

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

**31. Famous Premier, Pastor, and Scientist Testify**

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**1. Gladstone—Immortal-Soulism Entered Church Through "Back Door"**

Britain's illustrious Prime Minister Gladstone also thrust his thoughtful pen into the widespread discussion, still on in earnest toward the end of the nineteenth century. His was a conspicuously objective study. He wrote as an investigator seeking historical and Biblical facts, methodically analysing both arguments and evidence with his trained mind. Then he impressively recorded his conclusions. This was a unique development, worthy of study. First note the man.

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE (1809-1898), eminent British statesman, financier, orator, and author, was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, graduating in 1831 with highest honours both in the classics and in mathematics—achieving the rarity of a "double first in classics." He was elected to Parliament in December of 1832, where his exceptional abilities were quickly recognized. Here he became distinguished for his financial skill, and was soon made under treasurer for the colonies under Sir Robert Peel. Next he was appointed master of the mint, and then president of the Board of Trade, in 1843, with a seat in the cabinet. In 1845 Gladstone was named Secretary of State for the colonies, developing into a political Liberal, and in 1847 represented Oxford University in Parliament.

In 1852 Gladstone first became chancellor of the exchequer, and again from 1859 to 1866. He was considered to be the greatest of British financiers. Then he was made leader of the House of Commons. Finally, on December 4, 1868, he was accorded the highest honour attainable by a British subject—that of Prime Minister. This distinguished post Gladstone held four times—1868-1875, 1880-1885, 1886, and 1892-1894. Then England's Grand Old Man, as he was commonly called, retired from public office, giving himself to writing. Besides being Prime Minister and first lord of the treasury, he was sometimes concurrently chancellor of the exchequer. His budgets were recognized as marvels of financial statesmanship. In fact, the history of his various ministries is really the history of the British Empire in his generation.

With the exception of a year and a half, Gladstone sat continuously in the House for sixty-two years—from 1833 to 1895. He cared little for power, several times being offered a peerage but each time declining the honour. He was by far the most prominent personage in the political arena of his time, but he preferred to remain the Great Commoner.

WRITINGS INCLUDE QUESTION OF FUTURE LIFE.—Gladstone was considered without a superior as an orator, having great persuasive gifts and a magnetic voice. He was a scholar of the Old School. It is amazing how he found time for his periodic literary productions, including, among others, *The State in Its Relations with the Church* (1838); *Studies on Homer* (1858); and *The Vatican Decrees* (1874). His issuance of books ranged in time spread from 1838 to 1896. His later studies took him deeply into the realm of the Christian faith.

For years Gladstone pondered the question of the future life, and in 1896 he published his significant 370-page treatise, *Studies. Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler*—his last major work. Part II contains ten chapters. The first five are entitled, "A Future Life," "Our Condition Therein: History of Opinion," "The Schemes in Vogue," "Concluding Statement," and a "Summary of Theses." This was painstakingly produced toward the close of his full life, although some forty years prior, in his *Studies on Homer* (1858), he devoted a number of pages to the doctrine of the future state. [1] These later *Studies* were the result of many years of wide research, careful analysis, and mature thought. Because of its significance we trace it with some fullness.

The scope, grasp, and penetration of the "Future Life" section of this treatise is remarkable for one whose life had been devoted chiefly and brilliantly to affairs of state and finance. In addressing himself to the postulate of Bishop Joseph Butler's famous *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (1736), [2] Gladstone declares that Butler contends as "a man who has to fight with one of his hands tied up," because of restricting his arguments to the analogies from nature. The validity of Butler's "argument on a future life" is "entirely wanting," Gladstone avers, for by his chosen limitations he was "precluded from referring to Divine authority," and is dependent chiefly upon reason, logic, and philosophy. [3] That is fundamentally unsound and unsafe in a religious issue.

