

Systematic Theology 6.1

Individual Eschatology

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Part Six: The Doctrine of the Last Things — Section 6.1: Individual Eschatology

Editorial note

The text has been updated to UK English; gloss boxes have been added to explain technical terms; summaries have been included; and questions for further study have been added. We have also included a master outline with the part represented in this volume shown in bold.

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Berkhof's Systematic Theology: Master Outline

This six-part guide is designed for use at the beginning of each volume. The part represented in this volume is shown in bold.

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Individual Eschatology

Introductory Chapter

Eschatology considers the last things: the destiny of individuals and the final consummation of all things. It gathers the whole of Christian doctrine into its final hope, where God's saving purpose is brought to completion.

A. ESCHATOLOGY IN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION.

GLOSS Eschatology: the doctrine of the last things: death, the future life, Christ's return, judgment, and the final state.

1. THE QUESTION OF ESCHATOLOGY A NATURAL ONE. A doctrine of the last things is not something that is peculiar to the Christian religion. Wherever people have seriously reflected on human life, whether in the individual or in the race, they have not merely asked, whence did it spring, and how did it come to be what it is, but also, whither is it bound? They raised the question, What is the end or final destiny of the individual; and what is the goal towards which the human race is moving? Does man perish at death, or does he enter upon another state of existence, either of bliss or of woe? Will the generations of men come and go in endless succession and finally sink into oblivion, or is the race of the children of men and the whole creation moving on to some divine telos, an end designed for it by God. And if the human race is moving on to some final, some ideal, condition perhaps, will the generations that have come and gone participate in this in any way, and if so, how; or did they merely serve as a thoroughfare leading up to the grand climax? Naturally, only those who believe that, as the history of the world had a beginning, it will also have an end, can speak of a consummation and have a doctrine of eschatology.

2. THE QUESTION OF ESCHATOLOGY IN PHILOSOPHY. The question of the final destiny of the individual and of the race occupied an important place even in the speculations of the philosophers. Plato taught the immortality of the soul, that is, its continued existence after death, and this doctrine remained an important tenet in philosophy up to the present time. Spinoza had no place for it in his pantheistic system, but Wolff and Leibnitz defended it with all kinds of arguments. Kant stressed the untenableness of these arguments, but nevertheless retained the doctrine of immortality as a postulate of practical reason. The idealistic philosophy of the nineteenth century ruled it out. In fact, as Haering says, "Pantheism of all sorts is limited to a definite mode of contemplation, and does not lead to any 'ultimate'." Not only did the philosophers reflect on the future of the individual; they also thought deeply on the future of the world. The Stoics spoke of successive world-cycles, and the Buddhists, of world-ages, in each of which a new world appears and again disappears. Even Kant speculated on the birth and death of worlds.

3. THE QUESTION OF ESCHATOLOGY IN RELIGION. It is especially in religion, however, that we meet with eschatological conceptions. Even false religions, the more primitive as well as the more advanced, have their eschatology. Buddhism has its Nirvana, Mohammedanism, its sensual paradise, and the Indians, their happy hunting-grounds. Belief in the continued existence of the soul appears everywhere and in various forms. Says J. T. Addison: "The belief that the soul of man survives his death is so nearly universal that we have no reliable record of a tribe or nation or religion in which it does not prevail." [Life Beyond Death, p. 3.] It may manifest itself in the conviction that the dead are still hovering around and near at hand, in ancestor worship, in seeking intercourse with the dead, in the conception of an underworld peopled with the dead, or in the idea of the transmigration of souls; but it is always present in some form or other. But in these religions all is vague and uncertain. It is only in the Christian religion that the doctrine of the last things receives greater precision and carries with it an assurance that is divine. Naturally, they who are not content to rest their faith exclusively on

the Word of God, but make it contingent on experience and on the deliverances of the Christian consciousness, are at a great disadvantage here. While they may experience spiritual awakening, divine illumination, repentance and conversion, and may observe the fruits of the operations of divine grace in their lives, they cannot experience nor see the realities of the future world. They shall have to accept the testimony of God respecting these, or continue to grope about in the dark. If they do not wish to build the house of their hope on vague and indeterminate longings, they shall have to turn to the firm ground of the Word of God.

B. ESCHATOLOGY IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

GLOSS Chiliasm: belief in a future earthly millennium or thousand-year reign of Christ; Berkhof distinguishes its various forms.

Speaking generally, it may be said that Christianity never forgot the glorious predictions respecting its future and the future of the individual Christian. Neither the individual Christian nor the Church could avoid thinking about these and finding comfort in them. Sometimes, however, the Church, borne down with the cares of life, or entangled in its pleasures, thought little of the future. Moreover, it happened repeatedly that at one time it would think more of this, and at another time, more of that particular element of its future hope. In days of defection the Christian hope sometimes grew dim and uncertain, but it never died out altogether. At the same time it must be said that there has never been a period in the history of the Christian Church, in which eschatology was the center of Christian thought. The other loci of Dogmatics have each had their time of special development, but this cannot be said of eschatology. Three periods can be distinguished in the history of eschatological thought.

1. FROM THE APOSTOLIC AGE TO THE BEGINNING OF THE FIFTH CENTURY. In the very first period the Church was perfectly conscious of the separate elements of the Christian hope, as, for instance, that physical death is not yet eternal death, that the souls of the dead live on, that Christ is coming again, that there will be a blessed resurrection of the people of God, that this will be followed by a general judgment, in which eternal doom will be pronounced upon the wicked but the pious will be rewarded with the everlasting glories of heaven. But these elements were simply seen as so many separate parts of the future hope, and were not yet dogmatically construed. Though the various elements were quite well understood, their interrelation was not yet clearly seen. At first it seemed as if eschatology was in a fair way to become the center of the construction of Christian doctrine, for in the first two centuries Chiliasm was rather prominent, though not as prominent as some would have us believe. As it turned out, however, eschatology was not developed in this period.

2. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE FIFTH CENTURY TO THE REFORMATION. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the attention of the Church was directed from the future to the present, and Chiliasm was gradually forgotten. Especially under the influence of Origen and Augustine, anti-chilastic views became dominant in the Church. But though these were regarded as orthodox, they were not thought through and systematically developed. There was a general belief in a life after death, in the return of the Lord, in the resurrection of the dead, in the final judgment, and in a kingdom of glory, but very little reflection on the manner of these. The thought of a material and temporal kingdom made way for that of eternal life and the future salvation. In course of time the Church was placed in the center of attention, and the hierarchical Church was identified with the Kingdom of God. The idea gained ground that outside of this Church there was no salvation, and that the Church determined the proper pedagogical training for the future. A great deal of attention was paid to the intermediate state, and particularly to the doctrine of purgatory. In connection with this the

mediation of the Church was brought to the foreground, the doctrine of the mass, of prayers for the dead, and of indulgences. As a protest against this ecclesiasticism, Chiliasm again made its appearance in several sects. This was in part a reaction of a pietistic nature against the externalism and worldliness of the Church.

3. FROM THE REFORMATION UP TO THE PRESENT DAY. The thought of the Reformation centered primarily about the idea of the application and appropriation of salvation, and sought to develop eschatology mainly from this point of view. Many of the old Reformed theologians treat it merely as an adjunct to soteriology, dealing with the glorification of believers. Consequently, only a part of eschatology was studied and brought to further development. The Reformation adopted what the early Church taught respecting the return of Christ, the resurrection, the final judgment, and eternal life, and brushed aside the crass form of Chiliasm which appeared in the Anabaptist sects. In its opposition to Rome, it also reflected a good deal on the intermediate state and rejected the various tenets developed by the Roman Catholic Church. It can hardly be said that the Churches of the Reformation did much for the development of eschatology. In Pietism Chiliasm again made its appearance. The Rationalism of the eighteenth century retained of eschatology merely the bare idea of a colourless immortality, of the mere survival of the soul after death. Under the influence of the philosophy of evolution with its idea of an endless progress, it became, if not obsolete, at least obsolescent. Liberal theology entirely ignored the eschatological teachings of Jesus and placed all the emphasis on His ethical precepts. As a result it has no eschatology worthy of the name. Other - worldliness made way for this - worldliness; the blessed hope of eternal life was replaced by the social hope of a kingdom of God exclusively of this world; and the former assurance respecting the resurrection of the dead and future glory was supplanted by the vague trust that God may have even better things in store for man than the blessings which he now enjoys. Says Gerald Birney Smith: "In no realm are the changes of thinking more marked than in the portion of

theology which deals with the future life. Where theologians used to speak to us in detail concerning ‘last things,’ they now set forth in somewhat general terms the reasonable basis for optimistic confidence in the continuance of life beyond physical death.”[A Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion, p. 538.] At the present time, however, there are some signs of a change for the better. A new wave of Premillennialism appeared, which is not limited to the sects, but has also found entrance in some of the Churches of our day, and its advocates suggest a Christian philosophy of history, based particularly on the study of Daniel and Revelation, and help to fix the attention once more on the end of the ages. Weiss and Schweitzer called attention to the fact that the eschatological teachings of Jesus were far more important in His scheme of thought than His ethical precepts, which after all represent only an “Interimsethik.” And Karl Barth also stresses the eschatological element in divine revelation.

C. THE RELATION OF ESCHATOLOGY TO THE REST OF DOGMATICS.

GLOSS Dogmatics: the ordered study of Christian doctrine; eschatology is its crown, bringing every doctrine to its final fulfilment.

