

Is Your Soul Immortal?

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PREFACE

In the spring of 1989 the 85-year-old Kremlinologist George F. Kenan was speaking before the members of a United States Congressional Committee. After testifying about the political and economic shortcomings of the Soviet system, he veered off onto another topic, and to the surprise of the members of the committee, it was a religious one. A society should provide its members with a significant statement about death, he held. The Russian system has not done that. By way of contrast he pointed out that from their biblical heritage Western European countries do have something significant to tell their citizens about death.

But the question for examination here is, just what do those Holy Scriptures have to say on that subject? Some time ago a noted Swiss theologian highlighted the contrasting views on this subject by publishing a book in which the title set the stage for the contrast between Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Body. His work has not settled that question so Professor Odom has returned to it once more. As Eastern mysticism has brought to the western world emphasis upon yet another aspect of this question, it is imperative that the major source which provides a knowledge about the truth of this subject-the Bible- be examined carefully to answer these important questions: Is man naturally immortal? Does everyone possess immortality at present? Or will it be given to us at some future time? If so, then when? These significant questions have puzzled and troubled mankind since the dawn of civilization.

Professor Odom is well equipped with the scholarly tools to carry out such a search. For most of his adult professional career he has carried heavy writing, editorial, and teaching responsibilities. He is the author of more than a dozen books on biblical topics and numerous articles published in professional and popular journals on related subjects. Even after becoming legally blind in 1983 he has continued his work of writing, with the capable assistance of his wife of 60 years, Martha.

Professor Odom's writing is noted for his clear and lucid explanations of difficult and complex subjects. He is able to bring them down to a level of understanding where all of his readers, regardless of their education, can readily grasp the issues involved. His background in the knowledge of the original languages of the biblical text is not flaunted as knowledge for knowledge's sake. Rather it is a tool that is put to work to present the clearest and most direct explanation of a subject that can be drawn out of the data. That is the type of penetrating insight that he has turned upon the interesting subject of the nature of man: mortal or immortal? Tell us, Professor Odom, what do the Scriptures have to say on this subject?

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THE HUMAN SOUL

Your soul, what is it? When you die will your soul become a ghost and haunt thereafter the house in which your death occurred? As a spook, will it waft and wing its way, or flit and fly and romp and play in ghastly ghoulish manner with other ghosts at night among the graves and tombstones in the cemetery where your body lies buried beneath the sod? Can it do or say, hear or see, think or feel anything apart from your body? Does it have a brain or mind different and separate from the one you now have?

Is your soul immortal, so much so that it will live on eternally after your dead body has been completely destroyed?

Many and various are the doctrines taught in the world today concerning the human soul. Some people teach that when a righteous person dies his soul will immediately leave his body, remain conscious, and fly away to heaven to play on a harp forever thereafter. Also, some think that if you have been a wicked person and die without having repented of your sins, your soul will be hurled at once into an eternally burning lake of fire and will remain there alive forever, suffering and screaming in ceaseless torment with no hope of ever being freed from it.

We wonder what the citizens of our nation would do if the worst criminals sent to our prisons by our courts of justice were subjected day and night to such unending torture?

In the light of all this, it is both proper and fitting that we should search the Holy Scriptures carefully to find out what God has said about what really happens to a person's soul at death. That is the main purpose of this book.

Let us now consider what our Creator tells us in the Holy Scriptures concerning the origin of the human soul: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7. Centuries later it was written that "Adam was made a living soul." 1 Corinthians 15:45.

Note particularly that the Sacred Record does not say that God breathed into man's nostrils a soul. He breathed into the first man's nostrils "the breath of life" and then "man became a living soul." Note, too, that it does not say that man became an immortal soul.

Does this mean that during the interval between the creation of Adam's body and the breathing of the breath of life into it, he was a lifeless soul? This would indicate that when a living person dies he ceases to breathe and then becomes a lifeless (or dead) soul.

Man's existence constantly depends on life from God. The psalmist stated the truth when he said, in praise to God: "With Thee is the fountain of life." Psalm 36:9. And the apostle Paul has rightly said: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17:28.

Where was Adam before he was created? He did not yet exist. Prior to his creation the dust of the ground existed, but it was not Adam. God had life in Himself long before He made man, but it was not Adam. In other words, while the dust of the ground and the breath of life from God were not combined by the process of creation, man did not yet exist. But when the two things—the earthly elements and the breath of life from God—were combined by the Creator in the proper way, this combination resulted in the existence of a living soul-man.

To state it another way, the living soul is a composite thing. The electric current, for example, is not a light. The bulb is not a light. But when the current is properly run into the bulb, a light appears. The burning light is the result of the combination of the bulb and the electric current.

Suppose, too, that we have in one place a bag of nails. In another place we have a stack of boards. The sack of nails is not a box. The pile of boards is not a box. But when the nails and the boards are properly combined, a box exists.

In a somewhat similar way the human soul is a composite thing, and its existence depends on a proper combination of the earthy body and life from God.

Consider this now from another angle. What happens to the light when the bulb is broken or the current is turned off? Because the existence of the light is dependent on the combination of the electric current with the bulb, the separation of the one from the other naturally results in the extinction of the light.

What happens to the box when the nails are pulled out and put into a bag, and the boards are removed and put into a pile? Does the box continue to exist thereafter? No.

If the soul did not exist until the Creator combined the breath of life from Himself with the earthy body He formed from the dust of the ground, then what happens to the soul when the breath of life is separated from the man's body?

The Sacred Scriptures answer: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit [breath of life] shall return unto God who gave it." Ecclesiastes 12:7. Thus death is the creative process reversed. In creation the human body was formed from the dust taken from the ground; in death the human body decays and is dissolved to dust and returned to the ground. In creation the life was given from God; in death the life returns to God. Death is the cessation of life for man. He ceases to be a living soul at death. Browning has well stated this truth in poetry saying:

"But the soul is not the body, and the breath is not the flute: Both together make the music, either marred, and all is mute." -Robert Browning, poem "La Saisiaz"

One widely used reference work presents this thought provoking comment: "The soul is not an entity with a separate nature from the flesh and possessing or capable of a life of its own. Rather it is the life animating the flesh. The soul of the flesh can thus be identified with the blood (Leviticus 17:14). Soul and flesh therefore do not go different ways, but the flesh (or a part like the eye or the hand) expresses outwardly the life or soul. When the soul thirsts for God, the flesh faints for Him (Psalm 63:1). Soul is thus the living being. 'Flesh' can be lifeless, but nephesh in its normal usage is alive. Adam was made of the dust, but when God gave him breath he became (not obtained) a living nephesh. Man does not 'have' a soul, he is a soul." -Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible, page 932, article "Soul." Nephesh is the Hebrew word commonly translated "soul" in our Bible. From another major religious reference work we quote:

"Nephesh is used in regard to both animals and humans. If life is human, nephesh is equivalent to the person, the 'I.' After death, the nephesh goes to Sheol.

"The above summary indicates that there is no dichotomy of body and soul in the OT. The Israelite saw things concretely, in their totality, and thus he considered men as persons and not as composites. The term nephesh, though translated by our word soul, never means soul as distinct from the body or the individual person"-The New Catholic Encyclopedia, volume 13, page 449, column 2, article "Soul (in the Bible)." Published by McGraw-Hill Co., New York: 1967.

When the Lord made man, He said to His Son: "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." Genesis 1:26. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him. Verse 27. "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him." Genesis 5:1. See also John 1:1-4, 10; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16,17. Thus the Sacred Scriptures say that man was made in the image, or likeness, of God. They do not say that man's nature was made the same as that of the Deity. Had such been the case, man would be a divine being.

By confusing man's nature with his likeness to his Maker in form, some people have thought that the human being was endowed with an immortal nature, one that cannot die, and that it is as eternal as God Himself. They even allege that He, using the hottest purgatory or hell of fire imaginable, will not destroy a wicked human being nor put an end to his existence. Hence they talk about "the immortality of the soul," *an expression that is not found in the Book of books.*

In the Holy Scriptures man is called "this mortal." 1 Corinthians 15:53,54. See also Job 4:17; Romans 6:12; 2 Corinthians 4:11. Only God is spoken of in the Bible as being immortal. Paul speaks of Him as "the King eternal, immortal." 1 Timothy 1:17. This is the only place in the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible where the word "immortal" is found, and it is applied to God alone. In this Paul is consistent, for in another place he refers to the Deity as "the King of kings, the Lord of lords; who only hath immortality." 1 Timothy 6:15,16.

The Lord does not depend upon another being for His life, as we do, because He is self-existing, having life within Himself. "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." John 5:26. Therefore God the Father and also God the Son (Christ) can create living creatures, and can restore to life those that have ceased to live. Our hope of living after death is based on the certainty of this great fact. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

When the Creator made man, He did not endow him with an immortal nature. He did purpose that man should live eternally, but only on condition of faithful obedience to the law of God. Within Adam's reach was placed the tree of life, and as long as he was obedient, he could partake freely of its fruit and live. Genesis 2:8,9,16,17.

Eating once of the fruit of the tree of life did not guarantee to the eater that he would become, thereby, immortal, and that he would live forever thereafter. Provision was made for man to live eternally by repeatedly eating of the fruit of the tree of life. However this privilege and promise were conditional, the condition being faithful obedience to God's law. By their disobedience, Adam and Eve forfeited their God-given right to eat of the fruit of the tree of life and live forever.

Because man was endowed with the power of choice, or free will, to create him immortal at the beginning would have been to run the risk that he might choose to do evil, rebel against his Maker, and so become an eternal and indestructible enemy of the government of God. But the Lord "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 10:28.

The Creator tested man in order that he might manifest whether or not he would loyally obey God and be worthy of life. He said to Adam: "Of every tree of the garden thou may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it: for in the day that thou eats thereof thou shall surely die." Genesis 2:16,17. This shows that God made man a mortal soul, one capable of dying. Therefore, the only way whereby man might have avoided death and live ages without end was by faithfully obeying the word of his Maker.

That one tree among the many that God had created on earth was to be a test of the love and loyalty of Adam and Eve to Him as their Creator. There never was any need for them to eat of its forbidden fruit. God's command concerning the fruit of that tree was not only evidence of His loving care for our first parents but also a test of their faith in Him. We repeat, there was no need whatever for them to disobey Him and eat of that forbidden fruit, for in the midst of the garden was the tree of life and Adam and Eve were told that they might freely eat of the fruit of every tree except the one called the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Note that our first parents were clearly told that disregard for God's commandment would be fatal to them. It has been a fundamental rule from Adam's time to the present that "the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23. So, "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Romans 5:12. "There is none righteous, no, not one." Romans 3:10. The same thing is taught in Ecclesiastes 7:20: "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sins not." See also Psalm 14:1,3; 53:1,3; 1 Kings 8:46.

Note particularly that the Lord has said in Holy Writ that "the soul that sins, it shall die." Ezekiel 18:4,20. That truth which God had stated to Adam, the first "living soul" in Eden, was reiterated centuries later by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians when he referred to man as mortal, as cited above in 1 Corinthians 15:53,54.

We have already noted that in the beginning, when God created man "a living soul" (Genesis 2:7), He made him a sinless human being. To test man's loyalty to Him, God planted in the Garden of Eden "the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Genesis 2:9. He warned man in the clearest of language not to eat the fruit of it, saying, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it: for in the day that thou eat thereof thou shall surely die." Verse 17.

Thus mortal man was placed on probation in order that by faithful obedience he could willingly show his love and loyalty to his Creator.

In the fifth century B.C. the Greek historian Herodotus wrote that the Egyptians were the first "to teach that the human soul is immortal." -The History of Herodotus, book II, chapter 123 (Harvard University Press edition, volume 1, page 425).

But Herodotus was mistaken, for Satan was the first to present to mankind the false doctrine of the immortality of the human soul to entice Adam and Eve to sin. Centuries before Herodotus wrote his history of the nations Moses, the Hebrew historian, born and reared to manhood in Egypt, wrote by inspiration of God the true story of the creation of man. In it he recorded the first human death (that of Abel) and the death of Adam, the first member of the human race. He tells us in Genesis 3 that when the tempter asked Eve, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" she replied: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Verses 1-3. This shows that Eve clearly remembered the warning that God had given them concerning that tree in Genesis 2:17.

Then the evil one said, "Ye shall not surely die." Verse 4 of chapter 3. Thus for the first time the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul was taught on planet Earth many centuries before Herodotus was born. It is a falsehood uttered by the Adversary (Satan) in direct opposition to the Creator's statement that as a result of disobedience man would "surely die."

Adam and Eve disobeyed their Creator by eating of the forbidden fruit and thereby became subject to death. The Lord had told them that if they should disobey they would "surely die." The Adversary opposed this by saying, "Ye shall not surely die." By the use of the pronoun "ye" he had in mind the fall of both Adam and Eve. Eve not only ate of the forbidden fruit herself but she persuaded Adam to do so, too.

Because of their disobedience, the Lord said concerning man: "Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." Genesis 3:22-24.

Thus God made it impossible for man to become an immortal sinner.

So it is made very clear in Holy Writ that when "man became a living soul" (Gen. 1:7), he did not thereby become an immortal one. It has been an unchangeable determination of our Creator from that time to the present that there should not be an immortal, sinful soul among earth's inhabitants.

Ever since the sin of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, humanity has had no access to the fruit of the tree of life. Consequently, because of sin, all mankind have been by nature candidates for death.

HUMANS NOW IN HEAVEN?

The evangelist was trying to pitch his tent on a vacant lot about a half block from where I lived. From the window of my home I saw that he was having difficulty in the undertaking and needed assistance. So I went to help him, for I had been trained to handle ropes and canvas in a seamanship school of the United States Navy. Also, I had pitched large tents and cared for them in several states. The preacher appreciated my help.

Although he was affiliated with another church organization than the one to which I belonged, we enjoyed our conversation. I asked him about some of his beliefs. For example, I inquired, "What is your church's teachings about what happens to a person when he dies?"

He replied, "If he has been converted and remained faithful to the Lord, he goes to heaven immediately at death."

"And if he dies an impenitent sinner, what then?" I asked.

"Oh, then he goes at once into hell fire to be tormented for ever and ever," was his answer.

"Do you believe that this world is going to go on eternally with one generation going down to the grave while another is coming into the crib or cradle?"

He promptly replied, "Indeed not! Jesus is coming back to this world to resurrect the dead and put an end to sin and suffering."

"How will He do that?" I asked.

"He will then judge and reward every man according to his works," he said. "The wicked He will punish for their evil deeds and the righteous He will reward for their good deeds."

"And if a person has been wicked and has never repented, what will be his future after he is judged by Christ at His second coming?"

And what will be the future of the person who has repented of his sins and remained faithful to God?" I inquired.

He explained: "Christ will then cast all the impenitent into hell, the lake of fire, to suffer eternal punishment; and the faithful He will take with Him to heaven to dwell there forever. That is the purpose of Christ's second advent."

Then I remarked: "That puzzles me. A few minutes ago you told me that your church teaches that immediately after he dies a wicked person goes down into hell fire to be eternally punished by torment; and that at death a righteous person is taken immediately up to heaven to dwell there eternally in joy and happiness. Do you mean that the impenitent sinner is to be judged and punished twice—that

is, that at death he will be judged and immediately sent to suffer torment in hell fire for the sins that he has committed, and that later, at the second advent of Christ, he will be resurrected, judged, and condemned again to eternal torment in the fires of hell for those same sins? Will Jesus at His second coming have all the wicked called up from the lake of fire to enter their graves to be resurrected, to be judged, and to be sent into hell fire a second time? Will the redeemed then be called down from heaven to enter their graves, to be resurrected, to be judged, and to be taken to heaven a second time?"

I shall never forget the puzzled expression that came over that preacher's face. He honestly replied: "I have never thought about that!" And, scratching the top of his head with one hand, and gesturing with the other, he added: "I am going to write to some of the big men in our church to find out what they have to say about that!"

I hope that he did. His series of evangelistic meetings was short, and he soon left town, for his home was in another part of the nation.

The best and most reliable source of information on that subject is the Bible. When Paul the apostle went to Berea in Macedonia to do evangelistic work, he was pleased because the people there "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things [taught by the preachers] were so. Therefore many of them believed." Acts 17:11,12. This reveals that in Paul's opinion the teaching of the Holy Scriptures in matters of religious doctrine is to be regarded as superior to, and of higher authority than, what any preacher may think or say about it.

Though it appears puzzling and illogical to the sincere and candid student of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrine that the inhabitants of this world are to be twice recompensed according to their deeds is widely taught and cherished by many religious people today.

