

# **Summing Up the Case for Biblical Conditionalism**

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### **A. Conditionalism Accentuated and Enforced in New Testament**

#### **1. COMPLETE HARMONY BETWEEN TESTAMENTS**

Immortality, set forth as conditional in the Old Testament, is even more conspicuously declared to be conditional in the New. The later innovation of the inherent continuity and indestructibility of the human soul, introduced into the Christian Church in a time of developing apostasy, finds no support in Christ's personal teaching or in the subsequent apostolic theology set forth in the New Testament.

On the contrary, the New Testament completely sustains the uniform position of Moses and the prophets, giving it precision, amplification, finality, and majesty. And it is of more than passing interest that, in so doing, the New Testament often borrows the terms employed in the Septuagint translation to bring over into the Greek the corresponding words and intent of the original Hebrew, as pertains to this issue. It thus forms an invaluable connecting link between the Old and the New in this specific field.

Like the Old Testament, the New proclaims the eternity of God but has nothing to say of any innate, inalienable Immortality possessed by man. Neither the term nor the thought can be found between Matthew 1 and Revelation 22. Immortality results from personal faith in the personal power and provision of Almighty God, who has purposed and provided Immortality for man as a gift through Christ—but on clearly enunciated conditions. The redeemed, righteous, and obedient shall live; the ungodly, obstinate sinners shall be completely destroyed (2 Thess. 1:9; cf. Ps. 92:9). That is the gist of Conditionalism.

#### **2. IMMORTALIZATION ACCENTUATED AND AMPLIFIED IN NEW TESTAMENT**

This important addition, however, is to be noted. In the New Testament the horizons are definitely widened and the foundations more firmly buttressed and expanded. The path to the grave becomes brighter and more luminous as the gospel day begins to dawn. Eternity of life for the one, and eternity of ultimate non existence for the other, outlined in the Old Testament, is more fully revealed and accentuated in the New.

Jesus, supreme Authority and Witness of all time, as concerns man, not only upholds but intensifies and delimits the conditions of immortalization. Man becomes immortal only by grace, assured through faith in Christ and His righteousness, which is first imputed and then imparted to the believer. Then, upon Christ's return, comes glorification and realized immortalization for the righteous.

This is the uniqueness of the gospel—that Jesus offers in and through His own person the sole means whereby a man may obtain righteousness and then Immortality. It is not man's inherently. Christ's expiatory death gives assurance of divine pardon, and the pledge of imperishable life becomes the portion of all who unite themselves to the risen, triumphant Christ by faith. Such is the fundamental offer of the New Testament and the declared aim of the gospel. This was the message still proclaimed by Christ after His resurrection, shortly before His parting commission and ascension. Here is John's record: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

There it is, compressed into a single sentence. In this climactic passage, life is used in its full sense and force— life at the highest level, life that is to be never ending and all embracing; life that will be imperishable, life based on belief in, and acceptance of, Christ's offer of eternal life. That again is the essence of Conditionalism.

### **3. IMMORTALITY AN ACQUISITION, NOT INHERENT POSSESSION**

"Life" in the New Testament means actual life, and "death" means the diametric opposite of life—the deprivation of all life, the end of all activity, the cessation of all individual faculties. Death, without any escape or resuscitation—absolute death, four times called the "second death"—terminates in the complete cessation of being of the wicked. It is the end of the recalcitrant human entity. Christ came that "who soever believeth in him should not perish [apollumi, "be utterly and finally destroyed," "brought to nought"], but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). That is the matchless provision of the gospel.

If one can "perish," obviously he is not by nature immortal. And if he is not by nature immortal, there is nothing inconsistent in saying, in conformity with Scripture, that Christ must confer Immortality upon man if he is to live forever. Consequently all New Testament texts that directly or indirectly state that Christ is our life, and confers eternal life, such as John 3:16, confirm the Conditional-Immortality postulate. This signifies that true believers, escaping the total destruction that awaits the impenitent sinner, acquire an imperishable and perpetual life through Christ alone. Immortality is therefore an acquisition, not an inherent possession. That, once more, is the essence of Conditionalism.

