

THOUGHTS FOR THE CANDID

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WHICH OF THE TWO IS THE GLOOMY DOCTRINE?

THE sleep of the dead is often designated a gloomy doctrine. To many it is chilling, repulsive, forbidding. But the immortality of the soul, and the reward of the saints at death,—this is declared to be a great joy, the fruition of the “blessed hope.”

But stop, friends, a few moments. Be not too hasty. Wait long enough to try the justice of this objection in the balances of reason.

You say that the doctrine is full of gloom, and that the departed saints would experience a bitter disappointment in being consigned to the grave for long ages, instead of being received into glory at death. You think the idea full of gloom to the living, and dreadful to the dead. But you forget that, if the doctrine be true, there is no chill, no gloom, no darkness, no disappointment, no lapse of time, no waiting through long ages, to the dead. The interval between their decease and their resurrection will be to them no time at all. The twinkling of an eye, in which the righteous will be changed to immortality, will be as long to them as the whole period during which righteous Abel has slept in death will be to him. And to him, so far as his own knowledge of the case is concerned, it will be precisely as if he entered heaven at the very moment he was slain.

You say that this helps the matter a little; but that, for all this, the sleep of the dead will no more compare in consolation with the soul’s immortality and the reward at death than the desert of Sahara will compare in beauty with the garden of Eden. But study a little further, friends. You may discover facts that will change this opinion. You find great consolation in the thought that the soul is immortal, and that men are rewarded as soon as they die. Answer me a few questions. How large a part of mankind lead lives of holiness, and die with good evidence of their acceptance with God? Truth compels you to answer that a minority are all that can be said to do this. What becomes, then, of the great majority of men, who have died out of Christ, and entered their reward? O, it is taught that they have gone into the furnace of fire, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth! What is the condition, then, at this very moment, of the greater part of the dead, according to this cheering doctrine? You have to answer, They are in unspeakable torment. You admit that this dreadful fact somewhat abates the consolation you have hitherto found in this doctrine.

But I want you to answer one question more. If the soul is immortal, as you affirm, how long are these impenitent men thus to suffer? You answer again, and this time surely with a shudder, **THEY MUST SUFFER TO ALL ETERNITY.** Before we part, will you not own that yours is a gloomy doctrine? Is it not a relief to your mind to think that men are to be judged **BEFORE** they are rewarded or punished, and that till the day of Judgment men wait for their reward? And is not that doctrine best which teaches that immortality is the gift of God, and that it is given only to the righteous?

AN EXAMINATION OF CERTAIN SCRIPTURES

The Prayer of the Souls Under the Altar

“How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” Rev. 6:10. The advocates of the kindred popular doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and that the souls of the righteous go to

heaven at death, believe and teach that the souls of martyrs are alive under an altar in heaven, and that they literally pray in the above words for vengeance on their persecutors. They do not seem to see that there is anything inconsistent in the idea that the souls of the martyrs in the presence of God, where there is fullness of joy, should be able to think only of their past tortures, and be entirely given up to anxiety for vengeance on their persecutors, who had hastened their arrival to their state of blessedness. Nor do they seem to realize that such prayers are not only unlike the spirit of Christ, who prayed in an hour of extreme anguish, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;" but that they are unlike the spirit of the noble martyr Stephen, who cried with his dying breath, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60. Nor do they explain how such a prayer can be offered literally while the Saviour stands before the ark of God's law as a great sacrifice, and the Spirit of God strives with sinful men to lead them to repentance. But let this case stand while we look at another.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches, to the same class of people, that the righteous at death go to heaven, and the wicked at death go into the flames of hell. See Luke 16:19-31. It also shows them that the wicked in their torment are not only in plain sight of the righteous in their blessedness, but that the two places are within speaking distance of each other, and that the two parties converse together. Now let us put these two cases together. The souls under the altar had only to look from their state of blessedness to see their persecutors in the flames of hell, or dropping, one by one, into this fiery gulf. Could the martyrs, with this terrible sight before them, pray, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Would they have been bidden to wait yet a little season? Would they not rather have been directed to look across the great gulf, and see many of their persecutors already in torment, and others every moment arriving? Who does not see that these two cases, when taken together, completely refute the doctrine so often drawn from each taken alone!

THOUGHTS ON MATT. 10:28 AND LUKE 12:4, 5.

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

"And I say unto you My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him." Luke 12:4, 5.

1. These texts are the record, by different writers, of the same language of the Saviour. The first one is often quoted by those who teach the immortality of the soul and its conscious existence in death. In Matthew's version of the Saviour's words, the soul is indeed made very prominent; but in that of Luke, it is not mentioned. Yet the language of the one version is the same substance as that of the other.

2. Thus, while Matthew represents the Saviour as saying, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," Luke expresses the idea thus: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more they can do." And Matthew adds, "Fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Luke gives the same warning, thus: "Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell."

3. Thus it is seen that our Lord recognizes the fact plainly expressed elsewhere, that there are two deaths. The first death, which is the common lot of mankind, is thus spoken of by Paul: "It is appointed unto men once to die." Heb. 9:27. The

second death is the portion only of the wicked. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8. The Saviour bids us not to fear those who can inflict only the first of these deaths; but He warns us to fear Him who alone is able to kill with the second death.