For example, a learned Roman Catholic writer tells us: "The Catholic doctrine of the particular judgment consists in this, that immediately after death the eternal destiny of each separated soul is decided by the just judgment of God. Although there has been no formal definition on this point, the dogma is clearly implied in the Union Decree of Eugene IV (1439), which declares that souls quitting their bodies in a state of grace, but in need of purification, are cleansed in Purgatory, whereas souls that are perfectly pure are at once admitted to the beatific vision of the Godhead (ipsum Deum unum et trinum), and those who depart in actual mortal sin, or merely with original sin, are at once consigned to eternal punishment, the quality of which corresponds to their sin," etc.-The Catholic Encyclopedia (1913), volume 8, page 550, article "Judgment."

That writer has frankly stated: "The Scriptural arguments in defense of the particular judgment must be indirect"; and also: "There is no text of which we can certainly say that it expressly affirms this dogma," etc.-Ibid.

And it is not surprising that after telling of the diversity of views held by many church leaders on the subject, the same writer informs his readers that "until the question was settled by the decision of Benedict XII, in 1332, there was much uncertainty regarding the fate of the departed in the period between death and the general resurrection."-Ibid., page 551. The date 1332 as given here is incorrect. It should be 1336. See footnote.

Footnote: The correct date was 1336, as stated in the following paragraph from The Catholic Encyclopedia (1913), volume 2, page 430, column 2, article "Benedict XII:

"Being a learned theologian, he was as bishop, cardinal, and pope, keenly interested in scholastic discussions. He terminated the controversy on the vexed question as to whether the Beatific Vision was enjoyed before or only after the General Judgment. John XXII had advocated the latter view and stirred up vigorous discussion. Eager to solve the question, Benedict heard the opinions of those maintaining the theory of deferred vision, and, with a commission of theologians, gave four months to patristic research. Their labors terminated in the proclamation (29 January, 1336) of the Bull 'Benedictus Deus' defining the immediate intuitive vision of God by the souls of the just having no faults to expiate." This is a notable example of papal fallibility.

The same date of 1336 is given in The Encyclopedia Britannica (11th ed.), volume 3, page 718, column 2, article "Benedict XII."

Note that the pontifical decree of Pope Benedict XII concerning that concept of the pre-advent judgment which the papacy calls "the particular judgment" had behind it more than a millennium of "much uncertainty" in ecclesiastical thinking, and "no [Scripture] text of which we can certainly say that it expressly affirms this dogma." The use of the term "suppose" in the following statement by the same writer leaves us to conclude that the papal doctrine on this subject rests mainly on theological suppositions:

"Theologians suppose that the particular judgment will be instantaneous, that in the moment of death the separated soul is internally illuminated as to its own guilt or innocence and of its own initiation takes its course either to hell, or to purgatory, or to heaven."-The Catholic Encyclopedia, volume 8, page 551, column 2.

Many Protestant and Evangelical church organizations also, while professing to take the Bible, and the Bible only, as their rule of faith and practice in religious matters, teach that at death the impenitent person goes immediately into eternal torment in the fires of hell, and that the faithful proceeds at once to heaven to be with Christ. Some of their preachers have told me privately that they have

personally rejected that concept of such a pre-advent judgment, and that they prefer to think that all the dead are kept in some "intermediate place" until the second coming of Christ to resurrect and judge the dead and all who will be living on earth at that time.

This statement of the above-quoted Roman Catholic writer is interesting: "Few truths are oftener or more clearly proclaimed in Scripture than that of the general judgment."-Ibid., page 552. He amply supports that statement by citing both Old and New Testament passages teaching that there will be a general judgment of both the wicked and the righteous by Christ when He comes to reward every man according to his works. However, we cannot rightfully say that the Holy Scriptures preclude the possibility of any instance of pre-advent judgment.

For example, Holy Writ tells us that the antediluvian patriarch and prophet Enoch, who was born in the year 622 of the life of Adam, lived 365 years and was translated alive to heaven. "And he was not; for God took him." Genesis 5:24. The New Testament says that "Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Hebrews 11:5. That occurred more than six hundred years before the Flood of the time of Noah. We must assume, therefore, that the Judge of all the earth accounted Enoch worthy of translation and by judicial decision ordered that it be done.

Elijah, the Israelite prophet, was similarly translated alive to heaven without having experienced death. This occurred approximately 854 years before Christ. See 2 Kings 2:1-12.

Moses, another great prophet in Israel, died at the age of 120 years, and was buried in the land of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River, in the fortieth and last year of the wilderness wanderings of Israel. See Deuteronomy 1:3; 2:7; 8:2,4; 29:5; 31:2; 34:5-7. The body of Moses (Jude 9) was resurrected not long thereafter, and this was the first time - since the creation of Adam that the clutch of death and the grave was broken and a dead person was resurrected. Romans 5:14. God, the righteous Judge, accounted him worthy of a special resurrection and ordered that it be done.

Nearly fifteen centuries later Moses and Elijah personally appeared alive together to Jesus on a mountain in Palestine, and talked with Him about the sufferings He would soon endure. Three of Christ's disciples witnessed this event. See the story of the transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-5; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-35.

When Jesus died on the cross, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Matthew 27:51-53. They later ascended to heaven with Jesus. By this special miraculous occurrence Psalm 68:18 was fulfilled, for "when He [Jesus] ascended up on high, he led a multitude of captives, and gave gifts unto men." Ephesians 4:8, margin. These resurrected ones were persons who had been faithful to God unto death. He accounted them worthy of this special resurrection, and judged that they be taken to heaven as trophies of His victory over sin and death, to be presented as the first-fruits of that vast harvest of righteous dead and living persons who shall be caught up to meet Him at His second advent. 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.

It must be remembered that insofar as Enoch and Elijah are concerned, they were persons translated bodily and without having died. Thus they did not go to heaven as ghosts, or spirits, or as souls separated from their physical bodies.

Likewise, it must be kept in mind that "the body of Moses" (Jude 9), and also the "many bodies" of the saints who had slept in death "came out of the graves." They did not then go up to heaven as disembodied spirits or ghosts, separated from their bodies.

Jesus Himself, when He ascended to heaven, did not go away as a spirit or ghost without a physical body. His dead body was not left in the tomb. The body of Jesus did not remain in the grave after His resurrection. See Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:3, 6.

Before His ascension to heaven He appeared in His resurrected body to His followers. They saw Him and even touched Him. Matthew 28:9. It is true that when some of them saw Him "they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." Luke 24:37. But He soon induced them to give up that supposition. He said: "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet." Verses 39,40. He went even farther to convince them that He had been resurrected bodily. He asked them for food, and "they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them." Verses 41-43.

Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, was not present when Jesus appeared to the others and "showed unto them His hands and His side." John 20:20. When he heard about it, Thomas skeptically said: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Verses 24,25.

Eight days later Jesus appeared bodily to them when Thomas was present. "Then said He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing." Verse 27. Thus the doubting Thomas was convinced. Verses 28,29.

Yes, Jesus did indeed ascend to heaven in His literal, physical body resurrected from the grave. Peter later declared that, in fulfillment of the oath God had made in Psalm 16:10 concerning the resurrection of Christ, "His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption." Acts 2:31. Here the Greek word *hades*, rendered into English as "hell," and the corresponding Hebrew term *sheol* in Psalm 16:10, both mean "grave." Christ's body was laid in the tomb shortly before sundown on Friday, and it was resurrected shortly before sunrise on the following Sunday morning. Hence it did not lie in the grave long enough to see corruption by decay. In His physical human body restored to life He ascended to heaven.

Nowhere in the Holy Scriptures is it taught that any human being has ever lived without his body, or has left this world to exist thereafter in the form of a disembodied soul or spirit, ghost or phantom. Those persons who have been translated to heaven without having experienced death were taken up in their physical bodies.

In answer to the question that forms the title of this chapter, we can say, Yes. The Bible tells us that a few human beings are already in heaven.

The extraordinary experience of translation and resurrection of this select number of people to everlasting life, mentioned above, can be correctly categorized as instances of pre-advent judgment. Those few faithful persons were judged or accounted worthy of being taken up from this world long before the general resurrection of the righteous at the second coming of Christ to judge the world in general, which is still future.

The exceptional experiences of these faithful children of God have been recorded in Holy Writ for our encouragement who "look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." Philippians 3:20,21.

Yes, we have the blessed assurance that "we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.

CAN THE SOUL DIE?

Adam, the father of the whole human race, was the first "living soul" (Genesis 2:7) to inhabit the planet Earth. Although the Holy Scriptures state that he was created "a living soul," they do not say that he was an immortal one. He died at the age of 930 years. Genesis 5:5. Why? Because he had sinned.

God has said: "The soul that sins, it shall die." Ezekiel 18:4,20. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Romans 5:12. Yes, it is affirmed that "in Adam all die." 1 Corinthians 15:22. "For the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23.

Because of disobedience to the word of God and without access to the tree of life thereafter, man-including every human being living on earth today-is mortal (subject to death). In view of this, we can see the need of giving serious thought to the subject of our study.

In the Old Testament section of the Holy Scriptures the Hebrew noun most frequently translated into English as "soul" is *nephesh*. It is used there 755 times. In 428 instances it is rendered as "soul" in our most widely published English text of the Bible, the King James Version. Also it is rendered there as "person" 30 times, as "life" (of a person) 119 times, and as "self" 19 times.

In some instances God uses the term *nephesh* in speaking of Himself as a person. For example, in Isaiah 1:13 and 42:1 He uses it in the phrase "My soul" in reference to Himself. In Amos 6:8 the prophet uses the word "Himself" in speaking of God. In the Hebrew text the word *nephesh* corresponds to the syllable "self" in the English word "Himself" in this verse.

In Psalm 22:20 someone is represented as praying, "Deliver my soul from the sword." This implies that the human soul (*nephesh*) can be slain.

In Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12 we find a prophecy concerning God's Suffering Servant whom Christians and many pious Jews have identified as the Messiah. The noun *nephesh* is rendered as soul in verses 10, 11, and 12 of chapter 53. The context of this prophecy clearly reveals that the Suffering Servant is pictured as one who "hath poured out His soul unto death." Verse 12.

In Genesis 34:3 it is stated concerning Shechem that "his soul [*nephesh*] clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob." The Song of Solomon speaks of a person "whom my soul [*nephesh*] loves." 1:7. In these instances and many others elsewhere in the Holy Scriptures it is certain that the "soul" (*nephesh*) mentioned is a person.

The term *nephesh* is rendered as "self" in plural form in Leviticus 11:43,44, which indicate that the persons referred to were "souls." See also Joshua 23:11; Isaiah 46:2; Jeremiah 37:9, margin.

In Jeremiah 40:15 Johanan asked Gedaliah concerning his enemy Ishmael: "Wherefore should he slay thee?" The Hebrew text literally reads, "Why should he strike your soul [nephesh]?"

When some of Joseph's brothers proposed that they kill him, Reuben countered: "Let us not kill him." Genesis 37:21. In the Hebrew text Reuben literally says, "Let us not slay a soul [nephesh]."

In Leviticus 23:29 the Lord forbade His people to do secular labor on the Day of Atonement; and He added: "And whatsoever soul [nephesh] it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul [nephesh] will I destroy from among his people." Verse 30. And Numbers 15:31 says: "Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken His commandment, that soul [nephesh] shall utterly be cut off." See also Exodus 12:15; Leviticus 22:3. Whether this penalty was immediate death or banishment with loss of citizenship is not clear.

In fact, God speaks of the kindling of fire, in the future, which shall consume "both soul [nephesh] and body." Isaiah 10:18. That reminds us that Jesus Himself, nearly eight hundred years later, said: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul [psuche]: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul [psuche] and body in hell." Matthew 10:28. Man may kill a human soul and thereby cause it to be dead temporarily—that is, until the resurrection day, when it shall live again. (In Greek, the language in which the New Testament was written, the word psuche corresponds to the Hebrew term nephesh.)

The Lord said also: "He that kills any man [nephesh] shall surely be put to death." Leviticus 24:17.

Balaam, the apostate, exclaimed: "Let me die the death of the righteous," etc. Numbers 23:10. The Hebrew text literally reads: "Let my soul [nephesh] die the death of upright ones."

Concerning the men who slew the Hebrew apostates at Peor, the directive given was that "whosoever hath killed any person [nephesh]" should purify himself. Numbers 31:19. Cities of refuge were designated in Israel as places to which "the slayer may flee thither, which killed any person [nephesh] unawares." Numbers 35:11. This was done in order "that every one that killed any person [nephesh] unawares may flee thither." Verse 15. The Lord commanded: "Whoso killed any person [nephesh], the murderer shall be put to death." Verse 30.

It is written that cities of refuge were designated lest an avenger overtake the killer "and slay him." Deuteronomy 19:6. The Hebrew text literally says, "and he slay a soul [nephesh]." Similar instruction is given in Deuteronomy 22:26. Deuteronomy 19:11 tells what ought to be done when a man, in hatred toward his neighbor, should lie in wait for him, "and smite him mortally that he die." Here the Hebrew text says, "and he should smite a soul [nephesh], and he die."

The penalty for willful manslaughter was that "life [nephesh] shall go for life [nephesh]." Verse 21. And the Lord said: "Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person [nephesh]." Deuteronomy 27:25. When Joshua and his army took the Canaanite city of Makkedah, "the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls [nephesh] that were therein; he let none remain." Joshua 10:28. A similar fate befell the people of several other cities. Verses 30,32,35,37,39; and 11:11.

Joshua, in compliance with the directive given by God through Moses, designated several places as cities of refuge, to which "the slayer that killed any person [nephesh] unawares and unwittingly may flee." Joshua 20:3,9.

When Samson committed suicide, he exclaimed: "Let me die with the Philistines." Judges 16:30. The Hebrew text literally reads: "Let my soul [nephesh] die with the Philistines."

Elihu stated concerning certain people: "They die in youth." Job 36:14. The Hebrew text says: "Shall die in youth their soul [nephesh]."

Proverbs 6:32 says that a man committing adultery "destroyed his own soul [nephesh]."

God reproved the wicked men who planned "to slay the souls [nephesh] that should not die, and to save the souls [nephesh] alive that should not live." Ezekiel 13:19. And He said that Judah's "princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls [nephesh]." Ezekiel 22:27. And verse 25 says, "they have devoured souls [nephesh]."

Thus the soul can be destroyed. The writer of Psalm 40:14 speaks of those who "seek after my soul [nephesh] to destroy it."

Proverbs 28:17 speaks of "a man that doeth violence to the blood of any person [nephesh]." This is further evidence that the Bible writers used the word "soul" in reference to the whole person of a human being and not to a supposed ghost or spook as part of him.

The apostle John saw in vision "under the altar the souls [psuche] of them that were slain for the word of God." Revelation 6:9. And he also saw "the souls [psuche] of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus." Revelation 20:4.

These and other passages in the Bible use the Hebrew word nephesh and the Greek word psuche in the sense that we often employ the term "person" in English today.

Therefore, in saying that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul [nephesh]" (Genesis 2:7), the Bible means that the lifeless man then became a living person.

Furthermore we have seen, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that a human soul can be slain, can die, can be destroyed.

These facts may be considered a major reason why the Hebrew word nephesh, used 755 times in the Bible, is sometimes employed there in reference to dead persons. In Leviticus 19:28 the Lord said: "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead [nephesh]." The priests were told: "There shall none be defiled for the dead [nephesh] among his people." Leviticus 21:1. And verse 11 says concerning priests: "Neither shall he go in to any dead body [nephesh meth]." Also: "And whoso touches any thing that is unclean by the dead [nephesh]," etc. Leviticus 22:4.

The Israelites were told "to put out of the camp ... whosoever is defiled by the dead [nephesh]." Numbers 5:2. This appears to have been a temporary period of quarantine for maintaining sanitary conditions.

The law concerning the Nazarite says: "All the days that he separates himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body [nephesh meth]." Numbers 6:6. A special sin offering was required of him if "he sinned by the dead [nephesh]." Verse 11.

It is recorded that "certain men, who were defiled by the dead body [nephesh] of a man," and for that reason could not celebrate the Passover at the appointed time, appeared before Moses and Aaron and said: "We are defiled by the dead body [nephesh] of a man." Numbers 9:6,7. As a result, a special statute was given which said: "If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body [nephesh],... yet he shall keep the Passover unto the Lord." Verse 10. It would be on the fourteenth day of the second month (verse 11), instead of the fourteenth day of the customary first month, for such persons.

Another law said: "He that touches the dead body [nephesh] of any man shall be unclean seven days." Numbers 19:11. Also: "Whoever touches the dead body [nephesh] of any man that is dead, and purified not himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord." Verse 13. In Haggai 2:13 we find a question and answer concerning an individual "that is unclean by a dead body [nephesh]."