1 See Abbot *The Literature of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, no. 1544.

2 Ibid., no. 771.

But before tracing Gladstone's discussion we may well note this contemporary statement of G. W. E. Russell, who records an interview with the great statesman: "Never shall I forget the hour when I sat with him [Mr. Gladstone] in the park at Hawarden, while a thunderstorm was gathering over our heads, and he, all unheeding, poured forth, in those organ-tones of profound conviction, his belief that the human soul is not necessarily in-destructible, but that Immortality is the gift of God in Christ to the believer. The impression of that discourse will not be effaced until the ablets of memory are finally blotted out." [4]

1. VARIANT VIEWS HELD IN EARLY CHRISTIAN ERA.—The second half of Gladstone's examination of Butler's Analogy centres on his claim of the natural and indefeasible immortality of the soul "apart from the body," [5] which the bishop asserts is ours as an "absolute possession." After discussing the varying views of Greek philosophy, and the notions of pre-existence and transmigration of souls often involved, Gladstone turns to Jewish teaching in the time of Christ—from the Sadducees, who denied a continuation of personal existence beyond the grave, to the Essenes (or Ultra-Pharisees), who believed in the natural immortality of the soul. [6]

3 W. E. Gladstone, *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler* (1896), part 2, chap. I, p. 142.

4 George W. E. Russell, *The Household of Faith, Portraits and Essays*, p. 37. Identical statement also appeared in *English Review of Reviews*, June, 1898, p. 557.

5 Gladstone, *op. cit.*, pp. 147, 156.

6 Ibid., p. 172.

Then follows chapter two, on the "History of Opinion." Here Gladstone declares according to F. Nitzsch the "immortality of the soul was the subject of free and open discussion among the early Fathers," with men like Justin Martyr, Tatian, Theophilus, Irenaeus, and Lactantius denying the Innate Immortality of the soul, but with Tertullian and others, on the contrary, teaching that the soul is "indivisible and imperishable." Gladstone then cites Flugge as likewise pointing out that "there was as yet no dogma of the church upon the subject." [7] It was the same concerning the punishment of the wicked. Some affirmed the process of punishment to be eternal, "others regarded the souls of the wicked as destined to annihilation." [8]

2. "INHERENT" IMMORTALITY NOT ASCENDANT TILL ORIGEN.—Gladstone describes the open-discussion attitude of the Early Church in this way:

"The secret of this mental freedom, the condition which made it possible, was the absence from the scene of any doctrine of a natural immortality inherent in the soul. Absent, it may be termed, for all practical purposes, until the third century; for, though it was taught by Tertullian in connexion with the Platonic idea was not given forth as belonging to the doctrine of Christ or His Apostles." [9]

That is a vital point. Then the thought is repeated for emphasis:

"It seems to me as if it were from the time of Origen that we are to regard the idea of natural, as opposed to that of Christian, immortality as beginning to gain a firm foothold in the Christian Church." [10]

The time of Origen, steeped as it was in the lore of Platonic philosophy, and seeking Platonic "buttresses for the Christian faith," is thus set forth by Gladstone as the actual time of introduction of the "natural immortality" concept, in contrast with the true and original "Christian" view. Then he adds:

"The opinion, for which he [Origen is now most generally known to have been finally condemned, is that which is called Restorationism or Universalism; an opinion which harmonizes with, and presupposes, the natural immortality of the soul. But the idea of restoration was only one amidst a crowd of his notions, all of which had the natural immortality, of the soul for their common ground." [11]

Gladstone presses the point that, prior to Pope Vigilius, "the immortality of the soul had heretofore been a question open and little agitated." While Origen's "complex group of opinions" had been "organically founded" on the premises of Innate Immortality and

had been condemned, Gladstone notes, "Of the immortality of the soul there was [at the time] neither condemnation or approval." But he adds, accurately, that the "extension of opinion" became "more obvious, perhaps more powerful, from the time of St. Augustine." [12]

7 Ibid., pp. 182, 183. See C. W. Flittgge, *Gesehichie des Glaubens an Unsterblichkeit, Aufersiehung, Gerieht and Vergeltung*, part 1, p. 237; cf. Abbot, op. cit., no. 553.

8 Gladstone, op. cit., p. 183.

9 Ibid., p. 184. (Italics supplied.)

10 Ibid. (Italics supplied.)

11 Ibid.

3. "WHOLESALE" ACCEPTANCE BY TIME OF MIDDLE AGES. —The revolutionary change of view that came as the result of slow but steady accretion resulted finally in the wholesale acceptance of the natural immortality postulate—a "revolution of opinion" that, Gladstone declares, was established by the Middle Ages. Thus:

"It seems indisputable, that the materials for the opinion that the soul is by nature immortal, whether we call it dogma or hypothesis, were for a long period in course of steady accumulation; though this was not so from the first. After some generations, however, the mental temper and disposition of Christians inclined more and more to its reception. Without these assumptions it would be impossible to account for the wholesale change which has taken place in the mind of Christendom with regard to the subject of natural immortality." [13]

