

Man: His Origin, Nature, and Destiny

By Thomas Williams

Brethren and Friends: The Origin, Nature and Destiny of man is a subject of vital important to us all. We certainly are all concerned in the question of what man's destiny is. The gospel as revealed in the Scriptures of Truth is adapted to man's needs, to fit the condition in which he is found, and unless we understand what man's nature and condition and wants are we shall not be in apposition to understand the gospel which is intended to meet his requirements, fit his condition, and to ultimately redeem him.

Let us suppose that one entertains the idea that man is now an immortal creature; that he has natural immortality; that he is in possession of immortality by inheritance, by birth: that its possession is not a matter of merit on his part at all; he is immortal because he was created immortal; he cannot help being immortal - supposing this is the view one takes of man's nature in the present state; and then suppose, in addition to this, that the true and only gospel offers man immortality. You will readily see that the theory of such a one would stand in the way of his accepting the gospel. He would be able to say to one preaching the gospel of immortality as a matter of hope, that he is not in need of such a hope; that he is immortal already and therefore does not need a gospel which offers him that which he already possesses. He will therefore be in a position which nullifies the gospel of Christ. We must therefore start right in order to receive the true gospel, in the belief of which only we may hope to be saved.

Man's Origin

In I Cor. 15:44, the apostle Paul says, "There is a natural body." That is a simple, clear statement. What does the apostle mean by natural body? The answer to this will help us to understand the truth concerning man's origin and nature. He makes the statement first, and then proves its truth afterwards. After saying, "there is a natural body," he proves the truth of that assertion by what is written. This is what we all ought to do. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). "Prove all things," says this same apostle, and "hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21). Hence we must depend upon the law and the testimony and abide by it. Now, then, what is written concerning the natural body?

Again, let us repeat, "There is a natural body...And so it is written..." - here is the proof that there is a natural body found in what is written. Where does the apostle get his proof? Hear his words: "The first man Adam was made *a living soul*." What follows? Why, that "a natural body" and "a living soul," according to the apostle Paul, mean the same thing. He does not say "immortal soul," and let it be remembered that the phrase "immortal soul" is nowhere found in the Bible. It is a theological term, not a Biblical term. Now, "living soul" is synonymous with "natural body."

But, inasmuch as he has referred us to what is written, let us go back to the book of Genesis and see what is written, and we shall come to the same conclusion that Paul did. The first time we find the phrase "living soul" in the Scriptures, it is applied to the beasts of the field (Gen. 1:20-21; see margin). This should show us at once that we cannot for a moment entertain the idea that the phrase means "immortal soul," because it would prove that the beasts are in possession of immortal souls. But, keeping in mind the fact that to the apostle Paul the phrase "living soul" means "natural body," and "natural body" means "living soul," let us read from Gen. 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Here is what is written to which the apostle has referred to show us the origin of man. In verse 47 of I Cor. 15, he says: "The first man is of the earth, earthy;" more correctly, "The first man is *out* of the earth, earthy." What is it that is out of the earth? The first *man* is out of the earth; he, the man, is earthy. Theologians will say, No, the first man is not out of the earth, for the real man is the immaterial, immortal soul, which they suppose dwells inside the body. Hence their revision of this Scripture would be that the body of the first man is out of the earth, but the man, the real, vital part of man, the intelligent part, the thinking part, the part that always lives in happiness or misery - that is not out of the earth, earthy; it is from heaven, part of the very essence of God's nature.

We have no right to try to revise the Scriptures in this way; we must accept them as they are, and the statement is that the first man is out of the earth, earthy; and we must abide by that. So when it is said, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground," we must believe it.

Let us suppose ourselves present, observing this work of man's formation. Through the instrumentality of angels, who said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," we see God forming man of the dust of the ground. This part of the work is finished, and here is the formation of the creature man. He is "fearfully and wonderfully made," but so far he is lifeless. There must be something added in order to make the man a *living* man. It is not that a man is added to the body, but it is life that is added to the man. Hence it is said, "And he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man - the very man formed out of the dust of the ground - became a living soul." And this living soul, which is the result of the formation from the dust and animation by the breath of life, is the "natural body" or "living soul" of the apostle's discourse.

