

Brief Notice of G. Cox's Thirty-six Reasons Against the Immortality of the Soul

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1. God's word nowhere teaches nor hints that the soul of man is, as his body now, mortal through sin. We read of the "mortal body," never of the mortal soul, though God only could be said to have immortality. Man's soul is only immortal through God's will, who was pleased to constitute Adam a living soul by breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. The lord Jesus is never said to confer on his people an immortal soul, but eternal life. This the believer has now in him, as he will have it for the body when Christ comes to change it into his glorious likeness.

2. It is neither his immortal soul nor original sin which involves man in endless misery and torment, but his own sins — above all, his unbelief and rejection of Christ.

3. The immortality of the soul is perfectly consistent with the death of man through sin.

4. Nothing can be more tremendous and humiliating than an endless duration of exclusion from God, with the accompanying punishment of self-reproach.

5. Scripture teaches not that death is the whole wages of sin, but that judgement must follow (Heb. 9: 27), when the wicked are raised and cast into the lake of fire — the second death — where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

6. "By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin." The creature thus falling was the author of sin, not the immortality of the soul, still less God, though He will justly condemn man's guilt the more because of his privileges and His own mercy despised.

7. Lev. 17: 11 does not refer to the human soul, but to the animals through the blood of which atonement was made in the ancient sacrificial system. Adam's soul had a wholly different character and an infinitely higher source, according to Gen. 2: 7. His death closes his present existence in this world, but is as consistent with the immortality of the soul as with the resurrection of the body.

8. If soul and body joined in sin, to think of the death of the body only is not the way to give full value to the cross of Christ, who "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." It was the divine glory of his person that gave infinite efficacy to His blood, who, for us, knew what it was to be forsaken of God in bearing the intolerable burden of sin.

9. It is untrue that the immortality of the soul make's only a human sacrifice of Christ's death. The inward soul-sufferings of His atoning death were as much beyond His outward humiliation and agony as the soul is deeper and higher than the body; but the divine value of His sacrifice flows not from His soul (for He had a spirit, soul and body as man) but from His Deity, who was the eternal Word and only-begotten Son before He was pleased to be born of the Virgin. Is it really meant that in His death His soul died? May God preserve G. Cox and his readers from blasphemy!

10. Undoubtedly Christ has annulled death and brought life and incorruption to light by the Gospel, these blessings being but dimly seen before. But how is all this destroyed by the immortality of the soul, which adds to the horror and the doom of those who believe not? It is folly to say that the Gospel is a delusion if a soul exists for ever in misery for rejecting it.

11. The immortality of the soul is not responsible for all that its advocates say, but thoroughly

consistent with every literal and figurative description which Scripture gives of lost souls in hell. But it is a mistake to apply Ps. 31: 17, 1 Sam. 2: 9, Ps. 63: 11, Matt. 22: 13, to souls in torment.

12. It is not the souls immortality which contradicts itself, but G. Cox, who seems to quarrel with the Scriptural employment of imagery drawn from the present life to convey a vivid impression of anguish or bliss in the future, and even the separate state, as in Luke 16: 23-26.

13. The soul's immortality is in no way the cause or even occasion of the wicked notation of saving ordinances; for sound men holding it believe that by Christ's grace all infants will be saved through redemption. Catholic theology is the true culprit.

14. It is Christ who (before He commended His spirit to the Father's hands — so little did death touch *it*) teaches that the soul even of a converted robber was to be with Him in Paradise on that very day that the man died on a gibbet; so Stephen (Acts 7: 59, 60), and Paul (2 Cor. 5: 8, Phil. 1: 23). Nor does this heavenly blessedness of the separate spirit do away entirely or in any measure with the necessity for the resurrection of life; for Christ, the firstfruits, is a Saviour of the body as well as of the soul. *This* we have (1 Peter 1: 9); *that* we wait for (Phil. 3: 20, 21).

15. Our Lord Himself shows that the wicked not only wait for their resurrection to judgement, but are at once after death "tormented in this flame" (Luke 16: 22-25). Doubtless their lot will be still more awful when the resurrection of the unjust arrives, and eternal judgement has consigned them, soul and body, to perdition. This is no question of argument, but of divine revelation.

16. Scripture teaches man's pre-eminence over other animals, not in death (for all alike die), but, among other respects, in the nature of his soul and spirit. Even Ecclesiastes, which most assimilates them (Eccles. 3: 19, 20), in the same passage points out their all-important distinctness (Eccles. 3: 21). Man in virtue of his soul and spirit — man alone of animals — is responsible to God. His spirit goes upwards, not downwards to the Earth like a beast's though man's body was made of the dust of the ground, and so far, has nothing to boast over a beast or a bird. (Gen. 2: 7, 19).

17. While "soul" and "spirit" then are used both of man and of beast, it is false that they are used "indiscriminately," even as the origin has been shown to be distinct for only into Adam's nostrils is Jehovah Elohim said to have breathed, not into the beast's. Hence creatures can only kill the body; they are not able to kill the soul. God only is to be feared, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10: 28). If this does not prove the immortality of the soul, it is hard to say what could, as every upright reader of the Bible will soon learn that "destruction" there never means annihilation, but an existence of utter ruin and misery in separation from God. Mortality is never predicated of the soul, save as it means a living man in this world who dies. To argue thence to the separate soul after death is sophistry, and beneath an honest man. Thus "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," means, according to the style so familiar in the Old and New Testaments, that the living man who sins shall die, it is "the soul (*i.e.* the person) that sinneth," not the soul of him who sins, as it is assumed falsely by those who argue against the immortality of the soul. So, in our ordinary language, when people talk of "a kind soul," or "the poor soul," they speak of a living person, not of the question of an immaterial principle, however true this may be.