The sweeping "revolution of opinion" that was effected over the course of centuries is then described:

"It would be difficult, I think, to name any other subject connected with religious belief (though not properly belonging to it) on which we can point to so sweeping and absolute a revolution of opinion: from the period before Origen, when the idea of an immortality properly natural was unknown or nearly hidden, to the centuries of the later Middle Ages and of the modern times when, at least in the West, it had become practically undisputed and universal." [14]

4. IMMORTAL-SOULISM SPRINGS FROM PLATO.—Gladstone then traces Immortal-Soulism back through Augustine and Origen to Alexandria and Plato, for Aristotelianism was "negative" while Platonism was "congenial." Hence Plato's pre-eminence:

"But Plato had been supreme in Alexandria; and Alexandria was the parent of Christian philosophism in the persons of Clement and of Origen. He had also a high place in the mind of St. Augustine, and he probably did much more among Christians than he had ever achieved among pagans, in establishing as a natural endowment that immortality of the soul which was already ineradicably fixed as fact for Christian souls (although upon a ground altogether different in the mind of the Church), so far as it touched the destination of the righteous." [15]

12 Ibid., p. 187.

13 Ibid., pp. 188, 189.

14 Ibid., p. 189.

5. LED INEVITABLY TO "ETERNAL TORMENT" OF DAMNED. — This "new doctrine" of natural immortality for the righteous led inevitably to a corollary position of vast proportions — that of the Eternal Torment of the damned, held increasingly as a threat over the sinner:

"The question of their [the "godless' "] destiny in the world to come, which had been but infinitesimal in the first apostolic days, now came to assume grave, and even vast, proportions. And here it was that the new doctrine, as I shall call it, of natural immortality played so material a part. The sinner had to be persuaded. He had also to be threatened; and threatened with what? If the preacher only menaced him with the retribution which was to follow the Day of Judgment, the force of the instrument he employed materially depended on what he could say as to the duration of that penal term, a subject which, in the earliest teachings of the Church, it had been found unnecessary minutely to explore." [16]

The Eternal Torment postulate therefore indisputably enhanced the power of the "priesthood as a caste," as it was more and more stressed as a deterrent.

6. ETERNAL TORMENT DOGMA ESTABLISHED THROUGH AUGUSTINE.—It was ultimately Augustine's "acceptance of the Platonic philosophy" that brought it, with modifications, into the teachings of the Latin Church. And from Augustine onward the dogma of the "never-ceasing" and "eternal punishment of the wicked" came to prevail for the sins of a brief, finite life—a dogma that Gladstone calls "an horrible decretum." [17] And in all this, Flugge says, the "Latin Church led the way." Gladstone then adds that the "formation of the ecclesiastical dogma . . . closes with the Schoolmen." [18] They supplied "the Western Church with its formal eschatology," with distinction to be noted between the Western and Eastern churches, but the motive force "was drawn from the works of St. Augustine." [19] Thus Peter Lombard found "the natural immortality of the soul, in possession of the field of thought, and, perhaps, accepted it simply as part of the common heritage." [20] Finally, the Bull of Leo X, in 1513, "issued with the assent of a Lateran Council," now condemned all those who denied the postulate of natural immortality. [21]

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., pp. 190, 191.

17 Ibid., pp. 192, 193.

18 Ibid., p. 193.

19 Ibid., p. 194.

7. CREPT INTO CHURCH BY "BACK DOOR."—Thus "the reserve of the early Church has been abandoned. Even the recollection of it has faded from the popular mind." So it was that the "Western tone had prevailed over the Eastern." [22] And now follows one of Gladstone's most significant conclusions, in contrasting natural and Christian immortality:

"With the departure of the ancient reserve there had come a great practical limitation of the liberty of thought possessed by the individual Christian. The doctrine of natural, as distinguished from Christian, immortality had not been subjected to the severer tests of wide publicity and resolute controversy, but had crept into the Church, by a back door as it were; by a silent though effective process; and was in course of obtaining a title by tacit prescription." [23]

How true that was! Then he adds this pointed observation on the non-Biblical basis of the teaching:

"The evidence of the change may perhaps be most properly supplemented by the observation of the noteworthy fact that, when arguments are offered for the purely natural immortality of the soul, they are rarely, if ever, derived from Scripture. For it will be borne in mind that, logically 'viewed, resurrection is one thing, and immortality another.'" [24]

