

# **The Soul and Eternal Punishment**

**Matthew 10:28**

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## Introduction

The Watchtower Society has about 6.7 million members and their rate of expansion is approximately 1.5%. Jehovah's Witnesses baptize close to 250,000 people each year and their converts are then trained to proselytize others. Many of those who study with the Witnesses changed their religion quite quickly after having been visited only a short time. The methodology employed by the Witnesses is very simple. First, the Witnesses will leave their literature in homes and then return to begin a discussion based upon a Watchtower book or pamphlet. The subjects taken up with newly contacted individuals usually center on such things as: God will put an end to all wars, a future life in a restored earthly paradise, the Trinity or the soul. Due to the fact that the majority of Christian people are not trained to discuss these matters, especially topics like the Trinity or the soul, the Jehovah's Witnesses easily turn these discussions to their advantage. With great conviction, they will state that the Bible does NOT teach what people (Protestants or Catholics) have been brought up to believe. According to the Watchtower Society, these are very simple subjects which anybody can easily understand.

Simplistic arguments are employed and the unlearned are led to accept what has been proved true thanks to the documentation provided in the Watchtower Society's books and magazines. This is why a detailed discussion of the Jehovah's Witnesses' teachings on this and other subjects is important to Christians who seek to dialogue with them. Christians need to have concern and empathy for Jehovah's Witnesses who are sincere, but in error. The purpose of this article is to help Christians meet the challenge thrust upon them by the Jehovah's Witnesses and others that hold similar beliefs on the soul (i.e. Adventism, Christadelphianism, etc.). Truth is a matter of life and death because it does affect our relationship with God (Deut. 30:19, 20; John 8:32).

When discussing doctrinal differences, remember that during the Arian controversies (of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries), only a *iota* (Greek letter "i") separated the opposing sides. What sometimes seems to be nothing more than a small detail can often make all the difference in the world. This is why I have chosen to consult lexicons and reference works. Jehovah's Witnesses admit that we should do this:

"But what does the Bible really teach about the soul? To find out, we need to examine the meanings of the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated "soul" in the Bible." ("What Happens to Us When We Die?" Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, Brooklyn, 1998, p. 19).

Matthew 10:28 is an important passage on life, death and the soul, and the JWs (i.e. Jehovah's Witnesses) will usually bring it up and explain that hell is not really a place we

should fear. I want to say right away that the true teaching about hell is nothing like what the JWs imagine Christians teach. Because the matter before us is the soul, I shall not go into much depth about what hell is and why men go there; this would be a topic for another article.

Consequently, my intention is to take up the Jehovah's Witnesses' belief that the soul ceases to exist at death. A complete treatment of the historical, theological and philosophical ideas relative to the nature of the soul is far beyond the limits of this article which is written for the average person. Hopefully this article will be easily understood by everyone. Should anyone desire more information, he or she is invited to consult his church leaders and reputable theological sources.

Sadly, Jehovah's Witnesses attract many fine people through their teachings concerning the soul and hell. A superficial reading of their literature might leave one with the impression that their arguments are plausible, even convincing. Such a possibility calls for a serious examination of the Watchtower Society's teachings. This is the task before us.

## The Christian Hope

What is eternal life? Is there life after death? What do the Scriptures set forth as the Christian's hope after death (Eph. 4:4)? These and other questions are dealt with in that section of theological studies called *eschatology* (study of last things). Briefly, a Christian who has been born anew, from above, has become a child of God (John 3:3). The apostle Paul informed the Galatian believers: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27, *NKJ*). A Christian will spend eternity with Jesus Christ. A number of passages from the Holy Scriptures are listed below to substantiate this thought. The italics will draw attention to certain key phrases. Although these texts inform our Christian faith, they don't exhaust all possible avenues of argument. Hopefully, they are sufficiently clear for most readers. They have been taken from the *King James Version* published several hundred years before the Watchtower Society was organized.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. *I go to prepare a place for you*. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and *receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also* (John 14:1-3)

And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that *he may abide with you for ever . . .*; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:16-17).

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and *where I am, there shall also my servant be* (Jn 12:26; compare John 17:24).

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them *eternal life; and they shall never perish*, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:27-28).

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and *joint-heirs with Christ*; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. . . . For I am persuaded, that *neither death*, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, *nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God*, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:16-17, 38-39).

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house, not made with hands, *eternal in the heavens*. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. . . . We are confident, I say, and willing rather *to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*. (2 Cor. 5:1-3, 8).

For me to live is Christ, and *to die is gain . . .* having a desire *to depart and to be with Christ*; which is much better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. (Phil. 1:21-24).

And this is the record [witness], that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. *He that hath the Son hath life*; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:11-12).

## Comments

Eternal life is God's gift to us in and through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-10; John 6:47) and it is called a *washing*, a *new birth* (Titus 3:5-6; John 3:3-5). The Scriptures tell us that we are made righteous and adopted as children of God: "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11). The Holy Spirit who begets us as children of God unites us to Christ, making us joint-heirs with Christ. Death will not separate us from the wonderful love of God (Romans chapter 8). It is true that even death can be considered a gain to a Christian who will be clothed with immortality at the Last Judgment and who will receive a new body, incorruptible, fitted for life in the presence of God and his angels. Because our Christian faith is founded upon such promises, how could we ever consider jettisoning it for Watchtower propaganda?

The New Testament describes *one* hope, *one* calling, to abide forever with God (Eph. 4:4; John 14:1-3); Jehovah's Witnesses tell us that there are two hopes because there are two different groups of believers in Christ and each group is called to a *different* hope! This is *absolutely contrary* to Christ's teaching that there is one fold, one shepherd (John 10:16). It contradicts the apostle's teaching that Christians share one hope, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 2:11-18; 4:4-5; Gal. 3:26-29). Christ's death has put an end to the division that existed before his coming, that is, the separation between Jews and Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:14, 15).

Jehovah's Witnesses used their book *Let God Be True* [during the 1950s] to tear me away from Catholicism. "What is Man?" was a key chapter for me and for this reason I have mostly based the following discussion upon it. Regarding man and the soul, *Let God Be True*<sup>1</sup> states:

So we see that the claim of religionists that man has an immortal soul and therefore differs from the beast is not Scriptural. The Bible shows that both man and beast are souls.... [...] The first man, Adam, was created a living soul, and nowhere is it stated that he was given an immortal soul. [...] There is not one Bible text that states the human soul is immortal. Let us abide by the facts of God's Word, and not by the philosophies of men.

A more recent statement by the Watchtower Society is found in their brochure "What Happens to Us When We Die?":

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<sup>1</sup> *Let God Be True*, rev. ed. 1952 (Brooklyn, WTB&TS, 1946), pp. 68-69.

In the Bible the word “soul” applies not only to humans but also to animals. . . . At times, the word “soul” refers to the life that a person or an animal enjoys. This does not alter the Bible’s definition of the soul as a person or an animal.”<sup>2</sup>

## Reasoning

First comment: *Let God Be True* affirms “nowhere is it stated” and “not one Bible text” should be identified as phrases underpinning JW propositions and methodology.

