

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

42. New and Old World Spokesmen Probe Heart of Problem

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Eight scholars are here set forth as witnessing in the years 1953 and 1954—Shaw, of Queen's Theological College, Canada; Craig, of Drew Theological Seminary; De Wolf, of Boston University; and Wright, of Harvard, in the United States; then Bishop Schjelderup, of Norway; and Lindhardt, of Denmark; next, Kantonen, of Hamma Divinity School in the United States; and last, Dr. Atkinson, of Cambridge University, in Britain. Some of these men—particularly Shaw of Canada, Kantonen of Ohio, and Atkinson of Cambridge—probe to the heart of the problem of the question of the nature and destiny of man. Their witness is competent, relevant, and convincing. We go first to Canada, and Dr. Shaw.

1. Queen's Shaw—Favors Conditionalism; Rejects Eternal Torment

Another ringing Canadian voice was that of Dr. JOHN MACKINTOSH SHAW, [1] professor of systematic theology at Queen's Theological College, Ontario, in his outline of Christian belief, in *Christian Doctrine*. After dealing with the sinlessness of man, as created in the image of God, and then the Fall, and sin as an intrusion, [2] Shaw comes to the question of death in its relation to life. On this he makes an important statement on "immortable":

1 JOHN MACKINTOSH SHAW, Anglican, was trained at Edinburgh and Marburg. He was successively professor of systematic theology at Pine Hill Divinity Hall, Halifax, Nova Scotia (1919-1927), Auburn Theological Seminary, Auburn, New York (1927-1929), and Queen's Theological College, Kingston, Ontario (1929-1952), then professor emeritus. He is author of several books.

2 John Mackintosh Shaw, *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 107, 109.

"It is not that man was created immortal and through sinning lost his immortality. It is rather that man was created capable of becoming immortal—'immortable' to use an expressive if somewhat less than euphonious adjective that has been suggested in this connexion—which capability or possibility he forfeited through disobedience to God's purposes." [3]

1. "EMBODIED EXISTENCE," NOT "DISEMBODIED SPIRIT."—Dr. Shaw opens chapter twenty-two, dealing with the question of "Continued Personal Existence After Death," with the arresting statement: "No section of Christian doctrine more requires rethinking and restatement to-day than the doctrine of life after death." [4]

Dr. Shaw rejects both the ancient Platonic philosophy and the claims of Modern Spiritualism as to a "personal survival of bodily death"—a "future discarnate life." [5] And in chapter twenty-three ("The Future Life of Those in Christ at Death") his first proposition is that—"this future life for those in Christ at death will be a life of embodied existence, and not one of merely disembodied spirit. This is the position usually spoken of as the Christian doctrine of a bodily resurrection." [6]

3 Ibid., p. 123. In support Shaw cites A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*. (Italics supplied.)

4 Ibid., p. 309.

5 Ibid., p. 310, note 2.

6 Ibid., p. 319.

In this connection Shaw calls "impossible and untenable" the popular concept of an "intermediate state," with conscious "disembodied" souls "waiting for reunion with the body which has been laid in the grave," to stand "before the judgment seat of Christ." The Greeks held to such "a disembodied or purely spiritual immortality." [7]

2. "ETERNAL FIRE" SUGGESTS "ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION." —Coming to chapter twenty-five ("The Future Life of Those Not in Christ at Death"), Shaw deals with the three schools of thought. The first is the "traditional doctrine"—that at death all are separated into "the saved and the unsaved," the former going immediately to glory, the others to "conscious torment" in everlasting punishment. This is traceable to non-canonical Inter-Testament Jewish writings and to certain New Testament parables, such as that of the judgment of Matthew 25:32-46. Shaw adds that the term "eternal fire" suggests "ultimate destruction or annihilation rather than the everlasting continuance of that which is evil or corrupt." In any event, to build a doctrine "upon so slender a foundation" as a parable, like Matthew 25, and Dives and Lazarus is "precarious."

Moreover, such "hopeless and unending torment" is "irreconcilable with the character of God," and irreconcilable with "the very principles of moral justice itself." [8] It is this that gave rise to the concept of a future probation, or a future chance. Shaw then observes:

"This theory or doctrine finds no place in any of the great [early] Creeds of the Church. It has no place in the Apostles' Creed or in the Nicene Creed, not indeed in any of the Creeds commonly reckoned as ecumenical, not appearing in any Creed until the Athanasian Creed in the sixth or seventh century." [9]

Passing the medieval theologians and the Roman Catholic modification" of the harshness of Hell by injecting Purgatory, haw pointedly observes that the Reformers " 'kept Rome's hell and thrust out Rome's purgatory.' " [10]

7 Ibid., pp. 320, 321. 9 Ibid., p. 348.

8 Ibid., pp. 342-346. 10 Ibid.

3. NOT IMMORTAL BY "NATURE" OR "CONSTITUTION." —Taking up next Origen's "Universal Restoration or Salvation" school—that "the destiny of the individual is not finally determined at death"—Shaw notes the inconsistency of interpretation on the part of its advocates. He then turns to the third school—that of "Conditional Immortality," sometimes known as "Potential Immortality." This, Shaw says, involves the "Ultimate Extinction or Annihilation of the finally unrepentant." [11] This school he introduces with this definitive statement:

