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The Angel Message Series

Chapter 7

Immortality and the Resurrection

By ELBERT A. SMITH



And I saw another angel fly in the midst
of heaven, having the everlasting gospel
to preach unto them that dwell on the
earth.—Revelation 14: 6 : : :

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The Voice from a Book

Whoever put me here made me a resident and property holder, occupant and part owner of extensive premises, of valuable message and curtilage. I am born a shareholder in the benefits of the cosmos, holding some certificates of capital stock in an incorporated universe, with coupons maturing as the seasons roll; possessor of the multifarious privileges, adjuncts, and emoluments of this life. And when I said, "this life," and paused on that period, I heard a Voice coming from between the lids of a Book, a voice which breaks to temporal ears news of eternity, and which bade me add that to be a person means to have beyond this life a claim to real estate located where no surveyor can run his chains around it—to be heir to an inheritance greater than any surrogate can make record of—"heir," says that authentic and supremely authoritative Volume, possible "heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ," by and for whom the worlds were made, capable of receiving from Him whose right it is to bestow the enormous information that in some sense "all things are yours." Down over every human personality that stupendous announcement converges its thrilling tidings for the soul awakening to a knowledge of itself, its sphere, its possible reaches and possessions.—A Pilgrimage of the Infinite.

Immortality and the Resurrection

CHAPTER 7

Those who hope for no other life are dead even for this.
—Goethe.

Our Savior Jesus Christ . . . hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.—2 Timothy 1:10.

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead. But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. . . . But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.—1 Corinthians 15:12-20.

In the death cell where great Socrates waited for his draught of hemlock, they fell to discussing that question of the ages, immortality. Some contended that man is like a harp; his emotions, his thoughts, his deeds merely the music that issues from the harp; that when the harp is destroyed man ceases to be.

Socrates replied that man is neither harp nor harmony; that man is the harper; and even if the harp were broken the musician would still exist.

THE ROCK THAT BECAME A THRONE

The belief of Socrates was put to the test when Jesus was laid to rest in the rock-hewn tomb. A great stone was rolled before the door and the august seal of Rome was placed upon the tomb to certify that all was over and done. There reposed the hopes of humanity; and humanity, through its domi-

nant governmental authority, had said that the tomb should for ever remain sealed and inviolate.

But this man said, "I lay down my life, that I might take it up again. . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."—John 10: 17, 18.

The great rock that rested on the heart of the world, sealed by imperial Rome, was presently rolled aside by divine power, and became the throne of an angel from heaven, with raiment like snow and countenance like lightning, who announced:

Ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.—Matthew 28: 5, 6.

Hear it, ye mothers who weep by night over empty cradles! The angel rolled the rock from off your broken hearts. Hear it, all people!

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.—1 Corinthians 15: 20-23.

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.—Revelation 1: 18.

EVEN ATHEISM DISCERNS A STAR OF HOPE

It is a strange phenomenon of the times that many have lost faith in immortality, whereas formerly it was generally accepted. Some even put on a spirit of bravado, and pretend to treat the subject with indifference. Men shrug their shoulders and dismiss the subject, saying, "One world at a time."

Probably this attitude is assumed by those who,

having lost faith, feel that they may as well put on a bold face to a bad situation that they can not remedy.

But when men come face to face with the loss of loved ones, when in hours of contemplation their spiritual vision is opened, this attitude of indifference breaks down. Even the agnostic expresses a feeling of great concern. Ingersoll, standing at the side of his brother's grave, declared, "In the hour of death hope sees a shining star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing."

MATERIALISM HAS THE WORST HELL OF ALL

Huxley, who was agnostic as touching this question of immortality, wrote:

It flashes across me at all sorts of times with a sort of horror that in 1900 I shall probably know no more of what is going on than I did in 1800. I would sooner be in hell a good deal, at any rate in one of the upper circles where the climate and company are not too trying.

So it has been reserved for the creed of materialism to imagine the worst hell of all. Subscribing to the creed that death ends all, the heaven-aspiring, immortal soul of man is filled with intolerable despair.

Darwin said, "It is an intolerable thought that man and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation, after such long-continued, slow progress."

THE "CREEDS" OF MATERIALISM

If we adopt the thought that death ends all, with correlated ideas, we are in essence adopting a creed.

We might just as well face the issue and decide for ourselves the logical conclusions that will follow such a position.

Granting the creed of materialism to be correct, the universe is irrational, and we are the victims of blind forces that are both unreasonable and unjust. Having struggled upward for centuries untold and having finally brought into existence *personality*, something that can feel, that can aspire, that can sacrifice, and love, struggle, and die for an ideal, then these insensate forces blindly destroy the climax of their production, the most valuable thing in the universe.

We must conclude then that "the great soul of Abraham Lincoln was sacrificed out of deference to the few particles of matter that were deranged by the bullet of the assassin."

THE VIOLIN MAKER

What would we think of one who should toil for many years to produce a violin, a perfect instrument, and learn to play upon it a divine melody, and then smash it to atoms? We would say that insanity entered in somewhere in that proceeding.

