

Proof of a Separate State of Souls Between Death and the Resurrection

Part III

Isaac Watts

Founder of English hymnody, he was born at Southampton, England on July 17, 1674 and died at Stoke Newington, November 25, 1748. He obtained an excellent education at Southampton grammar school, then joining the dissenters, he studied at an academy at Stoke Newington, where he acquired his accuracy of thought and habit of laborious analysis; leaving the academy in 1694, he spent two years at home, beginning his hymn writing.

He was a private tutor, 1695-1701; became assistant pastor in the chapel at Mark Lane, 1699, and sole pastor in 1702. Because of frequent attacks of illness, Samuel Price had assisted him from 1703 and was chosen co-pastor 1713. His illness increased with time, but the congregation refused to part with one who had become so famous and beloved.

SECTION III

Some Firmer or More Evident Proofs of a Separate State

I COME now to consider those texts which do more expressly and certainly discover the separate state, and which I think cannot with any tolerable appearance of reason be turned aside from their plain and obvious intention, to reveal and declare that there is a separate state of souls. And such, in my opinion, are these that follow.

1. Text, Matthew 10:28: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." Every common reader, as well as every man of learning, who reads this text with a sincere mind and without prejudice, I think, will acknowledge at least, that the most obvious and easy sense of the words implies that there is a soul in man which men cannot kill even though they kill the body.

It is to very little purpose for writers to say that the Greek word which we translate *soul* here does in other places of Scripture, and even the thirty-ninth verse of this very chapter, signify *life*, and consequently here it may also signify the animal life, or the

person of the man. It is manifest that in this place it must signify some immortal principle in man that cannot die; whereas when the body is killed, the animal life dies too, and does not exist till the body is raised again; but the soul is a principle in this place which men cannot kill even though they destroy the life of the body. And whatever other senses the word may obtain in other texts, that cannot preclude such a sense of it in this text, as is most usual in itself, and which the context makes necessary in this place.

Nor will it avail the supporters of the mortality of the soul to say that this scripture means only that men cannot kill the soul forever, so that it shall forever perish, and have no future life hereafter by a resurrection; for in this sense men cannot kill the body, so that it shall never revive nor rise again: but here is a plain distinction in the text, that the body may be killed, but the soul cannot.

And I think this scripture proves also that though the body may be laid to sleep in the grave, yet the soul cannot be laid to sleep; for the substance of the body still exists, and is not utterly destroyed by killing it, but only laid to sleep for a time, as the Scripture often describes death: but the soul cannot be thus laid to sleep for a time, with its substance still existing, for that would be to have no preeminence above the body, which is contrary to this assertion of our Saviour.

II. Luke 16:22, if: "The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, . . . and send Lazarus to my father's house, that he may testify to my brethren, lest they come also into this place of torment." This account of the rich and the beggar proves the existence of the rich man's soul in a place of torment before the resurrection of the body:

1. Because the existence of souls in a separate state, while other men dwell here on earth, is the very foundation of the whole account, and runs through the whole of it. The poor man died, and his soul was in paradise. The rich man's dead body was buried, and his soul was in Hell, while his five brethren were here on earth in a state, of probation, and would not hearken to *Moses and the prophets*.

2. Because the very design of this account is to show that a spirit sent from the other world, whether Heaven or Hell, to wicked men who are here in a state of trial, will not be sufficient to convert them to holiness if they reject the means of grace and the ministers of the Word. The very design of our Saviour seems to be lost, if there be no souls existing in a separate state. A spirit sent from the other world could never be supposed to have any influence to convert sinners in this world, if there were no such things as spirits there. The rich man's five brethren could have no motive to hearken to a spirit pretending to come from Heaven or Hell if there were no such thing as spirits or separate souls either happy or miserable.

3. I might add yet further, that it is very strange that our Saviour should so particularly speak of angels carrying the soul of a man, whose body was just dead, into Heaven or paradise, which he calls Abraham's bosom, if there were no such state or place as a

Heaven for separate souls; if Abraham's soul had no residence there, no existence in that state; if angels had never anything to do in such an office. What would the Jews have said or thought of a prophet come from God, who had taught his doctrines to the people in such accounts as had scarcely any sort of foundation in the reality or nature of things?