Here, then, we have the origin of man in terms clear enough, certainly, for us to understand. We may illustrate this. For instance, there is the dynamo [rather, electric motor]. It is formed, using the terms that are applied to man, who has bones, sinews, arteries, capillaries, flesh and skin. Here in this motor is a mechanical organization, all the parts combined in mechanical perfection. Put alongside of this machine man

formed from the dust of the ground, "fearfully and wonderfully made." There you have two formations: one by divine power and wisdom, the other by means of that wisdom and power that God has imparted to man, who has mechanically constructed a wonderful machine; but so far they are both of them motionless, both, we may say, lifeless.

Now, in the case of the dynamo [motor], if we turn on the current, the electrical power that will impart life, what have we? We have life, a mechanical, electric life, as the result of that combination. This illustrates the case of man's creation. Here is man formed of the dust of the ground, but he is as motionless, as helpless, as lifeless as the dynamo until the current of life is turned on. How is the current of life turned on in his case? We read that "the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," and the result is, man became a living man. You may, if you please, call this life electricity, or spirit, but do not forget that it is the same spirit which gives life to man that gives life to the entire animal kingdom. "If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust" (Job 34:14-15).

This is sufficient, it would seem to show us the origin of man, but I will call your attention to a few other testimonies in addition to those already referred to. In Gen. 3:23 we read, "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground *from whence he was taken*." It was not that the Lord God sent him forth to till the ground from whence his body was taken. It is in strict accordance with what we have read, "The Lord God formed *man* of the dust of the ground;" "the first *man* is of the earth, earthy."

In Gen. 18:27, Abraham said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." You see the estimate Abraham placed upon himself. He regarded himself as a creature formed out of the dust of the ground. He did not claim that he was an immortal, immaterial soul, a vital spark worth ten thousand million worlds, as theologians declare; but he regarded himself as "dust and ashes," a creature formed from dust and liable to return to dust.

In Job 10:9 we read, "Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?" Notice that word "again." Man was out of the dust in formation, and in death he returns to the dust.

In Psa. 103:14 again, "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

These are sufficient, I think, to show the origin or creation of man. Now, to follow along to the next step, we come to

Man as Mortal Through Sin

At the present time, man is a dying creature. He is sin-stricken, death-stricken; so much so that the patriarch Job declares: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (14:1-2). The apostle Paul says: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22). Here is man, then, in the condition which this same apostle terms "wretched." "O wretched man that I am!" he exclaims, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We are, then, bodies of death, in a dying condition, subject to sorrow, pain and death.

How came man to be in this condition? Is it the condition in which God created him? Here some one will ask, Do you think we have a different nature now from what we had when we were created? No, not a different nature. The same earthy nature, the same flesh and blood nature, but nature now is not in the same *condition* that it was when it came fresh from the creative hand. When created, man, with everything else, was pronounced "ver good;" and the reason why man is not now very good, but very bad - sin-stricken, death-stricken - cannot be attributed to God or to God's creation. We must find the cause of the sin-stricken, death-stricken condition in which the whole creation is "groaning."

In Gen. 2:17 we read, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," or, as the marginal rendering is, "dying thou shalt die." Here is a law, and a penalty attached to that law. If you eat of the forbidden fruit, death shall be the punishment - "thou shalt...die." We may therefore conclude that the cause of death is sin or transgression of law. Since the cause must always precede the effect, sin must have preceded death, for "the wages of sin is death." Therefore man must be before sin, and sin before death. Man must have sinned before he became mortal. God, therefore, did not create man a dying creature; he created him "very good," a creature capable of ascending to immortality, living forever; or descending to mortality, passing under the power and dominion of death. Now, it must be evident that he was created a flesh and blood man, but in a provisional state, in a state in which it was provided that he could ascend or descend. This would depend upon obedience or disobedience. If he ascended and attained to the divine nature, became immortal, it would be because of merit; if he descended or fell, he would merit the punishment God provided.

So far, we see everything is reasonable. Indeed, the Bible is the most reasonable book on the face of the earth.