What shall we say of the forces of the universe if for eons they have toiled to produce a human spirit, an intelligent entity, that can think, feel, aspire, love, hate, reason, and then at the hour of death dash it to oblivion, and start the process all over again with some other individual?

Is God blowing soap bubbles? Did he dip the pipe of his power in the suds of matter and blow the character of Jesus,

that it might entertain him with its iridescence, burst to his satisfaction, and be gone?—Fosdick.

If we take this materialistic view and believe that death ends conscious existence, it all appears as a great, irrational, unjust tragedy,—the superlative, universal tragedy.

ALL ADEQUATE INCENTIVE GONE

This conception blots out from our philosophy faith, hope, and charity. There is no ground left for faith in God; there is no ultimate hope left for either the individual or the race; and there is no adequate incentive for charity.

But the Apostle Paul says, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity." There is the contrast.

This other philosophy takes away all hope of ultimate reward and fear of ultimate punishment. No incentive left there. It takes away that which is vastly higher and nobler than either of these, the impulse and the desire to serve, because it offers no adequate incentive to service, indicating as it does that there can be no ultimate fruitage of our service worthy the sacrifices we are called upon to make.

A SHORT LOOK AHEAD

Some seek a ray of light in the universal gloom of such a theory by assuming that society will gather up and conserve human gains. The individual will perish but society will go on. They have acquired "social consciousness" and are willing to obliterate self for succeeding generations,—as they should be.

It is a noble sentiment, so far as it goes, but the merit of their theology is apparent rather than real.

Its plausibility depends on "a *short* look into the future." If we take a "*long* look into the future," we discover nothing in it worthy of our consideration.

If we look far enough we discover that if the *individual* must perish, so sometime, somewhere, the race must perish. The world will have burned out. The race will have expended its initial impulse. And sometime, somewhere the last living man must go down to his grave in a world of graves.

Where then are the social gains? Where then are those things we have sacrificed for and bequeathed to society? They are eternally lost.

ABSORPTION INTO DEITY

Another class long for absorption into Deity, or some mysterious reservoir of soul energy, and thus hope to escape the eternal loss incident to the blotting out of personality.

"What does it matter?" they ask, "if individuality perish, so long as all love, justice, morality, and truth that are in the individual flow back into the great source and are preserved?"

But remember, these attributes we do not wish to have blotted out and lost are attributes that can be exercised only between and among individual entities. They can not be exercised by one individual upon himself alone.

And so when we look far enough into the future and see this old planet nothing but a tomb, all those qualities gone back into God, we have God alone, all love, with nothing but himself to lavish that love

upon; all justice, with no one to exercise justice toward but himself.

How much more sublime is the New Testament conception that we are colaborers with God, that we are and always shall be, independent, ever-existing, intelligent entities between whom and God there can always exist this continuation of justice and this flow of love.

BETTER HAD WE NEVER BEEN BORN

Neither absorption into Deity nor self-effacement in society offer any permanent hope for humanity. If the creed of materialism be true and death ends all, then, as Paul says, man is of "all creatures most miserable"; by blind, unreasoning forces having been brought up to the heritage of intelligence only that he may contemplate the black abyss at his feet.

Then the language that was used concerning the miserable Judas Iscariot may well be used concerning the entire human race: "Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

Well does Fosdick say:

Nevertheless, when, believing in annihilation, one takes account of the long travail of the ages, weighs in his imagination all the agony of struggle and misfortune there, and perceives the inevitable end, when, like a burned-out cinder, the earth whirls back to its primeval chaos, he can understand the meaning of the philosopher who wrote: "Considering the immense and protracted sorrows of mankind, it would have been better if the earth had remained like the moon, a mass of slag, idle and without a tenant."—The Assurance of Immortality, p. 24.

A BETTER CREED

But how much higher and better the thought we have to present. We may say of all worthy men, as was said of one of old:

We doubt not that for one so true
There must be other, nobler work to do.

Paul takes up the same thought and says that God has not baptized us with the Spirit of fear; and he goes on to add:

But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to *an innumerable company of angels*, to the *general assembly* and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, *and to the spirits of just men made perfect*.—Hebrews 12: 22, 23.

BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY NOT UNSCIENTIFIC

Should any man or woman hesitate in making a choice between these two conceptions, between these two creeds?

Ah, but some one says, science has demonstrated that man is wholly mortal, and that death ends all. That is a misconception. Science has never done anything of the kind. A belief in immortality is not inconsistent with scientific research and enlightenment.

Many quotations from eminent authorities might be given to support that statement. We present two or more from two of the greatest of modern scientists: William James, the psychologist; and Sir Oliver Lodge, President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

During comparatively recent years the science of

psychology has demonstrated in a remarkable manner the dependence of the mind upon the physical brain. This dependence is so great and so marked that many students have concluded that when the brain ceases to exist the mind ceases to exist.

With the *facts* of psychology religion has no quarrel. They but sustain the statement made in modern revelation emphasizing the extremely intimate relations of body and spirit: "The *spirit* and the *body* is the *soul* of man."—Doctrine and Covenants 85: 4.