Thus it is evident that the word "soul" [nephesh] in the Bible is commonly used in reference to a human being as a person, either a living one or a dead one. When Abraham and Sarai moved from Mesopotamia to Canaan, they took with them "the souls [nephesh] that they had gotten in Haran." Genesis 12:5. The number of persons in their household was large, perhaps as many as a thousand. Genesis 14:14, 15. This Hebrew term nephesh is actually translated as "person" 30 times in the King James Version of the Bible, and many, many times in that same sense as "soul." See Genesis 14:21; Deuteronomy 10:22.

The answer to the question in the title of this chapter, Can the soul die? is, Yes.

As noted above, the Bible makes it very clear that man must have within him the breath of life supplied by God in order for him to be a living soul. A living soul is a living person, one who is alive. A dead person is a dead soul, one that has been deprived of the breath of life. The Bible speaks of dead persons as souls that have died, or been slain, or killed, or destroyed.

According to Christ, a person can "lose" his own soul [Psuche]." Hence He warns us by asking, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul [psuche]? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul [psuche]?" Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36,37.

Yes, a person can actually "lose" his own soul. How? By impenitent persistence in sin until he dies. We have been warned: "The soul that sinned, it shall die." Ezekiel 18:4,20. Also: "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. This death is called "the second death," the one in which the impenitent sinner receives his final punishment. He will suffer it when God sits in judgment after He has raised the wicked dead from their graves and pronounced sentence upon them. This is why it is called "the second death"-because their judgment takes place after their resurrection from the first death. Revelation 20:5,6,14; 2:11.

In describing the destruction of the wicked who die impenitent, the Bible says: "Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." Revelation 20:9. Hence this final destruction, or annihilation, of the wicked is called "the second death." v. 14.

Note that in describing it the prophet was shown in vision that when fire descended from heaven upon Satan and all other impenitent sinners at the end of the one thousand years, it "devoured them." Verses 7-9. That means complete destruction or annihilation of all who persist in sin.

Thus the New Testament is in agreement with the Old Testament concerning the end of Satan. He had been the covering cherub at the throne of God in heaven before his revolt against Him. He is represented in Ezekiel 28 by the wicked ruler of Tyre. God said:

"Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth... and never shall thou be any more." Verses 12-19.

“GAVE UP THE GHOST”

A front-page story in one of the nation's leading daily newspapers reported that six persons had been pronounced dead but were revived later. The report states that they were interviewed to find out what they did while so near death. An accident victim "said he hovered over the operating table" during the surgery performed on him. A man near death as a result of a motorcycle crash "recalled stepping outside his body and calmly witnessing the sequence of events leading to the accident." A woman who had nearly died during childbirth "remembered drifting through the sky" and "tried to convince a God-like voice that she could not die because she had two children to care for."

Do those stories seem "spooky"? Why would such a revived accident victim not remember how he left his body to hover over it, and when and how he got back into it? Nothing is said of the motorcycle-crash victim stepping back into his body, and which exit he used in going in and out of it.

Interesting is the fact that the news report states twice concerning the six persons interviewed that "they nearly died," and refers to them as "near death victims." This poses still another question: Can a person leave his body while it is still alive and go "drifting through the sky"?

That news report reminds me of "Old Jake," who lived a short distance from a farm on which I spent part of my boyhood days. His neighbors spoke of him as "the old goat" because of his profuse profanity and infidel scorn for religion. Neighbors who "sat up" with him and his family the night he died, told us young folks the next morning that before Old Jake breathed his last breath he deliriously screamed and cursed because he thought the devil was eagerly tugging hard at his toes in an effort to pull the old man's soul out of his body, like pulling an ear of corn out of its shucks, to roast it in hell fire! When I heard that, my hair seemed to stand on end.

Of course, since then I have heard of other cases of delirium experienced by persons near death in which strange things were said and seen. Even I myself had an unusual experience one night after hours of hard work and a substantial evening meal. My wife awoke and, sensing that something was wrong, roused me quickly out of my deep sleep. And how glad I was that she did! I was having a nightmare in which I thought myself to be dead and was being taken in a coffin to the cemetery. What agony it was, for I knew I was not dead but could not tell the men so, who were bearing my body in the casket to the open grave. Stranger yet is the coincidence that she woke me just at the right time-before they could lower the box into the hole in the ground. Of course, I having been aroused from my slumber at that point, I cannot imagine how I could have gotten out of the casket and what would have happened if my dream had continued longer.

I personally have known of surgical cases in which an anesthetized patient has unwittingly talked in the recovery room and thereby revealed to nursing attendants some surprising secrets of a personal sort that were never intended to be known to others.

To what extent does a person know what is going on around him when he is really dead? Does the Bible teach that a person becomes a ghost when he dies? I have searched the Bible carefully-including the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament-and I have not found it teaching that a person becomes a ghost when he dies.

In Genesis 25:8, for example, it is said that "Abraham gave up the ghost, and died." In nine other instances the Old Testament in our King James (Authorized) Version of the Bible in English similarly speaks of a dying person. In all those 10 cases a single Hebrew verb (*gawa*) is translated into the four-word English phrase "gave up the ghost" or "yielded up the ghost." In other instances in that same version *gawa* is translated as "be dead" once, "die" 11 times, "Perish" twice, and (as a participle) "ready to die" once.

In Hebrew that verb *gawa* means "to gasp out," "to breathe out." Hence it is no surprise to find the Revised Version saying that "Abraham breathed his last and died." So say The New American Standard Bible, The New American Bible (Roman Catholic), and The Jerusalem Bible (also Roman Catholic). The English translation long published by the Jewish Publications Society of America simply says that "Abraham expired," which is a more accurate rendering.

How can we account for the wording "gave up the ghost" and "yielded up the ghost" in our beloved English version authorized by King James I of England, as the legal head of the Anglican Church? It was first published in 1611 A.D., when the great religious reformation in Europe was calling all Christians to return to the Bible, and the Bible only, as the infallible standard of true religious doctrines, and the true basis of reform. The Reformation had not yet completed its work of discarding the erroneous teachings and superstitious practices which the state church of the Dark Ages had accumulated during centuries of apostasy and handed down as ecclesiastical tradition.

Furthermore, the old English words "ghost" and "ghostly" in 1611 were not in those days so limited to the pagan concept of spooks, hobgoblins, imps, phantoms, etc., as they are today. The Anglican scholars, plus a few Puritan ones, who produced the English version

of 1611, were accustomed to speaking of the "Holy Ghost." As "ghostly advisers," pastors gave "ghostly counsel" and "ghostly comfort" to people, for a clergyman was supposed to be a "ghostly man." Such terms as "ghost" and "ghostly" make sense when we remember that they were then common English equivalents of "spirit" and "spiritual," terms, which we have inherited from the Latin language. Today the terms "ghost" and "ghostly" are mainly limited to supposed apparitions of the dead; though we still hear it said at times that such-and-such a person or thing "doesn't have a ghost of a chance," or you "don't have a ghost of an idea" of what may have happened in certain cases.

At any rate, the King James Version is still my favorite Bible text in English, and I prefer it over some modern versions which are often mainly paraphrasings of the Bible text.

Now this fact stands out clearly: While the Bible does not say in any instance that a man becomes a ghost when he dies, it tells us plainly and beyond a shadow of a doubt that he gives up, or is deprived of, something when he dies. What is it?

The Good Book says that "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath [neshamah] of life; and man became a living soul [nephesh]." Genesis 2:7.

Note the sequence of the steps in the process of the creation of man: First, man was made of the dust of the ground. Second, God breathed into his lifeless body the breath (neshamah) of life. The result: "Man became a living soul [nephesh]."

It is logical to assume that the death of man is a reversal of the creation process. Man was told that if he should sin he would "surely die." Genesis 2:17. And when man did sin, the Lord informed him: "In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return." Genesis 3:19.

Note that when he dies, man himself goes back to the dust of the ground. Where, then, does the breath (neshamah) of life go when a man dies?

The Word of God says: "His [man's] breath [ruach] goeth forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalm 146:4. Yes, at death man himself returns to the dust of the earth. And at that time his breath, also, called ruach in Hebrew, leaves him. As a result, the man ceases to think, which is something dead persons are unable to do. "For the dead know not anything." Ecclesiastes 9:5.

Where does man's breath (ruach) go when he dies? "Then [at death] shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit [ruach] shall return unto God who gave it." Ecclesiastes 12:7. This makes it clear that at death only the "spirit" or breath of life-but not the man himself-goes back to God, the Life-giver. That, too, is logical, for "He gives to all life, and breath, and all things. ... For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17:25,28.

Hence we find the psalmist saying to the Lord: "With Thee is the fountain of life." Psalm 36:9. Also: "Thou [God] takes away their breath [ruach], they die, and return to their dust." Psalm 104:29. Note, again, that it is man and not the breath of life that returns to dust. When a man dies, the "breath" or "spirit" returns to God, for He takes it from every one of them, the good and the bad alike.

In these Scripture passages we have seen that the terms "breath" (neshamah) and "spirit" (ruach) are used synonymously as the life-giving element that comes from God and is essential to man's existence as a living soul (nephesh).

We read concerning the family of Noah, and some animals and fowls shortly before the Flood came: "They went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath [ruach] of life." Genesis 7:15. But when the Deluge came, "All flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died." Verses 21,22. The Hebrew text says: "the breath of the spirit of life."

Hence The New American Standard Bible renders more accurately verse 22 by saying that "of all that was on the dry land died, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died." This shows that the words "breath" (neshamah) and "spirit" (ruach) were used synonymously in the Old Testament as shorter forms for the full form "the breath [neshamah] of the spirit [ruach] of life." Such, also, is the marginal reading given in the King James Version published by both the Cambridge University Press and the Oxford University Press.

In Genesis 35:18 it is said concerning Rachel that while she was giving birth to her second son, "her soul [nephesh] was in departing, (for she died)." This does not mean that she departed as a ghost, for the text explicitly states that "she died." Now, as we recall that it was when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, that "man became a living soul [nephesh]" (Genesis 2:7), we can readily see

that when Rachel died, the breath of life departed from her, so that her existence as a living soul then ended. Not the slightest hint is given to show that Rachel became a ghost when she expired.

According to 1 Kings 17, the son of a widow of Zarephath became ill, "and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath [neshamah] left in him." Verse 17. In j behalf of the lad, Elijah prayed to God: "I pray Thee, let the child's soul [nephesh] come into him again." Verse 21. The Lord granted that request, "and the soul [nephesh] of the child came into him again, and he revived." Verse 22. Then the prophet said to the widow, "See, thy son lives." Verse 23.

Inasmuch as "there was no breath left in him," it is evident that the boy had died. As a result, his condition as a living soul (nephesh) had ended. When the Lord restored him to life, the boy's condition as a living soul was resumed. No intimation is given to suggest that the lad became a ghost when "there was no breath [neshamah] left in him."

In the New Testament of the King James Version it is stated concerning four persons that each of them "gave up the ghost" or "yielded up the ghost" when he died. In two such accounts the Greek noun pneuma is rendered as "ghost But in these instances (Matthew 27:50 and John 19:30) the Greek term is used as the equivalent of the Hebrew word ruach, and means the "spirit" or the breath of life from God, by which man became "a living soul."

In Mark 15:37,39 and Luke 23:46 the Greek verb ekpneo is rendered as "gave up the ghost." The prefix ek (meaning out) and the verb pneo ("to blow, to breathe") are combined as ekpneo, which means "to breathe out," "to exhale," or "to gasp." Several modern versions which are not paraphrasings render the verb as "breathed his last." Some simply say he "died."

In mentioning the deaths of Ananias, Sapphira, and King Herod, the King James Verson states that they "gave up the ghost" or "yielded up the ghost." Acts 5:5,10; 12:23. The Greek verb used in these instances is eksucho, which is correctly rendered as "died" in several modern translations of the New Testament. No "ghost" is mentioned here.

The answer to the question, "Will you become a ghost when you die?" is, No. The Bible tells us that when you die you will return to the dust of the earth, that the breath of life within you will return to God, the Life-giver, and you will cease to be a living soul until the resurrection of your body.

But our Savior has said: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28,29.

Our prayer for you, dear reader, is that you will so faithfully live that if it should be your lot to die before Christ comes to raise the dead, you will be among those who shall come forth from the grave in the resurrection of life-everlasting life. Christ has given us His pledged word: "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 2:7. And, "He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death." Verse 11.

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14.

\$10,000 FOR A GHOST!

Little did John D. Fox and his family in Hydesville, New York, imagine what would be the result of their being mysteriously awakened from their sleep night after night in 1948 by eerie noises. After many efforts to discover the cause of the nightly disturbance, Kate and Margaret, daughters of Mr. Fox, devised a system of rappings by which they were able to communicate with the spirit that made the noises. By 1849 the "rappings" going on in the Fox home became sensational news, and out of curiosity multitudes of people flocked there from far and near.

Many went away convinced that the phenomena manifested there were the work of some invisible, superhuman agency. Communications from the spirit claimed that it was the ghost of a peddler who had been murdered, robbed, and buried in the basement of the house a many years before. Conclusive evidence of the finding of the skeletal remains of a dead man in the dirt beneath the house is lacking, but if such bones had been found, the find would not have proved the claim of the spirit to be true.

That experience marked the beginning of an interest in spiritualism that has spread far and wide. In its issue of April, 1941, page 210, the Scientific American announced the inauguration of a new investigation of spiritualistic phenomena. At that time that magazine added \$5,000 to the standing award of \$10,000 which was instituted some years earlier by the Universal Council for Psychic Research, hoping that the total of \$15,000 would be an incentive for mediums and others claiming psychic powers to cooperate. Mr.

Joseph Dunninger, chairman of the Universal Council for Psychic Research, was designated as head of the investigating committee approved by the Scientific American. It was stipulated that the combined award would be available for two years from March 15, 1941, to any medium or other person who could produce any effect in spiritualism or any supernatural manifestation which Mr. Dunninger could not duplicate or explain through natural or scientific means.

In its issue of April, 1943, the Scientific American announced that its two-year investigation was closed, and that they "have been unable to establish any clear-cut, solid, basic authority for the supposed existence of what are commonly known as psychic phenomena." The magazine stated that although it had withdrawn its \$5,000 award, "the \$10,000 offer of the Universal Council for Psychic Research still stands." Page 147.

This announcement by the Scientific American ought not to lead anybody to suppose the results of the investigation it undertook conclusively proves that no such thing as genuine psychic phenomena exists. The Sacred Scriptures clearly predict that in the last days there will be an extraordinary manifestation of psychic phenomena that will be the wonder of the world at large. Jesus Himself predicted it and emphatically declared that last-day spiritualistic marvels would be exceptionally delusive. "For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before." Matthew 24:24,25. He especially warned against belief in popular seances-spiritualistic phenomena "in the secret chambers"-where secret communications with Christ are said to be had. "Believe it not," He declared. Verse 26.

In testing the claims of spiritualism, we must seek the answers to two fundamental questions: (1) Is it certain that there exist invisible, superhuman spirit beings that are able to make contacts with men living on earth? (2) Is it possible that such spirits are human beings who have lived and died here in this world?

While it is true that much trickery has been performed by men skilled in sleight-of-hand and other means devised to produce fake spiritualistic phenomena, yet spiritualism can not be cast aside as chicanery of men.

The Bible repeatedly speaks of an order of heavenly intelligences called "angels" and "spirits." Hebrews 1:13,14; Psalm 104:4. But they are not ghosts of dead men. When the Lord created this world, "the morning stars and together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7. Angels are a superhuman order of beings, for man was made "a little lower than the angels." Psalm 8:5. And the angels "are greater in power and might" than man. 2 Peter 2:11. The Holy Scriptures tell of many mighty wonders performed by them. John saw "the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." Revelation 5:11. Paul speaks of them as "an innumerable company of angels." Hebrews 12:22. How long they have existed, the Bible does not say.

Lucifer, the anointed cherub attending the throne of God (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-19), rebelled against the government of heaven, and a vast host of the angels—at least one third of their number—joined him in that revolt. Revelation 12:7-9.

And these evil fallen angels are here on this earth. "The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Verse 9.

Angels have the power to assume the form and appearance of human beings, and can use men as mediums through whom to speak. See Genesis 18:1-35; Judges 6:22; 13:21; Hebrews 13:2. The angel that obstructed the passage of Balaam spoke to him through the medium of the ass (Numbers 22:21-25), and Satan spoke to Eve in Eden through the medium of the serpent. Genesis 3:1-4. Instances of spiritualism in the New Testament times are recorded in Acts 8:9-11; 16-16,18; 19:13-20.