Two pages farther on he repeats the thought of its surreptitious entrance: "The natural immortality of the soul did not become the subject of free and general discussion in the Church. It crept onwards in the dark." [25] Then he draws the sweeping conclusion:

"It appears indisputable that the tenet never was affirmed by the Councils, never by the undivided Church, never by either East or West when separated, until, towards the death of the Middle Age, the denial was anathematized under Leo X on behalf of the Latin Church." [26]

20 Ibid., pp. 193, 194.

21 Ibid., p. 194.

22 Ibid., pp. 194, 195.

23 Ibid., p. 195. (*Italics supplied.*)

24 Ibid. (*Italics supplied.*)

25 Ibid., p. 197. (*Italics supplied.*)

26 Ibid.

8. IMMORTAL-SOULISM "WHOLLY UNKNOWN" TO SCRIPTURE.—But that is not all. Gladstone now emphasizes the fundamental point of Immortal-Soulism's total lack of foundation in Scripture. It is, he asserts, only "philosophical opinion." Thus:

"Another consideration of the highest importance is that the natural immortality of the soul is a doctrine wholly unknown to the Holy Scriptures, and standing on no higher plane than that of an ingeniously sustained, but gravely and formidably contested, philosophical opinion." [27]

9. "PHILOSOPHICAL SPECULATIONS" DISGUISED AS DIVINE REVELATION.—Gladstone then warns against "philosophical speculations," as in this case, insinuating themselves in disguise into the sacred "precinct of Christian doctrine," but in reality gaining entrance as a false pretension under an "abuse of authority."

"And surely there is nothing, as to which we ought to be more on our guard, than the entrance into the precinct of Christian doctrine, either without authority or by an abuse of authority, of philosophical speculations disguised as truths of Divine Revelation. They bring with them a grave restraint on mental liberty; but what is worse is, that their basis is a pretension essentially false, and productive by rational retribution of other falsehoods." [28]

In the light of all this evidence, Gladstone soberly concludes, "We have ample warrant for declining to accept the tenet of natural immortality as a truth of Divine Revelation." [29]

10. GLADSTONE'S DEFINITIVE DESCRIPTION OF "CONDITIONALISM." — In chapter three, on "The Schemes in Vogue," Gladstone gives the following definitive statement of the Conditional Immortality position as he understood it, which view he says is "entitled to claim some kindred" with what is "usually called orthodox." This inevitably involves the question of the ultimate extinction rather than the endless torment of the wicked, for the two are inseparable:

27 Ibid. (Italics supplied.)

28 Ibid., pp. 197, 198.

29 Ibid, p. 198.

"It [Conditionalism] begins by renouncing the opinion of natural immortality, and takes firm ground when denying to it authority or countenance from the Holy Scriptures. On the other hand, it renounces also the conception of an existence prolonged without limit in the endurance of torment. But it neither teaches nor approximates to the notion of an extinction immediately consequent either upon death or upon the Day of Judgement. It does not attempt to find a particular limit for the ordained period of suffering; but holds that it is bounded by the nature of the subject to which it is applied, and that sin is a poison to which the vital" forces of the soul must in the end give away, by passing into sheer extinction." [3]

Death, Gladstone continues, means ultimate "cessation of existence":

"It [Conditionalism] protests against the current method of interpretation, which assigns to death in the New Testament the meaning not of a cessation of existence, but of an existence prolonged without limit in a state of misery. And it insists upon recovering for the word *sz* that idea of a termination, which dwells in it as a central essence. Ethically, the destructive nature of sin against God is taken as the basis of this scheme of ideas; and it claims to work according to natural laws, in propounding, as the eventual solution of the problem, not suffering without any end for the wicked, but the disappearance or extinction of their being at such time as the providence of God shall prescribe." [31, 32, 33]

30 Ibid., p. 218. (Italics supplied.)

31 Gladstone's notes *aionios*.

32 R. J. Campbell's statement in the *British Weekly* of February 14, 1901, is to be understood in the light of Gladstone's clear definition of terms. Campbell said: "The 'conditional immortality' view held by many at the present day, championed by the late Dr. Dale and favoured by Mr. Gladstone, is that the life after death is only for those who are in Christ, and that for the rest of mankind death is annihilation." (Quoted in F. A. Freer, *Edward White*, p. 75.)