We intend to hold the Jehovah’s Witnesses accountable to their own rules. For example: Is there one passage in the Bible that states that *The Watchtower* magazine is the only authorized interpreter of the Bible? Although no such passage exists, the Witnesses believe everything *The Watchtower* teaches. Doctrinal changes made in the pages of *The Watchtower* are received as “new light” from Jehovah God. We may surmise therefore that an appeal to statements like “nowhere is it stated” and “not one Bible text” (in *Let God Be True*) lack substance.

Second comment: In Jesus’ time, the Book of Wisdom (which was printed in the first copies of the *Authorized* (or *King James*) *Bible*, 1611) was found among the books contained in the Greek version of the Scriptures. Although, I don’t consider this book to be part of the biblical canon, at least it offers a testimony of Jewish beliefs in Christ’s time. This book is found in both the Catholic and Orthodox bibles.

For God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity (ft. “f” *nature*). But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. *In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died*, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of men they were punished, *their hope is full of immortality*. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself. . . . and the faithful will abide with him in love, . . . But the ungodly will be punished as their reasoning deserves, who disregarded the righteous man and rebelled against the Lord.

(Wisdom 2:23; 3:1-10; *RSV*, Catholic edition, emphasis added).

Evidently, the Jews of that day, considered *immortality* a reward for faithfulness and they presumed that the wicked were liable to punishment after death (cf. Rev. 14:10-11).

Although there are a few points where I might possibly agree with the JWs, unfortunately, they teach a number of ideas which I must reject. For instance, in their treatment of the soul and hell, they build their case almost entirely upon passages from

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<sup>2</sup> *What Happens to Us When We Die?* (Brooklyn, WTB&TS, 1998), p. 20.

the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> Yes, it is true that the Bible does not teach humans are immortal (i.e. indestructible) beings, because according to St Paul, immortality (or indestructibility) is an attribute of God alone (1 Tim. 6:15-16); but God himself assures us that our bodies will rise immortal in the resurrection of the just (John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:53-54) on the Last Day. Two more testimonies should be considered: the first one is from the *First Letter of John* and the other is from the apostle Paul:

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears *we shall be like him*, for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:1-2; emphasis mine).

And now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and *immortality to light through the gospel* (2 Tim. 1:10; emphasis mine).

## Methodology

First comment: Did God reveal everything he had to say in Genesis, or even Ezekiel or Malachi? Who would deny that revelation is linear, progressive? Students of the Bible agree that the Old Testament should be interpreted in the light of the New Testament. The knowledge available to the patriarchs was sufficient for them and their situation at that time, but since then God has spoken to mankind through his Son (Heb. 1:1-3) granting us a clearer and fuller understanding of things (2 Cor. 3:14-18). We acknowledge that the topic of the soul is a difficult area and obliges us to be all the more prudent in our studies. A standard Greek lexicon under the entry *soul*, explains: "Soul, life; it is oft[en] impossible to draw hard and fast lines betw[een] the meanings of this many-sided word."<sup>4</sup>

Metropolitan Hierotheos, an Orthodox bishop and a native of Greece, in his book *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, quotes Professor Christos Yannaras, a theologian, who writes:

The Septuagint translators of the Old Testament carried over into Greek with the word 'psyche' ('soul') the Hebrew 'nephesh', a term with many meanings. Anything which has life is called a soul, every animal, but more commonly within the Scripture it pertains to man. It signifies the way in which life is manifested in man. It does not refer just to one department of human existence—but signifies the whole man, as a single living hypostasis. The soul does not merely dwell in the body, but is expressed by the body, which itself, like the flesh or heart, corresponds to our ego, to the way in which we realise

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<sup>3</sup> See for example the article "What Happens to the Soul at Death?" in *What Happens to Us When We Die?*, pages 20-24, where all the passages quoted are taken from the Old Testament except one (John 11:11).

<sup>4</sup> Arndt and Gingrich, trans. *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Walter Bauer's 4th revised and augmented edition, 1952 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), p. 901.

life. A man is a soul, he is a human being, he is someone....” “The soul is not the cause of life. It is, rather, the bearer of life.”<sup>5</sup>

Metropolitan Hierotheos explains further, “Soul is the life which exists in every creature, as in plants and animals. Soul is the life that exists in man, and it is also every man who has life.” Later on [page 99] he adds that the soul is “mortal by nature but immortal by grace.”<sup>6</sup> This may surprise many Witnesses who may think they are the only ones who believe this.

So, although someone might agree with the JW's that *in a sense* animals are souls because in the Bible *nephesh* and *psyche* are often translated as *life, living creature, person*, etc., and animals do have life, sensible believers know that animals do not have a higher spiritual nature. Mankind alone was endowed with a nature that permitted him to commune with his Creator. Once man fell into sin, that capacity was damaged, man's sin separated him from the God of all holiness, and man preferred to flee his Creator rather than to dwell in his presence (Gen. 3:8-10). Many Old Testament passages quoted by the Witnesses amply demonstrate that animals have life (Heb. *nephesh*); but, limiting themselves to such definitions causes the Witnesses to stray from the path of truth. Man is different from the animal creation because *he is created in the image and likeness of God!* He is a special, a higher creation, created after the animals to enjoy fellowship with God and to reflect God to the rest of the material world where he was placed. Animals as “living creatures” (*nephesh*) do not and can not enjoy fellowship with God. Therefore, to base one's arguments on word meanings and texts from the Old Testament is not sufficient to demonstrate the whole truth of Scripture. This is why Christians reject what the booklet “What Happens to Us When We Die?” says about the soul.

Shortly, we will turn to Matthew 10:28 where our Lord says that only God has power over man's soul. The facts show that Jesus did not express something totally new. The Hebrew people believed that death did not completely remove the deceased from God's hand. Deuteronomy, 1 Samuel and other writings, especially those written during the last two centuries preceding the Messiah's Advent, testify to ancient Jewish beliefs. Although they did not have complete knowledge about the dead, the Hebrews understood that the deceased descended to *Sheol*, called *Hades* in the New Testament, but that this wasn't the end of them (Job 10:21-22; Ezekiel 26:20). Flavius Josephus, (c. AD 37–97) in his “The Wars of the Jews” and elsewhere, mentions the common beliefs held by the Jewish people and it is interesting to note how they coincide with Jesus' parable of the Rich Man

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<sup>5</sup> Metropolitan Hierotheos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, Esther Williams trans. (Levadia, Greece: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1994), pp. 97-98.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, page 99.

and Lazarus (Luke 16).<sup>7</sup> Several ancient books written in Greek and belonging to the Apocrypha are held as Holy Scripture by the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox believers who call them the “deuterocanonical books”; they also testify to Jewish beliefs of the period just before Christ’s birth. Here are three citations from these apocryphal (deuterocanonical) books:

For he afflicts and he shows mercy; he leads down to Hades, and brings up again, and there is no one who can escape his hand (Tobit 13:2).