4. The place in which the terrible punishment here set forth is inflicted, is called hell. This word is found in the English Testament twenty-three times. But in the Greek Testament there are three different words, *hades*, *gehenna* and *tartarus*, signifying different places, all rendered by the one English word, "hell." Thus, *hades* is used eleven times in the original, and is rendered "hell" ten times and "grave" once. The following are the places of its occurrence, the italicized word in each case being the translation of *hades*:

- Matt. 11:23. Shalt be brought down to *hell*.
- 16:18. The gates of *hell* shall not prevail.
- Luke 10:15. Shalt be thrust down to *hell*.
- 16:23. In *hell* he lift up his eyes.
- Acts 2:27. Wilt not leave my soul in *hell*.
- 2:31. His soul was not left in *hell*.
- 1 Cor. 15:55. O *grave*, where is thy victory?
- Rev.1:18. Have the keys of *hell* and of death.
- 6:8. Was death, and *hell* followed.
- 20:13. Death and *hell* delivered up the dead.
- 20:14. Death and *hell* were cast into the lake of fire.

Gehenna is found in the following places:

- Matt. 5:22. Shall be in danger of *hell* fire.
- 5:29. Whole body should be cast into *hell*.
- 5:30. Whole body should be cast into *hell*.
- 10:28. Destroy both soul and body in *hell*.
- 18:9. Having two eyes to be cast into *hell* fire.
- 23:15. More the child of *hell* than yourselves.
- 23:33. How can ye escape the damnation of *hell*.
- Mark 9:43. Having two hands to go into *hell*
- 9:45. Having two feet to be cast into *hell*.
- 9:47. Having two eyes to be cast into *hell*.
- Luke 12:5. Hath power to cast into *hell*
- James 3:6. It is set on fire of *hell*.

Tartarus is used only in the following text: "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell." 2 Peter 2:4.

Thus *hades* is seen to be the place of the dead, whether righteous or wicked; the place into which they are introduced by death, and from which they are delivered by the resurrection. Those who are in *hades* are said to be *dead*. Rev. 20:13. Once, in the English Testament, *hades* is rendered "grave." 1 Cor. 15:55. *Gehenna*, on the contrary, is the place where the wicked are to be cast alive with all their members, and to be destroyed soul and body. It is the lake of fire in which the wicked dead are to be punished after their resurrection. Rev. 20:13-15. *Tartarus* is the place into which the evil angels were cast after their rebellion. These three places, therefore, though rendered by the one English word "hell," are not to be confounded with one another.

5. It is claimed that the Saviour, in giving the warning recorded in Matt. 10:28

and Luke 12:4, 5, taught the continued existence of the soul in death. But it is worthy of notice that in each of these texts He utters no warning concerning the punishment of the soul in *hades*, the place or state of the dead. His warning relates to that which shall be inflicted upon "soul and body" together in *gehenna*.

6. That He should speak nothing of the punishment of the soul in its disembodied state in *hades*, if such punishment really takes place, is very remarkable; for here, more than anywhere else in the Bible, is there evidence of the continued existence of the soul while the body is under the power of death. Yet while expressly stating the terrible fate of the lost, and that, too, in such connection as would especially call out the fact, if it were a fact, that the souls of the wicked exist in a place of dreadful suffering, between death and the resurrection, the Saviour says not one word concerning the sufferings of the soul in its disembodied state, but confines His warning to that which shall be inflicted upon "both soul and body in hell," that is, in *gehenna*, thus showing that the retribution against which He warns us comes after the resurrection, and not before.

7. Our Lord means to point out precisely the danger to which the ungodly are exposed. When, therefore, He says "Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into *gehenna*," He means to teach that God will cast the wicked into *gehenna*. And when Matthew, expressing the same warning in different words, makes the Saviour say, "Fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in *gehenna*," the fact set forth is that such will be the fate of the lost.

8. "Fear Him, which *after* He hath killed hath power to cast into *gehenna*." As the wicked are to be cast into *gehenna* alive, and in possession of all their bodily members (see the list of passages in this tract where *gehenna* is used), it follows that He who can thus cast them there, after they have once been killed, is God alone; for to do this, He must raise them from the dead. The resurrection to damnation must precede the damnation of *gehenna*. Compare John 5:28, 29 with Matt. 23:33.

A REMARKABLE CORNER-STONE

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is something indispensable to almost every prominent erroneous religious system. It is the corner-stone of heathenism. All or nearly all the gods of heathenism are believed to be dead men who were turned into gods by dying.

Catholicism is indebted to this doctrine for all its saints who are believed to be mediators with God. It is a fundamental idea in the system of purgatory. In fact, Romanism is as much dependent on this doctrine as is heathenism.

Spiritualism is simply the embodiment of this doctrine of natural immortality. It is incapable of existing without it.

Is it not strange that this corner-stone of heathenism, Roman Catholicism, and Spiritualism, should be also the corner-stone of modern orthodoxy? Yet such is the case. It is in these days esteemed the marrow and fatness of Christianity. And so prevalent is the doctrine, that the advent of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the Judgment are rendered almost obsolete by it. How much better is life only in Jesus our Lord!