33 Gladstone, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

11. GLADSTONE'S CONSIDERED CONCLUSIONS IN SUMMATION.—In chapter five, "Summary of Theses on the Future Life," Gladstone tabulates an elaborate series of cumulative conclusions, of which the following are the most pertinent, as they appear on pages 260 to 267:

1. Is Unscriptural.—"That the natural immortality of the soul is not taught in Holy Scripture."
2. Restricted Acknowledgment.—"Neither is it commended by the moral authority of *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* [that is, always, everywhere, and by everyone acknowledged]."
3. Unaffirmed by Councils.—"Neither is it affirmed or enjoined by any of the great assemblies [General Councils] of the undivided Church, or by any unanimity, actual or moral, of Decrees and Confessions posterior to the division of the Church into East and West."
4. Immortality a Gift.—"The immortality of the soul is properly to be regarded as . . . a gift or endowment due to the Incarnation of our Lord."
5. Limited to Righteous.—"If we set out from the belief that Christ both reveals and gives immortality, which is exemption from death, and is life without an end, it is plain that the first application of this doctrine is to the righteous."
6. Differing Opinions.—"In regard to future punishment, it is plain that great differences of opinion have prevailed at different periods of the history of the Church, the first centuries presenting a view of a different colour from that which may be said to have prevailed over others from about the time of St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine."
7. Traditional Theology.—"It does not appear safe to apply the term traditional theology to the largely developed opinions of later ages on future punishment, as compared with the more reserved conceptions of an earlier period."
8. Impugns Justice.—"There can be no such thing as suffering, of whatever kind, through eternity except by God's departing from a principle of justice."
9. Death Is Extinction.—"The ordinary and principal description of the future state of the unrighteous is that conveyed in the word death. This word in its ordinary signification bears the sense of an extinction or cessation of some kind. It might mean cessation for the wicked of life itself."
10. Distorts Meaning.—"The popular definition of death . . . takes away from death that idea of cessation and extinction: ... It adds an idea of suffering, amounting largely to misery and torment, which the original sense of the word in no manner contains."
11. Strikes at Probation.—"It [Restitution] . . . strikes at what all believers in a future state consider as the grand and central truth of the subject, this, namely, that we are living in a state of probation. . . . But under Restitutionism all idea of essential quality as a distinctive mark disappears, and therefore all idea of genuine probation."
12. Restitutionism Unsupported.—"The notion of Universal Restitution is, then, not supported by Scripture, or by Christian tradition, or by any sound philosophy of human nature."
13. Gradual Assumption.—"The metaphysical doctrine of a natural indefeasible immortality of the soul, as an immaterial existence, has come, unawares and gradually to reckon, or be assumed, as a doctrine of Faith, and no longer as only a philosophical opinion."
14. Justice of God.—"The central and final stronghold of believers is faith in the indefeasible and universal justice of the Divine Being."

Such were the considered conclusions of England's Grand Old Man, the Great Commoner, and four-time Prime Minister of Britain, after his mature, intensive study of the history of the soul question. These were the ultimate convictions of this learned Anglican layman.



**2. Joseph Parker—Outspoken "Conditionalist" and "Destructionist"**

Among London preachers who rose to eminence in the last quarter of the nineteenth century two were conspicuous above others—Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Baptist pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and Joseph Parker, Congregationalist minister of the City Temple. Both drew immense audiences, and both were widely quoted in the secular as well as the religious press. They were alike symbols of pulpit oratorical power. Each had a worldwide following, both being regarded as master preachers and able Bible expositors.

But there the similarities ended. Their views in the area of eschatology were radically different. And they consequently held opposite views on the nature and destiny of man. Charles Spurgeon almost fiercely maintained the Innate Immortality of the soul, and the eternal, agonizing punishing of the unsaved, reminiscent of Jonathan Edwards and Dante. Dr. Parker, on the contrary, neither held nor taught the immortality of the soul, nor the endless punishment of the wicked. He maintained that the terms "destroy" and "destruction" were to be taken literally, and indicated utter, ultimate destruction. He even declared that none among the clergy of the Independent Churches at that time preached the doctrine of Eternal Torment. [34] Let us note the positions of Parker, the Conditionalist.

