

## 11. Brilliant Witnesses on Both Sides of Atlantic

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### **I. Blackburne—Historian of Reformation Conflict Over Soul Question**

Up to this time no one had ever attempted to give a systematic record of the contentions and conflicts of the proponents of Conditionalism, covering the two-hundred-year span immediately following the launching of the Reformation, and showing its relation thereto. That was left for the scholarly FRANCIS BLACKBURNE (1704-1787), archdeacon of Cleveland, Conditionalist, controversialist, and historian. Thoroughly trained at Cambridge, he was ordained an Anglican deacon in 1728, and was consecrated as a priest in 1739. Blackburne was ever the advocate of civil and religious liberty, never ceasing to champion thorough investigation of truth and its establishment in the church.

He was inducted into the rectory of Richmond in 1739, and resided there for forty-eight years, until his death. Throughout the remainder of his life he gave himself to intensive study and polemic writing. In 1750 Blackburne was made archdeacon of Cleveland, and he held this post until his death thirty-seven years later. He was a decided Arminian, not a Calvinist—which was a definite factor in his concept of the nature and destiny of man.

From the time of his first admission to Cambridge, Blackburne was a close friend and literary associate of Edmund Law, likewise an avowed Conditionalist, who was later Master of St. Peter's College, Cambridge, then archdeacon of Staffordshire, and finally bishop of Carlisle. Blackburne was also a friend of William Warburton, bishop of Gloucester, who was also a Conditionalist. Small wonder that these friendships should stimulate Blackburne's comprehensive study and personal adoption of Conditional Immortality and his extensive writing "concerning the use of the word soul in Holy Scripture, and the state of death." Blackburne was bent on dispersing the "clouds of folly and superstition." But his presentations were quickly denounced by antagonists as "soul sleeping" and persistently castigated by the more hostile as "heresy." When Dr. Law's Conditionalism was attacked, Blackburne sprang to his defence, publishing a 140 page *No Proof in the Scriptures of an Intermediate State of Happiness or Misery between Death and the Resurrection* (1756). [1] About the same time he felt compelled to take up the cudgels in behalf of his friend Dr. Warburton, under attack from the bishop of London. So Blackburne produced his 77- page *Remarks on Dr. Warburton's Account of the Sentiments of the Early Jews Concerning the Soul* (1757). [2] Thus the battle of pens and pamphlets surged on, Blackburne being author of six vigorous discussions in this hotly debated field.

The year 1765 marked the production of Blackburne's epochal 183-page *A Short Historical View of the Controversy concerning an Intermediate State and the Separate Existence of the Soul, Between Death and the General Resurrection, deduced from the Beginning of the Protestant Reformation, to the Present Time, with a second and enlarged edition in 1772*. [3] The continuing witness of a line of noted clerics was presented, constituting the earliest piece of systematic historical research brought forth on this vital issue. Based on the sources, to which he had full access, Blackburne began with the Council of Florence in 1439 and the period just prior to the Reformation, and the vital part it played in producing the Reformation break under Luther. He continued the recital of the swaying battle line on to his own day.

*1 Abbot, The Literature of the Doctrine of a Future Life, no. 2560.*

*2 Ibid., no. 1811.*

*3 Ibid., no. 2464.*

This unique discussion has fifty-eight pages of Introduction, followed by twenty-one sections comprising 108 pages of text. And it concludes with seventeen pages of Appendix material. Blackburne deals with cases and conditions then currently known but now difficult to compass. He had access to all the issues and the arguments, for he lived close to the times and the tensions. Moreover, he had deep personal convictions as to the principles under fire, and went back of the outer acts and utterances to the underlying principles and causes. His treatise compassed Pomponatius, Luther, Tyndale, Calvin and his Psychopannychia, then the Anabaptist, Helvetic, Edwardian, and Scottish confessions—and on through Stegmann, Overton, Bull, Jurieu, Locke, Coward, Layton, Hallett, Law, and many lesser lights who felt impelled to put aside the "incumbrance of superstition." Blackburne's Historical View remains unsurpassed in the area covered, and offers the most comprehensive coverage available of the conflict over the nature of the soul during the two and a half centuries traversed. In masterly grasp of the issues and sweeping treatment it remains the classic.