"Man is not immortal by nature or inherent constitution. Immortality is not a natural endowment but a spiritual attainment or achievement: an achievement or attainment conditional on the possession of certain moral and spiritual qualities. What man has by nature is not immortality but, to use a somewhat expressive word that has been coined in this connexion, 'immortability,' the ability or power to become immortal. Only those who use their natural gifts or trust so as to realize moral and spiritual fellowship with God do really attain to immortality or eternal life. All others are destined ultimately to extinction or annihilation. But if against all such future chances and ministries of grace, there be any who finally persist in the rejection of the Divine grace and love and become irremediably unrepentant or perverse, the destiny of such according to this theory is to suffer ultimate extinction or annihilation, `eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord.'" [12]

1. HISTORICAL LINEAGE OF CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY.—Shaw then traces the historical lineage of Conditionalism—through Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, of the second century, in whose writings there are suggestions of this view, and Arnobius of the fourth century, who was the first to give "clear and emphatic expression to this view." Then he cites sixteenth-century Faustus Socinus. But greater expansion of this doctrine came in the nineteenth century. Here he names, as typical, White and Dale in England; Bushnell, Beecher, and Abbott in America; Rothe, Ritschl, and Haering in Germany; and Petavel and Sabatier in Switzerland and France.

11 Ibid., pp. 350-355.

12 Ibid., pp. 355, 356. (Italics supplied.)

He also notes S. D. McConnell and J. Y. Simpson, and quotes from Prof. A. S. Pringle-Pattison, that "immortality is not to be thought of as an inherent possession of every human being." Then he adds immediately "that there is considerable ground in

Scripture for such a view." In the New Testament it is "the only kind of immortality with which the New Testament writers are concerned"—"that which is based on men's relation to God in Christ." [13] Further:

"It is an immortality set forth not as a natural inherent possession of humanity but as a Prize to be won through fellowship with a risen, living Christ. 'the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ' (Phil. 3:14)." [14]

But for the wicked it is "perishing or destruction by fire" —"annihilation or ultimate extinction." [15]

5. "ULTIMATE EXTINCTION" FOR INCORRIGIBLES.—TO Paul's testimony involving resurrection as the prerequisite to immortality, Shaw adds our Lord's own teaching on the "resurrection of those in fellowship with God through Him." And as to Jesus' pronouncement on the "ultimate fate" of the wicked, it is that of "perishing or destruction by fire." [16] That, says Shaw, is—

"language which, it may be contended, lends itself more naturally to the thought of annihilation or ultimate extinction than to that of unending existence in a condition of hopeless torment." [17]

The apostle Paul's "ultimate fate" of the wicked is like-wise "destruction"—"language which more naturally suggests complete extinction or annihilation than unending continuance in existence." [18]

Such, Shaw says, seem to be "in line with the general Scriptural view." [19]

13 Ibid., pp. 356-358.

14 Ibid., pp. 358, 359. (Italics supplied.)

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., p. 359.

17 Ibid., pp. 359, 360.

18 Ibid., p. 360.

19 Ibid.

20 CLARENCE T. Qum (1895-1953), Methodist, was trained at Boston, Harvard, Basel, and Berlin universities. After two pastorates he was successively professor of New Testament at Oberlin and Yale Divinity schools, then became dean of Drew Theological Seminary (1949). He was on the Translation Committee of the A.S.V., and has been a participant in Faith and Order Councils. He was author of six books.

2. Drew's Craig—Immortality Not Inherent but "Put On"

The distinguished Methodist scholar Dr. CLARENCE T. CRAIG, [20] of Drew Theological Seminary, likewise stresses the point that "immortality is not something which belongs to man by nature," as the Platonic "fantasy" contends. Immortality is "put on" when he is raised from the dead. [21] Immortal-Soul-ism was adopted by the Hellenistic Jews in the Inter-Testament period. It is not man's "by nature":

"In our letter [1 Cor. 15:52, 53] the trumpet seems to be the signal for the twin events of the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the transformation of the living members of the church. But the relation of this to the period of messianic rule assumed in vss. 24-27 is not at all clear.

"Paul repeats again in other language the necessity for the coming change. He reiterates the distinction between the perishable and the im-perishable and then adds another word which occurs in Paul only here and in the next verse. In contrast to the mortal are

those who have put on immortality. The term (athanasia) was a key word in Hellenic thought. The gods were believed to be immortal (cf. I Tim. 6:16), and, according to the Platonic school, so was the soul of man." [22]

21 Clarence T. Craig, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," vol. 10 of The Interpreter's Bible, p. 251.

22 Ibid. (Italics supplied.)

PLATONIC IMMORTALITY INVOLVED "DIVINIZATION."—The basic clash between Platonists and Biblical teaching is next portrayed:

"Though the craving for immortality was widespread in the ancient world, the assurance of it was not. Satisfaction was sought in the mysteries and in other forms of religion. Immortality meant not simply a continuation of life but the divinization of man. Belief in the existence of an elixir of immortality played a role in fantasy.