### **4. CONTRASTING POSITIONS SUCCINCTLY SET FORTH**

Conditionalists do not differ from Immortal-Soulists over the fact of a future life, but over the nature and source of that life and the time of receiving it. "Immortality" has been overlaid and loaded down with philosophical speculations and devious traditions. Immortal-Soulists insist that death is not an interruption or cessation of the natural life of man, but is simply entrance upon a new and glorified stage in that life. That, they insist, was the ancient belief of the nations of antiquity.

Presumptive evidence of the Innate Immortality of the soul is often put forth on the basis of its general belief among the nations of antiquity. But an appeal to a consensus sentium does not constitute proof, any more than does the argument of man's inner aspirations. The fact that the vast majority once believed the world to be flat did not make it so. Universal hunger for

Immortality is\_ implanted by God as an incentive to seeking and finding immortality. But it must be in God's way and upon His terms.

They hold that, instead of terminating at death, the real life of man simply intensifies and enlarges into a new sphere of activity, either in holiness and happiness, or sin and misery, and that man will continue to live on forever by virtue of the innate essence of life within him, being sustained by some in defeasible power, so as to suffer forever, if incorrigibly wicked. On the contrary Conditionalists hold that since the Fall death terminates the natural life of man, and that the life hereafter is not natural, inherited from Adam, but supernatural, received from God. They hold, furthermore, that only through the vicarious death and triumphant resurrection of Christ is there any resurrection or life whatever for man here after—for "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Cor. 15:17, 18). Immortality has thus by Christ been brought within reach of rebellious creatures otherwise destined to absolute death. In fact, He came to reveal and proclaim the secret of immortalization. That is Heaven's glad tidings for man. When once this majestic truth is grasped, it throws a floodlight upon all other saving truths. That again is Conditionalism.

## **5. IMMORTAL-SOULISM IS IMMORTALITY WITHOUT A SAVIOUR**

Conditionalists believe in the supernatural resurrection of the dead, in a general judgment, and in the absolute finality of that judgment. They believe in the "second death" for the wicked, and thus in the finality of their doom. In contrast they believe in the "life everlasting" of the righteous, raised through Christ—and that this is the highest and most glorious of all possible life, eternal life, the impartation of God's own pure and blessed immortal life, based upon entrance into the proffered new and living relationship to Jesus Christ. This, then, is the basic issue—whether we are immortalized by Christ, through the preparatory new birth and subsequent resurrection, or whether we are immortal by our own natural birth from Adam. In other words, it is whether Immortality, as the "gift of God," is "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23), or whether there is inherent Immortality without a Saviour, and His atoning death and saving life.

And it should here be stressed (as will be seen in Part IV) that the earliest, or Apostolic, Church Fathers maintained this Conditionalist position. The doctrinal deviation of one segment of the later Fathers was caused by the infiltration and acceptance of the Platonic philosophy, received into an increasingly confused and vacillating church. And, at the same time, the Platonized philosophy of the Alexandrian Jews added the pressure of its divergent weight upon the faltering theology of the Fathers. There was thus a dual pressure that proved overwhelming to a growing majority. A large segment of Christianity succumbed, and Conditionalism went into virtual eclipse for centuries. Again, Conditionalism is a positive, not a negative, position and pro vision. It is to be emphasized that Conditionalists hold Immortality for the good alone to be a fundamental proviso of the gospel. Thus the apostle John says, "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17). This gives the basis of distinction and the assurance of the permanence of the obedient. Sin, on the contrary, leads to disintegration and ruin, while sowing to the Spirit leads to the reaping of "life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8).

To view Conditionalism as largely a question of the final future punishment of the wicked is to miss its real significance. That is merely looking at the reverse side of the pattern. The glorious provision of the more abundant life is its central concept, its positive motivating principle. That is the heart of Conditionalism.