1. **WRONG CONCEPTIONS WHICH OBSCURE THIS RELATION.** When Kliefoth wrote his *Eschatologie*, he complained about the fact that there had never yet appeared a comprehensive and adequate treatise on eschatology as a whole; and further calls attention to the fact that in dogmatical works it often appears, not as a main division uniform with the others, but merely as a fragmentary and neglected appendix, while some of its questions are discussed in other loci. There were good reasons for his complaints. In general it may be said that eschatology is even now the least developed of all the loci of dogmatics. Moreover, it was often given a very subordinate place in the

systematic treatment of theology. It was a mistake of Coccejus that he arranged the whole of dogmatics according to the scheme of the covenants, and thus treated it as a historical study rather than a systematic presentation of all the truths of the Christian religion. In such a scheme eschatology could only appear as the finale of history, and not at all as one of the constitutive elements of a system of truth. A historical discussion of the last things may form a part of the *historia revelationis*, but cannot as such be introduced as an integral part of dogmatics. Dogmatics is not a descriptive, but a normative science, in which we aim at absolute, rather than at mere historical, truth. Reformed theologians on the whole saw this point very clearly, and therefore discussed the last things in a systematic way. However, they did not always do justice to it as one of the main divisions of dogmatics, but gave it a subordinate place in one of the other loci. Several of them conceived of it merely as dealing with the glorification of the saints or the consummation of the rule of Christ, and introduced it at the conclusion of their discussion of objective and subjective soteriology. The result was that some parts of eschatology received due emphasis, while other parts were all but neglected. In some cases the subject-matter of eschatology was divided among different loci. Another mistake, sometimes made, was to lose sight of the theological character of eschatology. We cannot subscribe to the following statement of Pohle (Roman Catholic) in his work on Eschatology, or the Catholic Doctrine of the Last Things: “Eschatology is anthropological and cosmological rather than theological; for, though it deals with God as the Consummator and Universal Judge, strictly speaking, its subject is the created universe, i.e. man and the cosmos.”[p. 1] If eschatology is not theology it has no proper place in dogmatics.

2. THE PROPER CONCEPTION OF THIS RELATION. Strange to say, the same Catholic author says: “Eschatology is the crown and capstone of dogmatic theology,” which is perfectly correct. It is the one locus of theology, in which all the other loci must come to a head, to a final conclusion. Dr. Kuyper correctly points out that every other locus left some question

unanswered, to which eschatology should supply the answer. In theology it is the question, how God is finally perfectly glorified in the work of His hands, and how the counsel of God is fully realized; in anthropology, the question, how the disrupting influence of sin is completely overcome; in christology, the question, how the work of Christ is crowned with perfect victory; in soteriology, the question, how the work of the Holy Spirit at last issues in the complete redemption and glorification of the people of God; and in ecclesiology, the question of the final apotheosis of the Church. All these questions must find their answer in the last locus of dogmatics, making it the real capstone of dogmatic theology. Haering testifies to the same fact when he says: “As a matter of fact it (eschatology) does shed a clear light upon every single section of doctrine. Is the universality of God’s saving plan, is personal communion with a personal God asserted without reserve, is the permanent significance of the Redeemer upheld, is forgiveness of sin conceived as one with victory over the power of sin — on these points the eschatology must remove all doubt, even when indefinite statements which have been made in the preceding parts could not at once be recognized as such. Nor is it difficult to discover the reason of this. In the doctrine of the last things, the communion between God and man is set forth as completed, and therefore the idea of our religion, the Christian principle, is presented in its purity; not, however, as a mere idea in the sense of an ideal which is never completely realized, but as perfect reality — and it is clear what difficulties are implied in that. It must therefore appear at last, in the presentment of eschatology, if not sooner, whether the reality of this communion with God has received its unrestricted due.”[The Christian Faith, p. 831.]

D. THE NAME “ESCHATOLGY.”

GLOSS **Last things:** the events connected with Christ’s return and the completion of God’s purpose for creation and His people.

Various names have been applied to the last locus of dogmatics, of which de Novissimis or Eschatology is the most common. Kuyper uses the term Consummatione Saeculi. The name “eschatology” is based on those passages of Scripture that speak of “the last days (eschatai hemerai), Is. 2:2; Mic. 4:1, “the last time” (eschatos ton chronon), I Pet. 1:20, and “the last hour,” (eschatē hora), I John 2:18. It is true that these expressions sometimes refer to the whole New Testament dispensation, but even so they embody an eschatological idea. Old Testament prophecy distinguishes only two periods, namely, “this age” (olam hazzeh, Gr. aion houtos), and “the coming age” (ollam habba’, Gr. aion mellon). Since the prophets represent the coming of the Messiah and the end of the world as coinciding, the “last days” are the days immediately preceding both the coming of the Messiah and the end of the world. They nowhere draw a clear line of distinction between a first and a second coming of the Messiah. In the New Testament, however, it becomes perfectly evident, that the coming of the Messiah is twofold, and that the Messianic age includes two stages, the present Messianic age and the future consummation. Consequently, the New Testament dispensation may be regarded under two different aspects. If the attention is fixed on the future coming of the Lord, and all that precedes it is considered as belonging to “this age,” then New Testament believers are regarded as living on the eve of that important event, the Lord’s return in glory and the final consummation. If, on the other hand, the attention is centered on the first coming of Christ, it is natural to consider the believers of this dispensation as already, though only in principle, living in the future age. This representation of their condition is not uncommon in the New Testament. The Kingdom of God is already present, eternal life is realized in principle, the Spirit is the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, and believers are already seated with Christ in heavenly places. But while some of the eschatological realities are thus projected into the present, they are not fully realized until the time of the future consummation. And when we speak of “eschatology,” we have in mind more particularly the facts and events that are connected with the second coming of Christ, and that

will mark the end of the present dispensation and will usher in the eternal glories of the future.

E. THE CONTENTS OF ESCHATOLOGY: GENERAL AND INDIVIDUAL ESCHATOLOGY.

GLOSS **Individual and general eschatology:** the destiny of each person after death, and the final events in which all humanity is involved.

1. GENERAL ESCHATOLOGY. The name “eschatology” calls attention to the fact that the history of the world and of the human race will finally reach its consummation. It is not an indefinite and endless process, but a real history moving on to a divinely appointed end. According to Scripture that end will come as a mighty crisis, and the facts and events associated with this crisis form the contents of eschatology. Strictly speaking, they also determine its limits. But because other elements may be included under the general head, it is customary to speak of the series of events that is connected with the return of Jesus Christ and the end of the world as constituting general eschatology, — an eschatology in which all men are concerned. The subjects that call for consideration in this division, are the return of Christ, the general resurrection, the last judgment, the consummation of the Kingdom, and the final condition of both the pious and the wicked.

2. INDIVIDUAL ESCHATOLOGY. Besides this general, there is also an individual, eschatology that must be taken into consideration. The events named may constitute the whole of eschatology in the strict sense of the word, yet we cannot do justice to this without showing how the generations who have died will participate in the final events. For the individual the end of the present existence comes with death, which transfers him completely from the present into the future age. In so far as he is removed from the present age with its historical development, he is introduced into the future age, which is

eternity. In the same measure in which there is a change in locality, there is also a change of æon. The things touching the condition of the individual between his death and the general resurrection, belong to personal or individual eschatology. Physical death, the immortality of the soul, and the intermediate condition call for discussion here. The study of these subjects will serve the purpose of connecting up the condition of those who die before the parousia with the final consummation.

Individual Eschatology

I. Physical Death

Physical death is the separation of body and soul, and entered human life through sin. For believers it remains a solemn enemy, yet Christ has removed its sting and makes it a passage into His presence.

The Scriptural idea of death includes physical, spiritual, and eternal death. Physical and spiritual death are naturally discussed in connection with the doctrine of sin, and eternal death is considered more particularly in general eschatology. For that reason a discussion of death in any sense of the word might seem to be out of place in individual eschatology. Yet it can hardly be left out of consideration altogether in an attempt to link up past generations with the final consummation.

A. THE NATURE OF PHYSICAL DEATH.

GLOSS Physical death: the separation of body and soul; it is not the end of human existence, nor merely an appearance.

The Bible contains some instructive indications as to the nature of physical death. It speaks of this in various ways. In Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4, it is spoken

of as the death of the body, as distinguished from that of the soul (psuche). Here the body is considered as a living organism, and the psuche is evidently the pneuma of man, the spiritual element which is the principle of his natural life. This view of natural death also underlies the language of Peter in I Pet. 3:14-18. In other passages it is described as the termination of the psuche, that is, of animal life or living, or as the loss of this, Matt. 2:20; Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9; 14:26; John 12:25; 13:37,38; Acts 15:26; 20:24, and other passages.[Cf. Bavinck, *Bijb. en Rel. Psych.*, p. 34.] And, finally, it is also represented as a separation of body and soul, Eccl. 12:7 (comp. Gen. 2:7); Jas. 2:26, an idea that is also basic to such passages as John 19:30; Acts 7:59; Phil. 1:23. Cf. also the use of exodus in Luke 9:31; II Pet. 1:15,16. In view of all this it may be said that, according to Scripture, physical death is a termination of physical life by the separation of body and soul. It is never an annihilation, though some sects represent the death of the wicked as such. God does not annihilate anything in His creation. Death is not a cessation of existence, but a severance of the natural relations of life. Life and death are not opposed to each other as existence and non-existence, but are opposites only as different modes of existence. It is quite impossible to say exactly what death is. We speak of it as the cessation of physical life, but then the question immediately arises, Just what is life? And we have no answer. We do not know what life is in its essential being, but know it only in its relations and actions. And experience teaches us that, where these are severed and cease, death enters. Death means a break in the natural relations of life. It may be said that sin is per se death, because it represents a break in the vital relation in which man, as created in the image of God, stands to his Maker. It means the loss of that image, and consequently disturbs all the relations of life. This break is also carried through in that separation of body and soul which is called physical death.

B. THE CONNECTION OF SIN AND DEATH.

GLOSS **Wages of sin:** death as the judicial consequence of sin, entering the world through man's fall and God's righteous judgment.