But you will say, The Jews had such an opinion current among them, though it was a very false one, and that this was enough to support such an account. I answer, What could Christ (who is Truth itself) have said more or plainer, to confirm the Jews in this gross error of a separate state of souls than to form an account which supposes this doctrine in the very design and moral of it, as well as in the foundation and matter of it?

III. Luke 20:37, 38: "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; for he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." Some learned men suppose that the controversy between Christ and the Sadducees in this place was about the *anastasis*, which implies the whole state of existence after death, including both the separate state and the resurrection, because the Sadducees denied both these at once, and believed that death finished the whole existence of the man. They denied angels and spirits, Acts 23: 8, that is, separate souls of men, and thought the rewards and punishments mentioned in Scripture related only to this life. Upon this account they suppose our Saviour's design is to prove the existence of persons or spirits in the separate state as much as the resurrection of the body.

And when he says that the Lord or Jehovah is described as the God of Abraham, it supposes Abraham at the same time to have actually life and existence in some state or other, for *God is not a God of the dead, but of the living, for all that are dead and gone out of this world still live unto God*; they have a present life in the invisible world of spirits, as God is an invisible spirit, as well as they expect a resurrection of their body in due time.

How could God in the days of Moses be called actually *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, who were long since dead, if there was no sense in which they were now alive to God, since our Saviour declares God is properly *the God only of the living, and not of the dead*? This part of the argument holds good in whatever sense you construe the whole debate, and by whatever medium or connection you prove the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; and this is obvious to the honest and unlearned reader, as well as to the men of learning.

IV. Luke 23:42, 43: "And he [that is the penitent thief upon the cross] said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom: and Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise." The thief upon the cross believed that Christ would enter into paradise, which he supposed to be Christ's kingdom, when he departed from this world, which was *not his kingdom*; and this he believed, partly according to the common sentiment of the Jews concerning good men at their death, as well as it is agreeable to our Saviour's own expressions to God (John

17:11). "*Holy Father, I am no more in the world, and I am come unto thee.*" Or as He had said to His disciples (John 16:28), "*I leave the world, and go to the Father.*"

And according to these expressions (Luke 23:46), Christ dies with these words on His lips, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*. Our Saviour taking notice of the repentance of the thief acknowledging his own guilt, thus, "We are justly under this condemnation, and receive the due reward of our deeds"; and taking notice also of his faith in the Messiah as a king whose kingdom was not of this world, when he prayed, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*: Christ, I say, taking notice of both these, answers him with a promise of much grace: *Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

The use of the word *paradise* in Scripture, and among ancient writers Jewish and Christian, is to signify the *happiness of holy souls in a separate state*; and our Saviour entering into that state at His death, declared to the dying penitent that he should be with Him there immediately. It is certain that by the word *paradise* Paul means the place of happy spirits, into which he was transported (II Cor. 12:4). And this sense is very proper to this expression of our Saviour, and to the prayer of the penitent thief, and it is as suitable to the design of Christ in His Epistle to the church of Ephesus (Rev. 2:7), *The tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God*, which are the only three places where the New Testament uses this word.

I know there have been great pains taken to show that the stops should be altered, and the comma should be placed after the word *today*, thus: *I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise*, sometime or other hereafter. As though Christ meant no more than this, "Thou askest Me to remember thee when I come into My kingdom: and I declare unto thee truly this very day, that some long time hereafter thou shalt be with Me in happiness at thy resurrection, when My kingdom shall be just at an end, and I shall give it all up to the Father" (see I Cor. 15:24). Can anyone imagine this to be the meaning of our blessed Saviour in answer to this prayer of the dying penitent? I know also there are other laborious criticisms to represent this word (*today*) in other places of Scripture as referring to some distant time, and not to mean that very day of twenty-four hours; but rather than enter into a long and critical debate upon all these texts, I will venture to trust. the sense of it in this place with any sincere and unlearned reader.