But the souls of the righteous *are* in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them.<sup>2</sup> In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: and their departure is taken for misery,<sup>3</sup> and *their* going from us *to be* utter destruction: but they are in peace.<sup>4</sup> For though they be punished in the sight of men, *yet is* their hope full of immortality, Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-2).<sup>8</sup>

For thou has power over life and death; thou dost lead men down to the gates of Hades and back again. A man in his wickedness kills another, but he cannot bring back the departed spirit, nor set free the imprisoned soul. To escape from thy hand is impossible. . . (Wisdom 16:13-15).<sup>9</sup>

In the Watchtower Society publication *Let God Be True* (page 69), the Jehovah’s Witnesses tell us the soul has many meanings: life, mind, appetite, body, etc. This is true, but why must they reject the possibility that the Jews’ understanding of the soul (and the afterlife) may have deepened over time? The fact is the Hebrews always believed that the deceased were alive in some sense, although that life was one of darkness and ignorance as to the affairs of the living. The quotations and the footnotes listed here adequately testify to this. Historical studies indicate the Jews held such beliefs during the Jesus’ lifetime. If those ideas had been completely erroneous, would not our Lord have corrected them? Whereas he scolded the Jews on many points, he never contradicted nor corrected their beliefs concerning the soul and hell; on the contrary, he confirmed them (Luke 16:19-31; Mark 9:42-48). [*I am deliberately ignoring the teachings of the Sadducees because they were a minority group and “modernists” in theology.* The early Christians did not accept their ideas. See the confession of the former Pharisee, Saul/Paul, in Acts 23:5-9.] Through the Messiah’s crucifixion, burial and resurrection, death was

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<sup>7</sup> For Jewish beliefs in Palestine, see Flavius Josephus’ “Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades” in William Whiston, trans., *Josephus Complete Works*, reprint (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1960), pp. 637-638. See also, “Wars of the Jews,” Book 2, c. 8, num. 14, page 478; also, Book 3, c. 8, num. 5, “The bodies of all men are indeed mortal, and are created out of corruptible matter; but the soul is ever immortal, and is a portion of the Divinity that inhabits our bodies” page 515; “Antiquities of the Jews,” Book 18, c.1, num. 3, for the views of the Pharisees, page 376.

<sup>8</sup>*The Cambridge Paragraph Bible: Of the Authorized English Version.* 2006 (cxix). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>9</sup> Other passages on this subject are: Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; Psalm 30:4; Amos 9:1-3.

conquered and heaven opened to the worthy ones who were waiting in Sheol (Hades) for the Messiah-Redeemer.<sup>10</sup>

Second comment: When the prophet warns: *the soul that sins shall die*, we know this is true of all those descendants of Adam. Ezekiel 18:4 does not contradict any of the references quoted above. People die because of sin and a corruptible nature inherited from Adam (Rom. 5:12). Our bodies perish because they are mortal, corruptible, and as the Scripture teaches, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). But man is not just a creature of flesh; he is more than a mere animal. Man has a higher nature, a spiritual nature which the catechisms define as a *soul*. Because the soul is spiritual and not material, it is not extinguished at the death of the body. The Book of Revelation (Apocalypse) provides a glimpse of the souls of the martyrs who cry out for vengeance (Rev. 6:9-10).

The Scriptures never teach that God’s servants cease to exist after death. Rather, they inform us that at death Christians are clothed anew, differently *housed*. The resurrected Christian will have a *spiritual* body, one fitted for a *different kind of life*. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church:

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, *eternal in the heavens*. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. . . . We are of good courage, and we would rather *be away from the body and at home with the Lord*. (2 Cor. 5:1-3, 8; emphasis added).

JWs think that man is simply a composition of chemical and physical properties which is exactly what atheists believe!

What do the words “person” and “personality” connote? Injury to the body, perhaps the loss of an arm or a leg may possibly affect our personality, but such an injury doesn’t destroy us as a person. This should tell us that body and personality (intellect, memories, emotions, and will i.e. the spiritual composition of someone), are somehow linked and together constitute the person. This is how we distinguish one individual from another. A person is composed of a soul [often called “spirit”] and a body; together, they constitute a *living creature* (a *soul, nephesh*). This is how the word is *generally* used in biblical (Hebrew) anthropology. Yet, we ask, is a person, *who he is*, destroyed when the body dies or is killed?

It is not hard to understand that the spiritual part of man, called spirit or soul,<sup>11</sup> is esteemed to be more important because God, through his *grace*, dwells in our heart or

<sup>10</sup> Eph. 2:5-7; Col. 1:18, 13-14; Heb. 10:19-20; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 3:19.

<sup>11</sup> These words are *often* synonymous as a comparison of 1 Cor. 6:20 and 2 Cor. 7:1 shows.

soul.<sup>12</sup> Because the *part* is sometimes applied to the *whole*, man is often called a *soul*.<sup>13</sup> This figure of speech is called *synecdoche*; an example of this would be, “I conferred not with flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:16), meaning “with men.” When we talk about having “mouths to feed,” we mean we have a family to take care of. The preceding may also help us to understand the intention of Paul’s words to the Thessalonians: “May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23; cf. Heb. 4:12). I do not think that his intention here is to teach the theological makeup of humanity, but instead, Paul calls upon God to bless every aspect of the lives of the recipients of his letter. The Bible teaches that we have both a physical *and* a spiritual nature.<sup>14</sup>

Someone may ask: “If this be true, what need is there for a resurrection?” Resurrection means to “stand up again.” The resurrection actually applies to an individual’s body which is laid in the ground, in a cemetery. The body’s being laid to rest has given rise to the expression “the dead are asleep”<sup>15</sup> in the belief that someday the body will stand up again (Gr. *anastasis*). In the meantime, the spirit is alive, awaiting the Last Judgment. If the soul (or spirit) did not survive the death of the body, it would have to be recreated in order to receive a resurrected body. This would mean that God would have to *recreate* the entire person, another body *and* another soul. To solve this dilemma, Jehovah’s Witnesses explain that God’s servants are *alive* in his memory. They tell us that it is *as if* God has a tape recording of all that we are and of all that we have ever done; he then puts this “memory” back into a new created body. This is the Watchtower Society’s teaching about the resurrection. We must not think that God is a finite creature with “memory.”

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. 3:16; Rom. 8:9, 11; John 14:17, 23. For more examples which refer to our soul [spirit or spiritual nature], compare: Rom. 1:9; 2:29; Rev. 6:9; 20:4.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, in English one may speak of a ship which sank with 100 (or whatever) *souls* aboard. For such a use of the word, compare Matt. 2:20; Luke 9:24; and people in Acts 27:37.