That which lay closest to Blackburne's heart was "the perfection [or completion] of the Protestant principle, and the reclaiming of the Church of England" from all departures from Scripture, the great rule of faith and standard of doctrine. Blackburne ever

stressed the folly of going to churchly dictums instead of Holy Scripture for sanction or authority. In his treatise *The Confessional, or a Full and Free Inquiry into the Right, Utility, and Success of Establishing Confessions of Faith and Doctrine in Protestant Churches* (1766) he appealed for the progressive acceptance of truth as it should be discerned, and warned of stultifying, rigid creeds and Rome ward trends. He fought "established follies and absurdities." Intense controversy resulted from his searching exposures.

It was Blackburne's call for further reformation of the Anglican Church that aroused the antagonism of Dr. Seeker, Archbishop of Canterbury, and other powerful church leaders, and forestalled any chance of further ecclesiastical advancement for Blackburne, [4] despite his conspicuous and widely recognized abilities. Nevertheless, *The Confessional* went through three editions and drew answering volumes from various clerics. [5] Deep conviction of truth, based upon "the Bible only," was the motivating force in Blackburne's life. He held to the inalienable right of private judgment, and was deeply troubled over current encroachments of the Papacy and the devastating perversions she had introduced from paganism into Christen dom. And to him the dogma of the Innate Immortality of the soul and its corollaries was perhaps the most serious of all papal departures, for it is foundational to the whole papal structure. And it sprang from Platonism.

4 Leslie Stephen, "*Francis Blackburne*," *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 2, p. 538.

5 *The seven-volume Works of Blackburne gives all the published items and public correspondence, and covers the entire ground and the issues.*

## **II. Blackburne's Personal Views on Conditionalism**

Blackburne left the defensive and took the offensive, showing the inconsistency of some of his antagonists, their recourse to unworthy tactics, and the specious arguments often resorted to—such as reducing "life" and "death" to mere figurative terms. Opponents felt the weight of his blows and his castigation of their "fine spun notions," and of their "art of blowing scholastic bubbles." [6] His was a masterful endeavour.

### **1. THE QUESTION OF DISEMBODIED SOULS.—**

While his chief work had been to chronicle the views of other Conditionalists, Blackburne had his own deep convictions thereon.

To him the entire issue revolved around the question of Innate Immortality and the "separate existence of the soul," and particularly the "intermediate state between death and the resurrection" in "happiness or misery," as contended. He carefully states the problem in the Introduction, phrased in the heavy style of the time: "The question is, whether the scriptures afford any just and solid grounds for the doctrine of the immortality of the soul of man, and particularly, any evidence of its existence, when disunited from the body, in a state of conscious perception; and whether, in consequence of this notion, there is not a certain intermediate state of happiness and misery for good and wicked men respectively, between death and the general resurrection?" [7]

### **2. IMMORTALITY ONLY THROUGH RESURRECTION.—**

In answering the questions he had propounded, he said: "They who hold the negative in these points, allege, that according to the scriptures, life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel of Christ, in a sense exclusive of all other teachers, and all other revelation, at least from the birth of Moses downwards; exclusive likewise of all FAITH information from the light of nature, or the result of philosophical disquisition on the substance or qualities of the human soul. They insist that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, so that no man cometh to (the father [so as to be like him, and to see him as he is in a future state] (but by the mediatorial power of Christ. That the way of coming to God, in the sense, and by the means above-mentioned, is the resurrection of the dead, of which, assurance is given unto all men, by the resurrection of JESUS." [8]

6 *Blackburne, A Short Historical View*, pp. 106, 107.

