

from which there will be no resurrection. All sinners will suffer punishment, some with few stripes and others with many (Luke 12:47, 48); the instigator of sin, the devil, will suffer the most.

This second death is really the only everlasting punishment that could be inflicted on mortal man. To illustrate: If a judge punishes a man by giving him a ten-year sentence, his imprisonment means that his loss of freedom lasts for ten years. If that same man could be put to death for ten years and then be brought to life again, that too would be ten years' punishment, for as long as he is deprived of freedom and the privilege of life, he is enduring punishment. But God is not going to deprive the wicked of their life and freedom for ten years, nor a hundred years, nor even a million years, but for eternity, for they are to suffer the vengeance of "eternal fire." This will indeed be "everlasting punishment," for it ends in "everlasting destruction."

The souls of men, not being immortal, can and will be destroyed. The word soul is mentioned 859 times in the Bible, but never once is it spoken of as "an immortal soul." God "only hath immortality" (1 Timothy 6:16), and this He gives to all who will turn from their sins and receive His grace, but we are not changed from mortality to immortality until our Lord's return in glory.

Eternal life is a gift from God that we receive by faith now. We read, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." His gift of eternal life is ours now, but it is still "in his Son." Only as He lives in us, that is, in our mortal flesh, do we have that gift of life. When our mortal flesh dies, or falls asleep, that spiritual life is "hid with Christ in God" and remains with Him until He returns for His people. Paul says, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear [that is, His second coming], then shall you also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). In that glad day the righteous dead will be raised from the tomb, and the righteous who are alive to see Him come will be translated. But whether we are living or dead when He appears, "We shall all be changed." Paul's clear message was largely an amplification of our Lord's statement to Martha concerning "the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24). It was in that setting that Jesus said, "He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live [be resurrected]; and whosoever lives and believes in me [that is, will be alive to see me come] shall never die [will be translated]" (verses 25 and 26).

On page 130 Martin says that " 'immortality' refers only to the resurrection body of the saints and to the nature of God Himself and that the saints "do not now possess 'immortality.'" True! But we could wish that the author were more consistent. If immortality refers only to, and is "a future gift to be bestowed upon, the believer's body at the second advent of our Lord," as he says, page 122, then why quote Dr. Charles Hodge? In so doing, our brother completely reverses himself, for Dr. Hodge claims "the human soul" has "unending existence" and is immortal. (Page 132). Martin certainly has not helped his case by appealing to this theologian of a past generation. But having quoted this scholar, we would simply ask both Hodge and Martin, When did the human soul become "immortal"? Was it created immortal, or does it put on immortality when the body dies? or is it some separate entity floating around waiting for a body in which to make its home, as the pagans teach?

Having stated that the human soul is immortal, Hodge then seeks to substantiate his claim by this argument:

If the Bible says that the sufferings of the lost are to be everlasting, they are to endure forever unless it can be shown either that the soul is not immortal or that Scriptures elsewhere teach that those sufferings will come to an end. (Italics supplied.)

Now let us face the Scripture squarely, for on those two important points the Bible is clear and emphatic-first, the soul is not immortal; and second, the sufferings of the wicked will come to an end. Jesus said, "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). If it can be destroyed, then the soul is certainly not eternal, as our friend declares. For him to state that the "Bible emphatically teaches that it is," page 132, must mean that he either has not discerned or is not willing to accept the clear implications of our Lord's statement. God says: "The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20), and again, "The wages of sin is death." And because "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23), therefore all should die, and die eternally. But while "the wages of sin is death ... the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Our blessed Lord "Poured out his soul unto death" in order to save our souls from eternal death.

We have searched in vain for a single Biblical text in Martin's critique that says the soul is either immortal or eternal. He has tried to build up a case by reference to a few Greek and Hebrew words, but even these have failed to support his claims. We wonder why he, as well as many others of our fellow Christians, seem unable to accept the clear statement of Jesus, who shows conclusively that it is when He "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." It

is at that time, and not before, that the righteous “enter into life eternal.” During our mortal existence it is ours by faith only, but at His coming we enter into the full experience of “life eternal.” The wicked, on the other hand, go into “everlasting punishment,” or destruction. Now, these are not our words; neither is it merely Adventist doctrine. These are the words of our Lord, and it is His doctrine.

Eternal Fire

Someone may ask, What is the meaning of “eternal” in such expressions as “eternal fire”? Let the Bible speak for itself. We read of Christ being “the author of eternal salvation,” and also of His “having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 5:9; 9:12). We do not need to ask how and when was our “eternal salvation- obtained, or secured (RSV). It was when He died on the cross. We were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18, 19). And although every true Christian rejoices in that truth, yet none would contend that this “eternal redemption” that Christ obtained for us on the cross is something still in process, something continually being worked out but never completed. No! a thousand times no! That shout from the cross, “It is finished!” told the universe that man’s redemption was accomplished for all eternity. He died unto sin once (Romans 6:10). But the redemption is eternal in its result.

While obtaining that redemption for us our Redeemer was “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded [“tormented,” margin] for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:4, 5). It was for us that He died. He “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18), but now, thank God, He has entered into His glory. He “poured out his soul unto death” once; He is not dying now. “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28), and “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). Our Savior met the penalty of sin by dying once, not by continually dying, as the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation teaches, but by dying “once for all.” The authentic trumpet note of the New Testament is that our redemption is settled. It was accomplished by our Lord’s death and resurrection. The victory at Calvary was decisive. The devil was defeated by Christ’s death on the cross and completely outmaneuvered by His resurrection. All we await now is V-Day, and that will be when our Lord returns in power to raise the dead, to destroy His foes, and to reign forever as Lord of all.

10. The Immortality of the Soul

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IN THE STUDY of God’s Word and especially in analyzing the great doctrines of the Christian faith, it is always helpful to appeal to the original languages of Scripture. But to appeal for support to the Hebrew and Greek and then to misread or misapply the words is tragic. But that is just what our friend Martin, in his book *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*, has done in a number of places in his effort to refute the scriptural teaching of life only in Christ. This we have already mentioned in the previous chapter. We would not be unkindly critical, but his misuse of the original languages is all too evident, and in several places even the words he uses are misspelled. These are probably typographical errors, but he also reveals an inability to be completely objective in his study. It may be difficult to be completely objective, especially where theology is concerned, but when one, critical of the beliefs of others, tries to defend his case by the aid of Hebrew and Greek, and then misunderstands and consequently misapplies the very scriptures he uses, the result cannot be other than confusion.

To cite one simple example: He uses “soul” and “spirit” as though they were exact synonyms. That certainly is not the case. Then, too, his strict adherence to the K.J.V. in certain places, while appearing perhaps to prove his point, leads him at times far from the clear meaning of the original. To illustrate: In support of his claims that the soul departs at death, he quotes Genesis 35:18 about Rachel, “And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni.” Now the word translated “soul” in this text is *nephesh* in Hebrew. It is translated 428 times “soul” in the K.J.V., and 119 times *life*. Comparing the different usage of this word *nephesh* and applying them to Martin’s theory makes interesting reading. Take, for example, David’s prayer for protection from his persecutors. He says, “Deliver me: lest he tear my soul [*nephesh*] like a lion, rending it in pieces” (Psalm 7:1, 2). Would anyone