<sup>14</sup> “Though Paul spoke of the Christian as spirit, soul, and body, man is described elsewhere as having two parts—body and spirit (James 2:26; 2 Cor. 7:1), or body and soul (Matt. 10:28). And man is also said to have a heart, mind, conscience, and other parts. Rather than teaching man as having only three parts, Paul was probably using the three terms here to identify the different aspects of personhood he wished to emphasize. The *spirit* is the highest and most unique part of man that enables him to communicate with God. The *soul* is the part of man that makes him conscious of himself; it is the seat of his personality. The *body*, of course, is the physical part through which the inner person expresses himself and by which he is immediately recognized. Paul was saying then that he desired that the Thessalonians would be kept blameless by God in their relationships with Him in their inner personal lives, and in their social contacts with other people.” Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:710.

<sup>15</sup> *Cemetery* from Greek, *koiman*, “put to sleep”: *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language*, Pocket Edition, David B. Guralnik, editor (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1974).

All things are present to God. There is no past and future with him. He knows all things without having to “remember” them (Acts 15:18; 1 John 3:20).

The apostle Paul explains that our corruptible bodies are to be raised and clothed with immortality and incorruptibility at the general resurrection.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:53-54).

The end or goal (Greek, *telos*) of a Christian is his complete renewal and restoration in the image and likeness of God. At the Last Judgment, the soul will receive its resurrected body *in order that the person may once again be complete*, what God created man to be (Gen. 2:7).<sup>16</sup>

Like Abraham, Christians are citizens of a heavenly city (Heb. 11:8-10, 13-16). A place has been prepared for them in heaven and in the meantime they patiently wait for Christ’s return at his Second Coming. He will receive them into an eternal abode which he promised them (John 14:1-3). Again Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, informs us:

But our commonwealth (citizenship) is in heaven; and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, *who will change our lowly body, to be like his glorious body*, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself (Phil. 3:20-21, emphasis added; cf. Rom. 8:11; Col. 1:5; 3:4).

Third comment: Nobody is annihilated at death. The apostle Paul discusses the resurrection of the body in 1 Corinthians 15:35-49. He does not teach annihilation or that God’s servants are to spend an indefinite period of time in a kind of soul-sleep. According to the Scriptures the righteous go to heaven but the wicked suffer eternal loss with conscious torment because of it. Of what this torment will consist we are not sure because the descriptions given in the Bible are given in a language that is full of images and symbols. At the very least, we can be sure that the reality of hell will be terrible for those who will be cast into hell. Those who have rejected God’s love will go to the place described as a lake of fire and darkness, where the flames are never quenched and where the damned gnash their teeth.<sup>17</sup> In spite of the many references to hell and its torments in the Bible, the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the wicked will be annihilated. Although figurative language is often used in the Scriptures, the ideas, the truths, the reality described by such language can not be less meaningful than what it seeks to portray, the dreadful consequences of willful disobedience.

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<sup>16</sup>The following references are listed for further study: Matt. 22:30-32; Luke 20:37-38; 23:42-43; Rom. 1:29; 6:5; 8:22-23; Eph. 1:4, 12; 1 Thess. 4:14.

<sup>17</sup>See: Matt. 8:11-12; 22:13; 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43-44; Jude 13; Rev. 14:9-11; 20:10. This is highly figurative language and does not mean God has pleasure in tormenting those who hate him.

## A Detailed Examination of Matthew 10:28

### First Argument - Greek and logic applied to JW teaching on Matthew 10:28

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28, KJV).

Be not afraid of THOSE who KILL the BODY, but cannot destroy the [future] LIFE; but rather fear HIM who CAN utterly destroy both Life and Body in Gehenna. (Matthew 10:28, Benjamin Wilson, *The Emphatic Diaglott*; see ft. 31).

Remaining true to our goal to base our argumentation solely upon the Scriptures does not imply that we must refrain from using our God-given intelligence to analyze Jesus' words in Matthew Chapter Ten.<sup>18</sup> From time to time it will be necessary to consult the Greek text in order to clarify what Christ said in Matthew 10:28. The following quotation demonstrates that JWs are agreeable to this.

#### **1a) The Witnesses told me (and they will tell you) that the soul is the *person* because Adam was created a *living soul*.**

“The *original-language terms* . . . as used in the Scriptures show “soul” to be a person, an animal, or the life that a person or an animal enjoys.” Article under “Soul” in *Insight on the Scriptures*, 2 vols. (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1988), 2:1004 (emphasis mine).

Our examination of Matthew 10:28 will show that what Jesus said actually goes against the Witnesses' views. We shall proceed phrase by phrase in order to test their arguments. Here is the first question on the first member of Matthew 10:28: Is it possible to *kill the body* without *killing the soul*, if the *soul* is the *person*? An illustration may be helpful.

Imagine that a JW killed someone. The dead corpse lies there. Would he plead guilty to a charge of murder? Or would he plead *not guilty*, arguing, “Yeah, okay, I did it, but I didn't take his life because Jesus said you can't kill the soul (*psyche* = soul or life)! Or,

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<sup>18</sup> We will not build our case on arguments from philosophy or the church fathers because we intend to meet JWs head-on, using the Holy Scriptures. Greek lexicons must be consulted to ascertain the meaning of certain words used in the Scriptures.

looking at it from the point of view of the Watchtower's second definition: "soul" means *person*, therefore, what if he said: "*I didn't kill a soul, a person, I only killed his body.*" How far do you think that would get him in court? He would know he would deserve the death penalty or life in prison, right? Would not a person (Adam or anyone else) be killed if his body were killed? This would be true if *soul* only meant *person*, a *living creature*.

What then do Jesus' words to his disciples mean? Do they not mean that men have power to put people to death, but they do not have the power to kill the soul because *they have no power over what is spiritual, immaterial and invisible*? Which definition of the soul makes more sense, ours or the Witnesses'?

Does not Matthew 10:28 teach that the soul, the immaterial part of man, survives the death of the body, and consequently, the soul being spiritual and immaterial has a capacity for a higher life than the animal or physical life we observe around us? Eternal life is a quality of life that resembles the Creator's although in a lesser way.<sup>19</sup>

Was not Adam created in God's own image for communion with God who is spirit (John 4:24)? We are all, either black, brown, white, red or yellow, but what does this have to do with the image of God? Being created in God's image logically refers to the spiritual nature endowed with spiritual qualities received from the Creator.

**1b) The Watchtower Society contends that *soul* may also refer to the *life* that a person or animal possesses.**

If we apply this definition to the first member of Matthew 10:28, will it make sense? "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the life" he possesses. What do you think? Does it appear contradictory to you? If someone has killed the body, is the person dead if he still has life (soul)? Conclusion: if one cannot kill the life (soul) then it must not be subject to physical death as our Lord says in Matthew 10:28.

Let's return to our illustration. Charged with murder, would the killer want to say: "I never took a life because *psyche* in Greek means *life* and Jesus said we *can't kill the life.*" If this appears ridiculous, then the JW's' interpretation of Matthew 10:28 must not only be erroneous, but as ridiculous.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. 2 Peter 1:4. One also needs to understand that something can be eternal without being immortal. These two words do not always refer to the same thing.

