth. This was the object of His incarnation and death to make it possible for dying man to live forever. This is the gift of God, "the unspeakable gift," the gift of everlasting life through Jesus Christ to man.

But it is forced on no man. It is conferred on those alone who believe. It cannot be bought. It cannot be earned. It cannot be deserved. It cannot be demanded as a right. It is a gift, a free gift. It must be received as such, or not received at all. It must be desired, sought, asked for, and received from the only One who has it to confer—Jesus Christ our Savior.

These are the conditions, the indispensable conditions, the only conditions, of the bestowment of immortality. To as many as receive Him He gives "power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). This will constitute them heirs and subjects of His everlasting kingdom. There sinlessness, happiness, and immortality will be united in endless perfection.

All other kingdoms are destined to come to an end. All other life is transitory. The kingdom of this earth, Satan's kingdom, is a kingdom of darkness and death. However long it may endure, it contains within itself the seeds of death and utter ruin. It must fade away before the light and glory of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord, and He alone "shall reign for ever and ever."

Immortality Conditional

It is difficult to read the Bible without being struck by the fact that the nature of man is everywhere contrasted with the nature of God. God is infinite; man is finite. God is immortal; man is mortal. God is eternal; man is transitory. God has immortality in Himself; man has no immortality in himself.

His only hope of living forever is dependent, or conditional, upon union with God through Christ.

The Bible, in the very plainest terms, reveals that the life of man is brief and temporary. It never once calls him immortal, or deathless, or ever living. It emphatically declares him to be the opposite. He is said to be "mortal" in Job 4:17; Romans 6:12; 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54; and 2 Corinthians 4:11.

In James 4:14 the question is asked, "What is your life?" and immediately we are given the inspired answer, "It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away."

Man's life is said to be like grass, which in the morning flourishes and grows up, but which in the evening is cut down and withers (Psalm 90:5, 6).

Human life is like a shadow, like a shadow that continues not and a flower that is cut down (Psalm 102: 11; Job 8:9; 14:2). It is like "smoke" (Psalm 102:3). Like the "flower of the field" (Psalm 103:15,16). Like the grass that withers and fades (Isaiah 40:6,7). Peter writes, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away" (1 Peter 1:24).

A Shadow

Inspiration declares, "Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passes away" (Psalm 144:4). "Thou has made my days as an handbreadth; ... verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Psalms 39: 5; 62:9).

Perhaps the most concise and impressive and convincing way we can get before us the content of Bible teaching on this subject of immortality is by the catechetical form. In the forty questions and Biblical answers that follow, every passage of the Scripture that uses either the word immortal or the word immortality will be included.

It may come as a surprise to many to learn that the Bible uses the word immortal only once, and immortality but five times.

Forty Questions and Answers

1. Who is immortal? "The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God" (1 Timothy 1:17).

2. Are not all men in possession of immortality? "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality" (1 Timothy 6:15, 16).

3. Are not all men created immortal? God "only hath immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16).

4. Is there a way by which "mortal" man may obtain immortality? "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1A).

5. Where is this immortality revealed? "By the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

6. Who has power to bestow immortality upon man? "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

7. Will God give this great gift to all persons, whatever their works may be? God "will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6).

8. What will be the portion of those who are contentious and obey not the truth? "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil" (Romans 2:8,9).

9. To whom will God impart immortality? "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality" (Romans 2:7).

10. What shall be their reward? "Eternal life" (Romans 2:7).

11. Upon what conditions may men obtain this blessing? "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:12).

12. When do men obtain immortality, at death or at the resurrection? "The dead shall be raised incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

How shall those who are not dead become incorruptible? "We shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

13. When will this change take place? "At the last trump" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

14. How suddenly will the change occur? 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" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

15. Will this change be a change of the internal or the external and physical or corruptible man? "This corruptible must put on incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:53).

16. What then becomes immortal? "This mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15: 53).

17. What scripture will be fulfilled 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" (1 Corinthians 15:54; Isaiah 25:8).