7 *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

### **3. No SEPARATE INTERMEDIATE LIFE OF SOUL.—**

Blackburne states that life and immortality come solely through Christ. He contends that death is the "total deprivation of life," and that there is no "separate or intermediate life for the soul, when disunited from the body." Thus: "They [the Conditionalists] hold moreover, that the sentence pronounced upon our first parents, imported a total deprivation of life without any reserve or saving to the life of the soul; and consequently, that eternal life, or a restoration and redemption from the consequences of this sentence, was effected for, revealed, consigned and insured to man, in and through Christ, and will be accomplished in no other way than that spoken of by Christ and his apostles, who have left no room to conclude that there is a separate or intermediate life for the soul, when disunited from the body." [9]

#### 4. REFORMERS LOPPED "BRANCHES," LEFT "ROOT" OF ERROR.—

Blackburne shows how the issue strikes at the whole provision of redemption of souls through Christ and the sole purpose of the resurrection (p. xxix). He remarks concerning the Reformers: "While our Reformers were studiously lopping the branches of superstition and imposture, they inadvertently left the stock, with a vigorous root in the ground, which their successors, with a surprising inattention to the pernicious consequences of their misapprehension, have been cultivating to a fresh growth, to the great hazard not only of the protestant religion, but even of Christianity itself, which is at this hour well nigh choaked and obscured under the thick shade of this venomous exotic." [10] To this charge Blackburne adds: "It is remarkable that Protestants, who have on most occasions refused to be governed by tradition, seem to have submitted to it in this matter with the most implicit deference." [11]

8 *Ibid.*, pp. xxvi, xxvii. (*Brackets his in original.*)

9 *Ibid.*, pp. xxvii, xxviii.

10 *Ibid.*, p. xliii.

11 *Ibid.*, p. xlv.

On another page he adds: "I cannot help commiserating the distress of these poor men, who having once allowed the Saints a conscious existence in heaven, were so hard put to it to keep it clear of the consequences." [12]

#### 5. UNFAIRNESS OF CHARGE OF "HERESY."—

Feeling the sting of unjust criticism, and protesting against the acrimony and bigotry revolving around the issue, he says: "It is not only unfair but inhuman for one sett of her [the Church's] members to brand another with HERESY, merely for holding the negative side of this question." [13]

#### 6. RESTORATION OF "WHOLE MAN" TO LIFE.—

The heart of Blackburne's position is simply this: "The doctrine of the New Testament is, that men shall become immortal by the way of a resurrection of the dead, a restoration of the whole man to life; and the New Testament is far from acknowledging any intermediate consciousness in man, between death and the resurrection, that it always speaks of that interval as a sleep, which implies a suspension of the thinking faculty, a rest from those labours which require thought, memory, consciousness. &c. during which those faculties are useless." [14]

#### 7. DEAD MADE ALIVE ONLY THROUGH RESURRECTION.—

His line of reasoning and his emphasis on the resurrection, is stated thus: "But this is not all. The scriptural system of immortality, supposes that man had forfeited his original title to immortality, and would never have recovered it but for the interposition of a redeemer. The consequence of this doctrine is, that between the time of the forfeiture, and the actual appearance of the Redeemer, the dead could have life in no sense at all: and that neither before nor after the appearance of the Redeemer, dead men were or would be restored to life, otherwise than in the way revealed by, the Redeemer, namely the resurrection, of the dead." [15]

#### 8. IMMORTAL-SOULISM "OVERTURNS WHOLE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM."—

The seriousness of the issue, as it appeared to Blackburne, is stated in these words: "Hence to suppose the souls of dead men to be alive, conscious and active, and capable of happiness and misery, from the death of the first

12 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 69.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

man, to the resurrection of the very last, and to pretend to demonstrate this by reason and philosophy, is plainly to overturn the whole Christian system." [16] Blackburne deeply deplored the "application of certain i passages of scripture torn from their context, and wrested from their true meaning, in order to accommodate them to the pagan accounts of the nature and properties of the human soul." [17] This hostility is aroused because the doctrine of the "sleep of the soul" strikes against the "pride of the philosopher, the enthusiastic visions of the mystic, the lucrative systems of the interested churchman, and the various prejudices and superstitions of their respective disciples." As a result the holders of such Conditionalist views are the recipients of "all the obloquy and scandal which bigoted and provoked adversaries can lay upon it." [18] And Blackburne knew by experience.