## **7. MORE GAINED THROUGH CHRIST THAN LOST THROUGH ADAM**

There is yet another angle that must not be missed— the justice of God, blended with His goodness and mercy, implicit in Conditionalism. The trial of our first parents in Eden could not have been made under conditions more favorable to a successful outcome. They were swayed by no sinful tendencies, had no compelling habits, and possessed no bent toward evil.

But the tragic results of the Edenic test proved that the human race was not yet fit for Immortality. If God had not purposed to provide eternal life through another probation, mankind's case would have been hopeless. But we came under the operation of a marvelous system, a divine provision of grace, by which eternal life is offered to us again by a new birth, effected through a Second Adam, the reception of the righteousness of Christ, and a subsequent resurrection from the dead. That was the divine provision and process. " And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul [or being]; the last Adam was made a quickening [life-giving] spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural [psuchikon, "possessing animal life"]; and afterward that which is spiritual [pneumatikon, belonging to the Spirit]. The first man [Adam] is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:45-50).

The same eminent apostle adds, "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die" (v. 36). Death, as explained by Inspiration, is a somber but inevitable part of this world's mottled picture. It is therefore plain, from the gospel, that we gain infinitely more in Christ than we lost in Adam. What we lost in Adam was an earthly Paradise, but what we gain through the Second Adam is a celestial Paradise forevermore. Christ came not simply to repair the ruin of the Fall and to bring mankind back in penitence to God but to raise lost but ransomed man to a state infinitely higher than that of Adam in his first innocency in Eden.

The first Adam had but a potential, contingent life, which he forfeited for himself and his posterity under the temptation and the Fall. But the Second Adam proved Himself superior to the seductions of the great deceiver. He possesses absolute sinlessness and righteousness in His own right. And this righteousness, along with eternal life, He bestows upon His own through the supernatural second birth and a resurrection from among the dead. It is first imputed, then actually imparted. And this bestowal the great adversary can never again take away. Thus Christ said:

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27, 28).

"Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

That is the glory and the triumph of the gospel. That is the gift of God through Jesus Christ. And that is the process and the principle of Conditional Immortality.

## **B. Issues Illuminated Through Significant Series of "Two's"**

Within the New Testament a significant series of "two's" stands forth, augmenting and amplifying the basic teachings begun in the Old Testament. These complete the unique testimony of the Word on the two worlds, two Adams, two progenitors, two births, two covenants, two classes, two kingdoms, two advents, two lives, two deaths, two resurrections, two ways, and two eternal destinies—the irrevocable endings of these divergent ways. Comparisons and contrasts are introduced by Christ and His apostles that throw a floodlight of understanding on this question of the origin, nature, and destiny of man. A survey of the inevitable implications of this series is desirable, because the traditional concept of the continuing persistence of a single, unending life—an innately, indefeasibly immortal life for all men—has tragically blurred or made void those distinctions so sharply drawn in Holy Writ that otherwise would have remained transparently clear.

It seems to have been the studied aim of human philosophy to ignore or obscure these distinctions or to mystify and confound them. And the medieval papal church and the Protestant churches that followed in her footsteps here, have so molded their creeds and fashioned their theologies as to perpetuate this confusion. It is therefore incumbent upon us to re-examine this provocative series given to guide us. This additional factor should, however, be noted at the outset. The divine intimations of restoration, early given to man to keep the race from utter demoralization and discouragement, in time became distorted by darkened minds into perverted postulates regarding the soul. These were thence forth passed on by tradition from generation to generation. This is obviously the origin of those twisted notions of the future state that came to prevail throughout the ancient pagan world.

Finally they brought division and ruin to the faith of the Jewish church through their adoption. This occurred shortly before the proclamation of the gospel of Christ began, which was designed to restore the purity of revealed truth and the radiance of inspired light and to put the darkness of perversion to flight. Pressured by hopes and fears, men had given free rein to their imaginations, thus distorting the divine provisions into fanciful notions and fallacious theories concerning the soul, both here and hereafter. Now note this Biblical series of two's:

### **1. TWO WORLDS: TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL**

As to the two worlds, the first one is graphically described in Genesis 1 and 2. Upon creation it was pronounced "very good" (Gen. 1:31), in accordance with its nature. But its nature, cursed because of the fall and sin of man, became dominantly material and earthly. Death and decay came to characterize this present order.