But if we consult the learned Dr. Whitby, he will tell us that it was a familiar phrase of the Jews to say on a just man's dying, "Today shall he sit in the bosom of Abraham"; and it was their opinion that the souls of the righteous, who were very eminent in piety, were carried immediately into paradise. The Chaldee paraphrase on Solomon's Song 4:12 takes some notice of the souls of the just, who are carried into paradise by the hands of angels. Grotius, in his notes on Luke 23:43 mentions the hearty and serious wish of the Jews concerning their friends who are dead, in the language of the Talmudical writers: "Let his soul be gathered to the garden of Eden"; and, in their solemn prayers, when one dies, "Let him have his portion in paradise, and also in the world to come"; by which they mean the state of the resurrection, and plainly distinguish it from this immediate entrance into Eden or Paradise at the hour of death. The Jews suppose Enoch to be

carried to paradise even in his body; and that the souls of good men have no interruption of life, but that there was a reward for blameless souls, as the Book of Wisdom speaks (2:22), "For God created man to be immortal, and to be an image of his own eternity," which seems to suppose blameless souls entering into this reward without interruption of their life. And, if this be the meaning of paradise among the Jews, doubtless our Saviour spake the words in such a known and common sense in which the penitent thief would easily and presently understand him; it being a promise of grace in his dying hour, wherein he had no long time to study hard for the sense of it, nor consult the critics in order to find the meaning.

We come now to consider the writings of Paul: and it is certain that the most natural and obvious sense of his words, in many places of his epistles, refers to a separate state of the souls after death. For, as he was a Pharisee in his sentiments of religion, so he seems to be something of a Platonist in philosophy, so far as Christianity admitted the same principles. Why then should it not be reasonably supposed, wherever he speaks of this subject, and speaks in their language too, that he means the same thing which the Pharisees and the Platonists believed, that is, the immortality and life of the soul in a separate state? But I proceed to the particular texts.

V. II Corinthians 5:6, 8: "Therefore we are always confident [or of good courage], knowing, that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The apostle (v. 4) seems to wish that he might be clothed upon at once with immortality in soul and body, without dying or being unclothed; but, since things are otherwise determined, then in the next place he would rather choose absence from the body that he might be present with the Lord. These words seem to me so plain, so express, and so unanswerable a proof of the spirits of good men existing in a separate state, and being present with the Lord when they are absent from the body at death, that I could never meet but with two ways of evading it.

The first is what a gentleman many years ago, who professed Christianity, acknowledged to me: that he believed Paul did mean, in this place, the same sense in which I have explained him; but he thought Paul might be mistaken in his opinion, for he was not of the apostle's mind in this point. I think I need not tarry to refute this answer; but I may make this remark upon it, that the sense of Paul concerning the separate state was so evident, in this place, that this man had rather differ from the apostle than deny this to be his meaning. All his prejudices against this doctrine could not hinder him from acknowledging that the apostle believed and taught it.

The second way of evading it is that this text, with one or two others of like kind, does indeed speak of the happiness of souls in a separate state, but it refers only to the apostles themselves, who had this peculiar favor and privilege granted them by Christ, to follow Him to paradise and enjoy His presence there, while the souls of other Christians were asleep, unconscious and inactive till the resurrection.

Answer 1. It is granted indeed, that several verses of this chapter, as well as in the former, have a peculiar reference to the ministers of Christ, and perhaps to the apostles who were his ambassadors; but there are many things in both these chapters that are perfectly applicable to every Christian, and the verses just before and just after this eighth verse may belong to all good men as well as to the apostles or ministers. *He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing* [for the happiness of the future state] *is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit*, at least as an enlightener and a sanctifier, if not as the author of special gifts, for Romans 8:9: *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* And verse 6, “Therefore we are always confident [or of good courage], knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight.” This is or should be the character of every Christian. And the ninth verse that follows it belongs to all the saints: “Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him; for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” Now why should we suppose that Paul excludes all other Christians besides himself and his brethren the apostles from the blessing of the eighth verse, that when they are absent from the body they shall be present with the Lord — since the verses all round it are applicable to all Christians?

Answer 2. These chapters were written with a design not only to vindicate and encourage the apostle himself under the sufferings and reproaches which he met with, but doubtless to give encouragement to the Corinthians, and all Christians, under any sufferings or reproaches they might meet with in the world; that (as he expresses it a little before) they might learn *to walk by faith, and to look at the things which are unseen, which are eternal.* And indeed if this peculiar blessing of the happiness of a separate state belongs only to the apostles, how much are the comforts of the New Testament narrowed and diminished, and the faith and hope of common Christians discouraged and enervated, and their motives to holiness weakened, when they are told that they have nothing to do to lay hold upon such promised favors, such revelations of grace, because they belong only to the apostles, and not to them.