A sorcerer is a person who uses power gained from the assistance or control of evil spirits, especially for divining. The Bible expressly declares that sorcerers (spirit mediums) will not have a part in the better world to come. Revelation 22:15. Witchcraft is placed in the same category, for it is nothing else than a form of sorcery. Galatians 5:20, 21. The final destination of those who practice these arts will be the lake of fire if they do not repent and turn from their evil ways. Revelation 21:8.

God not only forbids the practice of spiritualism, but under the theocracy of Israel He made it punishable by death. Leviticus 19:31; Exodus 22:18. To His people of old He said: "There shall not be found among you anyone that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord." Deuteronomy 18:10-12. Note that He not only condemns "a consulter with familiar spirits," but also "a necromancer." Necromancy is the art of revealing pretended communications from spirits of the dead.

At first Saul, king of Israel (1095-1055 B.C.), faithfully enforced the nation's laws against the practice of spiritualism. But in time he came to disregard the requirements of God. After many years of disobedience, the king saw the Philistine armies gathered against him. Samuel, the prophet, was then dead, having been buried in Ramah.

"And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." 1 Samuel 28:36. God does not answer the prayer of those who are bent on disregarding His law. "If I regard iniquity in mine heart, the Lord will not hear me," said David. Psalm 66:18. "He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Proverbs 28:9. But God hears those who seek to be obedient. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." 1 John 3:22.

Instead of humbling himself before God in repentance and confession, the wicked King Saul decided to consult a spirit medium. Because he hitherto had prosecuted those who practiced spiritualism, the mediums kept themselves in hiding and did a "black market" business. When he asked his servants where he might find a woman "that hath a familiar spirit, they told him that there was one at Endor. Taking two men with him, the king went by night to her abode and consulted her, saying: "Divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee....Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel." 1 Samuel 28:7-11.

Describing what she saw, the medium said: "I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he [Saul] said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? and Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answers me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou may make known unto me what I shall do." Verses 12-15.

Saul thought the medium was talking to the dead prophet, for the spirit that communicated with him through her represented himself as being the ghost of Samuel. This proves that the demons can impersonate dead persons.

The tragic result of Saul's experience is tersely recorded in these words: "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the Lord: therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David, the son of Jesse." 1 Chronicles 10:13,14; 1 Samuel 31:1-6. The Lord abandoned the wicked king to his enemies, and he died a suicide in battle. Verse 4.

"Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." 1 Timothy 4:1.

The fundamental "doctrine" of spiritualism is what the devil taught Adam and Eve in Eden when he seduced them into sin. God had said of the forbidden tree: "In the day that thou eats thereof thou shall surely die." Genesis 2:16,17. Satan contradicted this statement, saying: "Ye shall not surely die." Genesis 3:4. The system of Spiritualism is built upon this satanic proposition. It alleges that men do not die at death, but have an immortal soul that will continue to live thereafter in spirit form, and that mediums can communicate with the dead and obtain information from them. In this teaching spiritualism contradicts the Bible, which declares: "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." Ecclesiastes 9:5,6. The dead do not know that God exists, as David says: "In death there is no remembrance of Thee." Psalm 6:5. "The dead praise not the Lord." Psalm 115:17. The reason for this is as follows: "His [man's] breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalm 146:3,4.

Hence, we know by the word of God that the ghost which disturbed the sleep of the Fox family in Hydesville, New York in 1848, was not the spirit of a dead man. By claiming, as it did, that he was the spirit of a murdered peddler, the ghost was lying. "As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away: so he that goes down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more." Job 7:9,10. The dead are in their graves, just as Lazarus was during the four days that he was dead. John 11:11-14,17, 39, 43, 44. They will be in their graves until Christ shall come again and raise them up. John 5:28, 29; 1Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

WHERE DOES THE SOUL GO AT DEATH?

A religious newspaper reported that a little boy wrote a letter to God in which he asked: "Dear God: What is it like when you die? Nobody will tell me. I just want to know. I don't want to do it. Your friend, Mike." So even little children are puzzled about death and want to know more about it.

Another news report states that the body of a young woman was pulled from the Savannah River at a point near Augusta, Georgia. In a handbag tied to her wrist the police found a rambling suicide note penciled on school tablet paper, in which appeared this striking statement: "Soon I will be just another spook roaming around in space."

That girl's religious education, like that of millions of others, had led her to believe that at death she would immediately become a ghost that would wander, like a will-o'-the-wisp, invisibly here and there on the breezes.

The Tulsa World, a newspaper published in Oklahoma, in its issue of June 25, 1972, contained this item: "Is it true that evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson was buried with a live telephone in her coffin?"

"Yes, but the lady never had occasion to use it."

What really is death? A legal definition of death reads: "The cessation of life; the ceasing to exist; defined by physicians as a total stoppage of the circulation of the blood, and a cessation of the animal and vital functions consequent thereon, such as respiration, pulsation, etc."- Black's Law Dictionary, page 488, article "Death," column 1.

A standard unabridged dictionary similarly defines death: "1. The ending of all vital functions without possibility of recovery either in animals or plants or any parts of them: the end of life:... 4.a: the state of being no longer alive."-Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, page 581.

Medical advances that can keep a body functioning even after severe injury and disease make those definitions and laws based on monitoring breathing and circulation alone obsolete. A news report in 1981 stated that a group of medical, experts in the United States proposed the adoption of a Uniform Determination of Death Act, which reads:

"An individual who has sustained either (1) irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions, or (2) irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem, is dead."-Tulsa World, July 10, 1981.

A news report in 1983 stated that "Chinese health departments have changed their definition of death, partly because a peasant woman was rescued from her grave after crying, "I'm not dead. Quick, let me out."

That news report adds: "The peasant woman 'died' in a hospital in east China in 1981, but when her son visited her grave the day after she was buried, he heard a faint voice saying, 'I'm not dead. Quick, let me out.'

"Thinking he had heard a ghost, the son ran back to the village, and skeptical fellow villagers went out and heard the voice too.

"They dug up and opened the coffin, and the woman sat up.

"The paper said that in the hospital her heart had stopped and breathing apparently had stopped, but her brain had not died.

"It added that her coffin was not sealed tightly and, because of local custom, the grave mound had not been heaped with dirt, so air could enter and she could recover."-Tulsa World, May 18, 1983.

So the Chinese have had to redefine death also! Death happens everywhere man lives on earth. It has occurred ever since human history began. According to a published report, 2,073,000 persons died in the United States alone in the year 1984. This makes us wonder how many persons have died on planet Earth since Abel, the second son of Adam and Eve, was murdered by his brother Cain nearly 6,000 years ago. Genesis 4:1-8.

It is an astonishing fact that many religious people do not think that a person really dies when his body succumbs to disease and is buried in the grave to decay. Some believe that if his body is destroyed by fire, eaten by sharks or cannibals, or is blown to bits by a bomb, he still lives on as a disembodied soul or ghost, either in heaven or in a fiery purgatory or in a hell of eternally blazing fire.

Nevertheless, many of those same people believe that the bodies of those dead persons will be resurrected to live again at some time in the distant future. Hence it behooves us to consider what the Holy Scriptures say about the state of the dead. Where does a person really go at death?

When God created man He placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful paradise called the Garden of Eden. In it was the tree of life. As long as they were obedient to their Creator they might freely eat the fruit of it and live forever, for it contained the antidote against death. Because man was created a free moral agent, endowed with the power of choice, he was not forced to be obedient to his Creator. In the Garden of Eden the Lord planted also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Of it, God said: "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eats thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:17. Our Creator wants voluntary and loving obedience from His earthly children. He does not wish forced obedience to His laws.

But Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit and by so choosing to flout the law of God in order to live a life of license (unlimited freedom), man violated the condition on which he might enjoy an endless existence. The Lord immediately interposed, "lest he [man] put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." Verse 22. "So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep [guard] the way of the tree of life." Verse 24.

Thus man's access to the fruit of the tree of life, which contained an element essential to his perpetual existence as a living soul, was cut off. And the Lord told man what the result of that measure would be, saying: "In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return." Genesis 3:19.

Thus God has stated in the clearest of terms that when the living soul dies, he returns to the ground, unto dust, from which he originally was made, as stated in Genesis 2:7. At death he does not go away immediately to reside in some extra-terrestrial paradise, purgatory, hell of fire, heaven of bliss, or a series of reincarnations, as some religious people have thought.

Back in the distant past, in Eden itself, God said to Adam, the first living human soul, when he sinned: "Thou shalt surely die" (2:17), and "unto dust shall thou return" (3:19). Note that "thou"-the whole human person and not the mere body alone-returns to dust at death. "All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust." Job 34:15. It is the man-the living soul himself-who dies and returns to the ground (the dust) at death.

In cautioning us not to trust in man's ability to solve the problem of death, the Lord said: "His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth." Psalm 146:4. Note that it is "he"-the man himself-that "returns to his earth." "His breath goes forth," it is true, but the Lord does not identify nor equate the breath with the man-the living soul-who dies.

It is written concerning both man and beast that at death, "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." Ecclesiastes 3:19,20. "Thou takes away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." Psalm 104:29. Yes, "out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air." Genesis 2:19. And concerning man it is written: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Verse 7. Here, again, God does not identify nor equate man-the person or soul-with the breath of life.

The ancient patriarch Job in his great physical affliction asked: "Man dies, and wastes away: yea, man gives up the ghost, and where is he?" Job 14:10. Sensing the fact that he was close to death, he exclaimed: "My days are extinct, the graves are ready for me." Job 17:1. "If I wait, the grave is mine house." Job 17:13. "For I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." Job 30:23. That is, the grave-the dust of the ground-is the intermediate place where the dead remain after death until the Lord shall resurrect them at the last day.

Elihu, in his conversation with Job concerning the destiny of man, rightly said: "All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust." Job 34:15.

Solomon, in speaking of death, said: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was." Ecclesiastes 12:7. King Hezekiah (729-686 B.C.), when facing death, said: "I shall go to the gates of the grave." Isaiah 38:10. When Joshua, who succeeded Moses as leader of Israel, was about to die he said: "I am going the way of all the earth." Joshua 23:14. King David made a similar statement. 1 Kings 2:2.

In ancient times it was customary to say, when a person died, that he was "gathered to his people." Genesis 25:8,17; 35:29; 49:29-33; Numbers 20:24,26,29; 27:13. Or, "gathered to their fathers." Judges 2:10.

The Jewish Encyclopedia aptly comments: "The tomb is to the dead what the house is to the living, so that the grave is termed a 'house' (Isaiah 14:18), or the 'long home' (Ecclesiastes 7:5), while in Job 30:23 it is called 'the house appointed for all living.'" - Volume 12, page 183, article, "Tombs."

The Hebrew noun sheol is commonly used in reference to the grave as the place to which people go at death. Job 3:22; 5:26; 10:19; 17:1; 21:32; Psalm 88:5,11; Isaiah 14:19; 53:9.

Death was commonly referred to as "sleep" by the ancients. The biblical obituary of a Jewish king simply states that he "slept with his fathers" in at least 38 instances. See, for example, 1 Kings 2:10; 11:43; etc.

In Psalm 13:3 David refers to it as "the sleep of death." See also Deuteronomy 31:16; Job 3:13; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 1:21.

When Jesus was in a place beyond Jordan, He said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." John 11:7. And He added: "Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead." Verses 11-14.

When Jesus came to Bethany He went with the sisters of Lazarus and others to the tomb where the dead body lay. When He told them to remove the stone that closed the entrance to the grave, Martha objected, saying: "Lord, by this time he stinks for he hath been dead four days." Verse 39.

When the stone was removed, Jesus prayed to His heavenly Father and then cried with a loud voice to the dead body in the tomb, "Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go." Verses 43,44

Note particularly that Lazarus was not called down from heaven or up from hell to enter his grave for the resurrection of his body.

While Jesus was teaching at Capernaum, a city on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jairus, the ruler of a synagogue, requested Him to come and heal his daughter, who was very ill. Before Christ arrived at the ruler's house messengers informed them that the girl was dead. Jesus then said, "Be not afraid, only believe." Mark 5:35,36.

When He entered the house full of mourners, Jesus said: "Give place: for the maid is not dead but sleeps. And they laughed Him to scorn." Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:39,40; Luke 8:52,53. Jesus took the dead girl by the hand and said, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years." Mark 5:41,42.

Note that in three of the gospels it is affirmed that Jesus spoke of the girl's death as "sleep." God can rightfully speak of death as "sleep" because He can waken dead people to life. He, as the Creator of human beings, will resurrect the dead of all ages to appear before Him in the coming great day of judgment.

Jesus said: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

John 5:28,29. In other places in the New Testament death is referred to as sleep. See Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Corinthians 15:6,18,20,51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15.

"The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." Ecclesiastes 9:5,6. "Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goes." Verse 10.

It is really illogical to suppose that a dead person whose brain has been destroyed by crime, disease, war, accident, or other means, can think and reason, sing or talk.

In the Holy Scriptures it is said concerning God: "In death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?" Psalm 6:5. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Psalm 115:17. Also: "The grave cannot praise Thee, death can not celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day." Isaiah 38:18,19.

We read in Holy Writ that when a person dies, "his breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalm 146:4.

DO IT NOW

If with pleasure you are viewing any work a man is doing,
If you like him or you love him, tell him now;
Don't withhold your approbation till the parson makes oration
And he lies with snowy lilies on his brow;

No matter how you shout it, he won't really know about it;
He won't know how many teardrops you have shed;
If you think some praise is due him, now's the time to slip it to him,
For he cannot read his tombstone when he's dead.

More than fame and more than money is the comment kind and sunny
And the hearty, warm approval of a friend.
For it gives to life a savor, and it makes you stronger, braver;
And it gives you heart and spirit to the end;

If he earns your praise-bestow it; if you like him, let him know it;
Let the words of true encouragement be said;

Do not wait till life is over and he's underneath the clover,
For he cannot read his tombstone when he's dead.

- Berton Braley

IMMORTALITY, WHEN?

Have you ever thought about the human desire to live happily as long as possible? The amount of money that people spend to protect and prolong human life is enormous. We wonder how much is spent per year in building and operating hospitals, sanitariums and clinics for medical purposes. How much does it cost to build and staff medical institutions and operate medical schools? Add to this the cost of manufacturing medical equipment and instruments, plus medicines and many other things essential to medical care. It indicates that life and health are very precious commodities.

A news report in major newspapers across the nation announced:

"A specialist in the problems of age and aging predicts that the average human life span will double-to between 120 and 140 years-in the next century; and that immortality for human beings is within the reach of medical science."

The report cites a medical expert as saying: "We have already learned to slow the aging process. In the next 50 years, we will slow it still further-extending the average life span to between 120 and 140 years.

"It should then be possible ... to completely arrest the aging process and, finally, to reverse it."-Tulsa World, December 7, 1980.

More trustworthy than that is the precious promise and plan of God for us to enjoy everlasting life in the earth made new, as foretold in the Holy Scriptures.

In the beginning, when man was created, provision was made whereby he could enjoy immortality on condition of faithful obedience to his Creator. The Lord endowed him with ability to think, to reason, and to learn. He was given the power of choice in order that he might freely render willing and intelligent obedience to his Maker.

In the midst of the Garden of Eden, the paradise home which God provided for Adam and his wife Eve, the Lord planted the tree of life. They could freely eat of the fruit of it and live forever. Genesis 2:9,16. To test their loyalty to Him as their Creator, He also planted there the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Concerning it, He said to them: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shall not eat of it; for in the day that thou eats thereof thou shall surely die." Genesis 2:17.

Eating of the fruit of the tree of life once could not impart to Adam and his offspring eternal life or immortality. In Eden man had to continue to partake of its fruit from time to time in order to live for ever.

We do not know how long Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden before their expulsion from it. Their third son, Seth, was born to them after their expulsion from Eden and when they were 130 years old. Genesis 5:3. Thus Adam, who died at the age of 930 years, had lived in Eden with access to the tree of life a comparatively short time-probably less than 100 years. Cain and Abel were born to them after their expulsion from Eden, and had grown to manhood before Seth was born.

Eating of the fruit of the tree of life from time to time was necessary in order for man to live forever. To prevent this after Adam and Eve sinned, God cut off their access to the tree of life thereafter by stationing there cherubim with a flaming sword to deny them access to that life-perpetuating fruit. Genesis 3:22-24. From that time to the present man has been a mortal being, doomed to die.

Adam could not transmit, therefore, immortality to his offspring because he did not possess it to bestow. Our inheritance from Adam, our first human father, is mortality and death, the very opposite of immortality and everlasting life (eternal existence).

Only by special interposition on the part of God have any of the descendants of Adam been so fortunate as to avoid death. The two exceptions are Enoch (Genesis 5:22-24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:1,11). We are told that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Romans 5:12.