Pelagians and Socinians teach that man was created mortal, not merely in the sense that he could fall a prey to death, but in the sense that he was, in virtue of his creation, under the law of death, and in course of time was bound to die. This means that Adam was not only susceptible to death, but was actually subject to it before he fell. The advocates of this view were prompted primarily by the desire to evade the proof for original sin derived from the suffering and death of infants. Present day science seems to support this position by stressing the fact that death is the law of organized matter, since it carries within it the seed of decay and dissolution. Some of the early Church Fathers and some later theologians, such as Warburton and Laidlaw, take the position that Adam was indeed created mortal, that is, subject to the law of dissolution, but that the law was effective in his case only because he sinned. If he had proved himself to be obedient, he would have been exalted to a state of immortality. His sin brought about no change in his constitutional being in this respect, but under the sentence of God left him subject to the law of death, and robbed him of the boon of immortality, which he might have had without experiencing death. On this view the actual entrance of death, of course, remains penal. It is a view which might be made to fit in very well with the supralapsarian position, but is not demanded by this. In reality this theory merely seeks to square the facts, as they are revealed in the Word of God, with the dicta of science, but even these do not make it imperative. Suppose that science had proved conclusively that death reigned in the vegetable and animal world before the entrance of sin, then it would not yet necessarily follow that it also prevailed in the world of rational and moral beings. And even if it were established beyond the shadow of a doubt that all physical

organisms, the human included, now carry within them the seeds of dissolution, this would not yet prove that man was not an exception to the rule before the fall. Shall we say that the almighty power of God, by which the universe was created, was not sufficient to continue man in life indefinitely? Moreover we ought to bear in mind the following Scriptural data: (1) Man was created in the image of God and this, in view of the perfect condition in which the image of God existed originally, would seem to exclude the possibility of his carrying within him the seeds of dissolution and mortality. (2) Physical death is not represented in Scripture as the natural result of the continuation of the original condition of man, due to his failure to rise to the height of immortality by the path of obedience; but as the result of his spiritual death, Rom. 6:23; 5:21; I Cor. 15:56; Jas. 1:15. (3) Scriptural expressions certainly point to death as something introduced into the world of humanity by sin, and as a positive punishment for sin, Gen. 2:17; 3:19; Rom. 5:12,17; 6:23; I Cor. 15:21; Jas. 1:15. (4) Death is not represented as something natural in the life of man, a mere falling short of an ideal, but very decidedly as something foreign and hostile to human life: it is an expression of divine anger, Ps. 90:7,11, a judgment, Rom. 1:32, a condemnation, Rom. 5:16, and a curse, Gal. 3:13, and fills the hearts of the children of men with dread and fear, just because it is felt to be something unnatural. All this does not mean, however, that there may not have been death in some sense of the word in the lower creation apart from sin, but even there the entrance of sin evidently brought a bondage of corruption that was foreign to the creature, Rom. 8:20-22. In strict justice God might have imposed death on man in the fullest sense of the word immediately after his transgression, Gen. 2:17. But by His common grace He restrained the operation of sin and death, and by His special grace in Christ Jesus He conquered these hostile forces, Rom. 5:17; I Cor. 15:45; II Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 1:18; 20:14. Death now accomplishes its work fully only in the lives of those who refuse the deliverance from it that is offered in Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Christ are freed from the power of death, are restored to

communion with God, and are endowed with an endless life, John 3:36; 6:40; Rom. 5:17-21; 8:23; I Cor. 15:26,51-57; Rev. 20:14; 21:3,4.

C. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEATH OF BELIEVERS.

GLOSS **Death in Christ:** for believers death is still real, but its condemning power is removed and it becomes entrance into Christ's presence.

The Bible speaks of physical death as a punishment, as “the wages of sin.” Since believers are justified, however, and are no more under obligation to render any penal satisfaction, the question naturally arises, Why must they die? It is quite evident that for them the penal element is removed from death. They are no more under the law, either as a requirement of the covenant of works or as a condemning power, since they have obtained a complete pardon for all their sins. Christ became a curse for them, and thus removed the penalty of sin. But if this is so, why does God still deem it necessary to lead them through the harrowing experience of death? Why does He not simply transfer them to heaven at once? It cannot be said that the destruction of the body is absolutely essential to a perfect sanctification, since that is contradicted by the examples of Enoch and Elijah. Neither does it satisfy to say that death sets the believer free from the ills and sufferings of the present life, and from the trammels of the dust, by liberating the spirit from the present coarse and sensual body. God might effect this deliverance also by a sudden transformation, such as living saints will experience at the time of the parousia. It is quite evident that the death of believers must be regarded as the culmination of the chastisements which God has ordained for the sanctification of His people. While death in itself remains a real natural evil for the children of God, something unnatural, which is dreaded by them as such, it is made subservient in the economy of grace to their spiritual advancement and to the best interests of the Kingdom of God. The very thought of death,

bereavements through death, the feeling that sicknesses and sufferings are harbingers of death, and the consciousness of the approach of death, — all have a very beneficial effect on the people of God. They serve to humble the proud, to mortify carnality, to check worldliness and to foster spiritual-mindedness. In the mystical union with their Lord believers are made to share the experiences of Christ. Just as He entered upon His glory by the pathway of sufferings and death, they too can enter upon their eternal reward only through sanctification. Death is often the supreme test of the strength of the faith that is in them, and frequently calls forth striking manifestations of the consciousness of victory in the very hour of seeming defeat, I Pet. 4:12,13. It completes the sanctification of the souls of believers, so that they become at once “the spirits of just men made perfect,” Heb. 12:23; Rev. 21:27. Death is not the end for believers, but the beginning of a perfect life. They enter death with the assurance that its sting has been removed, I Cor. 15:55, and that it is for them the gateway of heaven. They fall asleep in Jesus, II Thess. 1:7, and know that even their bodies will at last be snatched out of the power of death, to be forever with the Lord, Rom. 8:11; I Thess. 4:16,17. Jesus said, “He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live.” And Paul had the blessed consciousness that for him to live was Christ, and to die was gain. Hence he could also speak in jubilant notes at the end of his career: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing,” II Tim. 4:7,8.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: What is the fundamental idea of the Biblical conception of death? Is death merely the natural result of sin, or is it a positive punishment for sin? If it is the latter, how can this be proved from Scripture? In what sense was man, as he was created by God, mortal; and in what sense, immortal? How can you disprove the position of the Pelagians? In what sense has death really ceased to be death for believers? What purpose

does death serve in their lives? When is the power of death completely terminated for them?

II. The Immortality of the Soul

The soul continues in personal existence after death. Its immortality is not the same as eternal life, but it means that human persons do not cease to be when the body dies.

In the preceding it was pointed out that physical death is the separation of body and soul and marks the end of our present physical existence. It necessarily involves and results in the decomposition of the body. It marks the end of our present life and the end of the “natural body.” But now the question arises, What becomes of the soul: does physical death bring its life to a close, or does it continue to exist and live on after death? It has always been the firm conviction of the Church of Jesus Christ that the soul continues to live even after its separation from the body. This doctrine of the immortality of the soul calls for brief consideration at this point.

A. DIFFERENT CONNOTATIONS OF THE TERM “IMMORTALITY.”

GLOSS Immortality: continued personal existence beyond death; this differs from eternal life, which is life in saving communion with God.

In a discussion of the doctrine of immortality it should be borne in mind that the term “immortality” is not always used in the same sense. There are certain distinctions that are quite essential, in order to prevent confusion.

1. In the most absolute sense of the word immortality is ascribed only to God. Paul speaks of Him in I Tim. 6:15,16 as “the blessed and only Potentate,

the King of kings, the Lord of lords, who only hath immortality.” This does not mean that none of His creatures are immortal in any sense of the word. Understood in that unrestricted sense, this word of Paul would also teach that the angels are not immortal, and this is certainly not the intention of the apostle. The evident meaning of his statement is that God is the only being who possesses immortality “as an original, eternal, and necessary endowment.” Whatever immortality may be ascribed to some of His creatures, is contingent on the divine will, is conferred upon them, and therefore had a beginning. God, on the other hand, is necessarily free from all temporal limitations.

2. Immortality in the sense of continuous or endless existence is also ascribed to all spirits, including the human soul. It is one of the doctrines of natural religion or philosophy that, when the body is dissolved, the soul does not share in its dissolution, but retains its identity as an individual being. This idea of the immortality of the soul is in perfect harmony with what the Bible teaches about man, but the Bible, religion, and theology, are not primarily interested in this purely quantitative and colourless immortality, — the bare continued existence of the soul.

3. Again, the term “immortality” is used in theological language to designate that state of man in which he is entirely free from the seeds of decay and death. In this sense of the word man was immortal before the fall. This state clearly did not exclude the possibility of man’s becoming subject to death. Though man in the state of rectitude was not subject to death, yet he was liable to it. It was entirely possible that through sin he would become subject to the law of death; and as a matter of fact he did fall a victim to it.

4. Finally, the word “immortality” designates, especially in eschatological language, that state of man in which he is impervious to death and cannot possibly become its prey. Man was not immortal in this highest sense of the word in virtue of his creation, even though he was created in the image of God. This immortality would have resulted if Adam had complied with the

condition of the covenant of works, but can now only result from the work of redemption as it is completed in the consummation.

B. TESTIMONY OF GENERAL REVELATION TO THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

GLOSS General revelation: what God makes known through creation, providence, conscience, and the moral nature of human beings.

The question of Job, “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14) is one of perennial interest. And with it the question constantly recurs, whether the dead still live. The answer to this question has practically always been an affirmative one. Though evolutionists cannot admit that faith in the immortality of the soul is an original endowment of man, yet it cannot be denied that this faith is all but universal, and is found even in the lowest forms of religion. Under the influence of materialism many have been inclined to doubt and even to deny the future life of man. Yet this negative attitude is not the prevailing one. In a recent Symposium on “Immortality,” containing the views of about a hundred representative men, the opinions are practically unanimous in favour of a future life. The historical and philosophical arguments for the immortality of the soul are not absolutely conclusive, but certainly are important testimonies to the continued personal and conscious existence of man. They are the following.

1. THE HISTORICAL ARGUMENT. The consensus gentium is just as strong in connection with the immortality of the soul, as it is with reference to the existence of God. There always have been unbelieving scholars who denied the continued existence of man, but in general it may be said that belief in the immortality of the soul is found among all races and nations, no matter what their stage of civilization may be. And it would seem that a notion so common

can only be regarded as a natural instinct or as something involved in the very constitution of human nature.