## **Second Argument: Matthew 10:28b (five sections: 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e).**

### **2a) Why we have reason to fear God rather than men.**

We shall reflect on now the second member of Matthew 10:28. “But rather fear him [God] who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [not *hades*, but *gehenna*].”

If we were to pursue our investigation of Matthew Chapter Ten using the same methodology, i.e., applying the JW definitions *life* and *person* to the word *soul* in the second member of 10:28, would it change anything? Because the subject (God) is different, we shall change our approach. Here are several questions for Jehovah’s Witnesses and their disciples.

What is the thrust of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew Chapter Ten? Reading through the chapter, we see that our Lord speaks about preaching and discipleship, including its consequences (*cf.* verses 16, 17, 22). Jesus also mentions *fear*. He tells us that Christians should fear what God can do to them *rather than* what men can do? Why is this?

The key word in Matthew 10:28 is, *destroy*. We fear God rather than men because God can destroy **both** body and soul in *Gehenna*. Our respect (*godly fear*) for God is helpful in our eternal relationship with him. If physical death is the end of a sinner or even a “good” person, why should anyone worry about how he or she lives? Why not go out and *live it up* (as some say)? If death is annihilation, the Hitlers, the Stalins and the Maos suffer the same end as people who lead exemplary lives, which would lead one to believe that God is unjust. Obviously, we need to understand what is meant by *destroy* in this passage. Does it mean destruction in the sense of *annihilation* or does it have another sense, biblically and theologically?

What happens to us at death? Let’s consider first the Watchtower Society’s doctrine, and afterward the biblical teaching.

- (1) All JWs hope to be resurrected to life on earth after death with the exception of those JWs who claim to be among the 144,000 with a call to heavenly life. Eternal death (annihilation, oblivion according to JWs) will be the lot of those who reject the Watchtower gospel.
- (2) In contrast, the Bible teaches that all those whom God adopts as his children are called to eternal communion with him. Those who reject God’s love, wishing to have nothing to do with him, are condemned to suffer eternal perdition in Gehenna. The New Testament describes Gehenna as the place of eternal darkness, great torment,

sorrow and a gnashing of teeth. This teaching is reason enough to fear God more than man!

Jehovah's Witnesses claim the Scriptures support their teachings but we believe they don't. The intellectually-honest person is not afraid to investigate his faith. The goal of this article is simply to help you test JW teaching in the light of the Holy Scriptures.

Our first line of argument led us to conclude that the human soul continues to exist after the death of the body since man is powerless to harm such a soul. Whether we call the spiritual part of man spirit or soul, it is something that can not be killed by man; only God is able to do something (called *destroy*) to the soul at the death of the body. This is why we must fear God rather than men. We have already shown from the Scriptures that for a Christian "to be absent from the body" means he will "be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23, "with Christ," *KJV*); so we need not take this up again. What about the wicked? What shall their destiny be? Does *destroy* in Matthew 10:28b mean annihilation, *oblivion*?

## **2b) The meaning of *Apollumi*, "destroy," in Matthew 10:28b.**

*Let God Be True*, says:

Hence Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnom, became a symbol, not of eternal torment, but of the condition of eternal condemnation. Its flames symbolized the *complete, eternal destruction* to which all the willful enemies of God and his kingdom will go and from which there is no recovery or resurrection. . . .

In all places where hell is translated from the Greek word *Gehenna* it means *everlasting destruction*. The *New World Translation* correctly renders Gehenna. So note Jesus' words at Matthew 10:28: . . . Since God destroys soul and body in Gehenna, this is conclusive proof that Gehenna, or the valley of the sons of Hinnom, is a picture or *symbol of complete annihilation, and not of eternal torment*. This is the meaning of the "everlasting fire" mentioned in the parable of the sheep and goats. There, after Jesus pronounced judgment on the "goats", who do not support God's kingdom to which Christ's brothers are called, he declares respecting the "goats": "These will depart into everlasting cutting-off [Greek, *kolasis*], but the righteous ones into everlasting life." (Matthew 25:46, *NW, ED*). So the everlasting punishment of the "goats" is their everlastingly being cut off from all life. (pages 96-97; emphasis mine).

We need only cover the main points brought up in *Let God Be True*, especially the JW translation of *kolasis* in Matthew 25:46. When studying a particular passage in the New Testament, one should investigate the context, the culture of the speaker (or writer) and of the people whom he addresses, always remembering to consider the time period of

the vocabulary because words often change meaning over a period of time, especially centuries. In the *King James Version*, for example, many words have become obsolete while others have changed meaning since it was published in 1611. This is why the *KJV* has been revised six or seven times and also why the *New King James Version* and modern translations are published. Please bear this in mind when we check the lexicons. By examining the way a word is used throughout the New Testament, we can discover its fundamental or usual meaning which may help us understand what a writer sought to convey in a particular passage.

The Greek word *apollumi* occurs 92 times in the New Testament. In Matthew 10:28, *destroy* translates the Greek aorist infinitive *apolesai* (from *apollumi*). Abbott-Smith's *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* says this verb means: *to destroy utterly, destroy, kill*; along with other possible meanings in the middle voice: *to perish, to be lost* and also metaphorically: *of spiritual destitution and alienation from God*.<sup>20</sup> In Arndt & Gingrich's Greek lexicon, we find that in the active voice *apollumi* means: "ruin, destroy." "Especially kill, put to death (Gen 20:4; Esth 9:6vl.; 1 Macc 2:37; . . ."; and, in the middle voice: "ruined, perish, die," and so the example of the bursting wineskins (Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37).<sup>21</sup>

The verb *apollumi* occurs three more times in Matthew Chapter Ten; twice in the 39<sup>th</sup> verse and once in the 42<sup>nd</sup> verse. In verse 39, it is in the future indicative and JWs translate it as *will lose* (see *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*) and again as an aorist active participle *loses* (*KIT*, English *NWT* side of page 75). In verse 42, the word *apollumi* appears again in the future indicative and is translated [will] *lose* (his reward) in both the *KJV* and the Watchtower Society's *KIT*.<sup>22</sup> It is highly instructive to note that in the same chapter and in the same context the verb *apollumi* is translated *lose*.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, *apollumi* occurs in Matthew 10:6: "But go rather to the *lost* (*apololota*) sheep of the house of Israel" (*KJV*, *NWT*, *RSV*), where it has nothing to do with destruction or annihilation. This being evident, we would like to ask JWs if *apollumi* could possibly mean *perish*, *lost* [forever] in Matthew 10:28?

<sup>20</sup>G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3d ed., 1981 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1923), p. 52.

<sup>21</sup>William Arndt & William Gingrich (trans.), Bauer's Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), p. 94.

<sup>22</sup>I am using the first edition of *KIT*. Those using the newer 1985 second edition of *KIT* may find the page numbering somewhat off (*cf.* page 59 in the 1985 edition).

<sup>23</sup>The reader may also check the parallel passage, Luke 9:24, where this verb occurs two times and it can't mean either destruction or annihilation.

