

MSB244

MORE Seed and Bread

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

Otis Q. Sellers, Founder - David R. Hetteema, Director

THE STUDY OF HUMAN DESTINY

A Testimony and an Appeal, By Otis O. Sellers

Book Review By Milton B. Hammond

The Study of Human Destiny was written by the late Otis Q. Sellers as an appeal to all professing Christians to reexamine and to restudy this important subject. In his work the author refers to Psalm 8:4, *What is man?* and Job 14:14, *If a man die, shall he live again?* to show that by inspiration of God these questions have been placed before every believer. He states simply, *"The revelation of Scripture concerning the nature and destiny of man is not yet understood. If it is ever understood in this era it will be because free and faithful men have dedicated themselves to the assiduous and progressive study of these subjects."* He goes into detail to show how his own background and training in the traditional ideas of religion kept him from dealing honestly with these topics for over 10 years. He had an optimism that, if he could learn from the Bible, so could others. He says, *"The time may very soon come when many of those who today appear only as superficial converts will turn to men who profess to know and teach the Word of God and demand of them to be told what the Bible has to say about the nature and destiny of man."* He then adds a warning, *"If this should happen, the man who teaches the Word will fail God if he attempts to pass on to them the confused and illogical errors of the Platonic philosophy of the nature of man. He will also fail God if he attempts to persuade them of the correctness of the Augustinian view of eternal conscious torment. He says "The facts are in the Word of God, but we must find the facts and then fit them into an honest formula that will speak the truth when it is presented."*

Sellers provides a testimony and background on his personal Christian experience, the early years of preaching on street corners, a message handed him by others, only a smattering of the truth, and his Bible Institute training,

the questions it developed. He goes on telling of his early pastorate experience which he considers a complacent state of affairs. Then he began to question many things about his role and became an avid student of the Bible. He knew he had not found the real answers to the questions raised in his schooling years, and many explanations given him were not compatible with the Scriptures they were supposed to explain. He gave up being orthodox and so set himself up as a heretic in the eyes of many, but to quote him, *"I can now say in all humility that my one desire and one goal was the truth"*.

Sellers sets forth twelve propositions that are, in his opinion, sufficient to demonstrate the imperative need for restudy and reexamination of the entire subject of man's nature and destiny. This booklet is not attempting to explain his findings of over 50 years of study, but rather it is a call to awaken other believers to the need for study. He concludes, *"I believe the lake of fire is penal and not remedial. I do not believe in any form of universal salvation, restoration, or universal reconciliation. Now go to the Book and let the Scriptures speak."*

Prop. 1. People are again seeking for the fresh and pure water from the living foundation of God's Word in regard to these subjects.

As we seek to deliver men from the bondage of tradition on every other subject should not we be delivered from tradition on the nature and destiny of man? What do words like *sheol, hades, gehenna, destruction, perish, torment, paradise* and *heaven* really mean? Unless we have clear, unambiguous definitions of these words as they are used in Scripture we are always deprived of the truth.

Prop. 2. In regard to man's nature and destiny, vast spheres of revelation have been disregarded, and this has resulted in the confusion which part-truth engenders.

For example there are hundreds of positive references to the word *heaven* in Scripture, but it seems that none of these are ever considered by men in forming opinions about the meanings. It can refer to a place, but also the beings that inhabit that place. It also can be a name for God; the contexts give evidence of how it is used.

Prop. 3. The commonly accepted views on man's destiny were developed by a process that eliminated the greater part of the Word of God from the witness stand.

Many Christians have the idea that the Old Testament revelation is not pertinent today. They claim that the record of Ecclesiastes is not the inspired record and discount the account of creation. If the New and Old Testament accounts are not in agreement, we have more research to do for the same God inspired them both.

Prop. 4. The results of Biblical research have not been allowed to shed their light upon the great subjects of man's nature and man's destiny.