2. THE METAPHYSICAL ARGUMENT. This argument is based on the simplicity of the human soul, and infers from this its indissolubility. In death matter is dissolved into its parts. But the soul as a spiritual entity is not composed of various parts, and is therefore incapable of division or dissolution. Consequently, the decomposition of the body does not carry with it the destruction of the soul. Even when the former perishes, the latter remains intact. This argument is very old and was already used by Plato.

3. THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT. Human beings seem to be endowed with almost infinite capabilities, which are never fully developed in this life. It seems as if most men only just begin to accomplish some of the great things to which they aspire. There are ideals that fall far short of realization, appetites and desires that are not satisfied in this life, yearnings and aspirations that are disappointed. Now it is argued that God would not have conferred upon men such abilities and talents, only to make them fail in their achievements, would not have filled the heart with such desires and aspirations, only to disappoint them. He must have provided a future existence, in which human life will come to fruition.

4. THE MORAL ARGUMENT. The human conscience testifies to the existence of a moral Ruler of the universe who will exercise justice. Yet the demands of justice are not met in this present life. There is a very unequal and seemingly unjust distribution of good and evil. The wicked often prosper, increase in riches, and have an abundant share of the joys of life, while the pious frequently live in poverty, meet with painful and humiliating reverses, and suffer many afflictions. Hence there must be a future state of existence, in which justice will reign supreme, and the inequalities of the present will be adjusted.

C. TESTIMONY OF SPECIAL REVELATION TO THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

GLOSS Special revelation: God's saving self-disclosure in Scripture and supremely in Jesus Christ.

The historical and philosophical proofs for the survival of the soul are not absolutely demonstrative, and therefore do not compel belief. For greater assurance in this matter, it is necessary to direct the eye of faith to Scripture. Here, too, we must rely on the voice of authority. Now the position of Scripture with respect to this matter may at first seem somewhat dubious. It speaks of God as the only one who hath immortality (I Tim. 6:15), and never predicates this of man. There is no explicit mention of the immortality of the soul, and much less any attempt to prove it in a formal way. Hence the Russellites or Millennial Dawnists often challenge theologians to point to a single passage in which the Bible teaches that the soul of man is immortal. But even if the Bible does not explicitly state that the soul of man is immortal, and does not seek to prove this in a formal way, any more than it seeks to present formal proof for the existence of God, this does not mean that Scripture denies or contradicts or even ignores it. It clearly assumes in many passages that man continues his conscious existence after death. In fact, it treats the truth of the immortality of man very much as it does that of the existence of God, that is, it assumes this as an undisputed postulate.

1. THE DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. The assertion has been made repeatedly that the Old Testament, and particularly the Pentateuch, does not teach in any way the immortality of the soul. Now it is perfectly true that this great truth is revealed less clearly in the Old than in the New Testament; but the facts in the case do not warrant the assertion that it is absent from the Old Testament altogether. It is a well-known and generally recognized fact that God's revelation in Scripture is progressive and

gradually increases in clearness; and it stands to reason that the doctrine of immortality in the sense of a blessed eternal life, could only be revealed in all its bearings after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who “brought life and immortality to light,” II Tim. 1:10. But while all this is true, it cannot be denied that the Old Testament implies the continued conscious existence of man, either in the sense of a bare immortality or survival of the soul, or of a blessed future life, in several ways. This is implied:

a. In its doctrine of God and man. The very root of Israel’s hope of immortality was found in its belief in God as its Creator and Redeemer, its covenant God, who would never fail them. He was to them the living, the eternal, the faithful God, in whose fellowship they found joy, life, peace, and perfect satisfaction. Would they have panted after Him as they did, have entrusted themselves to Him completely in life and death, and have sung of Him as their portion forever, if they felt that all He offered them was but for a brief span of time? How could they derive real comfort from the promised redemption of God, if they regarded death as the end of their existence? Moreover, the Old Testament represents man as created in the image of God, created for life and not for mortality. In distinction from the brute, he possesses a life that transcends time and already contains within itself a pledge of immortality. He is made for communion with God, is but little lower than the angels, and God has set eternity in his heart, Eccl. 3:11.

b. In its doctrine of sheol. We are taught in the Old Testament that the dead descend into sheol. The discussion of this doctrine belongs to the following chapter. But whatever may be the proper interpretation of the Old Testament sheol, and whatever may be said of the condition of those who have descended into it, this is certainly represented as a state of more or less conscious existence, though not one of bliss. Man enters upon the state of perfect bliss only by a deliverance from sheol. In this deliverance we reach the real core of the Old Testament hope of a blessed immortality. This is clearly taught in several passages, such as Ps. 16:10; 49:14,15.

c. In its frequent warnings against consulting the dead or “familiar spirits,” that is, persons who were able to summon the spirits of the dead and to convey their messages to the inquirers, Lev. 19:31; 20:27; Deut. 18:11; Isa. 8:19; 29:4. Scripture does not say that it is impossible to consult the dead, but rather seems to presuppose the possibility while it condemns the practice.

d. In its teachings respecting the resurrection of the dead. This doctrine is not explicitly taught in the earlier books of the Old Testament. Christ points out, however, that it was taught by implication in the statement, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” Matt. 22:32, cf. Ex. 3:6, and chides the Jews for not understanding the Scriptures on this point. Moreover, the doctrine of the resurrection is explicitly taught in such passages as Job 19:23-27; Ps. 16:9-11; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2.

e. In certain striking Old Testament passages which speak of the believer’s enjoyment in communion with God after death. These are in the main identical with the passages referred to in the preceding, namely, Job 19:25-27; Ps. 16:9-11; 17:15; 73:23,24,26. They breathe the confident expectation of pleasures in the presence of Jehovah.

2. THE DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. In the New Testament, after Christ has brought life and immortality to light, the proofs naturally multiply. The passages that contain these may again be divided into various classes, as referring:

a. To the survival of the soul. A continued existence of both the righteous and the wicked is clearly taught. That the souls of believers survive, appears from such passages as Matt. 10:28; Luke 23:43; John 11:25 f.; 14:3; II Cor. 5:1; and several other passages make it quite evident that the same can be said of the souls of the wicked, Matt. 11:21-24; 12:41; Rom. 2:5-11; II Cor. 5:10.

b. To the resurrection by which the body is also made to share in the future existence. For believers the resurrection means the redemption of the body and entrance into the perfect life in communion with God, the full blessedness

of immortality. This resurrection is taught in Luke 20:35,36; John 5:25-29; I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4:16; Phil. 3:21, and other passages. For the wicked the resurrection will also mean a renewed and continued existence of the body, but this can hardly be called life. Scripture calls it eternal death. The resurrection of the wicked is mentioned in John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:12-15.

c. To the blessed life of believers in communion with God. There are numerous passages in the New Testament which stress the fact that the immortality of believers is not a bare endless existence, but a rapturous life of bliss in communion with God and with Jesus Christ, the full fruition of the life that is implanted in the soul while still on earth. This is clearly emphasized in such passages as Matt. 13:43; 25:34; Rom. 2:7,10; I Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21; II Tim. 4:8; Rev. 21:4; 22:3,4.

D. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF PERSONAL IMMORTALITY AND MODERN SUBSTITUTES FOR IT.

GLOSS **Personal immortality:** the continued, conscious existence of the same human person after the death of the body.

1. THE MAIN OBJECTION TO IT. Belief in the immortality of the soul for a time suffered a decline under the influence of a materialistic philosophy. The main argument against it was forged in the workshop of physiological psychology, and runs somewhat as follows: The mind or the soul has no independent substantial existence, but is simply a product or function of brain activity. The brain of man is the producing cause of mental phenomena, just as the liver is the producing cause of bile. The function cannot persist when the organ decays. When the brain ceases to operate, the stream of mental life comes to a stop.

2. SUBSTITUTES FOR THE DOCTRINE OF PERSONAL IMMORTALITY.

The desire for immortality is so deeply implanted in the human soul that even those who accept the dicta of a materialistic science, seek some sort of substitute for the discarded notion of the personal immortality of the soul. Their hope for the future assumes one of the following forms:

a. Racial immortality. There are those who comfort themselves with the idea that the individual will continue to live on this earth in his posterity, in his children and grandchildren, to endless generations. The individual seeks compensation for his lack of hope in a personal immortality in the notion that he contributes his share to the life of the race and will continue to live on in that. But the idea that a man lives on in his progeny, whatever modicum of truth it may contain, can hardly serve as a substitute for the doctrine of personal immortality. It certainly does not do justice to the data of Scripture, and does not satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart.

b. Immortality of commemoration. According to Positivism this is the only immortality we should desire and look for. Everyone should aim at doing something to establish a name for himself, which will go down in the annals of history. If he does this, he will continue to live in the hearts and minds of a grateful posterity. This also falls far short of the personal immortality which Scripture leads us to expect. Moreover, it is an immortality in which only a few will share. The names of most men are not recorded on the pages of history, and many of those who are so recorded are soon forgotten. And to a great extent it may be said that the best and the worst share it alike.

c. Immortality of influence. This is very closely related to the preceding. If a man makes his mark in life, and accomplishes something that is of enduring value, his influence will continue long after he is gone. Jesus and Paul, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, — they are all very much alive in the influence which they exercise up to the present time. While this is perfectly true, this immortality of influence is but a poor substitute for

personal immortality. All the objections that were raised against the immortality of commemoration, also apply in this case.