Conditionalism is, by such detractors, stigmatized as "an heresy, derogatory to the nature of man, subversive of his future hopes,

and savouring not a little of atheism and impiety." But Blackburne counter charged that defenders of "immortal- soulist" have to depend upon the "weight of tradition . . . for a future state." [19] tradition being the "deciding" factor in the issue. Then he reminds them, pointedly, that if the "soul sleepers" were disposed to seek reprisals upon the "Orthodox, what depredations might they not make," [20] because of their vulnerable positions and arguments.

### **III. Four Basic Charges Made by Blackburne**

Near the close of his penetrating history and analysis of nearly three hundred years of conflict over the nature of the soul, Blackburne makes these four basic charges, on pages 93-95, of *A Short Historical View*: (1) That although introduced into the Christian Church in the early centuries of the Christian Era, "these scholastic subtilties" were accentuated through medieval scholasticism.

*16 Ibid., p. 69.*

*17 Ibid., p. xli.*

*18 Ibid., p. xliii.*

*19 Ibid., p. xlvii.*

*20 Ibid., p. li.*

Thus "the notion of the souls immortality" was "bred and nourished among the schoolmen of the twelfth, thirteenth and a great part of the two following centuries." (2) "That these scholastic subtilties were adopted by the popish divines, as the groundwork of the fable of purgatory, and the idolatrous invocation of Saints." Thus "scholastic immortality" was intermingled with the immortality offered by the Bible, and the two were made to give "light and support to each other," being "equally sanctified by the canons and decrees of the church." (3) "That though Protestants, on all other subjects, rejected all doctrines which were not built on a scripture foundation, they unhappily contented themselves on this, with the testimony of popish and pagan tradition." (4) That in disputes with Papists over Purgatory and saint worship, Protestants have "directed their arguments to the wrong object; and instead of insisting that the immortality subsequent to the general resurrection, was the only conscious future state allotted in Scripture, either for saints or sinners, they embarrassed themselves with an hypothesis of departed souls taken either immediately into heaven, or immediately thrust into a place of final torment." As a result, the Papists take "advantage of this weakness in their adversaries," through Protestant admission of a "middle state." [21] But Blackburne's conclusion is that according to Scripture "a suspension [of consciousness] actually takes place during the interval between death and the resurrection." [22] He repeats and enforces the thought in the next paragraph, calling it "a total intermission of consciousness in man for a certain interval"—namely, until the resurrection day. Then he adds confidently: "Our foundation stands sure, we know whom we have trusted, and we are persuaded he is able to keep what we have committed to him against the appointed day." [23]

*21 Ibid., p. 95.*

*22 Ibid., p. 106.*

*23 Ibid.*

Such are the mature deductions drawn by this astute and accomplished Anglican scholar, after a really massive survey of the evidence. It cannot be lightly passed by.

### **IV. Scientist Priestley—Total Insensibility Characterizes Death**

Learned scientists, as well as men of other professions, were in the list of champions of Conditional Immortality and its usual corollary, the ultimate destruction of the wicked. And some were in North America. One such was British-born DR. JOSEPH PRIESTLEY (1733-1804). eminent man of science, discoverer of oxygen (reputedly next in significance to Newton's discovery of gravitation), philosopher, and Dissenter theologian.

It is not without significance that while pursuing his theological studies in the Dissenter Academy at Daventry the sleep of the soul was a topic of frequent student discussion. It was one of the live questions of the day. The issue was now inescapable.

Early in his career as a minister Priestley held pastorates in two churches. At the same time he was professor of languages in the Dissenters Academy of Warrington, for he was facile in French, German, and Italian, knowing as well Hebrew, Syriac, and

Aramaic. But Priestley came to be known primarily as a scientist. As such he was a member of the Royal Society, and was honoured by the University of Edinburgh. He travelled widely in Europe, where his name and attainments were highly revered. However, in the popular uprisings at the time of the French Revolution, Priestley's home and library were burned, and his life was imperilled by a mob. Soon after, in 1794, he emigrated to the United States, where he resided the rest of his life, and there enjoyed the friendship of such men as Benjamin Franklin and John Adams.