Something definitively *lost*, is ruined as far as present or future utility or value is concerned. It is not destroyed in the sense of being annihilated, having ceased to exist, as we learn from the example given of the lost sheep of Israel. Luke 19:10: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (*KJV*). “...to save what was lost,” (*KIT, NWT, RSV*; lost, *apololos*, perfect participle). Because these lost sheep of Israel were precious to God who is infinite love, he sought their salvation. Being in bondage to sin they were separated from him, *lost*. Remember, sin is separation from God who is, figuratively speaking, both the Fountain (source) and the Tree of life.<sup>24</sup> Separation from God is spiritual death and leads to eternal ruin, damnation.

I can destroy a castle of cards. As a castle it no longer exists, but the cards do. The castle is *ruined*, it has *perished*. I have *lost* my castle; it is *apollumi*. But I could put it back together again because its components still exist. A man who has been killed has lost his life as an earthly creature, but not everything is lost. Something invisible, immaterial still exists. Man could never put it together again, *but God can*. The most important part of us, our inner, our spiritual man (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; 3:16; 4:24), our real identity (personality, will and memories) continues to exist. Remember that the Lord “is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. 22:32). A review of several other passages should verify that we are on the right track.

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins... (Mark 2:22, *RSV; NWT; NAB* reads, *ruined*).

Do not by your food ruin (*apollue*) that one for whom Christ died (Rom. 14:15, *NWT; KIT* has *be destroying* under *apollue*).

The owner’s wine and the wineskins are lost, ruined, but they do not cease to exist. They lie there useless, worthless (cf. the parallel passage in Matthew 9:17, *KJV, perished*). Whereas the *KJV* reads *destroy* in Romans 14:15, the *NWT* translates *apollumi, ruin*, which is better. Two final arguments for the word *apollumi* should suffice:

Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus (Matt. 27:20; also, *KIT, destroyed*).

The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him (Mark 3:6; also, *destroy* in *KIT*).

Was Jesus to be destroyed in the sense that he would never exist again? Were the religious leaders seeking to kill Jesus *or* to annihilate him? It is worthwhile to compare the above quoted passages in the *New American Bible*; in Matt. 27:20, *NAB* has *destroy* and in Mark 3:6, *kill*. If one should prefer *kill* as the meaning here, one must admit quite

<sup>24</sup>Gen. 2:16-17; 3:22-24; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 2:7; 21:7; 22:1-4, 14, 17.

easily that in the New Testament *destroy* (*apollumi*) always means one of the following: to kill, to lose, to perish, to ruin.<sup>25</sup>

The last passage we will study on the meaning of *apollumi* will be Mark 1:24:

Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

This is an example where the demons speak out in fear of Jesus. They know he has the power to send them into the lake of fire. They understand further that *destroy* does not mean that they will cease to exist. We shall examine next the topic of Gehenna.

## 2c) The unforgivable sin and the final destiny of the wicked.

According to the Scriptures, what is the final destiny of the wicked? What does *destroy*, *kill*, *lose* or *ruin* in Gehenna mean? What do the following quotations imply: annihilation or eternal punishment (i.e. conscious torment)? All quotations are taken from the *King James Version*.

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile (Rom. 2:8-9).

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction (*NAB*, *eternal ruin*) from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thess. 1:9).

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of *how much sorer punishment* suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God... (Heb. 10:26-29).

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (Rev. 14:10-11).

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

The lake of fire and the second death mean the same thing (Rev. 20:14-15). Only God can cast a wicked person into the lake of fire (Gehenna), the place of eternal torment. We do well to fear eternal damnation which is described as everlasting ruin, eternal

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<sup>25</sup>Other occurrences may be verified in Mark 9:22 and Luke 15:4, 24. This last verse is interesting.

punishment or eternal loss. Most people fear death, but they should fear more the second death symbolized by the lake of fire. The fact that the second death signifies *eternal death* means eternal banishment from the face of God, who is Love, Light and Life.

Death entered the world because of Adam's transgression. Adam's descendants inherited from him their fallen, human nature (Rom. 5:12; 6:23).<sup>26</sup> The present inherited spiritual death-estrangement is not necessarily eternal because reconciliation with God is possible through the death of his Son Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> After our rebirth into God's family (John 3:3, 5), personal sin does affect our relationship with our heavenly Father. Some sins may result in a temporary rupture of spiritual communion with God for a certain time, but these sins do not lead to eternal death (Rev. 2:11) because the penalty for them has been paid by Christ Jesus.<sup>28</sup> The path lies before us: heaven or hell, eternal communion with God or eternal separation from God? It is the ancient choice placed before the Israelites (Deut. 30:19).

In Revelation, the apostle John tells us that one day death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). This is a figurative manner of saying that death and Hades represent a temporary condition and place. Hades (or Sheol) speaks of the realm where all souls remained until Christ's death and resurrection. The soul, created spiritual and eternal (not subject to corruption), will eventually go either to heaven or to the place of eternal separation (Gehenna/Hell) from God. At the Last Judgment the souls of the wicked are confined forever in the lake of fire, the second death.<sup>29</sup>

According to Hebrews 10:29 a serious transgressor of the Mosaic Law was to be stoned to death; one who sins against Christ under the New Covenant suffers a worse punishment. If in *both* cases the punishment of the wicked were simply death, (annihilation, non-existence), how could punishment under the New Covenant be worse than stoning to death under the Old Covenant? Hebrews 10:29 clearly refers to either apostasy (the theme of the *Letter to the Hebrews*) or to the sin against the Holy Spirit or both of these,<sup>30</sup> for which there is no forgiveness either now or in the world to come.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, eternal separation from God is a punishment worse than physical death. We are now in a better position to understand Christ's warning in Matthew 10:28.

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<sup>26</sup>Adam died (spiritually) the instant he turned away (rebelled) from his Creator. He was cast out of the Garden of Eden to prevent him from taking of the Tree of life (Genesis Chapters Two and Three).

<sup>27</sup>2 Cor. 5:18-21; Heb. 2:9, 17.

<sup>28</sup>1 Cor. 15:55-57; Heb. 2:14-15.

<sup>29</sup>Rev. 20:15; 21:8; 22:12-15; cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10.

<sup>30</sup>Heb. 2:1-4; 6:4-6; 10:23, 26-27, 38-39; 12:25.

<sup>31</sup>See Matt. 12:31-32 (Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10); Heb. 6:4-8.

Two more passages from the Gospel of Matthew lead to the same conclusion: eternal damnation is worse than physical death.

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea (Matt. 18:6, *RSV*).

The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born (Matt. 26:24, *RSV*).

In Matthew 18:6 Christ teaches that death is preferable to causing one of his little ones to stumble. In this way he might avoid risking eternal damnation, something worse than death. Matthew 26:24 says that it would have been better for Judas to never have been born. He didn't exist before he was born and had he never been born, he would never have risked suffering eternal consequences for his betrayal of Christ. What else could Jesus have meant but that Judas had incurred the pain of eternal damnation in a place of suffering? Judas *appears* (the judgment belongs to God) to have committed the unforgivable sin, i.e., a stubborn refusal to accept the Holy Spirit's testimony. The Holy Spirit bore witness to the Jews of Jesus day by miracles that the Messiah was present and He is God's Son. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the unforgivable sin (everlasting) requiring eternal punishment.