Eliphaz, one of the friends of the ancient patriarch Job, was correct when he asked: "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" Job 4:17. This is the only instance in which the word "mortal" appears in the King James Version of the Old Testament. We find it used five times in the New Testament, as follows:

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." Romans 6:12. Thus Paul reminds us that we live in "mortal flesh." 2 Corinthians 4:11. The same apostle's comforting words to the faithful who, like him, would face death as martyrs, are: "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." Romans 8:11.

The following words penned by the same apostle are very comforting for those who will die before Jesus comes to resurrect the faithful who are asleep in death: "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:52-54.

In that passage the Lord makes it unmistakably clear that, though we are at present mortal souls, our hope of becoming immortal is still bright. It will be fulfilled at Christ's second advent, when He shall come to resurrect from their graves the souls who have been faithful to the end. Then He will take them to heaven with the righteous ones living on earth at that time.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:22.

The word "immortal" is used but once in the Bible, where it speaks of the Deity as "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God." 1 Timothy 1:17.

The word "immortality" is found five times in the New Testament, twice in 1 Corinthians 15:53,54, as quoted above, and also in the following three instances:

1. God is said to be "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: Who only bath immortality." 1 Timothy 6:15,16.
2. Our only hope is in "Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2 Timothy 1:10.
3. The faithful followers of Christ "seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." Romans 2:7. If we were born immortal there would be no need for us to "seek" immortality.

In speaking of His plan for the faithful to enjoy immortality in the better world to come, the Lord uses in the Holy Scriptures several terms that are synonymous, such as life more abundant, eternal life (28 times in the NT), everlasting life (14 times in the NT), live for ever, life for ever more, etc.

Furthermore, we are told in the Bible that immortality is not something we have inherited by birth and already possess, but it is a gift that God offers to penitent mortals: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23. Also: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

When will He bestow on the faithful the gift of immortality? It will be when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17. See also John 14:1-3.

How will the redeemed "be caught up"? It is written that "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matthew 24:31.

It is at that time that "this mortal shall put on immortality" 1 Corinthians 15:53,54.

TWO RESURRECTIONS

Comparatively few people have read the entire volume of the Holy Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. For those who have done so, one of the most surprising passages in Holy Writ is this one:

"I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." Revelation 20:1-6.

This prophetic period of 1,000 years is commonly called "the millennium," which term is derived from two Latin words, mille (a thousand) and annul (a year). This period is specifically mentioned only in Revelation 20.

In order to understand this interesting prediction, we first must find out when this long period of time will begin. The key to the mystery is provided in the passage above quoted from the prophecy. Note that the apostle speaks of two resurrections: one of them will occur at the beginning, and the other will take place at the close, of the 1,000 years. Particular mention is made of "the first resurrection," and it is said that "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." Verse 6.

Hence the first resurrection will be that of the just, those who have died sanctified by the saving grace of Christ. The prophet describes some of them as being martyrs, who "were beheaded for the witness of Jesus." Verse 4. He says that they shall have a part in the judgment during the millennium, and that "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Verse 4. To be able to live, reign, and judge during the millennium, the righteous dead must be raised from death to life. Thus it is patent that the millennium will begin with the resurrection of the just.

Paul declared that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." Acts 24:15. And Jesus specifically states that there will be two resurrections, saying that "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28,29. It is "the resurrection of life"-that of those who have done good-that will mark the beginning of the millennium.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," says John. Revelation 20:5. If the "blessed and holy" are to come forth in the first resurrection at the beginning of the 1,000-year period, then "the rest of the dead" are the wicked, the unholy, who will come forth in "the resurrection of damnation" at the end of the millennium. One thousand years, therefore, will separate the resurrection of the unjust from that of the just.

Because the resurrection of the righteous will mark the commencement of the 1,000 years, and will take place at the second coming of Christ, this means that the millennium will begin when Jesus shall return to the world the second time to receive His own.

When the Savior shall return the second time, there will be two classes of people in this world: the just and the unjust. They will be in four groups-two of the just: the dead and the living; and two of the unjust: the dead and the living.

The righteous dead will be raised from their graves at the second coming of Christ, and with them the living righteous will be caught up to meet Him in the air, after which both groups will accompany Him to heaven.

"For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. Consequently there will not remain a just person, either dead or alive, in all the earth during the millennium.

What will happen then to the unjust at Christ's second advent? The wicked dead will continue in their graves as they were, and the living wicked will be slain at His coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8. Because all the righteous shall have been taken to heaven by the Savior at His second advent, and because all the wicked shall have been left dead upon the earth, there will not exist a living human being in the whole world during the millennium.

A series of terrible calamities will precede the second advent of Christ. They are the seven last plagues described in Revelation 16. Under the sixth will come the great battle of Armageddon. Then the Lord will announce: "It is done," and the last of those terrible judgments will strike the earth. Revelation 16:16-21. Under the seventh plague the earth will suffer the worst earthquake of its history, which will cause terrible avalanches and tidal waves. Describing its effects, the seer says: "The cities of the nations fell And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." Verses 19,20. At the same time there will break loose upon the guilty inhabitants of the earth the most fearful tempest ever recorded. The hail stones will each weigh about "a talent" (approximately 55 pounds). Verse 21.

Then will be fulfilled these dreadful words: "The nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged and that Thou should give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and should destroy them which destroy the earth." Revelation 11:18.

The prophet Jeremiah has described the scene: "The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He shall mightily roar upon His habitation; He shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord path a controversy with the nations, He will plead with all flesh; He will give them that are wicked to the sword, said the Lord. Thus said the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind [a hurricane] shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground." Jeremiah 25:30-33. The wicked dead will neither be lamented nor given burial because there will be no human being left upon the earth to do this for them.

The whole face of the earth will be desolated and demolished into a state of chaos by the fury of the earthquake and the tempest. Not a member of the human race will be left alive upon the globe. "I beheld the earth," says the prophet, "and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by His fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb upon the rocks: every city shall be forsaken and not a man dwell therein." Jeremiah 4:23-29.

The trembling of the mountains will be caused by the earthquake. The horsemen and bowmen represent the angels of the armies of heaven, who will accompany the King of kings when He shall come to execute the wrath of God upon the rebellious world. Revelation 19:11-21.

Another description of this scene reads: "The heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:14-17.

The wicked will not desire to behold the face of the Savior in that day, but will pray for the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the presence of Christ. Their petition will be granted when the great earthquake shall hurl the mountains and hills into the valleys, and the waters of the oceans shall be poured in tidal waves upon the coasts of the continents and over islands, while the tempest of great hailstones shall batter down the cities of the nations. The carcasses of the wicked will be given to the birds of prey to devour in that day.

That will be the end of the world, but not "a full end," as Jeremiah has said. Jeremiah 4:27. The whole earth will be left in a desolate, chaotic condition, with no human being living upon it. This planet will then be in mourning and clothed in darkness. It will then be, indeed, a veritable bottomless pit-Satan's prison for 1,000 years.

Because there will be no human beings left alive upon the earth at that time, the work of Satan will be interrupted by this chain of circumstances, "that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." Revelation 20:3 Thus he and his angel followers will be confined to this dark and dismal terrestrial prison for 1,000 years without any human beings to tempt to sin. It will be the devil's vacation. This sentence to ten centuries of imprisonment will be a part of his punishment, which will end with torment and final destruction in the fires of hell.

The prophet Isaiah, who also describes that desolation, adds: "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited." Isaiah 24:21,22. All the unjust among men will be gathered into the pit of death, and in this prison they will remain shut up, while "hosts" or wicked spirits (Ephesians 6:12, American Standard Version) shall be imprisoned on this dismal and desolate earth to await their final doom. But "after many days"-1,000 years-"shall they be visited." Isaiah 24:22. Satan is to be bound thus by a chain of circumstances that will bring a halt to his nefarious work of deceiving men, and he will have ten centuries of leisure in which to contemplate a ruined world, the result of his long rebellion against the Most High.

In the meantime the redeemed will be with their Savior in the mansions above. John 14:2,3. Nothing whatever is said in Revelation 20 to intimate that the righteous will be on earth during the millennium. During the 1,000 years they will have a part in the judgment that shall determine what the punishment of each of the unjust shall be, for John saw that "judgment was given unto them." Revelation 20:4.

The great judgment process is divided into three phases: (1) the Investigative or Pre-Advent Judgment (extending from 1844 to the first of the seven last plagues) to determine who shall be saved at the second coming of Christ; (2) the Judicative Judgment (during the

millennium) to decide what the punishment of each of the wicked shall be; and (3) the Executive Judgment (at the close of the millennium) to give to every lost sinner the reward that his evil deeds merit. Thus it is done in the courts of today. First, an investigation or trial takes place to determine whether or not the accused is guilty. Second, if the jury should find him guilty, the judge must dictate the sentence, saying what his punishment shall be. Third, the judgment of the court is executed by the authorities appointed for that purpose. It is the second phase of the great judgment process-the Judicative Judgment-that will be carried on in heaven during the 1000 years that Satan shall be bound on the desolate and dreary earth.

John says of the just, that "judgment was given unto them." Revelation 20:4. Daniel likewise saw, in vision, that "judgment was given to the saints of the Most High." Daniel 7:22. God will not condemn the wicked to the fires of hell without their righteous fellowmen witnessing to His justice in every case. The redeemed will have ten centuries in heaven in which to examine the life story of every one of the lost, and they will see and understand the justice of God in punishing those who refuse to turn from evil. There will never be raised a finger thereafter to accuse God of having dealt unjustly with any soul.

Before the eyes of the saved the books of record in the tribunal of heaven will be opened, that all may know the full details of the great controversy between Christ and Satan from the beginning. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?...Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" 1 Corinthians 6:2,3. Step by step the apostasy of Lucifer and his confederate angels will be traced, the fall of man in Eden will be reviewed, and the subsequent struggle between good and evil will be scrutinized. Much that hitherto has remained obscure and hard to understand will be made plain then. The unanimous verdict of the saints will be that God is true and just. Revelation 15:3.

And when the 1,000 years shall have ended, the Savior will come "with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them [the wicked] of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Jude 14,15.

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." Revelation 20:7-9.

Thus Christ and the redeemed will descend from heaven at the close of the millennium. Then the wicked dead will be raised from their graves, for they have been dead in the earth during the millennium. The city of God, the New Jerusalem, shall come down to earth (Revelation 21:2) and be set in a place made for it where old Jerusalem now stands. Zechariah 14:4,5. The majority of men having "loved darkness rather than light" (John 3:19,29), will be in number "as the sand of the sea." Revelation 20:8. Upon seeing this vast host of resurrected sinners, Satan will take on renewed courage, and will lead them to believe that they can win in this last fight against the government of God. Wicked human beings will be just as disposed then to oppose God as they were when they lived before. Their hearts will not have changed in the least. The fact that they will be ready to join with Satan in his last effort against God shows that there can be no hope of repentance on their part after the second advent of Christ. Their hatred and rebellion against Him will be as manifest then as it is now.

We do not know how long will be the period of time that the wicked will have to prepare for the assault against the holy city. But we are told that after 1,000 years shall have expired, Satan "must be loosed a little season." Revelation 20:3. It will not be very long.

Gog and Magog are symbolic names by which the Holy Spirit designates that vast host of wicked human beings who shall come forth from their graves in the resurrection of damnation at the end of the millennium. They are those who have rebelled against the law of God, and have rejected the love, mercy, and grace which He has offered through the gift of His Son to save them. Satan will be the leader of that great army of the wicked. The powerful angel-demons who have aided his rebellion will be there to second his cause. Cain, the first of the world's long list of murderers, will be there. In that vast host will be seen the mighty giants whose impiety filled the antediluvian world with corruption and violence. With them will be those impenitent emperors, kings, generals, religious zealots, and others who have waged fiendish war against the Holy Scriptures and the saints of God in days gone by. In battle array they will march up to surround and attack the Holy City and the saints of God.

Inside the gorgeous walls of the New Jerusalem will be the redeemed of all ages. Outside the beautiful gates of pearl will be the vast host of impenitent sinners of all the centuries past. This will be the first, last, and only time that all the sons and daughters of Adam shall ever be assembled together. The whole human family will be there. You and I have an appointment before the tribunal of the Almighty. "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, said the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Romans 14:10-12. Each of us is to decide now whether he will be outside or inside the city of God that great day.

Once the army of the wicked shall have approached the walls of the Holy City, they will be halted to participate in a grand and solemn spectacle. Says John: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it.... And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God;

and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

Revelation 20:11,12. This will be the great Executive Judgment, when every one of the lost shall receive his just recompense. "Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." Verse 9. Thus will come the torment and "the second death" that await the lost. Verse 14.

Will you be inside, or outside, the Holy City on that day? Are you planning to meet Jesus in peace at His second coming? If not, then you will be on the outside of the New Jerusalem at the end of the millennium and will perish with all the wicked.

Now is the time, while the mercy of God still lingers, for the living to turn in repentance to the Lord and accept His gracious offer of salvation from sin and its consequences. Now is the time to give your heart to the Lord without delay, and prepare for Christ's soon coming.

HOW HOT IS HELL?

In religious circles today one hears some interesting things said about the destiny of the wicked after they die. On one hand, it is argued that Christ died for all men in order that all might have eternal life, for God is love and too good to torture and destroy any of His creatures. On the other hand, there is the extreme view that our Creator will send impenitent sinners to a hell of fire to burn for eternity-sizzling and suffering in endless torment and agony.

Is either of those two extreme views correct? Suppose, for example, that the judge of your county should sentence a man convicted of murder to be tortured continuously day and night with scalding water and red-hot irons so as to keep him constantly suffering the most excruciating pain. What would the news media have to say about that? What would be the reaction of the people in general to punishment of that sort? Does it make sense to say that our Creator, who is a God of justice and love, could be a monster of cruelty worse than that?

Suppose that the judge should choose the opposite course, saying that he believes in loving everybody, and that it is wrong to punish criminals and make them suffer for the crimes they have committed. What would the public reaction be to that, if he should allow murderers, robbers, rapists, etc., to go free without any restraint or punishment?

In our search for the truth, we should turn to the Holy Scriptures to see for certain what God Himself has said about what He will do with people who persist in sinful living. The Lord has said in His Written Word that He Himself will be our Judge, and that He will "give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12. No man can persist in wrongdoing with impunity. "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked." Nahum 1:3. Yes, the Lord God is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6,7.

We are plainly told in Revelation 20:8,9 that at the close of the 1,000 years-the millennium-Satan will be loosed out of his prison, and will go out "to deceive the nations ... to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."

Note particularly that the wicked will be devoured by fire here on this earth. It was the fate of wicked Sodom and Gomorrah to be thus destroyed, for it is written that "the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." Genesis 19:24. They were so completely destroyed that they were wiped out of existence. Hence the New Testament prophet tells us that "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Jude 7. Note particularly that those wicked cities are "set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." It is not the suffering that is said to be eternal, but the fire which God employed to destroy them is eternal in its effect.

Some suppose that the words "unquenchable fire" mean that there is an eternally burning hell in which the wicked will writhe in torment and anguish ages without end. Such is not the intention of John in saying: "He [Christ] will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17. By the word "unquenchable" he means fire that no man can extinguish or put out. Chaff is very easily consumed by fire, and John very plainly says that Christ will "burn up"-utterly consume-those (the, chaff) it figuratively represents.

By the prophet Jeremiah the Lord warned the sinners in Jerusalem what the result would be if they should not turn from their transgression of the Sabbath: "Then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." Jeremiah 17:27. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Babylonians took the city, "burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire." 2 Chronicles 36:19. But those buildings are not burning yet.

However, the unquenchable fire kindled in them did accomplish its work of destruction, as foretold, for no man was able to put it out. But it did go out of itself when its destructive work was done.

Furthermore, we must reject an interpretation that makes the Lord contradict Himself. Because He plainly declares that "all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, said the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1,3), we must conclude that by the expression "unquenchable fire" the Lord means that the wicked will be utterly destroyed, and that no one will be able to stay the fire until that work is accomplished.

The world has not forgotten the sensational atomic bomb that wrought such terrible havoc in August of 1945. That was a puny bit of fire play in comparison with the fiery spectacle of the destruction of the wicked at the close of the millennium, foretold in Revelation 20.

We have been told: "The heavens which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Peter 3:7,10. This refers to the atmospheric heavens that envelop the earth. "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch." Isaiah 34:8,9.

Yes, the whole earth will then be enveloped "with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones." Isaiah 30:30.

We have been told: "The soul that sins, it shall die." Ezekiel 18:4,20. Yes, "the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. Hence we read that at the close of the millennium, as viewed by the prophet John in vision, "Death and hell [hades, "grave"] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." Revelation 20:14. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." Verse 6.