Then progressively, first in the Old Testament and next in the New, there is revealed a better, more glorious world to come—eternal in nature and structure, under the divine order, and fitted to continue forever (Heb. 13:14). It is specifically called the "world to come" (Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30; Heb. 2:5; 6:5). It is the "better country," the "better land," desired by the patriarchs of old (Heb. 11:16).

And it is here tied in inseparably with "eternal life," or "life everlasting," for its ransomed citizens. Thus, "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). The forecast and nature of this "world to come" were but gradually unfolded in the Old Testament. Isaiah prophesied of the new earth that God had promised to create (Isa. 65:17). It would supersede the old, and remain forever (Isa. 66:22). But in the New Testament, Peter tells more explicitly of the coming "new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

The glories of the second Paradise, of which the Edenic first was a type, are still more fully and clearly unfolded by the seer of Patmos. Here in the Revelation, John portrays the establishment of this "new earth," to come after the present earth has "passed away" (Rev. 21:1)—a new earth reserved exclusively for the immortally redeemed, with its essential tree and water of life (Rev. 22). And this "better country," with its immortalized inhabitants, remains forever.

## **2. TWO ADAMS: THE NATURAL, THEN THE SPIRITUAL**

Next are the two Adams. The first man was formed out of the "dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7). He was the highest and no blest of all earthly creatures. Yet he was essentially earthly—as he soon proved himself to be, and as his very name, "Adam," indicates. He "became a living soul" (v. 7), endowed with life like the animals beneath him. But he differed from the brute creation in that he was endowed with a capacity for a higher life—the unending life of the spiritual world beyond, as intended for him by his Creator. But this could only be secured by becoming established in holiness, without which he could neither retain Paradise nor enjoy it. Tested, and failing through sin, and thus proving unworthy of the boon prepared for him, he sank to the condition of a perishable earthly creature. And as such he became the progenitor of an earthly mortal posterity. "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46). Another Progenitor was needed. Then came the Second, or Last, Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-47), born of a woman, yet begotten of God. He was the Son of man, yet was the Son of God. He was both divine and human—Heaven's provided link between this lower world of darkness and death and that higher world of light and life, of which He is the designated Lord. "In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15), He overcame where Adam fell, dying as a member of the human family for the redemption of man, yet possessed of absolute, original Immortality in His own right, which could not be lost, and being made perfect through suffering, "he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

And to "as many as received him," He gives "power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). That is God's provision for the redemption of man and the restoration of his forfeited life.

### **3. SECOND ADAM: PROGENITOR OF IMMORTAL RACE**

As noted, the first Adam was the progenitor of a race fallen like himself—earthly, carnal, sinful, mortal. It is incontestably clear that Adam's descendants could not therefore inherit from him an Immortality which he did not himself possess, and which because of his fall he failed to secure for himself. But the Second Adam is the progenitor of a race who, transformed into His likeness, are pure in heart and spiritual in nature, and who are to inherit from Him His own Immortal Life at His second advent. Though now subject to physical death, they will, in due time, enter upon that "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:4, 5). He, then, is our spiritual progenitor.

### **4. TWO BIRTHS: FIRST FLESHLY, SECOND SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL**

There are thus two births, or begettings. No child of Adam can inherit eternal life except he be born (begotten) "again" (another, "by divine power") from "above," from Heaven (cf. John 3:3). "That which is born [begotten] of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born [begotten] of the Spirit is spirit. ... Ye must be born again" (vs. 6, 7). From Adam we inherited a mortal, transitory life. For a life beyond, we must have a life ingenerated by the Holy Spirit—the life provided from Christ. This is the life uniformly and repeatedly spoken of by our Lord as "the life everlasting"—a life directly from Him, who alone can make us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12).