All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation (Mark 3:28-29).

But is guilty of an everlasting sin (*NAB*). [and so says the underlying Greek text].

In *Let God Be True* (and in "What Happens to Us When We Die?," page 22), the Witnesses seek to convince us that eternal death is unconsciousness, non-existence, a state similar to never having been born, that is nothingness. Both Matthew 18:6 and 26:24 warn of a situation more dreadful than the JW's definition of death: non-existence. Understandably, it would be better for Judas had he never been born than to risk eternal damnation in Gehenna, the lake of fire to which those who commit the unforgivable sin will be consigned. Hopefully, our fourth discussion has demonstrated why Christians must fear God rather than man who can only kill ("destroy") the body.

## **2d) What does *New World Translation* mean by *cutting-off* (Mt 25:46)?**

Argument 2d continues the discussion on the future punishment of the wicked. *The New World Translation's* rendering "cutting-off" is connected closely with 2c above.

In *Let God Be True*, the Witnesses endeavored to support their case for soul-sleep by introducing both *The Emphatic Diaglott*<sup>32</sup> and the *NWT's* erroneous rendition of Matthew 25:46. We shall take this up as a separate point. In Matthew 25:46, is *NWT's* “everlasting cutting-off” a correct translation of *kolasis*?

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Mt 25:41, 46, *KJV*).

In *The New World Translation* (1984 reference edition) at Matthew 25:46, we have this footnote on “cutting-off”: “Lit. “lopping off; pruning.” Gr., *kolasin* . . .”<sup>33</sup> The JW's push the limits of honesty when they interpret this to mean that the righteous continue on into life eternal but the wicked are “pruned,” “cut off,” meaning, held back from that life.

In classical Greek, the verb *kolazo* does mean *pruning, mutilate*, but this does not affect the Church's teaching about eternal punishment of the wicked. In ancient times (and still today in a few countries where Islamic law is carried out) the punishment for certain criminal acts was (or is) mutilation. For example, a thief's hand could be cut off (reminiscent of Matthew 18:8-9). From such a practice of mutilation (*kolazo, kolasis*) comes the meaning *punishment, chastisement*. In the New Testament *kolasis* always means punishment, torment.<sup>34</sup>

In modern Greek, gehenna is no longer the word used to refer to hell. Greek Orthodox Christians believe hell is a place of torment. What is the word they use for hell? It is ἡ κόλαση, *kolasis*!<sup>35</sup> In a New Testament published by the Greek Orthodox Church, the koiné Greek is placed alongside a paraphrase in modern Greek.<sup>36</sup> In Matthew 10:28, *kolasis* is the equivalent of gehenna. If this word only meant “pruning,” “cutting off,” how did it come to mean hell?

<sup>32</sup>A work by Mr. Benjamin Wilson, who, according to James Penton in *Apocalypse Delayed, The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), page 17, is said to have been a member of the Church of God (Faith of Abraham). The Watchtower Bible & Tract Society believes that he was a member of the Christadelphians who adhere to the doctrine of soul-sleep (See photocopy from *Consolation* magazine of 11/8/44 in *The Watchtower Files: Dialogue with a Jehovah's Witness* by D. Magnani with A. Barrett (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1983, reprinted 1985), page 196.

<sup>33</sup>Compare the *Emphatic Diaglott*, page 106 for notes along the same line of thought.

<sup>34</sup>Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 25-26).

<sup>35</sup>See Hubert Pernot, *Dictionnaire Grec Moderne Français* (Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, Athens: Librairie Kauffmann. 1970, 1979), p, 236. Also; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel (ed.), 10 vols (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), vol III, p. 816, ft. 3, “Already in the Byzantine period *kólasis* = *géenna* . . .”. *The Pocket Oxford Greek Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), page 354. See Metropolitan Hierotheos, pp. 252-253.

<sup>36</sup>Παν. Ν. Τρεμπελα, *Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ ΜΕΤΑ ΣΥΝΤΟΜΟΥ ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑΣ*, (ΑΘΗΝΑΙ : ΑΔΕΛΦΟΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΩΝ Ο ΣΩΤΗΡ, 1985), page 43.

Why didn't *NWT* translate *kolazo* "cut off" in Acts 4:21? Here, *New World Translation* rendered it *punish* (*KIT* and *NWT*, 1984). In the New Testament, *kolazo* is also found in 2 Peter 2:9 and the noun form in 1 John 4:18 where *NWT* reads *restraint*, although the footnote admits "punishment" as a possible translation (See *NWT*, 1984 reference edition). These are all the places where the noun (2x) and the verb (2x) are found in the New Testament and it always means: punish, punishment or torment. In other words, the everlasting punishment of Matthew 25:46 is the everlasting fire of Matthew 25:41.

## 2e) Does the word *soul* refer to future life as stated in *The Emphatic Diaglott*?

Be not afraid of THOSE who KILL the BODY, but cannot destroy the [future] LIFE; but rather fear HIM who CAN utterly destroy both Life and Body in Gehenna. (Benjamin Wilson, *The Emphatic Diaglott*).

*Let God Be True*, pages 71-72 (paragraph 14), states that *soul* can refer to life in the future:

In the Greek Scriptures Matthew 10:28 (*NW*) presents an example where the word "soul" is used as meaning future life as a soul. It reads: "Do not become fearful of those who kill the body but can not kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." The gist of this text is that we should fear God, because he is able to destroy not only our present human body but the possibility of future life as well. The destruction in Gehenna here referred to means that death from which there is no resurrection to future life as a soul.

Here JWs and Benjamin Wilson interpret *soul* as meaning life received at one's resurrection on a renewed earth. In Matthew 10:28, if *soul* refers to that part of man which is spiritual and eternal, and we have seen that this is indeed what it does mean, then it can not be limited *only* to life in the future. This is not to deny that Jesus' words may have implied something still future. This is evident. But it does not mean what the JWs are teaching. Adding suggestive words to a translation may result in a translation that is tendentious, bordering on dishonesty.

This is why we are obligated to condemn the added words in *The Emphatic Diaglott*, even if they are enclosed in brackets, because they will be used later to orient the reader in the direction of the JW teaching. This methodology was used successfully by JWs to convert me. I wasn't prepared to argue against the Greek New Testament they showed me. How could I have known at the time (I was sixteen years old) that there was more than one edition of the Greek New Testament?