Erroneous *conclusions* drawn from the *facts* stated by psychology and kindred sciences have caused this modern loss of faith in immortality.

In an address at Harvard University, Professor William James took pains to correct these false conclusions. He said:

But such dependence on the brain for this natural life would in no wise make the immortal life impossible,—it might be quite compatible with human life behind the veil hereafter.—Human Immortality, p. 18.

Even though our soul's life (as here below it is revealed to us) may be in literal strictness the function of a brain that perishes, yet it is not at all impossible, but on the contrary quite possible, that the life may still continue when the brain itself is dead. The supposed impossibility of its continuing comes from too *superficial* a look at the admitted fact of functional dependence.—Human Immortality, p. 12.

In his presidential address before the British Association, 1913, while considering psychical facts brought before the attention of scientists, Sir Oliver Lodge said:

The facts so examined have convinced me that memory and affection are not limited to that association with matter by which alone they can manifest themselves here and now,

and that *personality persists beyond bodily death*.—Continuity, p. 103.

And he wisely adds,

Yes, and there is more to say than that. The methods of science are not the *only* way, though they are *our* way, of being piloted to truth.—Continuity, p. 104.

Science, it is true, may not have demonstrated that life continues beyond the grave. Demonstration is made by those who pass over to the other side, and the moment their demonstration is completed they are removed from the circle of mundane investigators. We can only learn what they have learned as we shall receive revelation from some higher intelligence that knows what is existing on the other side. And we do not need to depend on doubtful manifestations of Spiritualistic mediums. We have a "more sure word of prophecy" whereunto we do well that we give heed.

RELIGION AND REVELATION ENTER

Here is where true religion enters. Here is where true revelation appears. That is why Paul says that Jesus Christ has "brought immortality to light."

Jesus revealed it, not only by word, but also by his great experience when he came up on the other side of the grave and said that the keys of death and of hell were delivered into his hands.

THE ANCIENT PROMISES

It is our purpose to call attention to and reiterate the ancient and eternal promises. The hope as well as the morality of the race depends upon a proper understanding of the nature and destiny of man.

Apparently in anguish of spirit, Job cried out: "If a man die, shall he live again?"

That question has ever been in the hearts of men. In every little hamlet some home has darkened windows and crepe upon the door.

Job got the answer to his question. He got it by revelation from that Man who brought immortality to light. The answer is so important that it brings hope to replace despair. It gives a different color to life.

It was so important that Job wished that his words were printed in a book, "graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever."

Listen to the answer to his question:

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: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.—Job 19: 25-27.

THE PROMISE OF JESUS

Jesus, who demonstrated the resurrection, and issuing from the tomb in defiance of Cæsar and Death, brought immortality to light, "the first fruits of them that slept," made these promises:

I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.—John 11: 25.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because

he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.—John 5: 25-29.

TWO RESURRECTIONS

Jesus thus clearly announces the resurrection, and that there shall be two resurrections. The resurrection of the just shall occur at his second coming, and they shall reign with him a thousand years. The wicked are not raised up until the thousand years are ended, prior to the great judgment mentioned in the twentieth chapter of Revelation.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.—1 Thessalonians 4: 14-16.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.—Revelation 20: 4-6.

WITH WHAT BODY SHALL THE DEAD COME FORTH?

Volumes of profitless speculation might be written on the character of the body that shall come forth. Innumerable questions might be asked that no man could answer with our present knowledge. The facts of the resurrection are no more wonderful or strange than the facts of birth and life that we see every day but do not comprehend.

We are content with this confession:

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.—Psalm 17: 15.

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.—1 John 3: 2.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.—Romans 6: 5.

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, 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.—Philippians 3: 20, 21.

But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.—1 Corinthians 15: 38.

It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.—1 Corinthians 15: 42, 43.

WHAT MANNER OF MEN OUGHT WE TO BE?

In closing we wish to present this thought. If we are in fact immortal, we are at the present time in one sense immortal. That is, we have already entered upon an existence that will never have an end.

In view of that fact, what manner of men ought

we to be? The things that we do now not only affect us here, and for three score years and ten, or less, but they affect us for ever and for ever. They will either make or mar for eternity. If men could only sense this, they would not live as they live now.

Jesus Christ came here with that conviction and always retained it. He gave us the supreme example of right living. He demonstrated the manner of life that a man lives who in his heart and his soul believes he is an immortal being who will never die.

Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly longed for death.
'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh, life, not death, for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.

—Tennyson.

In reply to that great appeal for fuller life, coming up from the human heart, Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

He shows us how we may be worthy of that greater, fuller, better life, here and hereafter, for ever and for ever.

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Note.—The next chapter will discuss "The eternal judgment." God has set a day in which all men shall be judged in righteousness. None can escape. Men will be judged according to their *works*, and with equity, and not according to *profession* only. There will be many degrees of glory and many grades of punishment and not merely two degrees, one in hell, the other in heaven.