"The O.T. contains no equivalent for the word immortality, for Jewish thought conceived of man as essentially mortal. But in the Hellenistic-Jewish literature is found (Wisdom Solomon 3:4; 15:3; IV Macc. 14:5; and often in Philo). There we see the adoption of the Greek idea of immortality. But even when Paul uses the word here it is in a quite different sense: immortality is not something which belongs to man by nature: it is put on when God raises him from the dead." [23]

3. Boston's De Wolf—No Inescapable "Everlasting Torture"

Then there is Dr. L. HAROLD DE WOLF, [24] professor of systematic theology at Boston University, who, after discussing God's judgment as inseparable from His love—together with the element of our wills in relation to Christ and His purpose for man—has thus gone on record against "everlasting torture":

"Because even His judgment is an aspect of His love we can be sure that there is no such retributive, inescapable hell of nonredemptive everlasting torture as has been traditionally pictured. God loves us more than any of us love one another." [25]

4. Archaeologist Wright—Eternity Entered by "Resurrection of Body"

Archaeologist G. ERNEST WRIGHT, [26] professor first at Mc-Cormick Theological Seminary and then at Harvard Divinity School, gives the important historical sweep and "perspective" —man's creation, Christ's death and resurrection, and then eternity, which latter man enters not through the escape of an innately immortal soul apart from the body but by the resurrection of the body. The final "death" of the wicked, he holds, is the "annihilation of the 'soul.' "

23 Ibid.

24 L. HAROLD DE WOLF (1905-), Methodist, trained in Nebraska Wesleyan and Boston universities. Beginning in 1933 he taught philosophy and logic at Boston University, and since 1944 has been professor of systematic theology at Boston University School of Theology. In theology he is an Arminian Evangelical, and is a personalistic theist.

25 L. Harold De Wolf, A Theology of the Living Church (Harper and Row), p. 286.

26 G. ERNEST WRIGHT (1909-), Presbyterian archaeologist, was trained at Wooster, McCormick, and Johns Hopkins. He taught archaeology at Haverford was field secretary of the American Schools of Oriental Research, and then taught at McCormick Theological Seminary. He is founder and editor of The Biblical Archaeologist, and author of about seven volumes.

Here is how he phrases it: "The Biblical perspective of time thus carries back before Abraham to the creation. It leads forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as its mid-point, and beyond that to the end of present history and the dawn of eternity. This eternity is not a timeless existence which men enter through the dissociation of soul from body by a natural process of transmutation. Death is taken much more seriously as the end of life, and annihilation of the 'soul' (nephesh). Eternity is the redemption of the present time and its extension. It is time stretched out, and one enters it by a miracle of God's creation, the resurrection of the body."

5. Theological Debate in Scandinavia Over "Hell" and "Heaven"

A much-publicized example of the extending ground swell of revolt against the traditional Eternal Torment concept occurred in 1953 and 1954, when controversy rocked the established Lutheran Church in Norway and Denmark over the question of Hell and Heaven. A series of editorials and news column reports in *The Christian Century*, of Chicago, epitomized this Scandinavian agitation.

1. BISHOP SCHJELDERUP CHALLENGES PROFESSOR HAL-LESBY.—In Norway the well-known conservative theologian, Prof. OLE HALLESBY, of the Lutheran Inner Mission, in a broadcast over the state radio, warned unbelievers that "the minute you drop dead you drop right down to hell." [28] This was immediately denied by Bishop KRISTIAN SCHJELDERUP, of Hamar, who declared that such a "doctrine of eternal punishment" does not comport with the character of God; that it came, instead, from Persian teaching.

27 G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts*, pp. 116ff. (Italics supplied.)

28 Editorial, *The Christian Century*, Jan. 13, 1954, p. 35.

Then, appearing before the minister of church affairs,

the backers of Hallesby charged the bishop with "unfaithful-ness to his ordination vows." Next, Bishop Eivind Berggrav tried to smooth things over by declaring, in *Kirke og Kultur*, that Lutheranism does not require a "legalistically literal interpretation of historic confessions." [29]

The incongruity of the situation, says *The Christian Century*—discussed under the heading "Hell Outlawed in Norway"—appears in the fact that the case was brought to the secular cabinet of the nation through the Minister of Church Affairs, Birger Bergersen. But Bergersen in turn asked the bishops and theological professors for their opinions. These were, however, divided. The majority view was presented by the professor of constitutional law, Castberg, at the University of Oslo, who declared the state must define the doctrine. The cabinet then backed Bishop Schjelderup, who had "outlawed" Eternal Torment. This, in turn, led Bishop Eivind Berggrav, the former primate, to challenge the cabinet's opinion. [30]

So there was widespread division and conflict. The Norwegian press "reverberated with the controversy," which involved both theologians and laymen. In fact, some of the strongest criticism of Bishop Schjelderup came from the Free Faculty at Oslo, where Dr. Hallesby was a professor. [31]

2. SIMILAR DEBATE PROJECTED BY LINDHARDT IN DENMARK.—About the same time, Denmark was also torn by theological debate over the question of Eternal Life and Heaven. It began when Dr. Lindhardt, professor at the University of Aarhus, ridiculed the ideas of Heaven frequently expressed in funeral sermons. Protests in the press demanded that Dr. Lindhardt not be allowed to continue preaching in the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. But when the complaint was carried to the nine bishops of Denmark, none of the nine would vote to keep him from preaching. [32] So this storm likewise subsided.

29 Ibid., p. 36.

30 Ibid., March 10, 1954, p. 293. See also issue of March 25, 1953 p. 366.

31 Ibid., June 24, 1953, p. 748.

32 Ibid., Feb 3, 1954, p 155.

6. Lutheran Kantonen—No Inherent Capacity to Overleap Tomb

One of the ablest recent books in this field to appear in America was written by Dr. TAITO A. KANTONEN, [33] professor of systematic theology in the Lutheran Hamma Divinity School, of Springfield, Ohio. It is titled *The Christian Hope*, and was first given as the Knobel-Miller Foundation Lectures. Taking the position that "Christian eschatology" rests squarely upon "Christology," Kantonen says that this is "the key to all other doctrines." [34] Discussing the "hope" in the Old and New

Testaments, and the nature and destiny of the soul, Kantonen refers with conviction to the "risen Christ" as "the constant pivot of the Christian message, the living centre of the Christian hope." [35] (Photo on page 871.)