18. Who will be raised from the dead? "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28, 29).

19. Will the unburied rise? "The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them" (Revelation 20:13).

20. Will different classes of characters be raised? "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15).

21. For what purpose will the good be raised? "They that have done good unto the resurrection of life" (John 5:29).

22. To what will the rest be raised? "They that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29).

23. Will a man's final destiny be in accordance with the life he has lived? "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

24. What will be the portion of the ungodly? "He that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6:8).

25. What shall be the reward of the righteous? "He that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8).
26. Where now is the Christian's life? "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).
27. How, then, should we live? "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).
28. What will be the fate of those who by sowing to the flesh reap corruption? "These, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed and shall utterly perish in their own corruption" (2 Peter 2:12).
29. Is it possible for man to be utterly destroyed? "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10: 2 8).
30. What is the wages of sin? "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).
31. Is this only a bodily death, or a death of the whole man? "The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).
32. If the wicked turn away from his wickedness and do right, what then? "He shall save his soul alive" (Ezekiel 18: 27).
33. When a righteous man turns away from righteousness and commits iniquities, and dies in them, what then? "For his iniquity that he hath done shall he die" (Ezekiel 18:26).
34. As he first dies in his iniquity and then dies for his iniquity, what must his last death be called? "The second death" (Revelation 21:8).
35. What is the result attained by the man who converts a sinner from the error of his ways? "He ... shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).
36. What, then, has God placed before us to excite us to action? "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).
37. How does God manifest His love for men? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).
38. What is the Savior's charge against men? "You will not come to me, that you might have life" (John 5:40).
39. What is the command of God to all? Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, said the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves and live you" (Ezekiel 18:31, 32).

7. Bible Truth Versus Human Tradition

WHEN the Bible teaching regarding life, death, and immortality is understood, many related doctrines at once become clear. When the nature of man is seen in the light in which the Scriptures set it forth, as mortal and not immortal, many human traditions are bound to be discarded. When the plain teaching of the Bible on this subject is accepted, great light will be thrown on questions long shrouded in darkness.

It is not the Bible that has given rise to all the contradictory views which prevail about immortality. The Bible is a plain, common-sense, consistent revelation of the truth that God would have men understand. In the very nature of things it cannot teach, and certainly does not support, doctrines that contradict one another. Look for a moment at the various views held by men about the nature of man and a future life. Look first, however, at the Biblical teaching, and hold it in mind as opposing views are considered.

Cessation of Conscious Existence

The Bible teaching is that man is mortal. All future life depends upon Jesus Christ and is bestowed by God through Christ. Natural death, which comes to all men, is not life in another realm or state but a cessation of all conscious existence. It is, however, a temporary cessation of life, for there will be a resurrection. This resurrection at "the last day" will include the whole race of humanity, both righteous and wicked. All will be raised to be judged. The righteous will then put on immortality, and the wicked, destitute of the life that is in Christ, will die the second death—be punished with everlasting destruction, not everlasting torment, and utterly perish in their own corruption.

That is the clear, positive teaching of Holy Scripture. But it is not the view held by all Christians. Many have been raised from childhood to believe that man by nature is immortal. They look upon their bodies as prisons and clogs from which, at death, their immortal souls will be released, the righteous to go at once to heaven, the wicked to be plunged into hell. The first will enjoy the presence of God forever; the second will be compelled to endure the torments of hell forever.

Purgatory Does Not Exist

There are those who hold a modification of the second view, believing that even the righteous, possessing immortal souls, instead of going directly to heaven at death, are held in a place called purgatory. In this place their disembodied spirits, after the lapse of a greater or lesser period of time, become purged from every stain by the sanctifying influence of fire and brimstone. The process of purification in purgatory is held to be materially hastened by the repetition of certain Latin prayers, which those specially qualified are always ready to offer—when paid to do so. Then, after the judgment, the purged saints will enjoy eternal blessedness while the incorrigible wicked endure eternal torment.

The teaching of the Bible, that all men are mortal, clears away the confusion as to where the truth lies in these conflicting theories. Man, being mortal, not possessing an immortal soul, does not go to heaven, hell, or purgatory when he dies. He goes into the grave. There he neither endures pain nor enjoys bliss. He is completely unconscious, knowing nothing. He is asleep, awaiting the resurrection and the judgment to determine his eternal destiny. He is not in a place of torment. He is not in a place of happiness. He is not in purgatory. All the prayers and masses in the world will not reach him or benefit him. He is dead.

Immortal and Immortality

No Bible writer except Paul ever makes use of the words immortal and immortality. He uses the word immortal but once, and immortality but five times. He never applies either of these to sinners. He never applies either to the righteous or to sinners in this world. He never applies either to men's souls at all, either before or after death.

Paul applies his single use of the term immortal to God (1 Timothy 1:17). He declares that God is the only possessor of immortality (1 Timothy 6:15, 16). He says immortality is revealed, or brought to light, in the gospel of the Son of God (2 Timothy 1:10). He presents immortality as an attribute which men are to seek for by patient continuance in well doing (Romans 2:7).