And indeed how shall common Christians ever know what part of the epistles they may apply to themselves for their direction and consolation if they may not hope in such words of grace, where the holy writers use the word *we*, and do not plainly intimate that they belong to preachers or apostles only?

Answer 3. When our Saviour prays for Himself and His apostles in the beginning of the seventeenth chapter of John, he comes in the twentieth verse to extend the blessings he had prayed for to all believers. Verse 20: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Verse 24: “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.” Here it is evident that our Saviour prays that those that shall believe on Him through the word of the apostles may be present with Him in His kingdom to behold His glory; and is

not that a very considerable part of His glory, which the Father hath conferred upon Him, to be Lord and King and Head of His Church?

As for that final blaze of supreme glory wherein Christ shall appear at the day of judgment, when “he shall come in the glory of his Father and of his holy angels,” as well as his own (Mark 8:38), the sight of it shall be public and common to all the world, and not any peculiar favor to the saints.

It seems therefore most probable that it is only or chiefly in the separate state of souls departed that the saints have a special proise of beholding this mediatorial glory of Christ in His kingdom; and this favor our Saviour entreats of His Father for others that shall believe on Him, as well as for His apostles.

I might here take occasion to enquire whether every text which promises to other Christians, as well as to the apostles, a dwelling with Christ in His kingdom, must not have a more special reference to the glory of the separate state; and particularly that text in II Peter 1:11, “So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” This kingdom is often in Scripture called everlasting because it continues to the end of the world; and the abundant entrance into it very naturally refers to our departure from this life.

Answer 4. I cannot find any text of Scripture where this blessing of being present with the Lord after death in the separate state is limited only to the Apostles: I read not one word of such a peculiar favor promised them by Christ; and therefore, according to the current course of several other places of Scripture which have been here produced, I am persuaded it belongs to all true Christians, unless Paul in some plainer manner had limited it to himself and his twelve brethren, and secluded or forbade our hopes of it.

After all, if it be allowed that the apostles may enjoy the blessedness of a separate state before the resurrection, then there is such a thing as a separate state of happiness for souls. This precludes at once all the arguments against it that arise from the nature of things, and from any supposed impropriety in such a divine constitution: and since it is granted that there are millions of angels and several human spirits in this unbodied state, enjoying happiness, I see no reason why the rest of the unbodied spirits of saints departed should not be received to their society after death, unless there were some particular scriptures that excluded them from it.

VI. Philippians 1:23, 24: “For I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” When the apostle speaks here of his abiding in the flesh and his departing from the flesh, he declares the first was more needful for the Philippians, to promote religion in their hearts and lives; but the second would be better for himself, for he should be with Christ when he was departed from the flesh.

I would only ask any reasonable man to determine whether, when Paul speaks of his being with Christ after his departure from the flesh, he can suppose that the apostle did

not expect to see Christ till the resurrection, which he knew would be a considerable distance of time, though perhaps it has proved many hundred years longer than the apostle himself expected it. No; it is evident he hoped to *be present with the Lord* immediately as soon as he was *absent from the body*; otherwise, as I have hinted before, death to him would have been but of little gain, if he must have lain sleeping till the dead shall rise and have been cut off from his delightful service for Christ in the Gospel, and all the blessed communications of His grace. The objection which may arise here also from supposing this to be a peculiar favor granted to the apostles is answered just before.

VII. Hebrews 12:23: "Ye are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written [or registered] in heaven, to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." The Gospel or the Christian state brings good men into a nearer union and communion with the heavenly world, and the inhabitants thereof, than the Jewish state could do. Now the inhabitants of this upper world, this heavenly Jerusalem, are here reckoned up, God as the prime Lord or head; Jesus the Mediator, as the King of His Church; *the innumerable company of angels*, as ministers of His kingdom; *the general assembly* of God's favorites or children, who are called the *first-born*; perhaps this may refer in general to all the saints of all ages past and to come, whose names are written in the book of life in Heaven; and particularly to the separate spirits of just men who are departed from this world, and are made perfect in the heavenly state. The criticisms that are used to put other senses upon these words seem to carry them away so far from their more plain and obvious meaning that I can hardly think they are the meaning of the apostle; for it would be of very little use for a common Christian to read these verses of divine consolation and grace if he could take no comfort from them till he had learned those critical and distant expositions of such plain language.