3. THE RECOVERY OF FAITH IN IMMORTALITY. At the present time the materialistic interpretation of the universe is making way for a more spiritual interpretation; and as a result faith in personal immortality is once more gaining favor. Dr. William James, while subscribing to the formula, “Thought is a function of the brain,” denies that this logically compels us to disbelieve the doctrine of immortality. He maintains that this conclusion of the scientists is based on the mistaken notion that the function of which the formula speaks is necessarily a productive function, and points out that it may also be a permissive or transmissive function. The brain may merely transmit, and in the transmission colour, thought, just as a coloured glass, a prism, or a refracting lens, may transmit light and at the same time determine its colour and direction. The light exists independent of the glass or lens; so thought also exists independent of the brain. He comes to the conclusion that one can, in strict logic, believe in immortality. Some evolutionists now base the doctrine of conditional immortality on the struggle for existence. And such scientists as William James, Sir Oliver Lodge, and James H. Hyslop, attach great significance to reputed communications with the dead. On the basis of psychic phenomena the first was inclined to believe in immortality, while the other two embraced it as an established fact.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY: Is the doctrine of immortality found in the Pentateuch? What accounts for the comparative scarcity of proofs for it in the Old Testament? On what did Plato base his belief in the immortality of the soul? How did Kant judge of the usual natural arguments for the doctrine of immortality? Is there any place for belief in personal immortality in either Materialism or Pantheism? Why does the doctrine of so-called “social immortality” fail to satisfy? Is the immortality of the soul in the philosophical sense the same as eternal life? How should we judge of the reputed spiritualistic communications with the dead?

III. The Intermediate State

The intermediate state is the condition of the soul between death and the resurrection. Berkhof teaches that believers are consciously with Christ, while the state of the wicked is fixed until the final judgment.

A. THE SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

GLOSS **Intermediate state:** the condition between death and the resurrection, when the body remains in death and the soul awaits resurrection.

1. THE SCRIPTURAL REPRESENTATION OF BELIEVERS BETWEEN DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION. The usual position of the Reformed Churches is that the souls of believers immediately after death enter upon the glories of heaven. In answer to the question, “What comfort does the resurrection of the body afford thee?” the Heidelberg Catechism says: “That not only my soul, after this life, shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head, but also that this my body, raised by the power of Christ, shall again be united with my soul, and made like the glorious body of Christ.”[Q. 57.] The Westminster Confession speaks in the same spirit, when it says that, at death, “The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.”[Chap. XXXII, I.] Similarly, the Second Helvetic Confession declares: “We believe that the faithful, after bodily death, go directly unto Christ.”[Chap. XXVI.] This view would seem to find ample justification in Scripture, and it is well to take note of this, since during the last quarter of a century some Reformed theologians have taken the position that believers at death enter an intermediate place, and remain there

until the day of the resurrection. The Bible teaches, however, that the soul of the believer when separated from the body, enters the presence of Christ. Paul says that he is “willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.” II Cor. 5:8. To the Philippians he writes that he has a “desire to depart and to be with Christ,” Phil. 1:23. And Jesus gave the penitent malefactor the joyous assurance, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise,” Luke 23:43. And to be with Christ is also to be in heaven. In the light of II Cor. 12:3,4 “paradise” can only be a designation of heaven. Moreover, Paul says that, “if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” II Cor. 5:1. And the writer of Hebrews cheers the hearts of his readers with this thought among others that they “are come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,” Heb. 12:23. That the future state of believers after death is greatly to be preferred to the present appears clearly from the assertions of Paul in II Cor. 5:8 and Phil. 1:23, quoted above. It is a state in which believers are truly alive and fully conscious, Luke 16:19-31; I Thess. 5:10; a state of rest and endless bliss, Rev. 14:13.

2. THE SCRIPTURAL REPRESENTATION OF THE STATE OF THE WICKED BETWEEN DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION. The Westminster Catechism says that the souls of the wicked after death “are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day.” Moreover, it adds: “Besides these two places (heaven and hell) for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.”[Chap. XXXII.] And the Second Helvetic Confession continues after the quotation cited above: “In like manner, we believe that the unbelievers are cast headlong into hell, from whence there is no return opened to the wicked by any offices of those who live.”[Chap. XXVI.] The Bible sheds very little direct light on this subject. The only passage that can really come into consideration here is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, where hades denotes hell, the place of eternal torment. The rich man found himself in the place of torment; his condition was fixed forever; and he was conscious of his

miserable plight, sought mitigation of the pain he was suffering, and desired to have his brethren warned, in order that they might avoid a similar doom. In addition to this direct proof there is also an inferential proof. If the righteous enter upon their eternal state at once, the presumption is that this is true of the wicked as well. We leave out of consideration here a couple of passages, which are of uncertain interpretation, namely, I Pet. 3:19; II Pet. 2:9.

B. THE DOCTRINE OF THE INTERMEDIATE STATE IN HISTORY.

GLOSS **Purgatory:** the Roman Catholic teaching of post-death purification; the Reformed churches reject it as lacking scriptural warrant.

In the earliest years of the Christian Church there was little thought of an intermediate state. The idea that Jesus would soon return as Judge made the interval seem to be of little consequence. The problem of the intermediate state arose when it became apparent that Jesus would not at once return. The real problem that vexed the early Fathers, was how to reconcile individual judgment and retribution at death with the general judgment and retribution after the resurrection. To ascribe too much importance to the former would seem to rob the other of its significance, and vice versa. There was no unanimity among the early Church Fathers, but the majority of them sought to solve the difficulty by assuming a distinct intermediate state between death and the resurrection. Says Addison: “For many centuries the general conclusion was widely accepted that in a subterranean Hades the righteous enjoy a measure of reward not equal to their future heaven and the wicked suffer a degree of punishment not equal to their future hell. The intermediate state was thus a slightly reduced version of ultimate retribution.” [Life Beyond Death, p. 202.] This view was held, though with some variations, by such men as Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Novatian, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa,

Ambrose, and Augustine. In the Alexandrian School the idea of the intermediate state passed into that of a gradual purification of the soul, and this in course of time paved the way for the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. There were some, however, who favored the idea that at death the souls of the righteous immediately entered heaven, namely, Gregory of Nazianze, Eusebius, and Gregory the Great. In the Middle Ages the doctrine of an intermediate state was retained, and in connection with it the Roman Catholic Church developed the doctrine of purgatory. The prevailing opinion was that hell received at once the souls of the wicked, but that only those of the righteous who were free from every stain of sin, were admitted at once into the blessedness of heaven, to enjoy the visio Dei. The martyrs were usually reckoned among the favored few. Those who were in need of further purification were, according to the prevalent view, detained in purgatory for a shorter or longer period of time, as the degree of remaining sin might require, and were there purged from sin by a purifying fire. Another idea, that was also developed in connection with the thought of the intermediate state, was that of the Limbus Patrum, where the Old Testament saints were detained until the resurrection of Christ. The Reformers, one and all, rejected the doctrine of purgatory, and also the whole idea of a real intermediate state, which carried with it the idea of an intermediate place. They held that those who died in the Lord at once entered the bliss of heaven, while those who died in their sins at once descended into hell. However, some theologians of the Reformation period assumed a difference in degree between the bliss of the former and the judgment of the latter before the final judgment, and their final bliss and punishment after the great assize. Among the Socinians and the Anabaptists there were some who revived the old doctrine held by some in the early Church, that the soul of man sleeps from the time of death until the resurrection. Calvin wrote a treatise to combat this view. The same notion is advocated by some Adventist sects and by the Millennial Dawnists. During the nineteenth century several theologians, especially in England, Switzerland, and Germany, embraced the idea that the intermediate state is a state of

further probation for those who have not accepted Christ in this life. This view is maintained by some up to the present time and is a favorite tenet of the Universalists.

C. THE MODERN CONSTRUCTION OF THE DOCTRINE OF SHEOL-HADES.

GLOSS Sheol and Hades: biblical terms often connected with death or the realm of the dead; their precise meaning depends on the context.

1. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE. There are several representations of the Biblical conception of sheol-hades in present day theology, and it is quite impossible to consider each one of them separately. The idea is quite prevalent at present that the Old Testament conception of sheol, to which that of hades in the New Testament is supposed to correspond, was borrowed from the Gentile notion of the underworld. It is held that according to the Old Testament and the New, both the pious and the wicked at death enter the dreary abode of the shades, the land of forgetfulness, where they are doomed to an existence that is merely a dreamy reflection of life on earth. The underworld is in itself neither a place of rewards nor a place of punishment. It is not divided into different compartments for the good and the bad, but is a region without moral distinctions. It is a place of weakened consciousness and of slumbrous inactivity, where life has lost its interests and the joy of life is turned into sadness. Some are of the opinion that the Old Testament represents sheol as the permanent abode of all men, while others find that it holds out a hope of escape for the pious. Occasionally we meet with a somewhat different representation of the Old Testament conception, in which sheol is represented as divided into two compartments, namely, paradise and gehenna, the former containing either all the Jews or only those who faithfully observed the law, and the latter embracing the Gentiles. The Jews will be

delivered from sheol at the coming of the Messiah, while the Gentiles will remain forever in the abode of darkness. The New Testament counterpart of this conception of sheol is found in its representation of hades. It is not merely held that the Hebrews entertained the notion of such an underworld, nor that the Biblical writers occasionally accommodated themselves formally in their representations to the views of the Gentiles of whom they were speaking; but that this is the Scriptural view of the intermediate state.