During the past century much labor has been expended upon the task of uncovering and recovering the truth. God has inspired men who have provided us excellent, sharp tools such as Concordances, Lexicons and Versions of the Bible. More manuscripts have been discovered and textual criticism has grown. However, these have not been allowed to shed their light because they might throw doubt on dogmas held for hundreds of years and then have to be labeled as "heresy."

Prop. 5. Christendom as a whole has no definition of the soul that conforms to the revealed facts of Scripture, and it has no teaching upon the subject that is in harmony with the Word of God.

Martin Luther and J. N. Darby are quoted as questioning the Roman Catholic doctrine of the immortality of the soul. J. Gresham Machen is quoted as stating that the tripartite (body, soul and spirit) nature of man had no significant foundation in Scripture.

Prop. 6. The statements of many respected Christian leaders and thinkers reveal that the matter of man's nature and destiny needs to be restudied.

Just as most common views about Satan have come to us from writers of great literature (e.g. Dante/Milton), so also commonly held views about the soul come to us from Plato and not from the Word of God. The Bible speaks of souls dying, and of dead souls, but never once of an immortal soul. Early apologists (first five centuries AD.) spent most of their time and energies seeking to reconcile Christianity with Greek philosophy. Thus the Bible was twisted to teach the ideas of Plato concerning the soul.

Prop. 7. It is quite evident to anyone who has gained some familiarity with the Biblical facts concerning the subjects that the present generation of ministers has no accurate teaching about the subject of future punishment.

Future punishment for sins committed in this life is certainly taught in

Scripture. However, the silence of the majority of ministers on this subject is appalling, and those who do declare it do not give evidence of having obtained it from the Holy Writ. Is *gehenna* the second death?

Prop. 8. Since God has spoken concerning death, it becomes our duty to give earnest heed to all that He has said and to be found believing His testimony concerning it.

God always associates life with good and death with evil. He declares that the wages of sin is death yet men continue to make death a desirable state with such words as "depart and be with Christ" or "going to be with the Lord." Death should not be exalted as an entrance to the blessings of God when He calls it an enemy.

Prop. 9. The generally accepted view of death makes the grand experience of resurrection to be an anti-climax, and, of no essential value to the believer.

If death ushers the believer into the presence of Christ, then resurrection cannot add anything or even compare with this experience. If the orthodox teaching on death is true, then the good dead will be happy in heaven and the evil dead miserable in hell, whether they rise from the dead or not. Such does not seem to be the message of Scripture.

Prop. 10. The coarse, repulsive, medieval doctrine of hell that was proclaimed for many centuries has been abandoned by most men as being out of harmony with the character of God as revealed in His Word.

It is true that few today preach hell-fire and damnation, but what does Scripture say? There still is a lake of fire and a second death. How do these come in, and what happened to eternal conscious torment?

Prop. 11. The teaching that the punishment of the unrighteous begins at death is a very serious blot on the justice of God.

If this is true, then Cain, who died about six thousand years ago, has endured six millenniums more punishment than the murderer who is executed today. If two men with equal crimes were sentenced one for five years and the other for ten years, we would cry out against such a miscarriage of justice. Is this God's idea of justice?

Prop. 12. The contention that God's holiness is of such nature that His justice can never be satisfied by anything save eternal conscious suffering, as the penalty for sins, needs to carefully examined.

If we want to know about God's wrath against sin, we need to look at the Cross. We learn from this that our God does punish sin, but we learn also that the wages of sin is death, not eternal conscious torment. God is creating a world that will be governed in righteousness someday.

Sellers concludes with a little of his own findings in Scripture: "After a most careful and exhaustive study of every one of the 859 occurrences of the Hebrew and Greek words that mean *soul*, I believe the dead are dead until they are resurrected. I believe that whatsoever punishment the wicked dead receive at the great white throne will be eternal. It will never be altered or changed."

Ask for the original 24 page booklet by Otis Q Sellers, it is available.

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