Now, how did the matter turn out? Let us refer to Gen. 3:17-19. Of course, the history of the case is familiar to you all. You know our first parents did partake of the forbidden fruit. Having thus become disobedient to the command, they justly deserved the penalty to be inflicted upon them. "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

This is clear enough. It needs no explanation nor interpretation. Let us go back to the illustration. Here is the process reversed. The machinist first of all forms the dynamo [motor]. He completes his work and turns on the current and you have...mechanical life, so to speak. He shuts off the current and allows the machine to go to ruin, to crumble to pieces, to go back to the dust...the machine is dead.

Apply this to man, and we have the same thing. God formed man out of the dust of the ground and turned on the current, as it were, applied to him the life principle called "the breath of life," breathed into his nostrils, and now he is a living being. There is motion, life, vitality, animation; but when death takes place the current is "switched off;" life is taken from him, and he crumbles into dust, verifying the words, "For out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Here we see the origin of man as a living being, and what takes place, and what becomes of him when he dies.

Let me call your attention further to the cause of death. In Rom. 5:12, the apostle says: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Now this is the scriptural reason why death hangs over us all; why we are all subject to it. One man sinned and human nature was poisoned, as it were, at its fountainhead, and all the streams flowing out from that fountain are poisoned in like manner. You will notice man was in the world first, then sin, then death. Here we have the cause and the effect. The cause was disobedience, and we are experiencing the effect now.

The real question is, What is death? and here the issue comes at once between those who believe the Bible and those who prefer to believe theology and so-called science. We are told by some, that "death is the gate to glory," the entrance to joy,

"The voice that Jesus sends To call us to his arms."

Now, if this be true of death, then, since we are indebted to sin for bringing death, if it is a voice to call us to the arms of Jesus, we are

indebted to sin for it. Let me repeat, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death - shall I say the voice which Jesus sends? - by sin." It would be an outrage upon reason. You know that death is an enemy of man, and not a friend. If it is the voice which Jesus sends, it is the best friend we have. If it is "the gate to endless joy," we cannot have a better friend than death; but if death is the result of sin, it must be the enemy of man.

Let us suppose that theology is right when it declares that death is the gate to endless joy. Then let us read the Scriptures, and see if both will harmonize. It is said Christ was manifested that "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). Whatever the devil is, he is here said to have the power of death; and if theology is right in saying that death is the gate to glory, then the devil has the key of the gate to endless joy. There is something wrong here, and you may depend upon it - the wrong is not in the Scriptures. Death is not a friend, it is not a gate to joy, it is not the voice which Jesus sends, but death is what it is said to be in the Scriptures, the penalty of sin, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

You will remember that after the penalty was pronounced upon man, it was said, "And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever," the Lord God drove man from the garden.

Now ask yourselves the question, carefully, calmly and reasonably, Why did God turn man out of the garden of Eden? For what purpose? What was the object of it? It was done to prevent something. To prevent what? To prevent man's living forever in a sinful state, was it not? "Let he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever," he was driven away from the tree of life, and was not allowed to perpetuate his life in this evil, sinful state. That was the object, was it not? Now, did God accomplish the purpose he had in view in excluding man from the tree of life and in preventing him from living forever in a sinful state?

Yes, according to the Bible.

No, according to theology.

You ask what I mean by this. I answer that if theology is right in saying that man is an immortal being, an immortal soul, that he will live forever in heaven or hell, then he does live forever; millions who go down to hell live forever in misery, and God did not prevent man from perpetuating his life in a state of sin and misery by expelling him from Eden. But theology is wrong, and not the Bible. Man, having fallen from the high estate in which he was created, God declares he shall not partake of the tree of life and live forever in that fallen state, so he is shut away from the tree of life which is guarded by a flaming sword. Now let me call your attention to a few passages of Scripture bearing on this point.

- "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living" (Job 30:23). Man must die and be brought to the house - the grave - appointed for all living, because it is written, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."
- "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling" (Job 7:1)?
- "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave" (Psa. 89:48)?
- "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Eccl. 3:19-20).
- "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass" (Isa. 40:6).

Here you see, then, man a dying creature.