It has been indeed objected against the plain sense of this text that the spirits of the just or good men are not yet made perfect in Heaven, because the same apostle (Heb. 11:39, 40) says, *These all, the saints of the Old Testament, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.* Now these had been dead for many generations, yet they received not the promises, nor were made perfect. Thus saith the objection.

But the evident meaning of this text is that they lived and died in the faith of many promises, some of which were to be fulfilled after their days here on earth, but were not fulfilled in their lifetime. They did not enjoy the privileges and blessings of the Gospel of the Messiah in that perfect manner in which we do since the Messiah is actually come and has fulfilled these promises, and by His death, or offering Himself, as the same apostle expresses it, *forever perfected them that are sanctified* (Heb. 10: 14). But all this does by no means preclude their existence and happiness in a separate state as spirits made perfect, that is, in a perfect freedom from all sin and sorrow; though it is probable

this very state of comparative perfection might have several degrees of joy added to it at the ascension of Christ, and will have many more at the resurrection from the dead.

VIII. II Peter 1: 13: "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle." Here it is evident that the person who thinks it meet to stir up Christians to their duty has a tabernacle belonging to him and which he must shortly put off. The soul or thinking principle of the apostle Peter, which is here supposed to be himself, is so plainly distinguished from the tabernacle of the body in which he dwelt for a season, and which he must put off shortly, that most evidently implies an existence of this thinking soul very distinct from the body, and which will exist when the body is laid aside. Surely the conscious being and its tabernacle or dwelling-place are two very distinct things, and the conscious being exists when he puts off his present dwelling.

After all these arguments from Scripture let me mention one which is derived partly from reason and partly from the sacred records, which seems to carry some weight with it.

The doctrine of rewards and punishments in a separate state of souls has been one of the very chief principles or motives whereby virtue and religion have been maintained in this sinful world throughout all former ages and nations, and under the several dispensations of God among men, till the resurrection of the body was fully revealed. Now it is scarcely to be supposed that such a doctrine, which God, in the course of His providence, has made use of as a chief principle and motive of religion and virtue, through all the world which had any true virtue and in all ages before Christianity, should be a false doctrine. Let us prove the first proposition by a view of the several ages of mankind and dispensations of religion.

The heathen, who have had nothing else but the light of nature to guide them, could have no notion at all of the resurrection of the body. Therefore, not only the wisest and best of them, but perhaps the bulk of mankind among the Gentiles, at least in Europe and Asia, if not in Africa and America also, who have been taught by priests and poets, and the public opinions of their nations and traditions of their ancestors, have generally supposed such a separate state after this life, wherein their souls should be rewarded or punished, except where the fancy of transmigration prevailed; and even these very transmigrations into other bodies, namely of dogs, or horses, or men, were assigned as speedy rewards or punishments of their behavior in this life.

Now, though this doctrine of immediate recompenses could not be proved by them with certainty and clearness, and had many follies mingled with it, yet the probable expectation of it, so far as it has obtained among men, has had a good degree of influence, through the conduct of common providence, to keep the world in some tolerable order and prevent universal irregularities and excesses of the highest degree, it has had some force on the conscience, to restrain the enormous wickedness of men.

The patriarchs of the first ages, whose history is related in Scripture, had no notion of the resurrection of the body expressly revealed to them, that we can find; and it must be

the hope of such a state of recompense of their souls after death that influenced their practice of piety, if they were not informed that their bodies should rise again.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had no plain and distinct promise of the resurrection of the body: yet it is said (Heb. 11:14): "They received the promises, that is, of some future happiness, and embraced them, and confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on earth, whereby they plainly declared, that they sought some other country, that is, an heavenly, and God hath prepared a city for them." What city, what heavenly country, can this be, which they themselves sought after, but the city or country of separate souls or paradise, where good men are rewarded and God is their God, if they had no plain promises or views of a resurrection of the body? And indeed they had a very plain and express promise of such a resurrection to encourage their faith and obedience, if they had no notion or belief of a separate state, or a heavenly country, whither their souls should go at their death.