Priestley was a voluminous writer on science, philosophy, and religion, and authored more than three hundred works, many having extensive circulations and exerting a wide influence. One was *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit*, to which is added the *History of the Philosophical Doctrine concerning the Origin of the Soul, and the Nature of Matter*; next *The History of Opinions concerning the State of the Dead* (1782); and then *An Inquiry into the Knowledge of the Ancient Hebrews, concerning a Future State* (1801).<sup>[24]</sup> Priestley's treatises stirred up a veritable hornets' nest of perfervid replies—from Whitehead, Bicknell, Dawes, Gifford, Omerod, Walters, as well as anonymous writers. But the ranks of the Conditionalists continued to have steady accessions.

In a major work, *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (1782), Priestley wrote as a Protestant, charging the Papacy with corrupting the Christian faith. He attacked the Church Fathers and the perverting part that Platonism had played in the corrupting of church dogma. This accusation led, perforce, to intense and prolonged controversy. But many sided with him.

Priestley was fearless and independent as a thinker, but reverent nonetheless. He rejected theological dogmas that rested upon merely ecclesiastical authority. The Bible was the norm and test. And because he came to disbelieve the theory of the Innate Immortality of the soul, Priestley was often bitterly stigmatized as a materialist. Some went so far as to brand him a deist, or even an atheist. Nevertheless, he fought the current infidelity and remained a firm believer not only in God and the Bible faith but in a future life. He based his hope of immortality solely upon a resurrection from the dead instead of on the conscious survival of the soul after death.

Revelation and resurrection were to him inseparable and inescapable. And he held undeviating to the postulate of the sleep of the dead between death and the resurrection. He maintained the "cessation of all individual thought" at the "dissolution of the [human] organism" at death, and challenged the possibility of "thinking" without an "organized body" as being "not only destitute of all evidence from actual appearances," but as "directly contrary to them." From his study of history Priestley knew that Conditionalism was held by not a few in the Early Church, and always by some in the centuries that followed. Thus he declared—"that the genuine Christian doctrine of the sleep of the whole man till the resurrection, did, however, continue in the Christian Church, and especially among those who had little intercourse with philosophers, there is sufficient evidence."<sup>[25]</sup>

24 Cf. *Abbot, op. cit., nos. 211-213, 1763, 2465.*

### **V. Priestley on the Condition of Man in Death**

#### **1. DEATH IS STATE OF "ABSOLUTE INSENSIBILITY."—**

In his Introduction to *"The History of Opinions Concerning the State of the Dead,"* Priestley declares, concerning the philosophical origin of the "independent soul" theory, that had penetrated the church: "I think that I have sufficiently proved in my *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit*, that, in the Scriptures, the state of death is represented as a state of absolute insensibility, being opposed to life. The doctrine of the distinction between soul and body, as two different substances, the one material and the other immaterial, and so independent of one another, that the latter may even die and perish, and the former, instead of losing anything, be rather a gainer by the catastrophe, was originally a doctrine of the oriental philosophy, which afterwards spread into the Western part of the world."<sup>[26]</sup>

#### **2. FALLACY OF "SEPARATE CONSCIOUS STATE."—**

Priestley brands the separate, conscious state of the soul theory as based on a "fabric of superstition." This is the root of the difficulty.