### **5. TWO COVENANTS: FIRST OF WORKS, SECOND OF FAITH.**

The dispensation of grace brings us under a new covenant, or ministration. The first covenant was a covenant of works. "This do, and thou shalt live." It was legal. Its rewards, penalties, and motives were earthly, though elevated. It could "never . . . make the comers thereunto perfect" (Heb. 10:1) —that is, complete. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second" (Heb. 8:7). The second, or new, covenant is a covenant of faith. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31; cf. 13:39). This requires an implicit trust in an omnipotent Saviour. That was necessary that we might receive endless life. The new covenant's appeals are to the higher nature, now begotten within the new man by the Spirit of God. Its motives and rewards are spiritual, heavenly, eternal (Hebrews 7; 8; 9). And it all centers about restoration of the lost life.

### **6. TWO CLASSES: CARNAL AND PERISHING, HEAVENLY AND ABIDING**

Mankind is divided into two classes—those destined for life and Immortality, and those headed for death and destruction. These two classes are always placed in juxtaposition, comparison being made by contrast. The most familiar categories are:

Sinners and saints Wicked and righteous Unbelievers and believers Reprobates and heirs  
Enemies of God and friends of God Foolish and wise Tares and wheat Dross and gold Children

of this world and children of the kingdom Children of the wicked one (or wrath) and children of God (or the Highest)

Those who live after the flesh, and those who live after the Spirit The first class is carnally-minded. They live after the flesh, are controlled by worldly motives, seek for worldly gain, and pursue the things that perish with the using. And when the world is finally destroyed, at the last day, they must perish with it, along with their treasures, for they have no portion or inheritance beyond.

The second class is spiritually-minded, and led by the Spirit of God. Through the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:13). They are controlled by spiritual influences, seek those things which are above, that are pure and eternal. Their choice is the "better part," which shall never be taken away (Luke 10:42). They, and they alone, will have eternal life.

## **7. TWO KINGDOMS: OF GOD AND OF SATAN**

There are likewise two kingdoms. Briefly, one is of this world, over which the great enemy of God and man bears rule, as prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). It is a kingdom of evil, disorder, sorrow, darkness, sin, and death. It is a kingdom doomed to overthrow, and to utter and irremedial ruin and destruction. The other kingdom is the kingdom of God, of Heaven, of our Lord, the Prince of life (Acts 3:15). It is a kingdom of light and glory and power. It is a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17); which, established by the Son of God as His everlasting kingdom, shall endure forever. It is "not of this world" (John 18:36). The immortalized saints will possess it (Dan. 7:27).

## **8. TWO ADVENTS: IN THE FLESH, AND IN POWER AND GLORY**

The establishment of this kingdom involves two advents. First, the Son of God came in the flesh, as a babe in Bethlehem, at the appointed time, as the Son of man, to live among men "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4), to suffer and die. And then, victorious over the power of death, He rose and ascended on high leading "captivity [aixmalosian, "body of captives," "multitude of captives," margin, Eph. 4:8] captive." Christ gave His own assurance that He will come again at the appointed time to gather the fruits of His victory, to raise the dead, and execute judgment upon the world, destroying all that is vile and sinful and destructible. Then He will make all things new. "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin [apart from sin] unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). And in that "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," Christ shall reign as King over His redeemed people forever. So two comings of one Saviour and Lord are necessitated. Cf. Matt. 27:52, 53; Rom. 1:4.

## **9. TWO RESURRECTIONS: TO "LIFE" AND TO "DAMNATION."**

Concurrent with the Second Advent comes the resurrection of the righteous dead, or sleeping saints (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 1 Cor. 15:52). The resurrection is in two installments. "They that are Christ's [come forth] at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:23). This is given pre-eminence. It is called the "first," the "better," resurrection, the resurrection unto "life." This is the "hope ... of the dead" in Christ (Acts 23:6). The "rest of the dead" (the wicked) are not called forth until the close of the

thousand years (Rev. 20:5). They will then come forth to hear the just decision of the judgment as it affects them and to perish under the execution of that judgment (v. 13). So all will "hear the voice of the Son of God," and all who "hear" will live again (John 5:25)—"they that have done good" are brought forth unto the "resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (v. 29). The latter are consigned to the second death, from which there is no recall. Christ will lose none of the trophies of His redemptive grace and work (chap. 6:39), but will raise each one who believes in Him to "everlasting life"—"raise him up at the last day" (v. 44; cf. 11:24, 25).