Job seems to have some bright glimpses of resurrection in chapter 19, but this was far above the level of the dispensation wherein he lived, and a peculiar and distinguishing favor granted to him under his uncommon and peculiar sufferings.

In the institution of the Jewish religion by Moses, there is no express mention of a resurrection; we suppose that their hope of a future state was chiefly such as they could gain from the light of nature and learn by traditions from their fathers, or from unwritten instructions. For, though our Saviour improves the words of God to Moses in the bush, *I am the God of Abraham . . .*, so far as to prove a resurrection from them, yet we can hardly suppose the Israelites could carry it any further than merely to the happiness of Abraham's soul, in some separate state; and thence came the notion of departed souls of good men *going to the bosom of Abraham*.

I grant that David in his Psalms, Isaiah and Daniel in their prophecies, have some hints of the resurrection of the body; but this does not seem to have been the common principle or support of virtue and goodness, or a general article of belief, among the Jews in the early ages.

In the days of the later prophets and after their return from Babylon, I confess the Jews had some notions of a resurrection; but they also retained their opinion of the righteous souls being at rest with God in a separate state before the resurrection. See the Book of Wisdom III:1, 2, 3, 4: "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure is taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction; but they are in peace; for, though they be perished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality. [IV. 7.] Though the righteous be prevented with death, yet they shall be in rest."

That this was the most common doctrine of the Jews, except the Sadducees and their followers in our Saviour's time, and that it was the doctrine of the primitive Christians

also need not be proved here; though they also had the expectation of the resurrection of the body.

Now, if this is the chief or only doctrine which men could attain to under the dispensation of natural reason, as the most powerful motive to virtue and piety; if this is the chiefest doctrine of that kind that we know of, which the patriarchs and primitive Jews enjoyed; if this also is a constant doctrine of later Jews, that is, the wisest and best of them, and also of the primitive Christians, which had so much influence on the good behavior of all of them toward God and men, and by which God carried on His work of piety in their hearts and lives, and by which also He impressed the consciences of evil men, in some measure, and restrained them from their utmost excesses of vice and wickedness, is it not hard to suppose that this doctrine is all mere fancy and delusion and has nothing of truth in it? And indeed, if this doctrine had been taken away, the heathen would be left without any possible true notion of a future state of recompense; and the patriarchs seem to have had no sufficient principle or motive to virtue and piety left them; and the principles and motives of goodness in the following ages among Jews and Christians, had been greatly diminished and enfeebled.

At the conclusion of this chapter I cannot help taking notice, though I shall but just mention it, that the multitude of narratives which we have heard of in all ages, of the apparition of the spirits or ghosts of persons departed from this life, can hardly be all delusion and falsehood. Some of them have been affirmed to appear upon such great and important occasions as may be equal to such an unusual event; and several of these accounts have been attested by such witnesses of wisdom, and prudence, and sagacity, under no distempers of imagination, that they may justly demand a belief; and the effects of these apparitions in the discovery of murders and things unknown, have been so considerable and useful that a fair disputant should hardly venture to run directly counter to such a cloud of witnesses without some good assurance on the contrary side. He must be a shrewd philosopher indeed, who upon any other hypothesis can give a tolerable account of all the narratives in Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus*, or Baxter's *World of Spirits and Apparitions*. Though I will grant some of these stories have but insufficient proof, yet, if there be but one real apparition of a departed spirit, then the point is gained that there is a separate state.

And, indeed, the Scripture itself seems to mention such sort of ghosts or appearances of souls departed (Matt. 14:26). When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they *thought it had been a spirit*. Also Luke 24:36; after His resurrection they saw Him at once appearing in the midst of them, *and they supposed they had seen a spirit*; and our Saviour does not contradict their notion, but argues with them upon the supposition of the truth of it: *A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have*. The word *spirit* seems to signify the apparition of a departed soul, where it is said (Acts 23:8), *The Sadducees say, There is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit*; and verse 9, *If a spirit or an angel hath spoken to this man*. A spirit here is plainly distinct from an angel, and what can it mean but an apparition of a human soul which has left the body?

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