We read that "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27. This is the first death, which comes upon all men as the result of the transgression of Adam and Eve. See Genesis 2:17. But God has given to all opportunity to repent and be saved. We are assured that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:22. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28,29.

The resurrection of damnation (condemnation) will take place at the close of the millennium, as it is foretold in Revelation 20. The death that the wicked will die in the lake of fire at that time is called "the second death." See verses 46 and 14.

By persisting in impenitence and sinful living, the wicked forfeit their right to membership in the human race. By rejecting the pardon and hope of everlasting life offered by God to men, as set forth in Holy Writ, the wicked seal their doom.

While it is very evident that the ungodly will suffer a fearful fate, with punishment and torment corresponding to their guilt, it is also certain that there will be an end of sin and sinners. An eternally burning hell filled with screaming, cursing, unceasingly tormented wretches would be a perpetuation, and not an end, to sin and suffering. Instead of bringing the human tragedy to an end, it would be a fearful perpetuation and augmenting of it without end and to no purpose.

We have already noted the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah that came as the result of their persistence in wickedness. Peter tells us that God, "turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." 2 Peter 2:6. And Jude, as we have noted, says that God has destroyed those cities by fire, and that they are "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Verse 7. Though those cities were destroyed with "eternal fire," yet they were turned "into ashes," according to the Bible. This explains Christ's reference to sinners going into "everlasting fire" (Matthew 25:41) in the judgment day. The fire that came down from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah was eternal in its effect, for those cities were eternally annihilated, and will never be rebuilt.

When the Lord shall finish the work of punishing the ungodly according to their deeds, He will completely rid the universe of them, so that sin and sinners will be no more. Their destruction is compared to the consumption of grease by fire. "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." Psalm 37:20.

When David described the end of the wicked he said that they would become wholly extinct. "Evildoers shall be cut off. ... For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.... The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Psalms 37:9, 10, 38.

Idol worshipers have been warned that they would be as dead trees and dry weeds in the fires of the last days. "The destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.... For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fades, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them." Isaiah 1:28,30, 31.

Indeed, "they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor a fire to sit before it." Isaiah 47:14.

"Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, said the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Malachi 4:1.

The destruction of sinners will be complete annihilation: "Ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, said the Lord of hosts." Verse 3.

Even the devil will be destroyed, for Christ came to the world "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Hebrews 2:14. He came "that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8.

An eternally burning hell filled with immortal men and devils, ceaselessly cursing God and suffering indescribable agony, would be a horrible and endless perpetuation of the existence of Satan, sin, and sinners. It would be contrary to God's statement to rebellious Lucifer: "I will destroy thee, O covering cherub,.. .Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. ...Thou shall be a terror, and never shall thou be any more." Ezekiel 28:16-19.

Sinners will be destroyed completely, both soul and body. God says: "The soul that sins, it shall die." Ezekiel 18:4, 20. That is why Christ warns us to "fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 10:28.

When a person chooses to persist in the violation of the rights of God and man, there is only one thing that his Maker can do with him, and that is to punish him for the evil he has already done and to put him out of existence to keep him from doing more.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Clearly then, there is only one alternative to this provision for the impenitent sinner, and that is the forfeiture of the right to exist. By rejecting the offer of everlasting life, the sinner chooses everlasting death. It is impossible for either man or angel to exist apart from God, "for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17:28. With Him "is the fountain of life" (Psalm 36:9), and by rejecting Him as the Source of life, the unrepentant sinner dooms himself to perish-to die "the second death." There will be no second chance after that. From the second death there will be no resurrection. Impenitent sinners will suffer eternal annihilation.

Jesus made it very clear that the way of the righteous leads "unto life," while the way of the wicked leads to "destruction." Matthew 7:13,14. Paul states emphatically that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Thus the "everlasting punishment" meted out to the ungodly will be "everlasting destruction."

In Matthew 25:41 it is said that in the day of judgment the impenitent will hear this verdict: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This means a fire that will constantly burn until it shall consume everything upon which it feeds, and none shall be able to hinder its destructive work until it is finished. Sodom and Gomorrah, wicked Canaanite cities which were destroyed nearly nineteen hundred years before Christ was born, "are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Jude 7. Peter says that God turned "the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes" by "making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." 2 Peter 2:6. The annihilation of those cities is an example of the eternal destruction by fire that awaits all those who persist in rejecting God's claims upon them and by continuing in sin. They, too, will be turned into ashes and obliterated as unfit for membership in the human race.

The term "destruction" is a very fitting one in Christ's description of the end of the road that awaits those who willfully continue in sin. He has said: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:13, 14.

Indeed, "destruction" is the only alternative to "life" -everlasting life. We beseech you, dear reader, to give serious and prayerful thought to those alternatives. To reject the road to ultimate destruction and choose the one that leads to an endless life, is the only sensible thing

to do. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

HOW LONG IS FOREVER?

Concerning impenitent sinners, the Lord says: "They shall be destroyed for ever." Psalm 92:7. This brings us to the question: How long is for ever? Does it always mean for or throughout eternity?

In vision the prophet John was shown the destruction of the wicked at the end of the millennium that will span the period between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked. See Revelation 20:4-6. He was shown what would happen to the wicked at the end of that 1000-year period. He says that "the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, ... and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Verse 10. What does the Lord mean by that statement?

The safest rule to follow in a case of this kind is to seek the meaning of terms as they are used in the Holy Scriptures themselves, instead of depending solely on en-cyclopedias and commentaries that give human definitions in use today. Furthermore, do not take a single instance as a basis for important conclusions, but gather a number of them from various places in the Written Word.

Now let us take the expression "for ever" and consider it in the light of its use in the Holy Scriptures. For example, when Moses gave Israel the law concerning the relation of a master to his manservant, it was stipulated that the servant could not be held in servitude more than six years without his consent. If, at the end of the six-year period, the servant should desire to continue in the service of his master, it would be necessary for them to fulfill the following requirement: "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever." Exodus 21:16.

How long does "for ever" mean here? It evidently means as long as both parties should remain alive. Else, how could a living servant serve a dead master? Or how could a dead servant serve a living master? That law, given to the Hebrew commonwealth more than fourteen centuries before the birth of Christ, is not in vogue today. Surely the masters and servants who entered into such agreements so long ago are not now fulfilling them.

Here is another example. When Naaman, the Syrian leper, had been healed he desired to give Elisha a costly gift as a token of his appreciation for the prophet's kindness. Elisha refused to accept pay for what God had done for the leper. But Gehazi, his covetous servant, slipped away from the house after the healed man had gone; overtaking him on the way, he obtained the gift by telling Naaman a lie. Returning to Elisha after hiding the present, Gehazi lied again by telling the prophet that he had gone nowhere. Thereupon Elisha reproved his wicked servant and added: "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." 2 Kings 5:27. This occurred nearly 900 years before Christ was born. Is Gehazi a leper today? The only reasonable meaning that "forever" can have here is that Gehazi would be a leper until death should overtake him.

In delivering his charge to Israel and to Solomon, David declared: "Howbeit the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever." 1 Chronicles 28:4. David's death is recorded, and it is stated that "the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years." 1 Kings 2:10,11; 1 Chronicles 29:27, 28. And centuries later Peter declared concerning David: "He is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day For David is not ascended into the heavens." Acts 2:29,34. And Paul remarks that David "fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." Acts 13:36. How long, then, did God mean that David should reign when He said that this king would rule over Israel "for ever"? He simply meant that David should be king over his people as long as he should live. And it was so, for he reigned over them forty years, that is, until he died.

When Aaron was consecrated as high priest, his duty thereafter was to minister unto the Lord, and "to bless in His name for ever." 1 Chronicles 23:13. Aaron died on Mt. Hor before the children of Israel entered the Land of Canaan. Numbers 20:28,29. He had lived 123 years. Numbers 33:38, 39. In this instance the expression "forever" meant as long as Aaron should live.

In ancient times the buyer of a house within a walled city in Israel was not permitted by law to have a clear title to the property until one year had elapsed after the sale was made. During the year the seller could present the purchase price to the buyer and demand the return of the house. But if the seller should fail to do this ere the twelve-month period should expire, the buyer would have a clear title to the house. The law said: "Then the house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations." Leviticus 25:29, 30.

How long was the title good? Obviously, as long as the buyer should keep the property. There was no law forbidding him to sell it to another party. And could he still be the owner of the house if it should be burned up or destroyed? Would it still be his after he should die? That law was issued about 1,400 years before Christ was born. Are such houses in ancient walled cities still standing? The meaning of "for ever" in this case is that the buyer would have a good title to the house for himself and his heirs against the world as long as they should desire to keep the property.

A remarkable use of the term "for ever" is found in this statement: "Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." Jonah 1:17. Jesus confirmed the accuracy of that statement. Matthew 12:40. But when Jonah described the experience that he had inside the fish, he said, "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God."

Jonah 2:1, 2, 6. How long was "for ever" in this case? Here "for ever" means as long as he was inside the fish, which was three days and three nights. The expression "for ever" simply means that as long as he was there inside the fish, such was his miserable condition.

Having carefully considered these passages, we conclude that the term "for ever" as used in the Holy Scriptures denotes continuity (without a break) of action, being, or state of being. It may mean either a long period or a short one, either definite or indefinite. The length of time involved depends on the nature of the person or thing to which the expression is applied. When we read of God that "His mercy endures for ever" (Psalm 106:1; 107:1), it means that as long as God shall exist, His mercy shall continue to exist. Because He is eternal in His nature, His attributes are eternal, too.

But when the words "for ever" are applied to things of this world, the expression can mean only as long as they endure. Because in the resurrection day the righteous will be given eternal life and an immortal nature, many things spoken concerning their future existence as lasting "for ever" means for eternity, for the expression "for ever" means as long as a thing shall exist. Hence many Bible scholars have given the original Hebrew and Greek words translated as "for ever" their more precise and correct meaning, which is "age lasting."

Our English word "always" has a similar meaning. It may mean eternity, or it may mean a short period of time. When a person says, "I have always lived in New York City," he does not mean that he has lived there all the eternity of the past, but that during all his past life he has lived there, which may be only 20 years, depending on his age at the time. When a man promises his bride that he will always love and cherish her, he means that he will do so as long as they both are alive. But when we say that "God has always existed," we mean that He has lived during all the eternity of the past. The psalmist says concerning Him: "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Psalm 90:2.

Revelation 20:10 does not say that the wicked "shall be tormented for eternity, for ever and ever." If the word "eternity" had been used in that text there could be no question about the length of time denoted. But the passage really says: "And shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Thus it is a matter of days and nights and not eternity. The suffering of some sinners in the lake of fire undoubtedly will be over a period of many days and nights, for every wicked person will be rewarded "according to his works." Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6; Revelation 22:12; 20:12,13.

Jesus has said concerning sinners in the day of judgment that "these shall go away into everlasting punishment." Matthew 25:46. Does this mean eternal torment? Note that this passage does not speak of everlasting punishing; it speaks of "everlasting punishment." That means that the effect of the fire upon the sinner will be eternal. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4, 20), which means that the sinner will suffer everlasting death, for there will be no recovery whatever from it. No resurrection from the second death is promised to anybody.

"NO MORE DEATH"

An archipelago of 365 islands ranging from tiny islets supporting five or six coconut palms to large islands, lies off the Atlantic coast of Panama. Hundreds of San Blas Indians make their home there. When we lived in Panama years ago, those squat, bronze folk were very picturesque in their dress, manners, and home life. Their daily food consisted of tropical fruits and vegetables-especially bananas, coconuts, and yams-with plenty of fish. A system of traps owned and maintained by the tribe in common kept the people well supplied with fish. When a family desired fish for a meal, one of its members would go to a trap and freely take enough for the need.

Although the religious beliefs of the San Blas Indians were simple, they incorporated traditions that are centuries old. Particularly interesting was their conception of the better world to come. They thought of it as being just what their own little archipelago would be under ideal conditions -verdant isles set like emerald gems in a sea of ocean blue, populated with good and honest people, free from evil and disease, and supplied with an abundance of food, especially fish.

North American Indians had a somewhat similar conception of the world to come-the Happy Hunting Grounds.

In nearly all the religious beliefs of mankind, whether ancient or modern, is found a hope for a better world to come in which the ideal conditions desired in this present world will become a reality. These varied beliefs undoubtedly have their basis in, and are variations of, the ancient promise of God that this earth will be restored to her Edenic state and become the eternal home of the faithful.

The primeval plan of God when He set this little planet Earth spinning in space will be carried out. That coming better world for which we long will be what this one would have been if all men had been good and honest. The day is not far distant when the King of Kings shall say to His own:

"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34. This planet was originally created to be the abode of a happy, holy people; and it will be such when sin and sinners shall be no more.

When the apostle Peter wrote that "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up," he added: "nevertheless we, according to His [God's] promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13. The apostle was speaking of something already promised by the Lord. Back about 1900 years before Christ was born, God promised to Abraham "that he should be the heir of the world." Romans 4:13. And all who believe in Christ and obey Him as Abraham did, will share this inheritance with that godly patriarch. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29.

Nearly 1,000 years before Peter wrote, David taught the people of God that "Evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." Psalm 37:9. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Verse 11. "For such as be blessed of Him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of Him shall be cut off." Verse 22. "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever." Verse 29.

And wise King Solomon, the son of David, wrote by inspiration of God that "the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth." Proverbs 11:31. He declared also that "the earth abides for ever." Ecclesiastes 1:4. For in the beginning our Creator "laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever." Psalm 104:5.

Jesus Himself, in His famous Sermon on the Mount, told the people: "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5. Why, then, does Peter say that we look for "new heavens and a new earth"? 2 Peter 3:13. Does this mean that the redeemed shall live on another planet? No, it means that this world, defiled and marred by sin, will be purified and made new again and fit for a holy, happy people to inhabit. The apostle John, in a vision, was shown by God the world to come. He says: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.... And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Revelation 21:1,5. After being cleansed by fire, this planet will be made new and beautiful like it was in the beginning. There will be no more vast oceans such as we have had since the Flood in the days of Noah.

The world to come will be so beautiful and wonderful that the present world, with its sin and sorrow, will fade from the memories of the redeemed as the ages of eternity pass by. Through His prophet Isaiah more than 25 centuries ago the Lord said to His people: "I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." Isaiah 65:17-19. Here the Lord is not speaking of old Jerusalem which is in Palestine, but He refers to that "Jerusalem which is above," to "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22.

Shortly before He ascended to heaven after His resurrection, Jesus said to His disciples: "In My Father's house are many mansions: ...I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2. And elsewhere the Lord says of His people that "He hath prepared for them a city." Hebrews 11:16. A city is a large aggregation of mansions-homes where people live. Abraham, the righteous patriarch of ancient times, lived and told the people: "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5. Why, then, does Peter say that we look for "new heavens and a new earth"? 2 Peter 3:13. Does this mean that the redeemed shall live on another planet? No, it means that this world, defiled and marred by sin, will be purified and made new again and fit for a holy, happy people to inhabit.

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When he was shown the new earth in a vision, the apostle saw that city also. He says: "I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:2. At the end of the 1,000 years of Satan's imprisonment on the desolate earth, the Holy City will descend from heaven. Revelation 20:9. At that time Christ and His angels, accompanied by the redeemed, will come to the earth to execute judgment upon the wicked. As He descends to the earth, Christ will call the wicked dead from their graves to receive their reward. Revelation 20:5. "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye [the wicked] shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee." Zechariah 14:4,5. And in that place cleansed and purified by Christ, the New Jerusalem shall rest when it comes down from above.

The apostle John says also: "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Revelation 21:3. The Holy City will be the capital of Christ's kingdom upon earth. His throne will be there, and He will be King over all. When He was born as the Son of man in Bethlehem nearly 2,000 years ago, the Son of God was bound to the human race by ties that shall never be broken. Hence He is called Immanuel, which means "God With Us." Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21-23. His human body was raised from the grave, and bears the scars of the wounds that Christ suffered in giving His life as a ransom for repentant sinners. John 20:24-28; Luke 24:39,40. For all eternity He will live in that body of human flesh-now glorified (Philippians 3:21)-as proof of His everlasting love for us.

In the vision, John saw "that great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Revelation 21:10-14. John says that "the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth," with three gates on each side. Verse 16. The measurement of the perimeter of the city is given as "12,000 furlongs"- approximately 1600 miles. Thus a street running from east to west, or from north to south, is about 400 miles long.

The adornment of the New Jerusalem surpasses that of any city on earth today. "The building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." That is, it reflects light like a mirror. "And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Revelation 21:18-21, 23 22:5.