1. HISTORICAL VICISSITUDES OF THE "HOPE."—Coming now to the "Hope in the Thought of the Church," Dr. Kantonen makes this arresting statement:

"The influence of Hellenic philosophy, represented by the Alexandrian fathers in particular, tended to spiritualize eschatology into a continuing inner purification and immortality of the soul." [36]

Nevertheless, the apostolic emphasis was retained in the creeds at Nicaea and Constantinople—namely, "the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." But Augustine came to identify the present church with the "kingdom of God" and the "millennial reign." The resurrection was already taking place, for the new life was being "obtained through the gospel." This, Kantonen adds, "exerted tremendous influence upon the growth of the medieval papacy." This put the "hope" into an "eclipse." And along with these developments arose the sacrifice of the mass, and Catholicism's "teaching on purgatory." [37] But this was followed by the Reformation, with its restorations and rejections. This involved man's nature and destiny.

33 TAITO A. KANTONEN (1900-), Lutheran, trained at Minnesota, Harvard, and Boston. After twelve years of pastoral work, in 1932 he became professor of systematic theology, Hamma Divinity School. He is author of five volumes.

34 T. A. Kantonen, *The Christian Hope*, p. 2.

35 Ibid., p. 16.

36 Ibid., p. 201.

37 Ibid., p. 21.

"The Reformation marks the beginning of a new epoch also in Christian eschatology. In restoring the gospel, Luther restored also the perspective of eternity. Rejecting purgatory, he [Luther] taught that man's destiny, eternal life or eternal damnation, would be decided on the last day on the basis of his personal relation to Christ in the present time of grace." [38]

"The end of the world, the last judgment, and the resurrection adds little to the content of the Christian hope beyond uniting the soul to its resurrected body." [39]

2. THREE SCHOOLS DEVELOP AS TO ESCHATOLOGY.—The rationalistic "Age of Enlightenment" marked a return in interest to the "history of the race" and the "present world." But it was accompanied by a "secularization of the kingdom of God" and a "weakening of specifically Christian hope." However, today eschatology is coming into its own as embracing the "essence of the Christian message." Three trends have developed. One is the "futuristic trend." The second looks to "present fulfilment rather than future expectation"—"realized eschatology." The third refuses the "simple alternatives of present or future." but seeks to combine "both aspects." [40] For this Kantonen mentions Althaus, Otto, Heim, and Tillich. That brings Kantonen to his basic discussion.

3. PAGANISM PENETRATES CHURCH IN FORMATIVE PERIOD. —In chapter 2 ("If a Man Die") Kantonen says, concerning Job's classic question: "The state of man after death has been the object of endless speculation, philosophical and religious, scientific and popular." [41]

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., p. 22.

40 Ibid., p. 22-26.

41 Ibid., p. 27.

42 Ibid.

Christian theology has, alas, gone beyond the "boundaries of revelation" and has incorporated "elements drawn from non-Christian sources"—pagan Animism and Platonism. [42] Here is Kantonen's depiction of Platonism's penetration and establishment as a dogma, just before the Reformation:

"Primitive animism with its notion of a detachable ghost-soul which continues after death to lead a shadowy existence and to enter interaction with the living still underlies much of popular religious thinking on the subject. More important and influential from the theological point of view is the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul which found its classical formulation in Plato's dialogues four centuries before Christ. Since Platonism furnished the sublimest thought forms for the formative period of Christian theology, it is not surprising that many of the Fathers identified the Christian doctrine of eternal life with Platonic immortality and that finally the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) adopted it as a dogma of the church." [43]

And added to this, Kantonen says, "Zoroastrian dualism with its eternal separation of the kingdoms of light and of darkness and its legalistic rewards and punishments"—and even "Hindu ideas of retribution and transmigration" [44]—found lodgement.

4. GREEK VIEW "ENTIRELY FOREIGN" TO "BIBLE" POSITION. —Turning to the relationship of "Soul and Body" and the subversive influence of Platonism in this area, Kantonen says of this foreign influence:

"It has been characteristic of Western thought ever since Plato to distinguish sharply between the soul and the body. The body is supposed to be composed of matter, and the soul of spirit. The body is a prison from which the soul is liberated at death to carry on its own proper nonphysical existence. Because of its immaterial spiritual nature the soul has been considered indestructible. Hence the question of life after death has been the question of demonstrating the immortality, the death-defying capacity, of the soul. The body is of little consequence.

"This way of thinking is entirely foreign to the Bible. True to Scripture and definitely rejecting the Greek view, the Christian creed says, not 'I believe in the immortality of the soul,' but 'I believe in the resurrection of the body.' " [45]

The "body," Kantonen adds, is a "necessary instrument of human living." Then he remarks, "The soul is not a separate part of man, constituting a substance of its own." [46] And he cites Prof. A. Nikolainen, of Helsinki, that "man is an indivisible whole." [47]

5. EXISTENCE AFTER DEATH ONLY BY RESURRECTION.—Considering next the subject "Death," Kantonen cites the Animist and Platonic views, with their concepts of the "protracted existence of the departed soul in a disembodied state."

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., pp. 27, 28.