He locates the time when immortality shall be "put on" by the followers of God, and fixes it at the resurrection, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear (1 Corinthians 15:52-54). Consequently, the only inspired writer who mentions immortality at all never taught the immortality of the soul, or of man, as it is now taught in some Christian pulpits and creeds.

Not one of the approximately forty writers of the Bible ever once speaks of any person as "dying and going to heaven," or "dying and going to hell," or "dying and going to purgatory." They all knew better. Such views have their sources in other places than the Christian Scriptures. And such views, because they are not only un-Biblical but anti Biblical, should be instantly discarded by all Christians. The Bible and the Bible alone is the basis, and the only basis, of genuine Christianity.

All Needful Truth

We have in the Bible a book in which God has made a revelation of all truth necessary to salvation. This Book contains all needful information regarding man's origin, history, condition, nature, and destiny. Its plain and positive teaching throughout is that man is mortal, not immortal; perishable, not deathless; that his only hope of a future life is in Jesus Christ and Him alone.

The sacred writings of the Christian faith promise life to those, and those only, who believe on Jesus Christ. They threaten death and destruction to the disobedient and the rebellious. This is the Bible teaching regarding man and man's destiny, regarding life and death. This is its teaching regarding a future life-life in Christ, death out of Christ.

The Eternal Conquest of Death

GOD made man for immortality. He did not make him immortal. Man was placed on probation to determine his fitness to live forever. He might have been exempt from death forever had he never sinned. Adam brought death on himself and all mankind by sin. Mortality became the lot of humanity. And that has persisted from the beginning until now. Man has found no way in himself to avoid the consequences of his sin. For six millenniums the whole race of man has been steadily plunging over the dread precipice of death.

Nevertheless, we hope for immortality as confidently and ardently as do those who believe the anti scriptural view of the deathless nature of man. Moreover, we advocate the doctrine of immortality as earnestly as they.

We differ only in the grounds of our hope. We teach it as a Christian doctrine; they as a doctrine of philosophy. They claim it from Adam by their natural birth; we from Christ only by a new spiritual birth and a resurrection from the dead. They believe it to be the natural endowment of every man; we believe it to be a supernatural endowment, received by faith as a gift of God's grace through the redemption provided by Christ.

It is still the purpose of God to immortalize man, but not in sin and misery. Only as men are restored to holiness by Christ do they become fit for immortality. Then at His Second Coming these, and these alone, receive it at His hand.

A Monstrous Conception

The monstrous conception of two everlasting kingdoms running parallel with each other---one a kingdom of purity and blessedness known as heaven, the other a kingdom of endless sin and sorrow known as hell; the first to resound with the praises and joy of the redeemed men and unfallen angels, the second with the groans and blasphemies of lost sinners and devils to all eternity-is a doctrine invented by the devil to discredit God.

It is not a doctrine of the Bible.

The Bible comprises two Testaments, the Old and the New. In these there are revealed to us two worlds, two Adams, two progenitors, two births, two covenants, two classes of men, two kingdoms, two divine advents, two lives, and two deaths. These couplets are contrasted throughout the Scriptures. In all cases the second is superior to, and more substantial and enduring than, the first.

The first world, perfect indeed at its creation, is now under sin. It is therefore unstable and transitory. The new world is revealed as a brighter, better, more substantial, and more glorious world. It is as yet invisible, spiritual in its nature, fitted and destined to endure forever. "For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

First and Second Adams

The first Adam was created “out of the dust of the ground.” He was the noblest and highest of earthly creatures, with a capacity for an endless existence. This was to be assured, however, by his maintaining himself in sinlessness, without which he could neither possess nor enjoy eternal life. He proved himself unworthy of endless life by disobeying his Creator. He failed to live up to his highest possibilities. “That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual” (1 Corinthians 15:46).

The fall of the first Adam made necessary the revelation of the second Adam. He was born of a woman, but begotten by God. He is both divine and human, the Son of man and the Son of God. He is the true link between this lower world and the higher world of light and glory. Of that world He is Lord of all. He was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” He died as a mortal for the redemption of men, though He possessed immortality in His own right. “Being made perfect” through suffering, He becomes “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” and to as many as receive Him He gives “power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (Hebrews 5:9; John 1:12).

Two Progenitors

The first Adam became the progenitor of a race like himself-earthly, carnal, sinful, mortal. His descendants could not inherit from him what he could not transmit, an immortality which he never possessed. They were born in sinfulness.