In section 3, *"Of the Revival of the Genuine Doctrine of Revelation Concerning the State of the Dead,"* he says: "Several persons in this country have, in every period since the Reformation, appeared in favour of the sleep of the soul, and it always had a considerable number of followers. . . . But I think the doctrine of an intermediate state can never be effectually extirpated, so long as the belief of a separate soul is retained. . . . But when, agreeably to the dictates of reason, as well as the testimony of Scripture rightly understood, we shall acquiesce in the opinion that man is an homogeneous being, and that the powers of sensation and thought belong to the brain, . . . the whole fabric of superstition which had been built upon the doctrine of a soul and of its separate conscious state must fall at once."<sup>[27]</sup>

25 *Joseph Priestley, The Theological and Miscellaneous Works, vol. 3, p. 374.*

26 *Priestley, A History of the Corruption of Christianity, p. 132.*



27 *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 140.

### 3. FUTURE LIFE BASED ON RESURRECTION.—

Priestley then presents what to him is the "only satisfactory evidence" of a future life, namely, the resurrection—first of Christ, then of ourselves—which is the heart of the gospel: "And this persuasion will give a value to the gospel, which it could not have before, as it will be found to supply the only satisfactory evidence of a future life. . . . [and] the only method by which it could be brought about, (viz., that of resurrection) we must eagerly embrace that gospel, in which alone this important truth is clearly brought to light. It is in the gospel alone that we have an express assurance of a future life, by a person fully authorized to give it exemplified also in his own person; he having been actually put to death, and raised to life again, for the purpose of giving us that assurance." [28]

28 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

### 4. "SOUL-SLEEP" REVIVAL CREDITED TO BIBLE.—

Priestley's belief in the unconsciousness of the dead in the "intermediate state," and the modern revival of this early belief of such writers as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Novatian, Arnobius, and Lactantius is set forth thus: "After the long prevalence of the doctrine of the intermediate state, that of the sleep of the soul has of late years been revived, and gains ground, not so much from considerations of philosophy as from a closer sense of the Scriptures. ...

"It has not, however, been considered how much the doctrine of the insensible state of the soul in death affects the doctrine of the separate existence of the soul, which it appears to me to do very materially. It certainly takes away all the use of the doctrine, and therefore should leave us more at liberty from any prejudice in the discussion of the question, since nothing is really gained by its being decided either way. Though we should have a soul, yet while it is in a state of utter insensibility, it is, in fact, as much dead as the body itself while it continues in a state of death." [29]

5. TIME WILL REMOVE CURRENT PREJUDICES.—Priestley believed that in time truth-loving Christians will put away their prejudices on the soul question: "Our calling it [death] a state of sleep is only giving another and softer term to the same thing; for our ideas of the state itself are precisely the same, by whatever name we please to call it. I flatter myself, however, that in time Christians will get over this, as well as other prejudices; and, thinking with more respect of matter, as the creation of God may think it capable of being endued with all the powers of which we are conscious, without having recourse to a principle [innate, independent immortality], which, in the most favourable view of the subject, accords but ill with what matter has been conceived to be." [30] Such were the published views of this celebrated British- American scientist and thinker, who died in hope of a "future state in happy immortality" solely through the resurrection pro vision.

## 6. Two Illustrious Questioners of Eternal-Torment Thesis

Two other illustrious men of the century should also be noted who went part way toward the Conditionalist position—Nonconformist hymnist Isaac Watts, in the first half of the century, questioning the dogma of eternity of misery, and Anglican bishop Warburton, in the latter half, demanding to know why the teaching of the final annihilation of the wicked "impeached" the character of God, as some had charged.

29 Priestley, Works, vol. 3, pp. 378, 379.

30 *Ibid.*

### 1. HYMNIST WATTS—DOES NOT "DEATH" INCLUDE "DESTRUCTION" OF SOUL?—

DR. ISAAC WATTS (1674-1748), world- famous Nonconformist hymn writer and author of many books, must be cited here. Precocious as a child, he started to study Latin at four, Greek at eight, French at eleven, and Hebrew at thirteen. He was an insatiable reader, and began versifying at the age of seven, even his conversation often taking a metrical turn. Besides his books on pedagogy and ethics, and his Logic (used as a text at Oxford, and other universities), he wrote twenty-nine treatises on theology (fifty-two books in all), and was honoured by the Aberdeen and Edinburgh universities, as well as memorialized in Westminster Abbey. His school teacher father was thrice imprisoned for his religious beliefs as an Independent. (Pictured on page 217.) Watts was the beloved minister of the noted Mark Lane Independent Chapel, London, situated in what is now the financial district, near the Bank of London. His congregation included merchant princes and other prominent men and not a few of the so-called "aristocrats" of Puritanism. He was counted among the best preachers of his time.