Paul concurs by declaring that there shall be a resurrection both of the "just," and of the "unjust" (Acts 24:15). And those who rise to everlasting life will have glorified, incorruptible, immortalized bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-44, 52-55)—bodies changed into the immortal likeness of Christ's glorious body (Phil. 3:21). In dismal contrast will be those brought forth to hear their sentence of doom, then to pass, after due punishment, into complete cessation of being.

### **10. FINALITY OF SEPARATION OCCURS AT SECOND ADVENT.**

The final separation of all mankind into the two classes is made manifest and actually takes place at Christ's second coming in transcendent glory. Then the righteous only are resurrected from the dead, while the wicked ("the rest of the dead"—Rev. 20:5) await their later resurrection turn and summons (1 Cor. 15:23). The righteous living will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, at His return (1 Thess. 4:17), while the living wicked will be smitten down by death through the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). Thus, under the impressive figure of the "sheep" and the "goats," so well known at that time "he [Christ] shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt. 25:32, 33).

Those on the left will, at the appointed time, "go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous [on the right] into life eternal" (v. 46), to "inherit the kingdom prepared" for them "from the foundation of the world" (v. 34). Mark it well: These final endings do not represent simply two types and conditions of perpetual life (of everlasting happiness, or of eternal misery), but everlasting life on the one hand, in contradistinction to everlasting punishment by the second death, on the other, from which there is no resurrection. The first death cuts off from temporal life; the second death cuts off from eternal life. It ends all hope of further life forever.

### **11. TWO DEATHS: FIRST DEATH FOR ALL, SECOND ONLY FOR WICKED**

There are thus the first and second deaths. These are given great prominence in the Biblical depiction. But confusion and misunderstanding arose from imbibing the principles of the Platonic philosophy, which denies the actuality of the first death by assuming that man is an immortal being. Consequently, for such there is no place for a second death.

The natural, or first, death is in consequence of the sin of the race rather than as punishment of personal transgressions. All die, good and bad alike. To put it another way, we die the first time primarily because of Adam's generic sin. The punishment for personal sins is the "second death" (Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8). Or to put it still another way: The portion of the saved will be the second

life, eternal life, immortal life, while the portion of the lost will be the second death of utter destruction.

According to the uniform testimony of the Word, the second death itself is the final end of the sinner's career. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). Furthermore, if there be no actual death in the first "death," there can, perforce, be no actual resurrection from the "dead." Consequently, all the awe-inspiring depictions of the Second Advent—the power and glory, the hosts of resplendent attending angels, the opening of the graves, the dead coming forth, and the glad reunions for the righteous forevermore—are looked upon as simply Oriental figures of speech. They are construed to mean nothing more than the emergence of the spirit from its encumbering body-prison, released like a balloon when the cord is cut that ties it to earth, so that it can soar above to the realms of bliss. That is the fanciful picture inherited from pagan philosophy and Christian deviation.

## **12. SECOND DEATH FOLLOWS SECOND RESURRECTION**

The "second death"—named only in the Apocalypse, but referred to in principle many times elsewhere—is not merely the natural death that comes upon all men at the close of this life, but is a death coming after the resurrection, restricted to those who are adjudged unworthy of eternal life. Four times this term "second death" is employed—and invariably placed in contrast with life everlasting, which is given to the righteous. Note them again:

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. ... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev. 2:10, 11).

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power" (Rev. 20:6).

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 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. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (vs. 11-15).