The second Adam, the divine Son of God, became the progenitor of a race like Himself, sharers of His own nature, pure in heart, spiritual in their natures. Although for a while they linger in this world of sin, subject to physical death, they will in due time enter upon that inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” 1 Peter 1:4,5).

Two Births

No descendant of Adam can inherit eternal life unless and until he is born again, begotten of a progenitor who possesses eternal life. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6).

Men inherit from Adam, by the first birth, only what Adam had to transmit to his posterity-natural, mortal, transitory life. From the second Adam, by the second birth from above, we inherit that which our Progenitor has to give, a spiritual, deathless life, a life imparted to us and generated in us by the Spirit of God. This is the life spoken of in the Bible as “the life everlasting,” a life directly from Him, which alone can make “us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Colossians 1: 12).

Two Covenants

The acceptance of the gospel of Christ brings us under a new covenant. The first covenant was a covenant of works, “Do this and live.” Its rewards and penalties and motives were earthly. It could not make “the corners thereunto perfect,” that is, complete. “For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (Hebrews 8:7).

The second covenant is a covenant of faith. “Believe and thou shall be saved.” It requires an implicit trust in a Savior who can “save to the uttermost,” One “who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life” (Hebrews 7:16). Its motives, its rewards, are spiritual, heavenly, eternal.

Two Classes

As a consequence of the fall, mankind came to be divided into two classes-sinners and saints, lost and saved, wicked and righteous. The first are carnally minded; are controlled by worldly motives; seek for worldly gain; have all their good things, which perish with their use, in this life.

The second, the righteous, are spiritually minded; are led by the Spirit of God; through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh; are governed by spiritual influences; seek those things that are above, that are pure, substantial, eternal. Their choice is the good part that shall never be taken away. They and they alone have eternal life.

Two Kingdoms

It follows that there are two kingdoms; the first, of this world. Over this kingdom the great adversary of God and man holds dominion as prince of this world. It is a kingdom of evil, of disorder, of sorrow, of darkness, of war, and of death. It is a kingdom which is doomed to be overthrown, and utterly and forever destroyed.

The second is the kingdom of God, of heaven, of Christ. This is a kingdom of light and glory and power. It is a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy. It is established by the Son of God as His everlasting kingdom, and “it shall stand for ever.”

Two Advents

To lay the foundations of this kingdom, the Son of God came in the flesh at His first advent, to suffer and die. Having conquered death, He rose and ascended to heaven, leading a multitude of captives” (Ephesians 4:8, margin), and giving gifts unto men.”

He left the assurance that He will return to this earth once again, in a second advent-to gather the fruits of His victory and reap the harvest of His ministry. He will accomplish this by raising the dead, judging the world, destroying all that is perishable and vile and unworthy in the earth, and making all things new. “Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). In His new heavens and new earth He will reign with His ransomed people forever.

Two Deaths

Great prominence also is given in the Scriptures to the first and second deaths. And there is no vagueness in the Book of God respecting these. There is no reason or excuse for misunderstanding its teachings on this subject. Nor would there be any such misunderstanding if men did not prefer to believe the original lie of Satan rather than the positive truth of God. When man is assumed to be an immortal being, of course there is no place for a second death.

But there is a second death, an eternal death. And it is death, not everlasting life in torment. Whatever miseries may attend its course and follow in its train, nevertheless, "sin, when it is finished, brings forth death" (James 1: 15)

Sin Not to Be Perpetuated

Sin is not to be perpetuated. Sinners will not live forever. The plain doctrine of the Bible is that the devil and all his works will be destroyed, utterly destroyed. Death is to be abolished "and swallowed up in victory." Evil is not to continue through the eternal ages, but give place to eternal good. "Sorrow and sighing" is to be completely unknown, "and there shall be no more pain."

The victory which the Son of God gained over His enemies and the enemies of His people is to be complete, wanting nothing. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:19,20). "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10, 11).

The Glorious Consummation

No other consummation is conceivable for a perfect and omnipotent Deity-One who is perfect in goodness to desire, perfect in wisdom to plan, perfect in power to execute all His purposes of benevolence and grace. He will finally crown His self-sacrificing work by a glorious consummation.

The Bible is filled with promises, pledges, and prophecies of this consummation. God swore a solemn oath to Moses: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 14:21). The whole universe is to be purified, with no plague spot left in it, "filled with the fullness of him that fills all in all." There will be no depth of hell left in it in which the miserable victims of God's wrath are to be confined, to sin and suffer forever. Sin is to be ended, abolished, destroyed forever.