Watts, called the father of English hymnody, is best known as writer of some of the best-loved and most widely sung hymns in the English language—"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," "There Is a Land of Pure Delight," "Joy to the World, the Lord Is Come," "Before Jehovah's Awful Throne," "Alas! and Did My Saviour Bleed," et cetera. For eighteen years his congregation sang his hymns as they were produced.

He wrote in revolt against the monopoly of the psalms of David in the hymnody of the Anglican and Dissenting churches,

substituting hymns of "human composure" on the theory that hymns are the congregational offering of praise to God. Therefore, the words ought to be their words. He maintained the right of the New Testament church to sing Christ centred hymns. This was in sharp contrast with the Calvinistic theory that only the psalms are a fit offering of praise to God.

Watts won out after long and determined opposition. His mind was saturated with Scripture. In fact, most of his hymns are couched in the thought and modernized phrasings of Scripture—so much so that they have been aptly characterized as "rhymed theology." His views carried weight, especially in Independent circles.

Despite his earlier views on the intermediate state of the soul between death and the resurrection, and his Calvinistic bent, he later put forth the searching proposition as to "whether the word death might not be fairly construed to extend to the destruction of the life of the soul as well as of the body." [31] This caused a reaction among contenders for indefeasible immortality. In his carefully reasoned treatise *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind* (1740), written near the sunset of his life, although admitting that God might continue the life of some in order that they might suffer long, he broke with the dogma, of the endless eternity of suffering. Two terse excerpts must suffice.

One of the propositions propounded was: "As human Life often includes not only Existence but all the blessings that attend it, ... so the word Death in the general Notion of it, and in the most obvious and common Sense of Mankind, may reasonably include a Loss of Every Thing which Man possessed, i.e., Existence itself together with all the Blessings of it; and consequently when Death was threatened for Sin, it more obviously appeared to signify, that by Sin Man forfeited every. Thing that he had received from his Maker." [32]

He is likewise reported to have held that infants, dying in infancy without baptism, are annihilated. Moreover, in dealing with Scripture testimony he says further: "There is not one Place of Scripture that occurs to me, where the word Death, as it was first threatened in the Law of Innocence, necessarily signifies-a certain miserable Immortality of the Soul, either to Adam, the actual Sinner, or to his Posterity. . . . That the resurrection of the body to a state of misery is threatened in the Bible for the punishment of Adam's (first sin is what I cannot prove, nor do I know in what text of Scripture to find it." [33]

31 Quoted in Salmond, *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality* (2d ed.), p. 599.

32 Isaac Watts, *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind*, p. 198, n. Cf. Preface to Watts, *World to Come*, Discourse XIII.

33 Watts, *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind*, pp. 228, 230.

Those were fateful admissions. The solid wall of Immortal- Soulism was again breached by this theologian-poet of note.

**2. BISHOP WARBURTON—CHALLENGES PROPONENTS OF EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.**—The second to be noted is WILLIAM WARBURTON (1698-1799), English prelate, controversialist, critic, and bishop of Gloucester. He was trained for the law but abandoned it for the ministry. In this new field he advanced from vicar to prebendary, to king's chaplain, to dean of Bristol (1757), and then to bishop of Gloucester (1759).

He was a friend of John Locke, whose positions he approved. [34] And he pressed for toleration of those who differed in doctrine and worship. (Pictured on page 217.) In his *Divine Legation of Moses* (1738), with various editions and a German translation, he portrayed the despair and inconsistency of the ancients, and the fallacy of exalting Grecian philosophy to the disparagement of the gospel. Bishop Warburton styled the insistent contenders for everlasting misery as the "unmerciful doctors," and demanded: "Doth annihilation impeach that wisdom and goodness which God displayed when he brought the soul put of nothing?" [35] As might be expected, Warburton's position was attacked by many—including Broughton, Turton, Peters, and Tillard.