JOSEPH PARKER, D.D. (1830-1902), Congregationalist divine, was for a little time a Wesleyan preacher, but in 1852 he returned to Congregationalism, ministering in Banbury, Manchester. In 1869 he became pastor of the Poultry Street Chapel, London, where his pulpit power attracted large congregations. He had the gift of investing old themes with a new lustre. Then, in 1874, in the newly completed City Temple, he ministered uninterruptedly, with great influence, until his death twenty-eight years later. He was pre-eminently a Bible preacher, and his popularity never waned. Many ministers of various churches were seen in his congregation.

His numerous publications include the People's Bible (25 volumes); The Pulpit Bible; and Ecce Deus; a Preacher's Life (1899). He was a strong advocate of temperance, and in 1901 became chairman of the Congregational Union of Britain and Wales. Here are some of his clear positions on record.

34 Petavel, The Problem of Immortality, p. 22.

1. OPTIONAL: RECEIVE IMMORTALITY OR CHOOSE DESTRUCTION.—Man is "constituted" for immortality, wrote Parker, but must and does choose eternal life—or death. This is distinctively man's prerogative and inescapable responsibility:

"Glorious to me is this idea (so like all we know of the Divine goodness) of asking man whether he will accept life and be like God, or whether he will choose death and darkness for ever. God does not say to man, 'I will make you immortal and indestructible whether you will or not; live for ever you shall.' No; he makes him capable of living; he constitutes him with a view to immortality; he urges, beseeches, implores him to work out this grand purpose, assuring him, with infinite pathos, that he has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but would rather that he should LIVE. A doctrine this which in my view simplifies and glorifies human history as related in the Bible. Life and death are not set before any beast; but life and death are distinctly set before man—he can live, he was meant to live, he is besought to live; the whole scheme of Providence and redemption is arranged to help him to live—why, then, will ,ye die?" [35]

2. EVIL ENDS IN "UTTER, FINAL, EVERLASTING EXTINCTION."—No eternal Hell, but final extinction of sin and sinners, and a clean universe, is the divine program: "By destroying evil I do not mean locking it up by itself in a moral prison, which shall be enlarged through ages and generations until it shall become the abode of countless millions of rebels, but its utter, final, everlasting extinction, so that at last the universe shall be 'without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing'—the pure home of a pure creation." [36]

3. INDEFEASIBLE IMMORTALITY IS PALPABLY ABSURD.—All God's gifts, including life, are conditional. Man cannot defy God to destroy him. It is not true that— "having once given you life you are as immortal as he himself is, and you can defy him to interfere with his own work! The doctrine seems to me to involve a palpable absurdity, and hardly to escape the charge of blasphemy. Throughout the whole Bible, God has reserved to himself the right to take back whatever he has given, because all his gifts have been offered upon conditions about which there can be no mistake." [37]

4. SODOM AN EXAMPLE OF "EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION." —Sodom's destruction, says Dr. Parker, resulted in the "utter end of its existence":

"In this case [of Sodom] we have an instance of utter and everlasting destruction. We see here what is meant by 'everlasting punishment,' for we are told in the New Testament that 'Sodom suffered the vengeance of eternal fire,' that is of fire, which made an utter end of its existence and perfectly accomplished the purpose of God. The 'fire' was 'eternal,' yet Sodom is not literally burning still; the smoke of its torment, being the smoke of an eternal fire, ascended up for ever and ever, yet no smoke now rises from the plain,—'eternal fire' does not involve the element of what we call 'time': it means thorough, absolute, complete, final: that which is done or given once for all." [38]

That was the clear published position of this great Congregationalist preacher just before the turn of the century.

35 Joseph Parker, *The People's Bible: Discourses Upon Holy Scripture*, vol. 1, p. 126.

36 Ibid., p. 160.

37 Ibid., p. 222

38 Ibid., p. 221.

### **3. Stokes—Man Not Innately Immortal; Only Through Redemption**

Sir GEORGE GABRIEL STOKES, M.P. (1819-1903), illustrious mathematician and physicist, was educated at Bristol College and then at Pembroke, Cambridge. In 1849 he was appointed professor of mathematics at Cambridge University, Sir Isaac Newton's old chair, [39] which post he held until his death. His scientific contributions dealt with abstruse problems in mathematical physics—hydrodynamics. He developed the modern theory of the motion of viscous fluids, and his discussions on the refrangibility of light made him famous. He also made notable contributions to the science of optics.