The psalms are full of promises of this coming glory under the reign of Christ. They predict not a temporal millennium period but the establishment of a kingdom that shall never end. In glowing terms the prophets describe the completeness of the victory over evil. There will be nothing to hurt or destroy throughout the length and breadth of God's dominions. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10). In the days of these kings [the modern nations of Europe] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44).

The Gathering of God's People

The Old Testament closes with a description of the gathering of God's people as jewels into His kingdom, and the complete destruction of all the wicked. When He cleanses His threshing floor, it will not be to gather the good grain into one garner and the chaff and tares and worthless rubbish into another, into some dark corner, there to be left to rot and send forth their pestilential stench forever. Nor will He cast them into a fire which will smolder and fume and smoke, but never consume. But, "the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, said the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1).

Every philosophy, every theory, every doctrine that will not permit us to believe in such a glorious consummation is anti Christian, and should be discarded.

Coming to the New Testament, we observe that the teaching of this glorious end to the purposes of God becomes more pronounced. The chief object of Christ's coming into the world is declared to be "that through death he might destroy [not imprison and torment forever, but destroy] him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

The End of the Age-long Conflict

The works of the devil are sin and sorrow and death. These, together with their author, are to be eternally destroyed.

In no place in all the record of God's will contained in Scripture is there the slightest intimation that the conflict of the ages now raging between Christ and Satan will issue in any outcome other than the complete and utter destruction of the great adversary of God and man. We are explicitly told that Satan is to be consumed "with the Spirit of his mouth," and destroyed "with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). "According to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Ephesians 1:9, 10).

In the parallel between the first and second Adams, already discussed, is disclosed how the base must come before the pure, the natural before the spiritual, and the temporal before the eternal. Paul, in language that glows, describes the glorious consummation, when the imperfect reaches its end and is done away, and the perfect comes; when the righteous dead are raised and immortalized and glorified with their risen Lord. He then exclaims, "Then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the

Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

1 Peter, too, describes the coming of the Lord, together with the complete overthrow and destruction of the wicked, in the general conflagration, when “the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat”. And adds, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness” (2 Peter 3:12,13).

The Closing Scenes

It is, however, in the last book of the Bible, the Revelation, that we find disclosed most comprehensively the final scenes of the great drama of the ages, together with the most perfect picture of the world to come. Here in apocalyptic vision the Seer of Patmos sees passing before his wondering eyes the scenes of conflict and carnage, the fire and smoke, in which our Lord, first as the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, which was and is and is to come, the Almighty; and then as “the Lamb of God, which was slain from the foundation of the world.” And finally as the glorious conquering King of kings and Lord of lords, is described as waging war with every form of evil, personified under every imaginable and actual symbol or image. And it all converges to and is consummated in the overthrow and extirpation of evil, and of all opposition to God and Christ, whatever form it may assume, or however strongly it may be entrenched, or however vigorously it may contend, and the ultimate reign of righteousness, peace, and harmony throughout the whole of the vast reaches of the universe.

In the final scene, the judge is seated on His great white throne. Before His face heaven and earth flee away; the dead, small and great, stand before God; the books are opened, and everyone is judged according to his works.

The Second Death

Another book is opened. This is the book of life. Whosoever is not found written in this book is cast into the same lake of fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. This is the second death. From this there will be no recovery, no resurrection, no breaking of eternal sleep. Death and the grave are also cast into this all-consuming lake of fire.

The seer is then allowed to look in upon eternity, and he lifts the veil for us to look with him. We see the glories of the celestial and eternal world. We see a new heaven and a new earth, “for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” We see the “new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,” with its jasper walls, its pearly gates, its brilliant palaces, its golden streets, and its pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, is the tree of life, once in the Garden of Eden, bearing twelve manner of fruits.

No More Curse

But there are now no cherubim with flaming swords to guard its approach. It is now for the healing of the nations. The gates of the city are not shut by day, which fact means that they are not shut at all, for there is no night there. We look in and see the redeemed and glorified inhabitants, clothed in white, with crowns on their heads and harps in their hands, singing praises to God and to the Lamb.

“There shall be no more curse.” “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” The Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water. God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. They will see His face. His name will be in their foreheads. He will be with them forever.

Since there will be no night there, they need no artificial light, neither light of the sun. The Lord God gives them light. “And they shall reign for ever and ever.”

These sayings are faithful and true. “He which testifies these things said, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

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