But he stood his ground without retraction, and his challenge remained unanswered. His question stood for another break away in high ecclesiastical circles.

34 Hudson, *Debt and Grace*, p. 351.

35 William Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, book 9, chap. 1, quoted in Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

## **7. Restorationism Revived as "Universalism" in Post Reformation**

It will be recalled that back in the third century, Clement and Origen, both of Alexandria, projected the theory that the punishments of Hell are purgative and purificatory, and therefore temporary. Consequently, all free moral agents—angels, men, and devils—will share in the grace of salvation and all will ultimately be saved. Originally called Restorationism (Gr., *apocatatastasis*), it constituted the third of the three schools in the theological trilemma of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, as regards the nature and destiny of man. [36]

Likewise based on the premise of universal, Innate Immortality, it stressed the triumph of the divine plan for man and the victory of divine love. Origen's scheme, it should be added, involved the pre-existence of souls and the ministry of spirits in the afterlife. Following Origen came Didymus of Alexandria, Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Titus of Bostra, and Gregory of

Nyssen (380), and others in the sequence. [37] But Restorationism was heavily attacked by the Council of Constantinople in 543. and declared heretical. So Restorationism, along with Conditionalism, was largely crushed by the Eternal Torment School, which virtually took possession of the field.

Thus it was that Restorationism, later to be called Universalism, or the "eternal progress of all souls," practically disappeared throughout the Dark Ages. Only sporadic echoes were heard, as with the Greek monk Maximus (seventh century), the Neoplatonic philosopher Johannes Scotus Erigena of France (ninth century), and Raynold of St. Martin's also of France (twelfth century). It was likewise involved in the pan theism of the "Brethren of the Free Spirit" (thirteenth century), and it had a place among the mystic "Men of Understanding" (fifteenth century), in Flanders. But these proponents were as yet neither very militant nor widespread.

However, in the Reformation century Universalism made a definite appearance in Germany, England, and Switzerland.

36 See volume 1 of this work under "Origen."

37 All covered in volume 1.

It insisted that every soul created by God would sooner or later be saved and inherit everlasting happiness. It taught the final destruction of sin and the reconciliation of all souls to God through Jesus Christ. This was the belief among some of the Anabaptists, such as John Denk. In fact, Article XVII of the Augustine Confession (1530) condemned it.

Also, in the Edwardine Forty-Two Articles of Religion (Anglican) of 1553, Universalism was similarly condemned.

But when the Convocation of 1562 revised and reduced the articles to thirty-nine, the one condemning Universalism was omitted—and not a few Anglicans have since so held. The Presbyterian parliament of 1647 also condemned Universalism, but it was not too effective.

Then in the seventeenth century Huber of Wittenberg and Sonner of Altorf championed it. More emphatic was Johann Wilhelm Petersen of Lunenberg (fl. 1701-1727), with Siegvold's Everlasting Gospel (five editions). And in 1727 came Haug of Strasburg, and Gerhard of Rostock with his Restoration of All Things (1727). But these endeavours were largely limited to individuals.

Finally, about 1750 a definite organization was formed by James Rely (1759-1776), who organized a Universalist Church in London. However, but few churches followed that bore the name. Elhanan Winchester's The Universal Restoration (1788) must also be noted. There were likewise appearances in Switzerland, France, Scotland, and, of course, in England.

Usually the individuals in England so holding were affiliated with existent communions, not a few merging with the Unitarians. There were likewise various writers who strongly opposed Universalism. There was also an American counterpart, to be noted later, largely stemming from Charles Chauncy and his Salvation of All Men (1782).

Thus the three schools of the Early Church theological trilemma reappeared—Conditionalism, and now Universalism, as well as the predominant Eternal Torment Immortal-Soulism —each continuing its individual way, and each opposing the others.

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