Professor Stokes was special lecturer at Aberdeen and Edinburgh. In 1851 he became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Britain (for the Advancement of Science), was its secretary from 1854 to 1885 and president from 1885 to 1889. In 1887 he became a member of Parliament for Cambridge University, and in 1889 was made a baronet. He left five volumes of mathematical and physical papers.

1. PUBLIC DENIAL OF INNATE IMMORTALITY.—An Anglican in faith, he was especially interested in the relationship of science and religion, or natural theology, particularly in the field of Christian evidences. He was an earnest churchman and competent theologian and gave a noted "Lecture on the Immortality of the Soul," in 1890, at the Finsbury Institute, later published, at which time he publicly reaffirmed his denial of the inherent immortality of the soul.

39 Several previous holders of this chair had been Conditionalists—Priestley, Whiston, and, it is said, even Sir Isaac himself.

Reported widely in the press, this public declaration made a profound and lasting impression in high circles. In this stand in a controversial field he was supported by three Anglican bishops. To Professor Stokes, death is a suspension of life and all its activities, a period of rest and "sleep" until the resurrection. He was long a warm friend of Conditionalist Edward White.

In 1897 Stokes published his treatise *Conditional Immortality*, but prior to that he was a contributor to the well-known *Symposium That Unknown Country* and to *Immortality—a Clerical Symposium*. He enjoyed marked success in placing his convictions on Life Only in Christ before scientific doubters and in quashing their principal objections. His courageous public avowal of Conditionalism had a most salutary effect in moderating the previous harsh and indiscriminate criticism of all Conditionalists. Until his death he continued to be an unfailing witness at Cambridge.

2. SOURCE OF IMMORTALITY AND THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.—Introducing his chapter (XLIV) in *That Unknown Country*, Scientist Stokes declares his conviction that man is not by nature immortal but that immortality is made possible through redemption. Furthermore, he states his belief that "the intermediate state between Death and Resurrection may be regarded as a state of unconsciousness." [40]

3. MAN NOT IMMORTAL MERELY BY CREATION.—Approaching the question from the scientific angle, Sir George said, "Consciousness, as we know it, is intimately bound up with the state of our material organism." But he declares that the idea of "man's immortality" as in some way "inherent in his nature" is "beyond the ken of science." For true information man must turn to the "teaching of revelation"—the "Scriptural account of creation." Comparing man's nature with that of the animal creation, Professor Stokes declares that man alone has a spiritual nature, but that this does not "supersede it [the animal nature], but is



superadded to it." [41, 42] Then, coming to the question of immortality by creation, and the origin of man, Sir George succinctly states:

"In the Scriptural account of the creation of man, there is nothing to lead us to suppose that he is by creation an immortal being. Quite the contrary. His attainment of immortality is represented as contingent upon the use of something outside of him. Whatever the 'Tree of Life' may mean or symbolize, it is clearly indicated that it was upon his use of it that his possession of immortality depended; and that when, by disobedience, he fell from his primeval state of innocence, access to it was denied him. Scripture, therefore, leads us to the same conclusion as that to which we should have been led by all outward appearances—that so far as depends on anything in man's original nature, at death there is an end of him." [43]

40 George Gabriel Stokes, "The Scientific and Moral Arguments Concerning a Future Life Supplemented by the Teachings of Revelation," in *That Unknown Country*, p. 823.

41 Ibid., p. 824.

42 Ibid p. 825.

4. UNFITTED FOR IMMORTALITY, CHRIST PROVIDES REMEDY.—Thus it is that "unaided by revelation, man can only offer conjectures as to a conceivable solution." [44] Then follows this illuminating paragraph:

"But if we frankly accept the Scriptural account of the fall of man, we at once obtain a solution of the teleological enigma. We learn that, unlike the lower animals, man is not in the condition in which he was created. If they have instincts suited to their mode of life, while he has aspirations which have no natural fulfillment so far as can be seen, it is that he alone is in an unnatural state,—in a state, that is, different from that for which he was originally fitted." [45]

Professor Stokes then discusses not only the Fall, which rendered man unfit for immortality, but the means of recovery through Christ:

"By the fall, our first parents lost their primal condition of innocence, a loss which, so far as natural means are concerned, was irretrievable. Not only so, but their progeny, having, by natural descent, inherited a nature which was fallen from the primal condition, were rendered unfit for immortality, and the whole race passed under the law of death. But restitution to a condition of sinlessness by natural means being impossible, God in his mercy provided supernatural means, by which restoration to a state of innocence became possible, and the recovery of the forfeited immortality permissible, for those for whom the provided means shall take effect.