18. There is no doubt that God's moral character is at stake; but whether those who affirm or deny the immortality of man's soul compromise it is another matter. I am sure that His truth is everywhere harmonious and plain against those who debase man to the level of a beast, even as to his soul.

19. The immortality of the soul does not necessitate an antedating of the judgement-seat of Christ, as has been shown already; but G. Cox wrongly puts all off after death till that day.

20. The soul's immortality flows from God's constitution of it. Scripture nowhere attributes it to God's gift of grace through faith in Christ. Eternal life, either now or at the end, is wholly distinct. The only passage which can be alleged is 2 Tim 1: 10, where "immortality" should unquestionably be "incorruption," and refers to the body raised or changed.

21. Scripture derives the soul of man, as man, from the inbreathing of God, apart from the dealings of His saving mercy in Christ. In this sense, as the apostle applied it (Acts 17: 28), all men, even the heathen, are His offspring. In Him all live. He is the God and Father of all, though He be only *in* all His saints (Eph. 4: 6).

22. Those who hold the soul's immortality equally insist on God's power to destroy soul and body in hell, not those who imagine the soul's dying with the body.

23. Man's spiritual nature makes him capable of eternal misery if he persist in refusing God revealed in Christ and His redemption, as it exposes him to the wiles of the devil in spiritualism, superstition, infidelity, and every other snare. This however, is not remedied by Sadduceanism, complete or partial, but by the truth of God and His grace.

24. Purgatory may be another perversion, but even that unbelieving fable is scarcely so disastrous as the debasing denial of the soul's immortality.

25. So with the unholy dream of Universalism. Slighting sin and loving it have more to do with it than even the abuse of the soul's immortality.

26. So with infidelity, or the more open profane form of scepticism. Refusal to believe God where his truth clashes, as it must, with man's thought's and will, is it's root, not the soul's immortality.

27. It is well to avoid terms not found in Scripture, but it is fatal to reject the truth — say of the Trinity, because it is not so expressed in the Bible. So with the soul's immortality. Everlasting punishment or fire seems to me quite as strong as "endless torments" or "eternal pain." What is gained by captiousness like this?

28. Not the doctrine of an immortal soul, but tradition, as such, tends to non-natural interpretation of scripture. This might be urged by any opponent of the world-church, and has no just application to the point in hand, though it may apply to some defenders of it.

29. The charge of paving the way for Secularism is only another form of reason 26; as, indeed, several of those statements are, at bottom, the same objection over and over again.

30. So the repetition of 14 and 19 re-appears substantially here. The answer is, that the believer's spirit does depart to be with Christ immediately after death; while we also expect to appear with Christ when he appears in glory, and to reign with him. Both are true. Traditionalism abuses the former to lose sight of the latter; while G. Cox's unbelief abuses the latter to deny and deride the former. Both are bad; but the denier of the soul's immortality is, in my judgement, much the worst.

31. Does G. Cox mean to insinuate the extinction of the devil's existence, or that of his children? All Christians hold that the Son of God is the destined destroyer of Satan's works; but that this means the annihilation of the enemy, or his hosts, or his instruments, human or angelic, is an unscriptural figment, of which no proof is even attempted.

32. When the results of the redemptive work of Christ are complete, in the view which God's word gives of the eternal state (Rev. 21: 1-8), we see evil, not extinguished, but separate from good and punished for ever. Scripture gives no prospect of and ulterior change. All the enemies are destroyed;

but they exist, not rampant, but tormented in the lake of fire.

33. The soul's immortality involves no such consequence as men becoming angels, demons, or any other order of beings; on the contrary, it is the basis of personal identity, when the resurrection arrives, the soul lasting unchanged through the various stages of man's existence — living, dead, and risen — makes him to be the same being. If the soul perishes at death, it is not the same person, but two different men, even if the absolutely same materials were used. We have already seen that the passage cited from Eccles. 3: 19-21, to prove a dissolution of man's whole being into dust, really teaches, in the spiritual part of his being, a contrast with the beasts; for man's spirit goes upward. The Gospel, too, brings life as well as incorruption to light. Dead saints do not lose life eternal any more than their spirits; they await the Lord's coming again to raise their bodies.

34. The soul's immortality is a truth common to Jews and Christians — a question for the moralists among pagans — a certainty for the believer in the divine oracles. The denial of it, far from being true or godly, puts all who take up so dismal a notion with the sensual and sceptical of all ages, including Papists and Protestants, priests and popes themselves, who had not the fear of God.

35. This, again, is scarce more than a rehearsal of the stale charge, unfounded and contrary to the evident facts, that the soul's immortality gives ground to doubt the authenticity of the revelation, etc. On the contrary, the assumption of the soul's immortality directly tends to undermine the fear of Him who has far more that He can do beyond killing the body. "The soul that sinneth it *shall* die" does not so much as touch the question of the soul's separate and continued existence after death. No more does Rom. 6: 23. The separate state is neither denied nor affirmed. But I have shown it certainly proved by Luke 16 and other Scriptures.

36. The longest objection requires but a few words. It is abuse of God for casting unbelievers into hell; the sting is in the tail. There will be differences of punishments as of reward. But most miserable will he be who has calumniated God's truth and weakened His fear, to the emboldening of sinners, already, without such help, careless enough about the Lord and their own souls.