Now, how is it with him when he dies? Is he conscious or unconscious? We have previously illustrated this, but I will call your attention to the testimonies bearing upon the state of man in death.

- "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10).
- "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Keep before your mind the sentence pronounced upon man. When he returns to the grave he returns to the dust from whence he was taken, and there is no work, nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave.
- "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks" (Psa. 6:5)?
- "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing" (Eccl. 5:5).
- "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psa. 146:3-4).
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Now this last verse brings us back to the subject as I was illustrating it a little while ago. We were showing that man was first formed of the dust of the ground. Let us suppose that here is a man formed. The creative work of Deity has produced this wonderful formation, a man complete, "fearfully and wonderfully made," but he is lifeless. God breathes into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man becomes a living man. He stands up in life, a living creature.

Now, death undoes this. It is the reversal of the process. Hence, when a man dies, our last text declares, "his breath goeth forth." God breathed into his nostrils to give life; "his breath goeth forth" at death: he expires, as we term it, breathes out his last breath, and he tumbles down in death, and dissolution takes place. Now, is he a conscious being, or an unconscious being?

The living, "The living know that they shall die, but the dead" - there is a dead man; does he know anything? - "The dead know not any thing."

His breath hath gone forth: he hath returned to his earth. In that very day his thoughts have perished. What can be plainer than that? Here is a man, a living, breathing, thinking, moving creature, possessing the five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling. He is an intelligent being, but he is not the only creature that is intelligent. The dog is intelligent. Here is an ignorant, depraved, idiotic man, and here is a dog.

They stand side by side. You speak to the dog and he understands you and will obey your command. You speak to the man and he does not understand you; he is idiotic.

This comparison has been made before, and it is a forcible one. Let me call your attention to it. A mother is down upon the bank of the river with her little babe. She leaves her babe on the bank of the river to prattle and bask in the healthful rays of the shining sun, and she wanders about gathering flowers, her eyes, for a few moments, turned away from her infant. An idiotic man comes along, picks up the babe and throws it into the river. The mother, in a moment, sees what has happened. She is in terror and dismay; the poor idiot laughs and gesticulates; the babe struggles and gasps. Just then a noble Newfoundland dog comes along, sees the situation, bounds into the river and brings out the child alive and safe. Which is the more intelligent, the dog or the idiot?

The dog, you say at once. Then the idiot is inferior; and why?

If the [supposed] immortal soul, which is supposed to come direct from God for every infant born into the world, is the intelligent part of man, why was there not a soul given the idiot that would teach him better than to throw the babe into the river? And what was it that was in the dog that saved the child? You will see that the theory of man's intellectual superiority being the result of the possession of an immortal soul is shown by this illustration to be groundless and not worth considering for a moment. The reason that the man is an idiot is not that God has deprived him of an immortal soul, but because of some impaired or undeveloped condition of the brain; and this brings us back to the fact that instead of thought being the property of an immortal soul it is a

property absolutely dependent upon organized matter which we call the brain. Real thought depends upon the development of brain power.

Here is a man in the exercise of the five senses which nature has imparted to him; he can feel, smell, taste, hear and see, but with what does he take cognizance of the touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing? Suppose you could "switch off" - disconnect - the current that leads from the fingers to the brain, would he be conscious of a touch? Certainly not. Why? Because, you would say, the seat of thought is the brain. That is just it. Therefore a man cannot think without brain. The brain is the seat of thought. Thought is a property of matter. The metaphysician says matter cannot think. Who told him that matter cannot think? We see with our eyes and hear with our ears. If matter can see and hear why can it not think? Oh, no, you say; it is not matter that sees and hears and tastes and smells and feels; it is the ego, that is the real, invisible man, that something called the immortal soul. The body is only the house, and the eyes are the windows of the soul. That looks very pretty. But here is a noble horse that can see better than the man can see, and hear better than the man can hear. Are his eyes the windows of the soul? You must see by this that a being sees, hears, thinks, reasons because it has a normal organism of brain power. If you shut off the nerve current connecting the various parts of the body with the brain, the creature becomes insensible.