"By the incarnation, the human nature was taken into the divine; and, though sinless himself, the Son of God suffered death, the appointed penalty of transgression, in order that through his blood we might have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. But the human and the divine natures being united in him, it was not possible that he should be held down by death, and he rose from the dead, the first fruits of them that slept: rose, however, not to the natural human life in which he was crucified, but to a mysterious, supernatural, higher life, of which the redeemed are in due time to be partakers." [46]

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., p. 826.

45 Ibid.

5. ENDOWMENT WITH IMMORTALITY ONLY THROUGH REDEMPTION.—Thus it is through this "scheme of redemption" that we have— "a solution of the moral enigma which has already been referred to. While it is only the redeemed to whom immortality is promised, all, we are told, are to be raised from the dead, and all are to be judged." [47]

Thus what is "involved in the death of Christ will form the touchstone by which some will be so drawn that their characters will be finally established for righteousness, and they will be endowed with immortality." On the contrary, others, through rejection, will become so "utterly hardened" as to be "fit only for destruction" and will be "condemned to the second death, from which there is no resurrection." Therefore in this life the gospel is "a savour of life unto life or of death unto death." [48]

6. ANY "NATURAL IMMORTALITY" FORFEITED THROUGH TRANSGRESSION.—Stokes states that "the advocates of the natural immortality of the soul seem to be nearly unanimous in the belief that, at death, man passes into some different state of conscious existence, which undergoes a further change at the resurrection." [49] But Sir George comments:

"No argument for the natural immortality of the soul, that the writer has seen, appears to him to be of any value; and, as to a prevalent belief among uninstructed nations, if it be true that man was created in a condition in which, if he had continued, he would have been fit for immortality, and was endowed with aspirations after immortality, it was natural that, after the forfeiture of immortality through transgression, man should seek to satisfy his craving for immortality by imagining that he had something immortal in his nature. It is, then, to revelation that we must look, if we are to find out something about man's condition in the intermediate state." [50]

7. NO CONSCIOUSNESS OF TIME IN INTERMEDIATE STATE.—Contending that it is "through the gospel that life and immortality were brought to light," Stokes states:

46 Ibid., pp. 826, 827.

47 Ibid., p. 827.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., pp. 828, 829.

50 Ibid., p. 829.

"It has been well said that Scripture bases our hopes of a future life, not upon the immortality of the soul, but upon the resurrection of the body. There are comparatively few passages in which the intermediate state even appears to be referred to at all. Of these, two or three are so dark that their real interpretation is quite uncertain. There are two or three in which, at first sight, the intermediate state seems to be referred to as one of consciousness, but which, on further examination, are seen to be, as the writer thinks, perfectly and naturally explicable on the opposite supposition. It is not in accordance with the plan of this collection [Symposium] that the writers should enter into argument, but it is wished that they should state their own opinions; and, in accordance with this desire, the writer of the present article ventures to say that his own mind leans strongly to the view that the intermediate state is one in which, as in a faint, thought is in abeyance; one which, accordingly, involves a virtual annihilation of intervening time for each individual in particular." [51]

8. POPULAR THEOLOGY SETS ASIDE BIBLICAL DECLARATIONS.—Then Professor Stokes closes his chapter with this trite observation: "In the popular theology and popular hymns the intermediate state receives an expansion utterly unlike what we find in Scripture; an expansion which goes far towards banishing from view the resurrection state and the day of judgment, though, as to the latter, so prominent a place did it occupy in the minds of apostles and those to whom they wrote, that they frequently speak of it simply as 'the day,' or 'that day.'" [52]

Such was Professor Stokes's public witness.

9. ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY ONLY IN CHRIST.—In another symposium Sir George Stokes buttresses the foregoing by the supporting statement: "Man's whole being was forfeited by the Fall, and the future life is 'not his birthright, but depends on a supernatural dispensation of grace. To look to man's bodily frame for indications of immortality, to look even to his lofty mental powers—lofty, indeed, but sadly misused—is to seek the living among the dead. Man must look not into himself, but out of himself for assurance of immortality. Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.'" [53]

51. Ibid., pp. 829, 830. (Italics supplied.)

52 Ibid., p. 830.

53 Stokes "The Foundations of the Belief in the Immortality of Man," in "A Clerical Symposium on Immortality," Homiletic Monthly, April, 1884.