2. CRITICISM OF THIS MODERN REPRESENTATION. In the abstract it is, of course, possible that the idea of such a separate locality, which is neither heaven nor hell, in which all the dead are gathered and where they remain, either permanently or until some communal resurrection, was more or less current in popular Hebrew thought and may have given rise to some figurative descriptions of the state of the dead; but it can hardly be regarded by those who believe in the plenary inspiration of the Bible as an element of the positive teachings of Scripture, since it plainly contradicts the Scriptural representation that the righteous at once enter glory and the wicked at once descend into the place of eternal punishment. Moreover, the following considerations can be urged against this view:

a. The question arises, whether the view of sheol-hades, now so widely regarded as Scriptural, is true to fact or not. If it was true to fact at the time, when the books of the Bible were written, but is no more true to fact to-day, the question naturally rises, What brought about the change? And if it was not true to fact, but was a decidedly false view—and this is the prevalent opinion —, then the problem at once arises, how this erroneous view could be countenanced and sanctioned and even taught positively by the inspired writers of Scripture. The problem is not relieved by the consideration, urged by some, that the inspiration of Scripture does not carry with it the assurance that the Old Testament saints were correct when they spoke of men entering some subterranean place at death, because not only these saints but also the inspired writers of Scripture employed language which, in itself and

irrespective of other clear teachings of Scripture, might be so interpreted, Num. 16:30; Ps. 49:15,16; Ps. 88:3; Ps. 89:48; Eccl. 9:10; Isa. 5:14; Hos. 13:14. Were these inspired writers in error, when they spoke of both the righteous and the wicked as descending into sheol? It may be said that there was development in the revelation respecting the future destiny of man, and we have no reason to doubt that on this point, as on many others, that which was first obscure gradually gained in definiteness and clearness; but this certainly does not mean that the true developed out of the false. How could this be? Did the Holy Spirit deem it expedient for man that he first receive false impressions and obtain erroneous views, and then exchange these in course of time for a correct insight into the condition of the dead?

b. If in the Scriptural representation sheol-hades is really a neutral place, without moral distinctions, without blessedness on the one hand, but also without positive pain on the other, a place to which all alike descend, how can the Old Testament hold up the descent of the wicked into sheol as a warning, as it does in several places, Job 21:13; Ps. 9:17; Prov. 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:24; 23:14? How can the Bible speak of God's anger burning there, Deut. 32:22, and how can it use the term sheol as synonymous with abaddon, that is, destruction, Job 26:6; Prov. 15:11; 27:20? This is a strong term, which is applied to the angel of the abyss in Rev. 19:11. Some seek escape from this difficulty by surrendering the neutral character of sheol and by assuming that it was conceived of as an underworld with two divisions, called in the New Testament paradise and gehenna, the former the destined abode of the righteous, and the latter that of the wicked; but this attempt can only result in disappointment, for the Old Testament contains no trace of such a division, though it does speak of sheol as a place of punishment for the wicked. Moreover, the New Testament clearly identifies paradise with heaven in II Cor. 12:2,4. And, finally, if hades is the New Testament designation of sheol, and all alike go there, what becomes of the special doom of Capernaum, Matt. 11:23, and how can it be pictured as a place of torment, Luke 16:23? Someone might be inclined to say that the threatenings contained in some of the passages

mentioned refer to a speedy descent into sheol, but there is no indication of this in the text whatsoever, except in Job 21:13, where this is explicitly stated.

c. If a descent into sheol was the gloomy outlook upon the future, not only of the wicked but also of the righteous, how can we explain the expressions of gladsome expectation, or joy in the face of death, such as we find in Num. 23:10; Ps. 16:9,11; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24,26; Isa. 25:8 (comp. I Cor. 15:54)? The expression in Ps. 49:15 may be interpreted to mean that God will deliver the poet out of sheol or from the power of sheol. Notice also what the writer of Hebrews says of the Old Testament heroes of faith in Heb. 11:13-16. The New Testament, of course, speaks abundantly of the joyous outlook of believers on the future, and teaches their conscious happiness in the disembodied state, Luke 16:23,25; 23:43; Acts 7:59; II Cor. 5:1,6,8; Phil. 1:21,23; I Thess. 5:10; Eph. 3:14,15 (“family in heaven,” not in “hades”); Rev. 6:9,11; 14:13. In II Cor. 12:2,4 “paradise” is used synonymously with “the third heaven.” In connection with this clear representation of the New Testament, it has been suggested that the New Testament believers were privileged above those of the Old Testament by receiving immediate access to the bliss of heaven. But the question may well be asked, What basis is there for assuming such a distinction?

d. If the word sheol always denotes the shadowy region to which the dead descend, and never has any other meaning, then the Old Testament, while it does have a word for heaven as the blessed abode of God and of the holy angels, has no word for hell, the place of destruction and of eternal punishment. But it is only on the assumption that in some passages sheol designates a place of punishment whither the wicked go in distinction from the righteous, that the warnings referred to under (b) have any point. Sheol is actually sometimes contrasted with shamayim (heavens) as in Job 11:8; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2. Scripture also speaks of the deepest or lowest sheol in Deut. 32:22. The same expression is also found in Ps. 86:13, but in that passage is evidently used figuratively.

e. Finally, it should be noticed that there was a difference of opinion among scholars as to the exact subject of the descent into sheol. The prevailing opinion is that man as a whole is the subject. Man descends into sheol and in some obscure fashion continues his existence in a world of shadows, where the relations of life still reflect those on earth. This representation would seem to be most in harmony with the statements of Scripture, Gen. 37:35; Job 7:9; 14:13; 21:13; Ps. 139:8; Eccl. 9:10. There are some which point to the fact that the body is included. There is danger that Jacob's "gray hairs" will be brought down to sheol, Gen. 42:38; 44:29,31; Samuel comes up as an old man covered with a robe, I Sam. 28:14; and Shimei's "hoar head" must be brought down to sheol, I Kings 2:6,9. But if sheol is a place whither all the dead go, body and soul, what then is laid in the grave, which is supposed to be another place? This difficulty is obviated by those scholars who maintain that only the souls descend into sheol, but this can hardly be said to be in harmony with the Old Testament representation. It is true that there are a few passages which speak of souls as going down into, or as being in, sheol, Ps. 16:10; 30:3; 86:13; 89:48; Prov. 23:14, but it is a well known fact that in Hebrew the word *nephesh* (soul) with the pronominal suffix is often, especially in poetical language, equivalent to the personal pronoun. Some conservative theologians adopted this construction of the Old Testament representation, and found in it support for their idea that the souls of men are in some intermediate place (a place with moral distinctions and separate divisions, however) until the day of the resurrection.

3. SUGGESTED INTERPRETATION OF SHEOL-HADES. The interpretation of these terms is by no means easy, and in suggesting an interpretation we do not desire to give the impression that we are speaking with absolute assurance. An inductive study of the passages in which the terms are found soon dissipates the notion that the terms sheol and hades are always used in the same sense, and can in all cases be rendered by the same word, whether it be underworld, state of death, grave, or hell. This is also clearly reflected in the various translations of the Bible. The Holland Version renders the term sheol

by grave in some passages, and by hell in others. The St. James or Authorized Version employs three words in its translation, namely, grave, hell, and pit. The English Revisers rather inconsistently retained grave or pit in the text of the historical books, putting sheol in the margin. They retained hell only in Isa. 14. The American Revisers avoid the difficulty by simply retaining the original words sheol and hades in their translation. Though the opinion has gained wide currency that sheol is simply the underworld to which all men descend, this view is by no means unanimous. Some of the earlier scholars simply identified sheol and the grave; others regard it as the place where the souls of the dead are retained; and still others, of whom Shedd, Vos, Aalders, and De Bondt may be mentioned, maintain that the word sheol does not always have the same meaning. It would seem that the last opinion deserves preference, and that the following can be said respecting its different meanings:

a. The words sheol and hades do not always denote a locality in Scripture, but are often used in an abstract sense to designate the state of death, the state of the separation of body and soul. This state is frequently locally conceived as constituting the realm of death, and is sometimes represented as a stronghold with gates, which only he who has the keys can lock and unlock, Matt. 16:18; Rev. 1:18. This local representation is in all probability based on a generalization of the idea of the grave, into which man descends when he enters the state of death. Since both believers and unbelievers at the termination of their life enter into the state of death, it can very well be said figuratively that they are without distinction in sheol or hades. They are all alike in the state of death. The parallelism clearly shows what is meant in a passage like I Sam. 2:6: “Jehovah killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to sheol, and bringeth up.” Cf. also Job 14:13,14; 17:13,14; Ps. 89:48; Hos. 13:14, and several other passages. The word hades is evidently used more than once in the nonlocal sense of the state of the dead in the New Testament, Acts 2:27,31; Rev. 6:8; 20:28. In the last two passages we have a personification. Since the terms may denote the state of death, it is not necessary to prove that they never refer to anything that concerns the righteous and the wicked alike,

but only that they do not denote a place where the souls of both are gathered. De Bondt calls attention to the fact that in many passages the term sheol is used in the abstract sense of death, of the power of death, and of the danger of death.

b. When sheol and hades designate a locality in the literal sense of the word, they either refer to what we usually call hell, or to the grave. Descent into sheol is threatened as a danger and as a punishment for the wicked, Ps. 9:17; 49:14; 55:15; Prov. 15:11; 15:24; Luke 16:23 (hades). The warning and threatening contained in these passages is lost altogether, if sheol is conceived of as a neutral place whither all go. From these passages it also follows that it cannot be regarded as a place with two divisions. The idea of such a divided sheol is borrowed from the Gentile conception of the underworld, and finds no support in Scripture. It is only of sheol as the state of death that we can speak as having two divisions, but then we are speaking figuratively. Even the Old Testament testifies to it that they who die in the Lord enter upon a fuller enjoyment of the blessings of salvation, and therefore do not descend into any underworld in the literal sense of the word, Num. 23:5,10; Ps. 16:11; 17:15; 73:24; Prov. 14:32. Enoch and Elijah were taken up, and did not descend into an underworld, Heb. 11:5 ff. Moreover, sheol, not merely as a state, but also as a place, is regarded as in the closest connection with death. If the Biblical conception of death is understood in its deep significance, in its spiritual meaning, it will readily be seen that sheol cannot be the abode of the souls of those who die in the Lord, Prov. 5:5; 15:11; 27:20.

There are also several passages in which sheol and hades seem to designate the grave. It is not always easy to determine, however, whether the words refer to the grave or to the state of the dead. The following are some of the passages that come into consideration here: Gen. 37:25; 42:38; 44:29; 29:31; I Kings 2:6,9; Job 14:13; 17:13; 21:13; Ps. 6:5; 88:3; Eccl. 9:10. But though the name sheol is also used for the grave, it does not necessarily follow that this is the original use of the word, from which its use to designate hell is borrowed.

In all probability the opposite is true. The grave is called sheol, because it symbolizes the going down, which is connected with the idea of destruction. For believers the Biblical symbolism is changed by Scripture itself. Paul says that they go down in death as a grain is sown in the earth, from which springs a new, a more abundant, a more glorious life. In the Old Testament the word sheol is used more often for grave and less often for hell, while in the corresponding use of hades in the New Testament the contrary holds.

D. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DOCTRINES RESPECTING THE ABODE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH.

GLOSS Limbus: a proposed border place in medieval Roman Catholic theology for certain souls; it is not a doctrine established by Scripture.

1. PURGATORY. According to the Church of Rome the souls of those who are perfectly pure at death are forthwith admitted to heaven or the beatific vision of God, Matt. 25:46; Phil. 1:23; but those who are not perfectly cleansed, who are still burdened with the guilt of venial sins and have not borne the temporal punishment due to their sins — and this is the condition of most of the faithful at death — must undergo a process of cleansing before they can enter into the supreme blessedness and joys of heaven. Instead of entering heaven at once, they enter purgatory. Purgatory is not a place of probation, but a place of purification and of preparation for the souls of believers who are sure of an ultimate entrance into heaven, but are not yet fit to enter upon the bliss of the beatific vision. During the stay of these souls in purgatory they suffer the pain of loss, that is, the anguish resulting from the fact that they are excluded from the blessed sight of God, and also endure “the punishment of sense,” that is, suffer positive pains, which afflict the soul. The length of their stay in purgatory cannot be determined beforehand. The duration as well as the intensity of their sufferings varies according to the degree of purification

still needed. They can be shortened and alleviated by the prayers and the good works of the faithful on earth, and especially by the sacrifice of the mass. It is possible that one must remain in purgatory until the time of the last judgment. The Pope is supposed to have jurisdiction over purgatory. It is his peculiar prerogative to grant indulgences, lightening the purgatorial sufferings or even terminating them. The main support for this doctrine is found in II Maccabees 12:42-45, and therefore in a book that is not recognized as canonical by the Protestants. But this passage proves too much, that is, more than the Roman Catholics themselves can consistently admit, namely, the possible deliverance of soldiers from purgatory who had died in the mortal sin of idolatry. Certain passages of Scripture are also supposed to favor this doctrine, such as Isa. 4:4; Mic. 7:8; Zech. 9:11; Mal. 3:2,3; Matt. 12:32; I Cor. 3:13-15; 15:29. It is perfectly evident, however, that these passages can be made to support the doctrine of purgatory only by a very forced exegesis. The doctrine finds absolutely no support in Scripture, and moreover, rests on several false premises, such as (a) that we must add something to the work of Christ; (b) that our good works are meritorious in the strict sense of the word; (c) that we can perform works of supererogation, works in excess of the commands of duty; and (d) that the Church's power of the keys is absolute in a judicial sense. According to it the Church can shorten, alleviate, and even terminate the sufferings of purgatory.

2. THE LIMBUS PATRUM. The Latin word *limbus* (fringe) was used in the Middle Ages to denote two places on the fringe or outskirts of hell, namely, the *Limbus Patrum* and the *Limbus Infantum*. The former is the place where, according to the teachings of Rome, the souls of the Old Testament saints were detained in a state of expectation until the Lord's resurrection from the dead. After His death on the cross Christ is supposed to have descended into the abode of the fathers, to release them from their temporary confinement and to carry them in triumph to heaven. This is the Roman Catholic interpretation of Christ's descent into hades. Hades is regarded as the dwelling place of the departed spirits, having two divisions, one for the righteous and one for the wicked. The division inhabited by the spirits of the righteous was the *Limbus*

Patrum, known to the Jews as Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:23, and paradise, Luke 23:43. It is maintained that heaven was not open to any man until Christ had actually made propitiation for the sin of the world.

3. THE LIMBUS INFANTUM. This is the abode of the souls of all unbaptized children, irrespective of their descent from heathen or from Christian parents. According to the Roman Catholic Church unbaptized children cannot be admitted to heaven, cannot enter the Kingdom of God, John 3:5. There was always a natural repugnance, however, to the idea that these children should be tortured in hell, and Roman Catholic theologians sought a way of escape from the difficulty. Some thought that such children might perhaps be saved by the faith of their parents, and others, that God might commission the angels to baptize them. But the prevailing opinion is that, while they are excluded from heaven, they are consigned to a place on the outskirts of hell, where its terrible fires do not reach. They remain in this place forever without any hope of deliverance. The Church has never defined the doctrine of the Limbus Infantum, and the opinions of the theologians vary as to the exact condition of the children confined in it. The prevailing opinion is, however, that they suffer no positive punishment, no "pain of sense," but are simply excluded from the blessings of heaven. They know and love God by the use of their natural powers, and have full natural happiness.

E. THE STATE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH ONE OF CONSCIOUS EXISTENCE.

GLOSS **Soul sleep:** the belief that the soul is unconscious between death and resurrection; Berkhof argues that Scripture teaches conscious existence.

1. THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE ON THIS POINT. The question has been raised, whether the soul after death remains actively conscious and is

capable of rational and religious action. This has sometimes been denied on the general ground that the soul in its conscious activity is dependent on the brain, and therefore cannot continue to function when the brain is destroyed. But, as already pointed out in the preceding (pp. 677 f.), the cogency of this argument may well be doubted. “It is,” to use the words of Dahle, “based on the error of confusing the worker with his machine.” From the fact that the human consciousness in the present life transmits its effects through the brain, it does not necessarily follow that it can work in no other way. In arguing for the conscious existence of the soul after death, we place no reliance on the phenomena of present day spiritualism, and do not even depend on philosophical arguments, though these are not without force. We seek our evidence in the Word of God, and particularly in the New Testament. The rich man and Lazarus converse together, Luke 16:19-31. Paul speaks of the disembodied state as a “being at home with the Lord,” and as something to be desired above the present life, II Cor. 5:6-9; Phil. 1:23. Surely, he would hardly speak after that fashion about an unconscious existence, which is a virtual non-existence. In Heb. 12:23 believers are said to have come to... “the spirits of just men made perfect,” which certainly implies their conscious existence. Moreover, the spirits under the altar are crying out for vengeance on the persecutors of the Church, Rev. 6:9, and the souls of the martyrs are said to reign with Christ, Rev. 20:4. This truth of the conscious existence of the soul after death has been denied in more than one form.

2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SLEEP OF THE SOUL (PSYCHOPANNYCHY).

a. Statement of the doctrine. This is one of the forms in which the conscious existence of the soul after death is denied. It maintains that, after death, the soul continues to exist as an individual spiritual being, but in a state of unconscious repose. Eusebius makes mention of a small sect in Arabia that held this view. During the Middle Ages there were quite a few so-called Psychopannychians, and at the time of the Reformation this error was advocated by some of the Anabaptists. Calvin even wrote a treatise against

them under the title Psychopannychia. In the nineteenth century this doctrine was held by some of the Irvingites in England, and in our day it is one of the favorite doctrines of the Russellites or Millennial Dawnists of our own country. According to the latter body and soul descend into the grave, the soul in a state of sleep, which really amounts to a state of non-existence. What is called the resurrection is in reality a new creation. During the millennium the wicked will have a second chance, but if they show no marked improvement during the first hundred years, they will be annihilated. If in that period they give evidence of some amendment of life, their probation will continue, but only to end in annihilation, if they remain impenitent. There is no hell, no place of eternal torment. The doctrine of the sleep of soul seems to have a peculiar fascination for those who find it hard to believe in a continuance of consciousness apart from the corporeal organism.

b. Supposed Scriptural warrant for this doctrine. Scripture proof for this doctrine is found especially in the following: (1) Scripture often represents death as a sleep, Matt. 9:24; Acts 7:60; I Cor. 15:51; I Thess. 4:13. This sleep, it is said, cannot be a sleep of the body, and therefore must be a sleep of the soul. (2) Certain passages of Scripture teach that the dead are unconscious, Ps. 6:5; 30:9; 115:17; 146:4; Eccl. 9:10; Isa. 38:18,19. This is contrary to the idea that the soul continues its conscious existence. (3) The Bible teaches that the destinies of men will be determined by a final judgment and will be a surprise to some. Consequently, it is impossible to assume that the soul enters upon its destiny immediately after death, Matt. 7:22,23; 25:37-39,44; John 5:29; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12 f. (4) None of those who were raised from the dead have ever given any account of their experiences. This can best be understood on the assumption that their souls were unconscious in their disembodied state.

c. Consideration of the arguments presented. The preceding arguments may be answered as follows in the order in which they were stated: (1) It should be noted that the Bible never says that the soul falls asleep, nor that the body does so, but only the dying person. And this Scriptural representation is

simply based on the similarity between a dead body and a body asleep. It is not unlikely that Scripture uses this euphemistic expression, in order to suggest to believers the comforting hope of the resurrection. Moreover, death is a break with the life of the world round about us, and in so far is a sleep, a rest. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the Bible represents believers as enjoying a conscious life in communion with God and with Jesus Christ immediately after death, Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Acts 7:59; II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 6:9; 7:9; 20:4. (2) The passages which seem to teach that the dead are unconscious are clearly intended to stress the fact that in the state of death man can no more take part in the activities of this present world. Says Hovey: "The work of the artisan is arrested, the voice of the singer is hushed, the scepter of the king falls. The body returns to the dust, and the praise of God in this world ceases forever." (3) It is sometimes represented as if man's eternal destiny depends upon a trial at the last day, but this is evidently a mistake. The day of judgment is not necessary to reach a decision respecting the reward or punishment of each man, but only for the solemn announcement of the sentence, and for the revelation of the justice of God in the presence of men and angels. The surprise of which some of the passages give evidence pertains to the ground on which the judgment rests rather than to the judgment itself. (4) It is true that we do not read that any of those who were raised from the dead ever told anything about their experiences between their death and resurrection. But this is a mere argument from silence, which is quite worthless in this case, since the Bible clearly teaches the conscious existence of the dead. It may well be, however, that those persons were silent about their experiences, but this can readily be explained on the assumption that they were not permitted to tell about them, or that they could not give an account of them in human language. Cf. II Cor. 12:4.