To illustrate more fully: You may administer an anesthetic; what is the result? The man becomes unconscious. What! unconscious? Is it possible for a man to become unconscious in life? Why, yes; you go into a physician's office and you see a man in an unconscious state. What do you mean by a man in an unconscious state? He does not think, he does not know anything, and still he is alive. It is possible, then, after all, for a man to become unconscious. But if it is the immortal soul that is the thinking part of man, how do you account for the fact that chloroform applied to matter affects the immortal soul, which is supposed not to be matter - superior and independent of matter? Here is an intoxicated man reeling along the street, jabbering the foolishness of the drunkard. What is the matter with him? You say he

has been drinking intoxicating liquors. Will drinking intoxicating liquors affect the immortal soul? How can that be? Can it be possible that spirits of wine can affect the spirit "divine?" It cannot be. The trouble with the drunken man is that his brain is inflamed by the alcohol. And brain is affected by what a man eats and drinks, and, the brain being the seat of thought, when that is inflamed by alcohol drunkenness is the result. You see from this there is no foundation for the theory that thought is the property of an immortal entity.

Let us go back to this unconscious man: He is under the influence of chloroform, and in this condition it is admitted by theologians and scientists that he is unconscious. If you don't believe that he is, wait until he recovers from the influence of the anesthetic and he will tell you he knew nothing about what took place, not even if a limb had been amputated; and of course you must believe him. He has no object in telling you a falsehood about it. Now, if a man can thus be unconscious in life, what do you suppose he will be in death?

Suppose a dentist should, unfortunately, administer a little too much chloroform and the man should cease to live. Now call in the theologian. "Well," he says, "he knows all about it now - more than he ever did before he died." What a fortunate thing! He has passed from unconsciousness to consciousness. What a benefactor was that dentist! You will readily see that from a scientific standpoint, there is absolutely no foundation for the theory of the immortality of the soul.

Let us now return and recall the scriptures which declare to us that when a man dies "his breath goeth forth, he returns to the earth, in that very day his thoughts perish;" "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

In the thirty-eighth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah we have the case of the king Hezekiah. It was said to him, "Thou shalt die, and not live."

Hezekiah declared himself to be a pure man. He said, I have walked before thee uprightly; but when the message of death came to him he turned his face to the wall and wept sorely. He prayed to God that he would add to his days. Now when God answered his prayers and added to his days fifteen years, are you willing to believe that by doing so God kept him out of heaven, out of glory, for fifteen years? that if he had died he might have gone straight to glory but God kept him here on the earth that much longer?

Take the restoration to life of the widow's son. Most people believe that when a child dies it goes straight to heaven. I ask, Did the prophet do a good thing or a bad thing in restoring the child to life? Do you believe that when that child died it became an angel and basked in the sunshine of bliss? Would not the prophet have said, "Why do you pray to me to bring your child back from glory and transform it into a mortal child?" She would begin to consider: "Now, that does not look right. I cannot persuade myself, after all, that when my child died it became an angel. When my child died, I saw it die. I did not want to lose it, and I asked the prophet to restore its life." That is what any reasonable mother would say; but if it is a certainty that the death of the child transports it to bliss, it were better that every one die in childhood, and thus avoid the risk of life in a cruel world that may result in eternal loss at last.

So we see that man in death is *dead*, and not alive.

You will ask, What hope is there for man if death is really death?

This brings me to mind a thought I want just to refer to a moment. Some will say, When Abel died he did not really die, and when Cain died he did not really die. What became of them? Abel went to heaven [some will say]. Of course his body died, that is the mortal part, and when Cain died he went to hell. The immortal soul, the vital spark that came from God, that part from God that is immortal, as God is immortal, that part of God that is supposed to have entered into Cain's body, as soon as it "shuffled off its mortal coil," went to hell, and has been tormented in

hell ever since, theologians say. That is a shocking thought, is it not? Do you believe it? I hope not.

But let us suppose for a moment that Cain went to hell and Abel went to heaven, and that Abel had been four thousand years in heaven at the time Christ appeared upon the scene. Now Christ is to suffer and finally to be crucified; he came to be sacrificed for human redemption. We follow him through his life as "a man of sorrows," and now he comes to face the ignominy of the death of the cross. He trembles, holding the cup of death in his hand, and we hear him cry, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." It was the Father's will that he should die. *Why* must it be so? Why was it not possible for death to pass? Because upon his death depends - what? Upon his death depends the redemption of mankind; the redemption of every child of God. Think for a moment. Did the redemption of Abel depend upon it? If he is in heaven, as we are told, let us call to him and ask him...