45 Ibid., p. 28. (Italics supplied.)

46 Ibid., p. 29.

47 Ibid., p. 30.

There is also the concept that "death is not a state but an event, not a condition but a transition." [48] He then cites Paul Althaus, *Die Letzten Dinge*, page 126, as soundly saying: "Death is more than a departure of the soul from the body. The whole person, body and soul, is involved in death." [49]

Kantonen adds, quoting [50] further from Althaus:

"The Christian faith knows nothing about an immortality of the person. That would mean a denial of death, not recognizing it as judgment of God. It knows only an awakening from real death through the power of God. There is existence after death only by way of awakening, resurrection." [51] And now Kantonen continues with the clear statement:

"There is no immortality of the soul but a resurrection of the whole person, body and soul, from death. The only immortality which the Bible recognizes is the immortality of a personal relationship with God in Christ." [52]

6. "SOUL," Is "DESTRUCTIBLE" AS WELL AS "BODY."—Contending that God can destroy as well as resurrect, Kantonen says the Innate Immortality concept has supplanted the Scripture testimony on the destructibility of the soul:

"The Bible does not distinguish between man and the beasts on the ground that man has an immortal soul while the beasts do not. Men, beasts, even plants, are alike in death. We do not need to concern ourselves about spiritualism or hypotheses of any kind concerning future existence. The whole matter of death and life after death is simplified when our only concern is faith in God who can destroy and who can resurrect. Life makes no sense and holds no hope except in terms of Christ's victory over death and the assurance that we share in that victory.

"There is considerable support in Scripture for the view that the soul as well as the body is destructible. This evidence has been obscured because the Greek conception of the inherent immortality of the soul has supplanted the teaching of Scripture." [53]

So Kantonen concludes that "it is impossible to hold that the soul is by its very nature indestructible." [54]

48 Ibid., pp. 31, 32.

49 Ibid.. p. 33.

50 PAUL ALTHAUS, Lutheran, studied at Gottingen, Tubingen, and Hannover. After a chaplaincy he taught at Rostock (1920-1925) and since 1925 has been professor of New Testament theology at Erlangen. A specialist in dogmatic theology and ethics, he is author of nine major volumes, the chief being *Die Letzten Dinge* (5th ed., 1949).

51 Kantonen, op. cit., p. 33.

52 Ibid., p. 34. (Italics supplied.)

53 Ibid. (Italics supplied.)

54 Ibid., p. 35.

7. LUTHER'S EMPHASIS ON SCRIPTURAL "SLEEP."—Coming next to the "State After Death," Kantonen observes:

"There are two indisputable realities in the scriptural doctrine, the fact of death and the fact of resurrection from the dead at Christ's second coming. But between the death of an individual and the return of Christ is an interval, which from the human point of view, in the case of most men, is a long period of time." [55]

"Against such speculation [of Roman Catholic paradise, purgatory, Limbo, etc.] Protestant orthodoxy has, on the whole, denied all conceptions of a neutral state of waiting and held that souls pass immediately into a state of misery or of blessedness." [56]

He then presents Luther's position:

"Luther, with a greater emphasis on the resurrection, preferred to concentrate on the scriptural metaphor of sleep. 'For just as one who falls asleep and reaches morning unexpectedly when he awakes, without knowing what has happened to him, so we shall suddenly rise on the last day without knowing how we have come into death and through death.' 'We shall sleep, until He comes and knocks on the little grave and says, Doctor Martin, get up! Then I shall rise in a moment and be happy with Him forever.' " [57]

"In Luther's view, so far as the dead person himself is concerned, the intermediate state is reduced to an unconscious moment. When soul-sleeping is denied and sleep is regarded only as an euphemistic metaphor for death, it is logical to deny the intermediate state altogether." [58]

So Kantonen observes: "If death means entrance into heaven, then resurrection and judgment lose their significance." [59]

8. UNCONSCIOUS OF PASSAGE OF TIME IN SLUMBER.—In the closing chapter, "The End of All Things," with emphasis on the resurrection as the "sole foundation of the hope of life beyond the grave," [60] Kantonen says the "end-result" of "Christ's triumph over death" is the "resurrection of all the dead." Recapitulating, he adds, adverting to Luther:

"The soul has no existence apart from the body. The whole man, body and soul, dies, and the whole man, body and soul, is resurrected on the last day. At death man proceeds directly to the final resurrection and judgment. There is no period of waiting, for waiting implies time, and beyond death time no longer has any significance. From our own temporal point of view we may speak of the dead as being asleep and then say with Luther that for one in deep slumber the passage of centuries is as an instant. We may even say that departed believers are at home with the Lord in the sense that their striving and waiting are over and they have reached their final goal." [61]

55 Ibid., p. 36.

56 Ibid., p. 37. On Luther, see pp. 65-79.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., p. 38. (Italics supplied.)

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., p. 93.