3. THE DOCTRINE OF ANNIHILATIONISM AND OF CONDITIONAL IMMORTALITY.

a. Statement of these doctrines. According to these doctrines there is no conscious existence, if any existence at all, of the wicked after death. The two are one in their conception of the state of the wicked after death, but differ in a couple of fundamental points. Annihilationism teaches that man was created immortal, but that the soul, which continues in sin, is by a positive act of God deprived of the gift of immortality, and ultimately destroyed, or (according to some) forever bereaved of consciousness, which is practically equivalent to being reduced to non-existence. According to the doctrine of conditional immortality, on the other hand, immortality was not a natural endowment of the soul, but is a gift of God in Christ to those who believe. The soul that does not accept Christ ultimately ceases to exist, or loses all consciousness. Some of the advocates of these doctrines teach a limited duration of conscious suffering for the wicked in the future life, and thus retain something of the idea of positive punishment.

b. These doctrines in history. The doctrine of annihilationism was taught by Arnobius and the early Socinians, and by the philosophers Locke and Hobbes, but was not popular in its original form. In the previous century, however, the old idea of annihilation was revived with some modifications under the name of conditional immortality, and in its new form found considerable favor. It was advocated by E. White, J. B. Heard, and the Prebendaries Constable and Row in England, by Richard Rothe in Germany, by A. Sabatier in France, by E. Petavel and Ch. Secretan in Switzerland, and by C. F. Hudson, W. R. Huntington, L. C. Baker, and L. W. Bacon in our own country, and therefore deserves special notice. They do not all put the doctrine in the same form, but agree in the fundamental position that man is not immortal in virtue of his original constitution, but is made immortal by a special act or gift of grace. As far as the wicked are concerned some maintain that these retain a bare existence, though with an utter loss of consciousness, while others assert that they perish utterly like the beasts, though it may be after longer or shorter periods of suffering.

c. Arguments adduced in favor of this doctrine. Support for this doctrine is found partly in the language of some of the early Church Fathers, which seems to imply at least that only believers receive the gift of immortality, and partly also in some of the most recent theories of science, which deny that there is any scientific proof for the immortality of the soul. The main support for it, however, is sought in Scripture. It is said that the Bible: (1) teaches that God only is inherently immortal, I Tim. 6:16; (2) never speaks of the immortality of the soul in general, but represents immortality as a gift of God to those who are in Christ Jesus, John 10:27,28; 17:3; Rom. 2:7; 6:22,23; Gal. 6:8; and (3) threatens sinners with “death” and “destruction,” asserting that they will “perish,” terms which are to be taken to mean that unbelievers will be reduced to non-existence, Matt. 7:13; 10:28; John 3:16; Rom. 6:23; 8:13; II Thess. 1:9.

d. Consideration of these arguments. It cannot be said that the arguments in favor of this doctrine are conclusive. The language of the early Church Fathers is not always exact and self-consistent, and admits of another interpretation. And the speculative thought of the ages has, on the whole, been favorable to the doctrine of immortality, while science has not succeeded in disproving it. The Scriptural arguments may be answered in order as follows: (1) God is indeed the only one that has inherent immortality. Man’s immortality is derived, but this is not equivalent to saying that he does not possess it in virtue of his creation. (2) In the second argument the bare immortality or continued existence of the soul is confused with eternal life, while the latter is a far richer concept. Eternal life is indeed the gift of God in Jesus Christ, a gift which the wicked do not receive, but this does not mean that they will not continue to exist. (3) The last argument arbitrarily assumes that the terms “death,” “destruction,” and “perish” denote a reduction to non-existence. It is only the baldest literalism that can maintain this, and then only in connection with some of the passages quoted by the advocates of this theory.

e. Arguments against this doctrine. The doctrine of conditional immortality is plainly contradicted by Scripture where it teaches: (1) that sinners as well as

saints will continue to exist forever, Eccl. 12:7; Matt. 25:46; Rom. 2:8-10; Rev. 14:11; 20:10; (2) that the wicked will suffer eternal punishment, which means that they will be forever conscious of a pain which they will recognize as their just desert, and therefore will not be annihilated, cf. the passages just mentioned; and (3) that there will be degrees in the punishment of the wicked, while extinction of being or consciousness admits of no degrees, but constitutes a punishment that is alike for all, Luke 12:47,48; Rom. 2:12.

The following considerations are also decidedly opposed to this particular doctrine: (1) Annihilation would be contrary to all analogy. God does not annihilate His work, however much He may change its form. The Biblical idea of death has nothing in common with annihilation. Life and death are exact opposites in Scripture. If death means simply the cessation of being or consciousness, life must mean only the continuation of these; but as a matter of fact it means much more than that, cf. Rom. 8:6; I Tim. 4:8; I John 3:14. The term has a spiritual connotation, and so has the word death. Man is spiritually dead before he falls a prey to physical death, but this does not involve a loss of being or consciousness, Eph. 2:1,2; I Tim. 5:6; Col. 2:13; Rev. 3:1. (2) Annihilation can hardly be called a punishment, since this implies a consciousness of pain and ill-desert, while, when existence terminates, consciousness also ceases. It might at most be said that the dread of annihilation would be a punishment, but this punishment would not be commensurate with the transgression. And naturally the dread of a man who never had within him the spark of immortality, will never equal that of him who has eternity in his heart, Eccl. 3:11. (3) It often happens that people consider the extinction of being and of consciousness a very desirable thing, when they grow tired of life. For these such a punishment would be in reality a blessing.

F. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE NOT A STATE OF FURTHER PROBATION.

GLOSS **Second probation:** the theory that persons may receive a new opportunity to accept Christ after death; Berkhof rejects this view.

1. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE. The theory of the so-called “second probation” found considerable favor in the theological world of the nineteenth century. It is advocated, among others, by Mueller, Dorner, and Nitzsch in Germany, by Godet and Gretillat in Switzerland, by Maurice, Farrar, and Plumptre in England, and by Newman Smythe, Munger, Cox, Jukes and several Andover theologians in our own country. This theory is to the effect that salvation through Christ is still possible in the intermediate state for certain classes or, perhaps, for all; and that this is offered on substantially the same terms as at present, namely, faith in Christ as Saviour. Christ is made known to all who still need Him unto salvation, and acceptance of Him is urged on all. No one is condemned to hell without being subjected to this test, and only they are condemned who resist this offer of grace. The eternal state of man will not be irrevocably fixed until the day of judgment. The decision made between death and the resurrection will decide, whether one will be saved or not. The fundamental principle on which this theory rests, is that no man will perish without having been offered a favorable opportunity to know and accept Jesus. Man is condemned only for the obstinate refusal to accept the salvation that is offered in Christ Jesus. Opinions differ, however, as to the persons to whom the gracious opportunity to accept Christ will be offered in the intermediate state. The general opinion is that it will certainly be extended to all children who die in infancy, and to the adult heathen who in this life have not heard of Christ. The majority hold that it will even be granted to those who lived in Christian lands, but in this present life never properly considered the claims of Christ. Again, there is great diversity of opinion as to

the agency and the methods by which this saving work will be carried on in the future. Moreover, while some entertain the largest hope as to the outcome of the work, others are less sanguine in their expectations.

2. THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH THIS DOCTRINE RESTS. This theory is founded in part on general considerations of what might be expected of the love and justice of God, and on an easily understood desire to make the gracious work of Christ as inclusive as possible, rather than on any solid Scriptural foundation. The main Scriptural basis for it is found in I Pet. 3:19 and 4:6, which are understood to teach that Christ in the period between His death and resurrection preached to the spirits in hades. But these passages furnish but a precarious foundation, since they are capable of quite a different interpretation.[Cf. especially Hovey, *Eschatology*, pp. 97-113, and Vos, *Art. Eschatology of the New Testament in the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*.] And even if these passages did teach that Christ actually went into the underworld to preach, His offer of salvation would extend only to those who died before His crucifixion. They also refer to passages which, in their estimation, represent unbelief as the only ground of condemnation, such as John 3:18,36; Mark 16:15,16; Rom. 10:9-12; Eph. 4:18; II Pet. 2:3,4; I John 4:3. But these passages only prove that faith in Christ is the way of salvation, which is by no means the same as proving that a conscious rejection of Christ is the only ground of condemnation. Unbelief is undoubtedly a great sin, and one that stands out prominently in the lives of those to whom Christ is preached, but it is not the only form of revolt against God, nor the only ground of condemnation. Men are already under condemnation when Christ is offered to them. Other passages, such as Matt. 13:31,32; I Cor. 15:24-28; and Phil. 2:9-11 are equally inconclusive. Some of them prove too much and therefore prove nothing.

3. ARGUMENTS AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE. The following considerations can be urged against this theory: (a) Scripture represents the state of unbelievers after death as a fixed state. The most important passage that comes

into consideration here is Luke 16:19-31. Other passages are Eccl. 11:3 (of uncertain interpretation); John 8:21,24; II Pet. 2:4,9; Jude 7-13 (comp. I Pet. 3:19). (b) It also invariably represents the coming final judgment as determined by the things that were done in the flesh, and never speaks of this as dependent in any way on what occurred in the intermediate state, Matt. 7:22,23; 10:32,33; 25:34-46; Luke 12:47,48; II Cor. 5:9,10; Gal. 6:7,8; II Thess. 1:8; Heb. 9:27. (c) The fundamental principle of this theory, that only the conscious rejection of Christ and His gospel, causes men to perish, is un-Scriptural. Man is lost by nature, and even original sin, as well as all actual sins, makes him worthy of condemnation. The rejection of Christ is undoubtedly a great sin, but is never represented as the only sin that leads to destruction. (d) Scripture teaches us that the Gentiles perish, Rom. 1:32; 2:12; Rev. 21:8. There is no Scripture evidence on which we can base the hope that adult Gentiles, or even Gentile children that have not yet come to years of discretion, will be saved. (e) The theory of a future probation is also calculated to extinguish all missionary zeal. If the Gentiles can decide as to the acceptance of Christ in the future, it can only bring a speedier and increased judgment upon many, if they are placed before the choice now. Why not leave them in ignorance as long as possible?