"Abel, where are you? Are you saved? Do you want anything better than you have? Is it necessary for the trembling Saviour, who stands here asking that the bitter cup of death pass, if possible - is it necessary, Abel, for him to drink this cup to save you?"

"Not at all. I have been saved for nearly four thousand years, basking in the bliss of heaven."

Ask all those who have died, from Abel down, and if they are in heaven they will answer in the same way. If they could be saved for four thousand years without the death of Christ, why not continue to save men when they die, and let it go on and on in that way for four million years, and let the trembling Saviour dash the cup from his lips?

Ah, friends, here is theology weighed in the balance and found wanting. Now take the case of Abel, of Noah, of Abraham, of all the worthies mentioned by the apostle in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, of whom - does he say, These all went to heaven as soon as they died? Not at all;

that is how the preacher in the pulpit would speak; but Paul says, "These all died." This is what happened to them. What do you mean, Paul, when you say they died? I mean they died the death that came by man, of which I wrote when I said, "If there be no resurrection of the dead...then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (I Cor. 15:13-18). Abel and all the ancient worthies fell asleep in death. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises" (Heb. 11:13). They are asleep in the dust of the earth, and if there be no resurrection of the dead, they are perished.

But, Paul, you have not studied theology. You predicate the future life of those who have died, upon a resurrection. Don't you know it is only their bodies that are dead? They can get along better without their bodies than with them. It does not matter whether there is a resurrection or not. Study theology, Paul, so you may become familiar with this matter, and you will see that these men are all basking in the sunshine of bliss, and you can dispense with a resurrection entirely.

Suppose you went to heaven when you died; suppose you, like Abel, had gone to heaven six thousand years ago and had been basking in bliss that length of time, would you like to be disturbed and brought back into the body and pass through the ordeal of judgment? Judgment for what? It is impossible to say, if men go to heaven or hell when they die. If, however, they are dead, then you can see judgment cannot precede the resurrection, and our hope is found, not in death, but in the resurrection from the dead. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Hence we look to Christ, who declared, "I am the resurrection and the life."

He spoke these words when in the very presence of death, when a friend and brother was lying in the cold grave where he had been for three days. He told the weeping sister, "Thy brother shall rise again." He did not say, Thy brother shall come down from heaven. Then he went to the tomb and cried out, "Come forth," and Lazarus came forth.

So here we have a case of death, burial in the grave, and the resurrection from the grave; and the words of the Saviour with reference to this, as a manifestation of his power, were, "I am the resurrection, and the life." Now you can see why Christ died, because Abel and all the ancient worthies have gone down into death in hope of a resurrection through Christ. With them, the question of the patriarch Job is an important one. He asks, "If a man die, shall he live again?" and answers it by saying: "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past..."

Then what? "That thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me!...Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands" (Job 14:7-15).

He says again, in the nineteenth chapter, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (verses 25-26).

This burning hope of a resurrection was in the minds and hearts of all the ancient worthies. Hence when they went down to the dust of death it was in the hope of a Christ to come and to open the way for their resurrection. In this hope the prophet Isaiah says: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

The prophet Daniel says that many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake and shall come forth (12:2). The Psalmist declares, "God will redeem my soul from the hand of the grave" (49:15, marg.).

Now, in view of the fact that all the worthies who had died during the four thousand years previous to Christ's death were dead and dependent upon Christ for resurrection, we can see that their salvation did not, as a fact, precede his, and that the realization of the hope in which they died depended upon Christ as the Saviour.