What a beautiful sight the Holy City will be when it descends from heaven to the earth! The glorious light of God, reflected by the mirror-like gold of the street and by the multicolored stones adorning the walls, will shine forth in glorious contrast to the white gates of solid pearl.

In the midst of the city will be the Paradise of Eden, the home from which Adam and Eve were driven after they sinned. John saw "a 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, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Revelation 22:1-3.

No longer will the cherubim with flaming sword bar the way to the tree of life and its life-giving fruit. Genesis 3:22-24. Those obedient to God's law are welcome to eat of it. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14.

As the apostle viewed the beautiful new earth, he saw that "there shall be no more curse." Verse 3. As a result of the curse that rested upon the earth after man sinned, the plants and animals have degenerated much. Thorns and thistles have grown up, and the beasts have become wild and sometimes savage. Vast areas are now jungles and deserts. These conditions will be changed in order that the earth may become a beautiful dwelling place for the redeemed people of God. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." Isaiah 55:13. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon." Isaiah 35:1,2. The mountains of Lebanon have been famous for their tall, stately cedars; and Mount Carmel and the Valley of Sharon are noted for their many kinds of lovely flowers. The new earth will be beautified with all the loveliness that the world had in the beginning.

"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, said the Lord." Isaiah 65:25. See also chapter 11:6-9. In the beginning both man and animals were vegetarians, and they will return to that manner of living in the future. Genesis 1:29,30. They will not hurt nor destroy one another in the new earth.

For His redeemed people God has great plans in the world to come. "His servants shall serve Him." Revelation 22:3. Man was not created to spend his days in idleness. Genesis 2:15. Work under the right conditions is a pleasure, and there will always be new subjects for study and meditation, and new enterprises for the exercise of mind and muscle. "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." Isaiah 65:21,22.

In all the wide world there will not exist a hospital, a cemetery, a jail, or any other thing that is the result of sin. Nothing will mar the happiness of the redeemed. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:4. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Isaiah 33:24.

There will be no temples or churches representing different sects of religion. The apostle says: "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Revelation 21:22. In the New Jerusalem the redeemed will worship their Creator face to face, with no veil to hide Him from them. "They shall see His face." Revelation 22:4.

At stated times the redeemed will assemble to worship God. In the beginning the Lord blessed and sanctified the seventh day of the week for that purpose, even before man sinned and became separated from his Creator. This ancient plan has never been abolished, but will continue throughout the endless ages of eternity. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, said the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, said the Lord." Isaiah 66:22,23. Then will "all flesh" worship God on the seventh day of the week-on God's holy Sabbath-as He has commanded us in His law. Exodus 20:8-11. So by keeping the seventh day Sabbath now in this world we are but doing what we shall do throughout eternity in the earth made new.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9. See also Isaiah 64:4. It is impossible to describe fully in human language the endless future which God has prepared for us. We must be in the new earth in order to see and hear it all.

And best of all, you are invited to be there. God has said: "Let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17. It is all free. Christ has paid the price for you, and all you need to do is, by His grace, to turn from disobedience and live in harmony with His will.

Jesus is coming soon. It will not be long until this present world of sin, sorrow, suffering, and death will end, and the new world of God's planning will be ushered in. In that glad day "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.

Will you be there?

Jesus, by His death on the cross for us, has made it possible for you to be saved. Turn to Him with your whole heart, confess and forsake your sins, accept Him as your Savior, and respond to His gracious invitation: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34.

"Someone will enter the pearly gate
By and by, by and by,
Taste of the glories that there await,
Shall you? Shall I? Shall you? Shall I?"

Someone will travel the streets of gold,
Beautiful visions will there behold,
Feast on the pleasures so long foretold:
Shall you? Shall I? Shall you? Shall I?"

-Christ in Song, page 5.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Probably no other story told by Jesus has been used more ardently for doctrine concerning the state of the dead than has that of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Those who preach that there is an already existing hell of fire cling tenaciously to this story for support of their teachings. They take it literally, barring any interpretation of it as a parable.

First, let us test the story by giving it a literal interpretation. The story says that the saintly "beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Is Abraham's literal bosom the abode of all the saved that have died? Would it not have to be exceedingly large in order to accommodate so many people? Abraham was born about 2,000 years after the creation of Adam, according to Bible chronology. Many righteous people died before he did. Did his literal bosom, as the abode for the righteous dead, exist before he himself existed?

Are Abraham's literal bosom, containing the righteous dead, and the hell of fire, containing the wicked dead, so close together that persons in the one place are within seeing, speaking, and hearing distance of those in the other place? Do sinners in hell fire chat with the saints as the rich sinner in the story talks with Abraham? Is this ancient patriarch the governor of, and spokesman for, the righteous dead? May they neither go nor come without his permission? Do the wicked say prayers to Abraham? Is he, and not God, the person to whom they are to look for mercy?

The proponents of a literal interpretation of this story assume that at death the wicked immediately go in bodiless form to hell fire, leaving their bodies of flesh to decay here in the grave. Yet the story does not speak of the "soul" of the rich man as being in hell fire. Indeed, the words "soul" and "spirit" are not used in this narrative. But, supposing that he is existing in ghost form in hell fire, does he crave literal water? Does he have literal eyes and a literal tongue? Does Lazarus have literal fingers? Do the angels have to literally transport the righteous dead from place to place? Are the dead saints comforted while within their sight and hearing there is a literal lake of fire filled with millions of literal human wretches who, in indescribable torment, literally cry and scream for ever to them for literal water and for mercy? Do the wicked in hell fire intercede for their kin living on earth now? Such are the implications if the story is to be taken literally.

It is very evident that reasoning based on a literal interpretation of this story becomes ludicrous and absurd. Even those who insist on taking it literally admit that their position is beset with difficulties. And to admit that the Bible contradicts itself is fatal to any argument that relies upon it for proof.

Alfred Edersheim, a widely known Hebrew Christian scholar, has wisely pointed out, in comment on this story, that "It will be necessary in the interpretation of this parable to keep in mind that its parabolic details must not be exploited nor doctrines of any kind derived from them, either as to the character of the other world, the question of the duration of future punishments, or the possible moral improvements of those in Gehinnom. All such things are foreign to the parable, which is only intended as a type, or exemplification and illustration, of what is intended to be taught."-The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, volume 2, pages 277,278.

Some will say, "The Bible does not say that it is a parable!" Neither did Nathan say that he was relating a parable when he told David the story of the rich man's crime of taking his poor neighbor's ewe lamb for a meal for a guest. 2 Samuel 12:1-6. Luke records several other stories concerning which we are not told in so many words that they are parables. Those of the unclean spirit seeking his house, the unjust steward, the great supper, and the prodigal son are examples. Luke 11:24-26; 16:1-12;14;16-24; 15:11-32.

My dictionary defines a parable as follows: "A fictitious narrative, usually brief and simple, which, under the guise of facts of familiar or common occurrence, conveys a moral or spiritual truth." In a parable the story itself, with its various details, is not the main thing, but is merely the vehicle for carrying the moral the storyteller desires to present. And herein lies a danger in the use of the Savior's parables. Some people insist on taking the stories themselves, and even their details, literally for this purpose.

The setting of the story of the rich man and Lazarus reveals that Jesus was giving a group of Jews a lecture in plain language about serving "God and mammon." Luke 16:13-15. In His discourse He was striking against a notorious sin of some Pharisees-the love of money. "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided Him." Verse 14. Evidently pausing because of this derision, He said to them: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knows your hearts." Verse 15. After these remarks, He related the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

By the rich man who fared sumptuously while his neighbor was in direst need, Jesus figuratively pictured a covetous, mammon-serving, money-loving class of Pharisees. In Matthew 23 and elsewhere we learn that they lived on the fat of the land, exploited their poor and needy countrymen, loved the praise of men more than the commendation of God, sought the chief seats and highest places in the synagogue services, at banquets, and at other public functions, and at the same time made the greatest pretense of piety. Meanwhile they remained callously indifferent to the needs and sufferings of the poor about them, who were figuratively represented by the saintly beggar.

In the parable Abraham is represented as saying that a miracle of raising a dead man to life would be useless evidence to persons who will not hear the plain teachings of the Holy Scriptures. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Luke 16:31. A timely lesson for men today! By the Written Word the Savior often refuted the erroneous teachings of His opponents, and "no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions." Matthew 22:46. But they persisted in demanding of Him a miracle. John 6:30.

That they might be without excuse, our Lord did grant them the evidence that even Abraham would have denied them. Lazarus of Bethany died, and after he had lain four days in the grave, Jesus raised him from the dead. In the presence of a witnessing multitude, Jesus called Lazarus to life, not from heaven nor from hell fire, but from the tomb. John 11:38-44. Many people believed on Jesus that day, and "some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done." Verse 46. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? For this Man doeth many miracles Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death." Verse 47-53. Such was their hardness of heart!

When Jesus visited with Lazarus and his sisters at Bethany before making His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, "much people of the Jews therefore knew that He was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." John 12:911.

How truly did the moral of the story of the rich man and Lazarus come to pass in the experience of the unbelieving Jews!

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

Did not Jesus promise the dying thief on the cross that he would go to Paradise on the day of his death?

The dying thief made the following request of Jesus: "Lord, remember me when Thou comes into Thy kingdom." Luke 23:42. He was thinking of the time in the distant future when Christ would return in glory to establish His kingdom upon the earth.

In reply Christ gave the man the assurance that he would be remembered then. His promise in the Greek text is: "Verily to thee I say today, thou shall be with Me in the Paradise." In the original text of the Bible there was no such punctuation between words as we have today in the English translation. The translators, supposing that men go either to heaven or to torment immediately after death, inserted a comma before the word "today," so as to make Jesus say it that way. This is obviously an error. Christ did not go to heaven on the day He died. When he appeared to Mary Magdalene the morning of His resurrection, which was the third day after His death, "Jesus said unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father." John 20:17. So on Sunday morning the Savior had not yet ascended to heaven.

Because the righteous dead are not now in heaven, Christ will come back to earth to get them. He said: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3. See also 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17. For this reason the dying thief said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comes into Thy kingdom." Luke 23:42. On that very day when he asked this of Jesus, the Savior assured him that his petition would be granted.

Joseph B. Rotherham in the emphasized New Testament, renders this passage in these words: "Verily I say unto thee this day: With Me shall thou be in Paradise." Luke 23:43. And George M. Lamsa, in his translation of the New Testament from Aramaic sources, renders it as follows: "Truly I say to you today, You will be with Me in Paradise."

The false doctrine of the immortality of the human soul, first taught to man by Satan (Genesis 3:1-4), has been perpetuated through the centuries by heathen philosophy and heathen religions down to the present time.

In the second century A.D. some of the so-called "Church Fathers" who had been reared and educated in heathenism and later accepted Christianity, presented the heathen doctrine of the immortality of the soul as a tenet of the church. The following paragraphs from the New Catholic Encyclopedia tell how it was done: "The doctrine that the human soul is immortal and will continue to exist after man's death and the dissolution of his body is one of the cornerstones of Christian philosophy and theology....

"When the Apologists and early Fathers presented Christianity to the Greeks, the Last Judgment formed part of their message. Since this doctrine implied the survival and immortality of the soul, they appealed to the poets and philosophers and general tradition of Greek thought in support of belief in immortality. Later, the scholastics preferred to make use of Plato or principles from Aristotle."
[1]

"It is rather in the philosophers that the Fathers found support for the message of Christianity. Pythagoras and Empedocles, cited by St. Justin (Apol. 1.18.5), both teach the survival and transmigration of the soul, which for them is made from heavenly particles of

ether. Yet the doctrine is less philosophical than religious, and may have been borrowed from Orphism. The thought of Socrates, who left no writings, is probably that expressed in Plato's *Apology*: that some 'divine element' in him makes him believe death is no evil; he hopes it is a good, though he has no proof of this.

"Platonic doctrine, often cited by the Fathers, is clear-cut and positive. The soul, for Plato a self-moving principle, is ungenerated and eternal; it has existed before the body, to which it is united by way of punishment for all some fault, and will therefore survive it. To be without the body is indeed the natural and proper state of the soul, though Plato admits transmigrations and future unions should the soul not attain full purification in this life (*Phaedo* 81)." [2]

Greek Philosophers

Long before Christ was born erroneous concepts of the human soul were cherished and taught in the pagan world. The writings of the famous Greek philosophers were widely circulated and read by the erudite. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says: "In Homer, while the distinction of soul and body is recognized, the soul is hardly conceived as possessing a substantial existence of its own. Severed from the body, it is a mere shadow, incapable of energetic life." [3] Homer, a pagan Greek poet, lived in the 10th or 9th century B. C. [4]

Orpheus, the mystic founder of Orphism in the 6th century B.C., taught "the doctrine of original sin, in the transmigration of souls, in the view that the soul is entombed in the body," etc. [5]

"The Orphic legends and poems related in great part to this [pagan god] Dionysus, who was combined, as an infernal deity, with Hades; and upon whom the Orphic theologians founded their hopes of the purification and ultimate immortality of the soul." [6]

Could this be a pagan antecedent of the doctrine of purgatory, cherished and taught by some professed Christians of our time?

Also in the 6th century B.C., Pythagoras (born c. 570 B.C.), a pagan Greek philosopher, taught the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Plutarch, a Greek biographer (461-20 A.D.), wrote this about him:

"Pythagoras and Plato affirm the soul to be immortal.... Plato and Pythagoras hold, that part of the soul which is rational, is eternal, as being from God: but the irrational part dies." [7]

Pythagoras, a heathen, is said to be the first famous philosophic exponent of Metempsychosis, or the reincarnation and transmigration of the soul.

Plato
The man whose pen has done most to instill in the minds of churchmen belief in the immortality of the human soul was not one of the inspired writers of the Holy Scriptures, but the pagan philosopher Plato, born in Athens, Greece in 427 B.C. He was a disciple of Socrates (469-399 B.C.), whose teachings on the subject he reports in a treatise called *Phaedo*. Being a heathen and without divine revelation from God, Socrates walked in the sparks of his own kindling in his search for a solution to the problem of life and death. He said:

"This was the method which I adopted: I first assumed some principle which I judged to be the strongest, and then I affirmed as true whatever seemed to agree with this, whether relating to the cause or to anything else; and that which disagreed I regarded as untrue." [8]

According to his famous pupil Plato, Socrates "assumed" that man has a dual nature composed of a soul and a body and "that the soul is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intelligible, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and the body is in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintelligible, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable." [9]

On this assumption Socrates reasoned that "when death attacks a man, the mortal portion of him maybe supposed to die, but the immortal goes out of the way of death and is preserved safe and sound." [10]

"Even when Plato employed mythology to describe creation, he considered the human soul an incorporeal substance, made from the same elements as the world soul, akin to the gods and yet part of the world of change and becoming (*Tim.* 41)." [11]

Gnosticism

Eusebius (260 A.D.) was bishop of Caesarea in Palestine from 315 until his death in 340 A.D. A widely-used reference work of our time says this concerning him: "It is as an historian that he is best known, and to his *History of the Christian Church* he owes his fame and his familiar title 'The Father of Church History.' This work which was published in its final form in ten books in 324 or early in 325, is the most important ecclesiastical history produced in ancient times." [12] He says:

"As the churches throughout the world were now shining like the most brilliant stars, and faith in our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ was flourishing among the whole human race, the demon who hates everything that is good, and is always hostile to the truth, and most bitterly opposed to the salvation of man, turned all his arts against the Church. In the beginning he armed himself against it with external persecutions. But now, being shut off from the use of such means, he devised all sorts of plans, and employed other methods in his conflict with the Church, using base and deceitful men as instruments for the ruin of souls and as ministers of destruction. Instigated by him, impostors and deceivers, assuming the name of our religion, brought to the depths of ruin such of the believers as they could win over, and at the same time, by means of the deeds which they practiced, turned away from the path which leads to the word of salvation those who were ignorant of the faith." [13]

Some leaders of Gnosticism named by Eusebius were: Simon Magus. He is mentioned in Acts 8:9-24. Concerning him, John Lawrence von Mosheim says: "At the head of the heretics of this age, and particularly of the Gnostics, we find the ancient fathers of the church unanimous in placing a Simon Magus, whom they assert to have been one and the same with him whose depravity and perfidy was so severely reprobated by St. Peter at Samaria: Acts, viii.9,10." [14]

Writing in c. 208 A.D., Tertullian referred to the followers of Simon thus: "At this very time, even, the heretical dupes of this same Simon (Magus) are so much elated by the extravagant pretensions of their art, that they undertake to bring up from Hades the souls of the prophets themselves." [15]

Menander. Early in the second century Menander was a disciple and successor of Simon Magus. He taught that those worthy of baptism by him "would partake even in the present life of perpetual immortality, and would never die, but would remain here forever, and without growing old become immortal." [16]