9. FATE OF WICKED SIMPLY DESTRUCTION.—After discussing the claims of Universalism Dr. Kantonen suggests that ultimate destruction meets the demands of the New Testament—ultimate nonexistence, final "lapse into nothingness":

"An alternative solution is that the fate of the wicked is neither eventual redemption nor endless torment but simply annihilation. Eternal death would conform to the New Testament connotation of death in general, *apoleia*, destruction. Proponents of this view claim that the idea of eternal punishment rests on the Platonic conception of the inherent indestructibility of the soul and that the reasoning used to disprove it applies here also. On this ground the nature of God also appears to be vindicated. When Christ, then, in the end destroys 'every rule and every authority and power,' he will wipe out every visage of opposition to God, both human and superhuman. This view, unlike universal restoration, preserves the twofold judgment taught in Scripture. And to be completely cut off from God, the source of life, would seem logically to imply nonexistence. Such a lapse into nothingness of all of life's hopes and values makes perdition a terrible reality even without the added feature of prolonged torture." [62]

Kantonen sums up his able discussion in these words: "The hope of the individual Christian at death does not lie in man's power to defy death but in God's power to raise man from the dead. Death is real, and man has no inherent capacity to leap over the grave into another existence." [63]

7. Richmond's Roberts—Immortality a Gift, Not a Possession

Dr. HAROLD ROBERTS, [64] professor of systematic theology and philosophy of religion at Richmond College, Surrey, England, gave the Fernley-Hartley Lecture for 1954, which immediately after was published as *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*. In this he sets forth man's hope of immortality to be as a "gift of God," not through an inherent or "natural immortality of the soul." It is dependent upon the grace of God and received through the resurrection. Here is Roberts' succinct statement:

61 Ibid., pp. 96 97. (Italics supplied.)

62 Ibid., pp. 107, 108. (Italics supplied.)

63 Ibid., p. 111. (Italics supplied.)

64 HAROLD ROBERTS (1896-), Methodist, trained at University College, Bangor, and Wesley House, Cambridge. After pastoral work he became professor of systematic theology and philosophy, Wesley College. He then became dean of the Faculty of Theology, University of London (1953-). He was on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (1954-), president of the Methodist Conference (1957-1958), and principal of Richmond College, Surrey, since 1955.

"Life in the Kingdom of God is the gift of God. It cannot be claimed or earned. It is a gift to be received in humility and gratitude—'Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 18'). If the teaching of Jesus can be interpreted as implying universal survival, it has nothing to do with the belief that man by nature inherits eternal life. The doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul, when advanced by Christian thinkers, is the outcome, not of reflection upon the Christian revelation of God, but upon the nature of the soul considered apart from that revelation.

"Eternal life, or life in a divine dimension, in this world and in the world to come is dependent on the grace of God. We are not born by nature into this life, but raised to it by the power of God. What Christianity offers is not the promise of immortality through the possession by man of some element within his constitution which is imperishable, but the assurance of being raised together with Christ through the complete submission of mind and body to God's kingly Rule. The Christian doctrine of the future life is a doctrine of resurrection, and resurrection is the free gift of God." [65]

Dr. Roberts repudiates Universalism, and does not preclude the "annihilation" of the wicked, or the concept of "conditional immortality." He insists that "eternal life is the gift of God." [66]

65 Harold Roberts, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 107, 108. (Italics supplied.)

66 Ibid., pp. 105, 106.

67 BASIL F. C. ATKINSON (1895-), Protestant Evangelical Conditionalist, was trained at Belmont, Tonbridge, and Magdalene College, Cambridge. He was under librarian of university library, Cambridge, from 1925 to 1960, and is author of numerous scholarly books and many articles and pamphlets. His Pocket Commentary series has won high acclaim from many well-known scholars.

8. Atkinson of Cambridge—Man Not Immortal; Punishing Not Eternal

Special note should be taken of the excellent "Genesis" number in the Pocket Commentary of the Bible (1954) series by Dr. BASIL F. C. ATKINSON, [67] Protestant Evangelical scholar of Cambridge University. In Part I (Genesis 1-9), starting with "the beginning of time and of all things," Atkinson deals briefly but adequately with the creation of the world and the origin of human life. Then comes the recital of the "making of man."

Mention is made of the fact that "material already in existence" was used in the formation of man—the "dust of the ground." But the use of the paralleling term "create," implies that "man had no physical relationship with any creature that preceded him." [68] Man was made in "God's image," and "after His likeness"; God spoke him into being, and man had a "corresponding gift of language." He was capable of thought, including "abstract thought." He was "self-conscious," as well as God-conscious. He had the power of choice, and knew the difference between what is "morally good" and "morally evil." Man is "therefore as different from the lower animals which preceded him, as they are from the plants." [69]

But the original image was "marred." And if man was not to be lost he must be renewed through redemption—"renewed in the image of Christ, the God-man, his Creator and Redeemer." [70] Moreover, man was "made in two sexes," with "power of reproduction." This unity of the race, in Adam, made it possible for "the one act of redemption performed by Christ to become effective towards the whole human race," just as the whole race was affected by the "one act of disobedience on Adam's part."

Furthermore, the "power of reproduction" made possible the "incarnation of Christ, which was essentially preparatory to the act of redemption." He assumed human nature as "the true child of Mary, through whom He took human nature from Adam." [71] The portrayal to this point lays the foundation. Now comes the crucial section.