Then, after a glowing description of the glories of the heavenly Paradise, when 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"—the revelator declares: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brim stone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

## **13. SECOND DEATH FOR IRRECLAIMABLY WICKED ONLY**

Now it is undeniable that there can be no second death with out a first death. And the second must be an actual death, like the first, otherwise there could be no propriety in employing the term "second." As stated, the first death is the death to which all earthly creatures are subject. Man alone has a resurrection, and another life offered by an omnipotent Saviour through a resurrection from the dead. So the first death is the common lot of all men from Adam onward, irrespective of character or conduct as individuals. But "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

The "second death" is the destiny only of those who "neglect so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3), offered through Christ. Consequently, the second death is solely for the irreclaimably wicked. We who live in the present life are all born to die once. But we must be born again, by a heavenly spiritual birth, if we are to avoid the second death, and thus live for ever. As the first death puts an end to man's earthly life, and he reverts to the dust from which he was formed, so the second death precludes entrance upon the life beyond, and remands all who fall under its doom of destruction, both "soul and body" (Matt. 10:28), to the non existence from which they were first called.

Whether the process of destruction be longer or shorter, according to the just mandates of the judgment, the end of the process is death. As Paul says, "whose end [of the "enemies of the cross," Phil. 3:18] is destruction" (v. 19), and "the end of those things is death" (Rom. 6:21; cf. 1:32). Death is therefore the final end of sin, the final issue of the conflict between Christ and Satan, the final consummation of the cruel experiment of sin, so vividly pictured in the Revelation. For the righteous the first death lasts only until the first resurrection. For the wicked, the second death, following the second resurrection, lasts forever.

#### **14. THE TWO WAYS: WAY OF LIFE, AND WAY OF DEATH.**

Two opposite "ways" are set forth in Scripture, along with the fact that all men tread one or the other. Moses of old was called upon to declare to God's ancient people: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I [the Lord] have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deut. 30:19).

In verse 15 "life and good" and "death and evil" are tied inseparably together in the contrasting couplets. Later, Jeremiah repeated the same solemn dictum, broadening each into a "way": "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death" (Jer. 21:8). But how, it might be asked, could the way of holiness be called the "way everlasting" as the psalmist puts it, in contrast with the "wicked way" (Ps. 139:24), if both ways are everlasting—one with everlasting holiness and happiness, the other everlasting sin and misery? Then the wise man warns, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). It has one end. Next, Ezekiel throws these ways into vivid contrast, declaring that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze. 18:20), but the repentant righteous shall "save his soul alive" (v. 27). And he declares: "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (v. 32). Christ Himself picks up and presses this theme of the two "ways":

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14).

And as might be expected, Paul likewise stresses the end of the two ways: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13).

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sow eth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7, 8).

## **15. DESTINED ENDINGS OF THE TWO WAYS**

Summarizing: After His resurrection Christ was received up into Heaven as a pledge of the coming restoration of humanity, and as proof of the eternal union now established between God and redeemed man. When Christ appears again, the second time, He will raise the sleeping saints and translate the living ones (1 Cor. 15:21-24, 51-57). And when the appointed hour shall come, the wicked dead—whose names have been blotted out of the book of life—will be brought forth from their graves to receive sentence and to be consumed by the second death, which involves utter destruction of body and soul, along with the obliteration of Satan, the malign author of sin, ruin, and death (Matt. 25:31, 32, 41, 46)—and all his evil cohorts with him.

He and his evil minions and all men and demons who follow him will perish utterly in the lake of fire and brim stone (Rev. 20:5-15). And all this because of choosing the evil and rejecting the good. This involves the extinction of all life, the utter end of the individual human personality. Nothing remains but the elements of which it was composed. And these disintegrate, and the person becomes as though he had not been. The promised new heaven and new earth will replace this age-old, sin-scarred battleground, and a clean universe will be brought into being—without sin, sinners, or Satan to mar (Rev. 21; 22). The righteous will have all received Immortality and incorruption. Then it is that they will "shine forth as the sun" (Matt. 13:43), and "as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). Then God will be "all in all," and the glory of the Lord will fill the earth forever (Hab. 2:14; cf. Isa. 11:9). Those are the ultimate issues, the outcome of the two ways of Life and Death.