Saturninus was a Gnostic and a disciple of Menander early in the second century, during the reign of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.). [17]

Basilides was an Alexandrian philosopher, also early in the second century. [18] Among other heresies, he taught that some souls "might expect, upon the dissolution of the body, to regain their original seats in the blissful mansions above; but those who neglected availing themselves of the proffered instruction, were destined to migrate into other bodies, either of men or brute animals, until their impurities should be wholly purged away." [19]

Gnosticism is "the name generally applied to the spiritual movement existing side by side with genuine Christianity, as it gradually crystallized into the old Catholic Church, which may roughly be defined as a distinct religious syncretism bearing the strong impress of Christian influences." [20]

"The great work of Irenaeus [120-202 A.D.] against heresies is the chief storehouse whence writers, both ancient and modern, have drawn their accounts of the Gnostic sects." [21]

Carpocrates was another Gnostic heretic of the second century A.D. "He is said to have been the native of Alexandria and by birth a Jew. His family, however, seem to have been converted to Christianity. With Epiphanes, his son, he was the leader of a philosophic school basing its theories mainly upon Platonism....Carpocrates made especial use of the doctrines of reminiscence and preexistence of souls." [22]

Later in the same century Tertullian (c. 150-240 A.D.), an ecclesiastical writer, penned the following concerning Carpocrates:

"However, it is not for you alone, (Simon), that the 'F transmigration philosophy has fabricated this story. Carpocrates also makes equally good use of it, who was a magician and a fornicator like yourself,.... The transmigration of human soul, therefore, into any kind of heterogeneous bodies, he thought by all means indispensable, whenever any depravity whatever had not been fully perpetrated in the early stage of life's passage. Evil deeds (one may be sure) appertain to life. Moreover, as often as the soul has fallen short as a defaulter in sin, it has to be recalled to existence, until it 'pays the utmost farthing,' thrust out from time to time into the prison of the body." [2]

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (c.100-165 A.D.), a Christian apologist, was born of pagan parents at Flavia Neapolis in Samaria. He was converted to Christianity in 130 A.D., and died a martyr. Justin had studied under a Stoic philosopher, a peripatetic, and also a Platonist. He became an Eclectic. He was a believer in the teachings of the Greek philosopher Plato. [21]

While Justin was in Ephesus he met Trypho, a Jew, with whom he discussed religion and philosophy. When Trypho inquired: "Will the mind of man see God at any time, if it is uninstructed by the Holy Spirit?" Justin replied: "Plato, indeed, says that the mind's eye is of such a nature, and has been given for this end, that we may see that very Being when the mind is pure itself ,....coming suddenly into souls well-dispositioned, on account of their affinity to and desire of seeing Him."

Trypho asked: "Is the soul also divine and immortal, and a part of that very regal mind?" "Assuredly," Justin replied. "And do all the souls of all living beings comprehend Him," Trypho asked; "or are the souls of men of one kind and the souls of horses and of asses of another kind?" Justin answered: "No, but the souls which are in all are similar." [25]

Trypho asked: "Does the soul see [God] so long as it is in the body, or after it has been removed from it?" Justin replied: "So long as it is in the form of a man, it is possible for it to attain to this by means of the mind; but especially when it has been set free from the body, and being apart by itself, it gets possession of that which it was wont continually and wholly to love." [26]

The following statements by Justin reveal that he seemed to have been convinced by Trypho that the human soul is mortal and can die:

"Nor ought it [the soul] to be called immortal; for if it is immortal, it is plainly unbegotten," and Trypho.

"It is both unbegotten and immortal, according to some who are styled Platonists," said Justin. Trypho asked: "Do you say that the world is also unbegotten?"

Replied Justin: "Some say so. I do not, however, agree with them." [27]

Trypho asked: "They [souls] are not, then, immortal?" Justin replied, "No"... "Souls both die and are punished."

The Catholic Encyclopedia, in comment on the Dialogue With Trypho, says Justin believed that "the soul is not immortal by its nature." [29]

Justin Martyr's First Apology, written in Rome c.150 A.D., was addressed to the Emperor and the Roman people. He affirmed concerning death that "if it issued in insensibility, it would be a godsend to all the wicked. But since sensation remains to all who have ever lived, and eternal punishment is laid up (i.e., for the wicked), see that ye neglect not to be convinced, and to hold as your belief, that these things are true. For let even necromancy, and the divinations you practice by immaculate children, and the evoking of departed human souls, and those who are called as among them magi, Dream-senders and Assistant-spirits (Familiars), and all that is done by those who are skilled in such matters-let these persuade you that even after death souls are in a state of sensation." [30]

Note that in making that broad, comprehensive statement concerning the state of a person's soul after death, Justin cites no statement of Holy Scripture to support his affirmation that "even after death souls are in a state of sensation."

In that same work Justin wrote concerning that Menandor who was a false teacher in Antioch and a disciple of Simon Magus: "He [Menandor] persuaded those who adhered to him that they should never die, and even now there are some living who hold this opinion of his." [31]

Concerning Justin Martyr, an extensively used Roman Catholic reference work makes the following significant statements:

"He found his chief inspiration in the Timaeus." [32] "His sympathies are above all with Platonism." [33] "St. Justin, supposing that the doctrine of natural immortality logically implies eternal existence, rejects it, making this attribute (like Plato in the 'Timaeus') dependent on the free will of God; at the same time he plainly asserts the de facto immortality of every human soul." [34]

It is significant that the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul, according to Justin Martyr, is based on heathen philosophy instead of on the Holy Scriptures. The heathen philosopher Plato is cited by him many, many times in support of his concept of Christian doctrine.

"In their eagerness to point out the salvific significance of immortality, that it is a gratuitous gift and is intended to benefit man, some writers, such as Justin and Tatian, tended to favor the idea that the souls of the wicked died or were annihilated (thanatopsychism)." [35]

Irenaeus

Irenaeus, one of the so-called church Fathers, was a native of Asia Minor. Jerome says that he flourished in the reign of the Roman emperor Commodus (180-192 A.D.). He died a martyr c. 202 or 203 A.D. [36]

It is said that as a child he had seen and heard Polycarp at Smyrna, who had been acquainted with the apostle John. In 177 A.D. Irenaeus was a presbyter at Lyons, France. On his return from a visit to Rome he became bishop of Lyons in 178 A.D. He was a contemporary of Victor I, bishop of Rome (189-199 A.D.). [37] We are told concerning him:

"Man was not from the first, according to Irenaeus, made perfect and immortal, but designed, in God's purpose concerning him, to become so." [38]

Irenaeus wrote a treatise entitled Against Heresies in 180-185 A.D. Concerning certain heretics of his time, he wrote:

"These men are in all points inconsistent with themselves, when they decide that all souls do not enter into the intermediate place, but those of the righteous only They maintain that souls shall continue in the intermediate place, while bodies, because they possess material substance, when they have been resolved into matter, shall be consumed by that fire which exists in it; but their body being thus destroyed, and their soul remaining in the intermediate place, no part of man will any longer be left to enter in within the Pleroma. For the intellect of the man-his mind, thought, mental intention, and such like-is nothing else than his soul; but the emotions and operations of the soul itself have no substance apart from the soul. What part of them, then, will still remain to enter into the Pleroma? For they themselves, in as far as they are souls, remain in the intermediate place; while, in as far as they are body, they will be consumed with the rest of matter." [39]

Note that Irenaeus speaks of an "Intermediate place" between death and resurrection in which, he thought, the human soul would remain until the resurrection. Could this be the introduction of the doctrine of purgatory which has crept into some areas of ecclesiastical thought?

One of the heretical doctrines that had become rampant among some Christians in the time of Irenaeus was metempsychosis, which taught the doctrine of reincarnation and transmigration of the soul from one body to another. In book II, chapter 33 of *Against Heresies* Irenaeus points out the absurdity of this heathen doctrine, which had been taught by the Greek philosophers Pythagoras and Plato.' This erroneous doctrine is widely taught today.

Irenaeus said concerning some professed Christians whom he deemed heretics: "How must these men not be put to confusion, who allege that 'the lower parts' refer to this world of ours, but that their inner man, leaving the body here, ascends into the super-celestial place? For as the Lord 'went away in the midst of the shadow of death' (Psalm. XXIII4), where the souls of the dead were, yet afterwards arose in the body, and after the resurrection was taken up [into heaven], it is manifest that the souls of His disciples also, upon whose account the Lord underwent these things, shall go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection, awaiting that event; then receiving their bodies, and rising in their entirety, that is bodily, just as the Lord arose, they shall come thus into the presence of God." [41]

Note that Irenaeus affirmed that at death souls "go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection." In the quotation previously given, he refers to "the intermediate place," while here he calls it "the invisible place." he does not specifically say where that "invisible place" is between death and the resurrection.

It is no surprise, therefore, that "Against the Gnostics Irenaeus said that the soul is not immortal by nature, but it can become immortal if it lives according to God's law." [42]

Tertullian

It is said that Tertullian was "the earliest and after Augustine the greatest of the ancient church writers of the West." [43] Also, that he was "the earliest of the great Latin fathers, their chief in fire and daring, and the first to create a technical Christian Latinity." [44]

Tertullian, born c.150 A.D. into a heathen family in Carthage of North Africa, became a Christian c. 192. He was ordained a priest c. 200. Later he became a Montanist. His writings date from c. 197 to 218. He finally formed a church of his own. He died between 220 and 240 A.D. [45]

At this time there was some divergence of opinion among Christians concerning the human soul. Tertullian's book *de Anima* (A Treatise on the soul) was written in 208-209 A.D. Its 58 chapters fill 55 pages in volume 3 of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. Concerning this, a Catholic reference work says:

"A long book, 'De Anima', gives Tertullian's psychology. He well describes the unity of the soul; he teaches that it is spiritual, but immateriality in the fullest sense he admits for nothing that exists,-even God is corpus." [46]

Tertullian's definition of the human soul is this: "The soul, then, we define to be sprung from the breath of God, immortal, possessing body, having form, simple in its substance, intelligent in its own nature, developing its power in various ways, free in its determinations, subject to the changes of accident, in its faculties mutable, rational, supreme, endued with an instinct of presentiment, evolved out of one (archetypal soul)." [47] This agrees with his previous declaration that "the soul is immortal." [48]

Note that Tertullian emphatically declared: "The soul, then, we define to be sprung from the breath of God, immortal." Note, too, that he does not cite any scripture statement supporting that declaration. Why? Because the Holy Scriptures do not teach that at creation or at birth man is endowed with an immortal soul. According to Tertullian, the word "soul" refers to the whole person: "All that we are is soul. Indeed, without the soul we are nothing; there is not even the name of a human being, only that of a carcass." [49]

Tertullian's concept of what happens to a person when he dies is set forth by him as follows: "Undoubtedly, when the soul, by the power of death, is released from its concretion with the flesh, it is by the very release cleansed and purified; it is, moreover, certain that it escapes from the veil of the flesh into open space, to its clear, and pure, and intrinsic light; and then finds itself enjoying its enfranchisement from matter, and by virtue of its liberty it recovers its divinity, as one who awakes out of sleep passes from images to verities." [50]

Also: "The operation of death is plain and obvious: it is the separation of body and soul The truth is, the soul is indivisible, because it is immortal; (and this fact) compels us to believe that death itself is an indivisible process, accruing indivisibly to the soul, not indeed because it is immortal, but because it is indivisible Death, if it once falls short of totality in operation, is not death. If any fraction of the soul remain, it makes a living state. Death will no more mix with life, than will night with day." [51]

"To the question, therefore, whether the soul is withdrawn, we now give an answer. Almost all the philosophers, who hold the soul's immortality, notwithstanding their special views on the subject, still claim for it this (eternal condition), as Pythagoras, and Empedocles, and Plato, and as they who indulge it with some delay from the time of its quitting the flesh to the conflagration of all things, and as the Stoics, who place only their own souls, that is, the souls of the wise, in the mansions above." [52]

One commentator has said: "As a preliminary to the consideration of the manner in which the soul encounters death, Tertullian considers the subject of sleep-the image of death(cc XLII-end). He adopts by preference the Stoic definition of sleep as the temporary suspension of the activity of the senses ('resolutionem sensualisvigoris'), and limits the senses affected to those of the body; the soul, being immortal, neither requiring nor admitting a state of rest. While the body is asleep or dead, the soul is elsewhere." [53]

The Stoic school of Greek philosophy was founded by Zeno of Citium at the end of the 4th century B.C. Stoicism did not "achieve its crowning triumph until it was brought to Rome,. where for two centuries or more it was the creed, if not the philosophy, of all the best of the Romans." [54]

Concerning the heathen Stoic concept of the human soul, we read that "after death the disembodied soul can only maintain its separate existence even for a limited time, by mounting to that region of the universe which is akin to its nature. It was a moot point whether all souls so survive, as Cleanthes thought, or the souls of the wise and good alone, which was the opinion of Chrysippus; in any case, sooner or later individual souls are merged in the soul of the universe, from which they proceeded." [55]

Tertullian derived much of his information from the heathen Soranus, a Stoic Greek physician (98-138 A.D.)⁵⁶ Although professedly a Christian teacher, Tertullian cited heathen philosophy instead of the Holy Scriptures as the basis of his doctrine that the human soul is immortal.

Origen

Origen (11.185-254 A.D.) was a pupil of Clement of Alexandria and succeeded him as head of the catechetical school there. "Epiphanius estimates the whole number of his writings at about six thousand." [57] Origen's concept of what happens to the soul at death is stated as follows:

"The apostolic teaching is that the soul, having a substance and life of its own, shall, after its departure from the world, be rewarded according to its deserts, being des-tined to obtain either an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness, if its actions have procured this for it, or to be delivered up to eternal fire and punishments, if the guilt of its crimes shall have brought it down to this." [58]

Note that Origen, in that statement, does not cite any biblical text telling when the rewards will be given.

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (315-340 A.D.), wrote that in the time of Origen some Arabian believers said that "the human soul dies and perishes with the body, but that at the time of the resurrection they will be renewed together." Origen was sent for and persuaded them to give up the biblical truth which they had held concerning the state of the dead.⁵⁹ Thus early church history reveals that the false doctrine that the human soul is immortal, as held by Origen, was being spread among Christians by the middle of the third century A.D. [60]

Origen taught "that the fury of God's vengeance is profitable for the purgation of souls. That the punishment, also, which is said to be applied by fire, is understood to be applied with the object of healing."⁶¹ In this doctrine Origen paved the way for the introduction of the later ecclesiastical concept of a purgatory.

In the same work Origen says: "The soul over which He [God] exercises this providential care is immortal; and, as being immortal and everlasting, it is not, although not immediately cared for, excluded from salvation, which is postponed to a more convenient time." [62]

He also says: "If human souls have partaken of the same light and wisdom, and thus are mutually of one nature and of one essence,- then, since the heavenly virtues are incorruptible and immortal, the essence of the human soul will also be immortal and incorruptible." [63]

Note that Origen cites no Scripture passage to support his affirmation that the human soul is immortal.

A long-used religious reference work says: "Origen taught the preexistence of the soul. Terrestrial life is a punishment and a remedy for prenatal sin." [64]

In the revised edition of that reference work we find this statement: "Origen, who was much more susceptible to rational argument, was led to the opinion that souls did indeed preexist and were put into bodies as a punishment for sins committed in a previous life." [65]

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, book VI, chapter 7, Origen has "a remarkable discussion on the pre-existence of souls, and the entrance of the soul into the body." And in book XX he comments on the "preexistence and character of souls." [66]

Plato, the pagan Greek philosopher, is mentioned many times by Origen in his discussions of the human soul. He quotes Plato concerning the nature of the soul as follows: "'For the essence, which is both colorless and formless, and which cannot be touched, which really exists, is the pilot of the soul, and is beheld by the understanding alone; and around it the genus of true knowledge holds this place,' [Phaedro, page 247]." [67]

Conclusion

From the foregoing facts we can see that the widespread heathen concept of the immortality of the human soul as taught by the ancient pagan philosophers was still cherished and taught by many of the so-called church fathers after their conversion from paganism to Christianity.

We call your attention to the following excellent statements from the New Catholic Encyclopedia concerning the teaching of the Holy Scriptures on this subject:

"In the first Christian writers one does not find the arguments from reason concerning the immortality of the soul but rather the proclamation that God through Christ has called man to a life of happiness that will never end." [68]

"The notion of the soul surviving after death is not readily discernible in the Bible." [69] "The Bible does not speak of the survival of an immaterial soul." [70]

Our only hope of enjoying immortality-eternal life rests on the precious promises and assurances given in the Holy Scriptures. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

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