68 Basil F. C. Atkinson, *The Pocket Commentary of the Bible. Part I (Genesis 1-9)*, pp. 20, 30, 31.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

1. MAN NOT "IMMORTAL SOUL" IMPRISONED IN A "BODY."—Man was "formed," or "moulded," of the "dust of the ground." He did not develop through a long line of "lower animals," and "behind them from primitive life forms." Man is essentially a "creature of this earth." But "the image of God does not lie in the physical." "When the First-begotten came into the world, He said, 'A body hast Thou prepared for me' (Heb. 10.5). It was not in the womb of the virgin that this body was prepared. It was down the generations from Adam to Mary." Evidently Adam's body was "formed with a view to the incarnation." [72] Then God "breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life"—the "principle of natural life." And now comes this key thought by Atkinson—man was not made immortal. Such an impression was a concept introduced by Greek philosophy in direct conflict with the Inspired Record. Here is Atkinson's incisive statement and his cogent reasoning:

"It has sometimes been thought that the impartation of the life principle, as it is brought before us in this verse, entailed immortality of the spirit or soul. It has been said that to be made in the image of God involves immortality. The Bible never says so. If it involves immortality, why does it not also involve omniscience, or omnipresence, or any other quality or attribute of the Infinite? Why should one alone be singled out? The breath of life was not breathed into man's heart, but into man's nostrils. It involved physical life. Throughout the Bible man, apart from Christ, is conceived of as made of dust and ashes, a physical creature, to whom is lent by God a principle of life. The Greek thinkers tended to think of man as an immortal soul imprisoned in a body. This emphasis is the opposite to that of the Bible, but has found a wide place in Christian thought." [73]

Man is not "an immortal soul imprisoned in a body."

72 *Ibid.*, p. 31

73 *Ibid.*, p. 32, on Gen. 2:7. (Italics supplied.)

74 *Ibid.*

2. OLD EDEN AND NEW PARADISE ON NEW EARTH.—The "combination of the clay with the life principle made the man a living soul—denoting "man's natural life." [74] Later, in the New Testament the "last Adam" is contrasted with the "first man," Adam—a "living soul" —while the "last Adam" is "a quickening spirit" (1 Cor. 15:44-46):

"Thus man is made unlike the animals a moral and spiritual being, but like the animals a creature of the earth. His creation was a preparation for the incarnation and may in itself have been a step towards the ultimate redemption of the universe." [75]

Again:

"The garden of Eden is a type and picture of the garden, or paradise of God, which will be on the new earth created by God for the redeemed in the world to come" (Rev. 2.7).

"The old Eden was planted in a corner of the earth. The new paradise will cover the whole earth." [76]

"The eternal Paradise will be a creation and gift of God." [77]

That is the plan and provision of God.

3. GOD GAVE THE ULTIMATE CRITERION OF RIGHT AND WRONG.—Man was tested by the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." It was a "negative" moral test—man was not to do a certain thing. Yet God "made" the tree. He is the "source of right and wrong and the sole arbiter of creation." Notice: "A thing is right if God commands it, and wrong if He forbids it, and there is no other ultimate criterion." [78]

So "God set up a test of relationship with Himself." This is the test that faces every responsible human being. It is the "ultimate test of the Gospel." [79] Moreover— "God gave him [Adam] a clear warning of the consequences of disobedience, and here we have the first expression of the great scriptural principle that death is inseparable from sin. It is expressed in Ezek. 18.4, 20: 'the soul that sinned, it shall die,' or again in Rom. 6.23: 'the wages of sin is death.' It means that God and sin are incompatible, that where God is, there ultimately sin cannot be." [80]

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid., p. 35.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid. (Italics supplied.)

4. SINNER SUBJECT TO IRREDEMIABLE SECOND DEATH. —Moreover, "in the day" that he ate, man would come under the death decree:

"We shall see in the words thou shalt surely die the equivalent of 'subject to death.' To us has been revealed the truth that physical death is not the end, but that one day 'all that are in the graves' shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth (Jo. 5.28, 29), and that the dead will stand before Christ's throne (Rev. 20.12). After this there remains for the unrepentant sinner the second, final, irremediable eternal death (Rev. 20.14, 15)." [81]

5. NOT "ETERNAL . . . TORMENT" BUT "EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION."—AS to the nature of that "second death," Dr. Atkinson says:

"It is well to notice that it was not said to Adam, 'In the day that thou eats thereof, thou shalt suffer eternal conscious torment.' If this is what the Lord God meant, surely here of all places He would say it clearly. On the contrary if we think for a moment of the analogy on which Adam would understand the word 'death' (as explained above), we shall see more clearly the nature and meaning of the second death, which is 'everlasting destruction' (2 Thess. 1:9)." [82]

This point is likewise vital.

2. TEMPTING "SERPENT" WAS SATAN HIMSELF.—Discussing the "temptation and fall" of chapter 3, he says the serpent was no ordinary snake, but is identified in Revelation 12:9; 20:2 as the "devil" and "Satan"—the "original serpent." [83] Of him Atkinson writes:

"The devil was a creature of God, whose creation fell in the period referred to in Gen. 1.1. He was a moral being of exalted nature, and the first in whom moral evil manifested itself. We read of his creation and life before his fall, his fall itself and his final annihilation in Ezek. 28.11-19. His name Satan means that he is the adversary and accuser of the people of God, and his Greek name of 'devil' emphasizes his part in separating God and man. It seems impossible to assemble all that the Bible says about him [Satan] without coming to the conclusion that he is a super-human personal being of high order, created perfect like all God's

creatures, but the author of evil through the conception of an evil thought and the formation of an evil choice in his will. Indeed it is impossible to conceive of the entrance of moral evil into God's creation apart from the existence of such a personality." [84]

SCOPE OF THE SERPENT'S TEMPTATION.—Suggesting that the serpent may have appeared to Eve as a "shining angel," and conversed in that form, Atkinson remarks concerning the tempter's question, and Adam and Eve's "wrong moral choice":

81 Ibid., p. 36.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid., p. 40, on Gen. 3:1.

84 Ibid. (Italics supplied.)

"Yea, hath God said? This was not a genuine question, but a suggestive sneer, 'So God has said you are not to eat, has He?' This was the first shot in a campaign of lies. The question threw doubt on God's goodness. The devil has taken this line ever since." [85]