### **C. Fundamental Fallacy of Immortal-Soulist Concept**

Before closing this chapter let us face this incontestable fact frankly: Something happened long ago in the theological world. The radical distinction between the natural and the supernatural, as pertains to the nature and destiny of man, came to be confused and flouted, along with a denial of the gulf that is fixed in Scripture between the physical, earthly, and transitory, and that which is spiritual, heavenly, and eternal—a distinction explicitly spelled out by Inspiration. An unwarranted, mystical, allegorical interpretation has been imposed upon the pivotal words of Scripture, such as "soul," "death," "resurrection," "destruction." This whole area of doctrine has been arbitrarily brought under a specious system of allegorization, or spiritualization, borrowed from Philo the Jew and Origen the Neoplatonic Christian philosopher. "Death," instead of being

recognized as an unconscious sleep, is considered by multiplied millions to be the mystic door by which the righteous enter forever upon that higher state of existence for which they have been preparing here below.

And as for the irreparably wicked, "death" is likewise conceived to be the inexorable door by which the wicked enter upon a hopeless state of paralleling eternal life, only in sin and misery. To such, "death" is still eternal existence. So to the Immortal-Soulist, the "second" death is simply unending life in ceaseless sin and irremediable torment. Such contenders are completely baffled in attempting to explain the "second death" aspect—merely making it unalterable continuance for ever, instead of a penalized ending, and thus missing the fundamental point of the comparison.

Beyond question, the notion of Innate Immortality started somewhere, some time. And history attests that it stems back through Protestantism to the older Catholicism, and thence back to the early Christian and Jewish apostasies, and prior to that back to pagan philosophy—and, before all these, back to the original lie of Satan, uttered within the gates of Eden. Such is the indelible trail of this delusive fiction that has insinuated itself into the teachings of Christianity and has established itself as a preponderant belief of both Catholicism and Protestantism. But such a lineage is the reason we do not hesitate to challenge its validity and to urge its repudiation.

### **1. DUALISM NOT PART OF DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES**

There is also a related involvement in the Eternal Torment dogma. If Satan and his demonic and human followers are not to be and cannot be destroyed, then Christ cannot become "Lord of all," nor His kingdom a universal kingdom. In such an event, a special segment of His kingdom would have to be portioned off, for all eternity, as a special habitation for enemies that He cannot conquer and destroy. He can torment them and isolate them, but they can still blaspheme His name and defy His power to harm them further—and that forevermore. So they say. Picture the scene: Raging hosts below, with groans and blasphemies, living on forever under a pagan dualism spawned in Persia of old. But the dualistic concept of Persian Zoroastrianism was based on the contention that there are two eternal principles (Ormuzd and Ahriman), one eternally good and the other everlastingly evil; that these were both without beginning and both without end, and so continue on in eternal, unending conflict with each other.

On the contrary, Christian theologians who are proponents of Immortal-Soulism, while holding that there are two such opposing principles, and principals, now at war with each other, say that only the Godhead had no beginning and was eternally existent throughout the eternity of the past. They recognize that evil, stemming from Satan as author, is an innovation and had a beginning. But they illogically hold that now, having begun to be, it must forever remain in being, endlessly marring and challenging God's once perfect universe. More than that, they maintain, or concede, that God Himself cannot put an end to its existence.

That is a tremendously serious charge to make, and one that is completely at variance with the Sacred Word, which declares that God will finally extirpate all evil from the universe. What He has created He can destroy. The truth is that evil is but a tragic episode—a temporary interlude—in the divine, eternal plan of the ages. And as it had a beginning in time, so will it end within the

confines of time, before the aeons of the eternity of the future begin to unroll. Sin is relatively incidental and passing, not integral and perpetual. The time will come when it will end. The "lake of fire" will mark the exodus of sin and death forever.

Thus the subtle, delusive, dual fiction of Innate Immortality and Endless Torment obscures the glory of the gospel and weakens its power and appeal (1) by denying to Christ His chief glory—the bestowal of life eternal upon the righteous, and (2) by denying His ultimate triumph in the destruction of all His foes. That is why we stand upon the Bible platform of Conditionalism. That is why we are Conditionalists.