Now we can, for a moment, return to Calvary and again look upon him who had passed the sufferings of Gethsemane, tremblingly holding the bitter cup of death in his hand and crying out, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Why must I drink it? Ah, from Abel down, the worthy ones put their hope and trust in me. They went down into the tomb depending upon me to open it for them. If I die not, if I rise not, then there will be no resurrection of the dead, and then they also who have fallen asleep in me have perished, and all is lost and the gates of hades will forever prevail against God's faithful people. I must not falter; the shame and ignominy of the cross must not daunt me. I must steady my trembling hand, and nerve myself for the last tragic act of the drama in which I am the actor and upon which salvation for every faithful child of my Father depends - "not my will, but thine, be done;" and

He drank the bitter cup of pain,
Then rose to life and joy again.

And now those who have fallen asleep in Christ have not perished, for Christ is their resurrection and their life, they having believed in him; though they are dead, yet shall they live (cf. John 11:25): for now the words sound out and resound, "I am the resurrection, and the life."

I need not quote further from the many testimonies that declare a resurrection; but a resurrection to what?

Man's Destiny

Here we come to the question of man's destiny. Man came from the dust; in nature he is mortal, and in the death state, unconscious. The resurrection is his hope; but a resurrection to what? We read:

- "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:4).
- "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

- "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).
- "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35-36).
- "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2:6-7).

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 Here you find eternal life, immortality, offered to man upon the condition that they seek for it. Hence, immortality is synonymous with the divine nature, as in the first verse I read, "that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature;" God is immortal. When we are made partakers of the divine nature we, too, shall be immortal; but not until we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

When, then, shall we come into possession of immortality, and upon what conditions shall it be obtained? Is it declared, here, to be when the Lord Jesus shall return, and we shall be granted an abundant entrance into his kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11).

In another verse, the apostle says: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour...who shall (when he comes) change our vile body," and shall fashion it "like unto his glorious body." It is at his second coming, then, when he comes to raise the dead and call the living into his presence. "When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." He shall change our vile body like unto his glorious body. Hence, there is no hope of immortality until Christ comes, and no hope then except for those who by a patient continuance in well doing seek for it.

Therefore, we see that to be made partakers of the divine nature is the greatest glory and exaltation man can attain to. How absurd, then, to talk about man being naturally immortal, and that every depraved wretch in human form is a partaker of the divine nature!

Now, if we do not comply with the conditions God has laid down, what will be our destiny? Preservation? Why preserve man in a sinful, fallen state? That was the very thing God prevented by driving man from Eden. Man must first pass through the ordeal of probation; he must ascend from the depraved state into which he has fallen, and become God-like in character; and when he has attained to the image of God, he is then fit and worthy to live. But if he never ascends - what then, what is the result?

"The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away" (Psa. 37:20).

The righteous will God preserve, but the wicked he will destroy.

No, says the theologian, he will not destroy the wicked; he will preserve them as long as he preserves the righteous. The wicked will be kept alive in hell as long as the righteous are alive in heaven. But the Bible says, the righteous he will preserve, but the wicked he will destroy. But, says one, destroy does not mean destroy. What, then, does it mean? It does not mean preserve, does it? It means to blast their hopes and ruin their happiness? Let us see:

- "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be" (Psa. 37:10). There will not be room for the wicked, for when we shall have reached the time when God shall be all in all, there will not be a single individual alive in whom God will not dwell. He must reign until he hath put down all enemies, and the last enemy is death" (I Cor. 15:25-26). When death is destroyed, the last enemy is destroyed, and there will not be countless millions of enemies to curse God through all eternity; for God is to destroy every enemy. This shall not come to

pass until Christ has accomplished his great mission. Paul, in proceeding with his argument, says:

- "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53).
- The triumphant ones over death will then exclaim: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory" (verse 55)?

When we have attained this glorious divine nature, then we are triumphant over death and made like unto the angels of God to die no more, because we are the children of the resurrection. Thus there will be the survival of those that are fittest to survive, and the utter annihilation of those that are not fit to survive. We are now living in the day of salvation, when it is possible for us to escape such a terrible fate. Why will ye spend your money "for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not" (Isa. 55:2-3)?

It is possible for you to respond to this call and accept of immortality, and by patient continuance in well-doing obtain eternal life, when, free from the evils of mortality, our vile bodies having been changed, we "shall mount up with wings as eagles;" we "shall run, and not be weary;" and "walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

God grant that this may be our happy lot!