As to Satan's lie, "Ye shall not surely die," and the doubt implanted in Eve's mind, Atkinson adds: "This lie of the devil's is widely believed among sinners today, and has been so believed in every generation. Apart from the convicting power of the Holy Ghost acting upon his heart no one can believe that he is perishing." [86]

And as to the sweeping involvements of that temptation, Atkinson says of Eve:

"She saw that the tree was good for food. This was the 'lust of the flesh' (1 Jo. 2:16). She saw that it was pleasant to the eyes. This is 'the lust of the eyes' (ibid). She saw that it was a tree to be desired to make one wise. This is 'the pride of life' (ibid). So that by one sinful, perhaps hesitant, look Eve brought into being the whole corrupt wicked world and enthroned the devil as the prince of it. Eve's look at the tree of knowledge, fraught with such catastrophic consequences, is in contrast to the look of faith that the sinner may take at the tree of Calvary, a look that by virtue of the Saviour's propitiatory death and in conformity with God's promise by the Gospel repeals and reverses the harm done by Eve and procures everlasting life." [87]

8. DEATH NOT CONTINUING DISCARNATE LIVING.—Concerning "death," and "returning to the ground," Atkinson says:

"Till thou return unto the ground. Here is the fourth, the saddest, indeed the supreme witness to the fall of man. No one can avoid hearing its voice. Its incidence is universal. 'The wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23). The description of death in this verse is in harmony with the whole general outlook of the Bible upon the nature of man and the meaning of death. Here is God's original explanation to man of the fact of death.

"No word is said about any separation of man's person from his body to go on living discarnate in a state of steering, or on repentance of [sic] blessedness. If that is what death means it is difficult to understand why it was not mentioned and clearly explained here. Man was taken from the ground. He is dust and returns to dust. The book of Ecclesiastes, describing the same event with obvious reference to the present passage, adds, 'And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it' (Eccl. 12.7). At death the life principle, breathed into man at the first (Gen. 2.7), returns to the Giver, and man is left a lifeless corpse to disintegrate and mingle once more with the ground." [88]

85 Ibid., p. 42.

86 Ibid., p. 43.

87 Ibid., pp. 43, 44.

But that is not the end for man: "Of course provision is made for the final resurrection of all the dead on the day of judgment, whether buried or not (Rev. 20.13). Lack of burial does not affect resurrection." [89]

9. DIVINE PROVISION FOR REDEMPTION.—But man was not left without hope:

"Adam and Eve made a wrong moral choice. They sold themselves to do evil, became guilty before God and separate from His fellowship, and justly deserving of eternal death. But having said that, we must further say that, whether or not they could have resisted, in actual fact they did not, and God knew from eternity that they would not. Without, therefore, for one moment abandoning a full belief in the volition and guilt of Adam and Eve, it is possible to see in the fall of Adam a further step in the hidden eternal purpose of the God Who 'works all things together for good to them that love' Him (Rom. 8.28)." [90]

And in the "coats of skins" of the sacrificial animals is the symbolism of the "robe of Christ's righteousness and the garment of salvation." Thus:

"Coats of skins. Here is the second essential. The provision of skins had necessitated the death of an animal, so that we have a complete illustration in practice of the fundamental biblical principle that 'without shedding of blood is no remission' (Heb. 9:22). The death of this animal was the first picture of the death of Christ, in virtue of which alone the believer is justified, clothed, set in his right mind and given access to God. The coats provided by God to clothe the guilty pair are the picture of the robe of Christ's righteousness and the garment of salvation, won for the people of God by Christ on the cross, applied through the Gospel, and appropriated by faith." [91]

1. No ETERNAL LIFE IN SIN AND TORMENT.—As death closes life, so resurrection renews the life of the believer. Man will not live forever in sin. Atkinson says:

"Live for ever. Had man been able to eat of the tree of life, the sentence of death, pronounced in verse 19, would presumably have been nullified. An eternal life in sin would be an offence to God and a misery to any who lived it. Death mercifully closes the corrupt life of fallen man. But though man in flesh and blood is debarred from the tree of life (1 Cor. 15.50), the believer may eat of it now in his—heart by faith (Jo. 6.54), and one day in a glorified body will enjoy its fruit for ever." [92]

88 Ibid., pp. 51, 52. (Italics supplied.)

89 Ibid., p. 52.

90 Ibid., p. 41.

91 Ibid., p. 53.

One further quotation must suffice in the Atkinson testimony. The final fires of judgment—the "eternal fire," as with Sodom and Gomorrah—completely destroy the sinner at last:

"This [the illustration of Sodom and Gomorrah] is the Scriptural picture of eternal fire, and ought to make quite plain to us that eternal fire consumes once for all with an irrevocable result, and does not continue burning for ever. Not only does our Lord select the destruction of these cities as an illustration of the final judgment (Lk. 17.28-30), but the language of this passage is taken up in the Apocalypse to describe the same thing (Rev. 14.10; 19.20; 20.10; 21.8)." [93]

That is Dr. Atkinson's simple but adequate recital of the origin, nature, and destiny of man, in contradistinction to the popular notion of an indefeasibly immortal soul and endless torment for the incorrigible sinner.

92 Ibid., p. 54.

93 Ibid. Part II (Genesis 10-21), p. 181, on Gen. 19:24. (Italics supplied.)

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