If Jesus' words are to make sense, there has to be a correspondence between what is meant by soul in both clauses in Matthew 10:28. If *soul* were to change meaning in this short passage, how would we ever understand anything Jesus taught? Jesus' warning would lose its force. Our Lord is not contrasting *soul* in phrase "a" with a different kind of soul in phrase "b". He is contrasting what God *is able* to do to the soul with what man *is not able* to do. Man can't kill the soul because it is spiritual, beyond his reach; but God can destroy, ruin the soul for eternity.<sup>37</sup> In theology this is called "eternal perdition," but it does not mean annihilation as we have demonstrated. The eternal punishment (torment) of the wicked means they will be cast into Gehenna, the lake of fire.

Edmond Gruss, himself a former Jehovah's Witness, points out that the Watchtower Society translates the Greek word *bazanizo* in Revelation 11:10 to mean *torment*. But, according to the JW's *torment changes* meaning in Revelation 20:10. In the latter case they say it means destruction, annihilation. Concerning *bazanizo*, "to torment," Professor Gruss, writes: "The Greek word *basanizo*, which Grimm-Thayer define as: "to vex with grievous pains (of body or mind), to torment," [Gruss' footnote 140, quoting *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, page 96] "in every case found in the New Testament speaks of pain and conscious suffering."<sup>38</sup> Matthew 10:28 is a good example of Watchtower eisegesis, meaning that they read their private ideas into the Scriptures, instead of going to the Scriptures to learn what God is saying to us.

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<sup>37</sup>Or, "kill": i.e. eternal death, separation from God.

<sup>38</sup>Edmond Gruss, *Apostles of Denial* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), p. 166 where, in his footnote 141, he gives all the passages where *bazanizo* is found in the New Testament.

### Conclusions on Matthew 10:28

We conclude that “[future] LIFE” is wrong in *The Emphatic Diaglott* because it is simply gratuitous. The JWs seek support for their doctrines of soul-sleep and the annihilation of the wicked in Matthew 10:28. We believe we are on solid ground when we refuse to admit the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ peculiar teaching on Matthew 10:28. Furthermore, the Christian Church has never professed such doctrines.

Having thoroughly examined the Watchtower Society’s arguments from every angle and having found them without support, we turn now to the parallel passage to Matthew 10:28. This will bring to a conclusion our investigation. Does the parallel passage support our conclusions? Why didn’t the Watchtower Society quote this in *Let God Be True*? This in itself is evidence of their style. Finally, are not Christ’s words in Luke Chapter 12:4-5 sufficient for all his disciples?

Do not fear those who kill the body, *and after that have no more that they can do*. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, *after he has killed, has power to cast into hell*; yes, I tell you, fear him! (emphasis added.).

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## Appendix

### Testimonies from several church fathers on hell and the soul

Because this article is intended for those who wish to help people who insist that everything must be proved by the Scriptures, I have not included the church fathers in the main part of the discussion. The most important witnesses to the Christian faith after the New Testament writings are those who immediately followed them in the faith. Some of these early writers are also known as *Apologists* while others are simply called “church fathers.” Anyone can search their writings on the subject of the soul. I have included a few quotations here as indicative of what Christians believed during the first centuries after Christ; more than these would be like whipping a dead horse.

#### The First Apology of Justin Martyr (100-165)

##### CHAP. XIX. — THE RESURRECTION POSSIBLE.

And to any thoughtful person would anything appear more incredible, than, if we were not in the body, and some one were to say that it was possible that from a small drop of human seed bones and sinews and flesh be formed into a shape such as we see? For let this now be said hypothetically: if you yourselves were not such as you now are, and born of such parents [and causes], and one were to show you human seed and a picture of a man, and were to say with confidence that from such a substance such a being could be produced, would you believe before you saw the actual production? No one will dare to deny [that such a statement would surpass belief]. In the same way, then, you are now incredulous because you have never seen a dead man rise again. But as at first you would not have believed it possible that such persons could be produced from the small drop, and yet now you see them thus produced, so also judge ye that it is not impossible that the bodies of men, after they have been dissolved, and like seeds resolved into earth, should in God's appointed time rise again and put on incorruption. For what power worthy of God those imagine who say, that each thing returns to that from which it was produced, and that beyond this not even God Himself can do anything, we are unable to conceive; but this we see clearly, that they would not have believed it possible that they could have become such and produced from such materials, as they now see both themselves and the whole world to be. And that it is better to believe even what is impossible to our own nature and to men, than to be unbelieving like the rest of the world, we have learned; for we know that our Master Jesus Christ said, that "what is impossible with men is possible with God," and, "Fear not them that kill you, and after that can do no more; but fear Him who after death is able to cast both soul and body into hell." And hell is a place where those are to be punished who have lived wickedly, and who do not believe that those things which God has taught us by Christ will come to pass.

## **Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew (c. 155)**

### CHAP. V. — THE SOUL IS NOT IN ITS OWN NATURE IMMORTAL.

"But I do not say, indeed, that all souls die; for that were truly a piece of good fortune to the evil. What then? The souls of the pious remain in a better place, while those of the unjust and wicked are in a worse, waiting for the time of judgment. Thus some which have appeared worthy of God never die; but others are punished so long as God wills them to exist and to be punished."

## **Athenagoras, a Christian Philosopher, c. 170**

"I have sufficiently demonstrated that we are not atheists, since we acknowledge on God. ... We recognize also the Son of God. Let no one think it laughable that God should have a Son. For we do not conceive of either God the Father or the Son as do the poets, who, in their myth-making, represent the gods as no better than men. The Son of God is the Word of the Father...the Father and the Son being one...[T]he Son ...is the First-begotten of the Father, not as having been produced-for from the beginning God had the Word in Himself, God being eternal mind and eternally rational."

*(Intercession on Behalf of the Christians, 10, [addressed to the Emperor]in Jurgens, Faith of the Early Fathers, vol. 1).*

## **Tertullian (c. 160-225), a Treatise on the Soul**

### CHAP. VII. — THE SOUL'S CORPOREALITY DEMONSTRATED OUT OF THE GOSPELS.

So far as the philosophers are concerned, we have said enough. As for our own teachers, indeed, our reference to them is *ex abundantia* — a surplusage of authority: in the Gospel itself they will be found to have the clearest evidence for the corporeal nature of the soul. In hell the soul of a certain man is in torment, punished in flames, suffering excruciating thirst, and imploring from the finger of a happier soul, for his tongue, the solace of a drop of water. Do you suppose that this end of the blessed poor man and the miserable rich man is only imaginary? Then why the name of Lazarus in this narrative, if the circumstance is not in (the category of) a real occurrence? But even if it is to be regarded as imaginary, it will still be a testimony to truth and reality. For unless the soul possessed corporeality, the image of a soul could not possibly contain a finger of a bodily substance; nor would the Scripture feign a statement about the limbs of a body, if these had no existence. But what is that which is removed to Hades after the separation of the body; which is there detained; which is reserved until the day of judgment; to which Christ also, on dying, descended? I imagine it is the souls of the patriarchs. But wherefore (all this), if the soul is nothing in its subterranean abode? For nothing it certainly is, if it is not a bodily substance. For whatever is incorporeal is incapable of being kept and guarded in any way; it is also exempt from either punishment or refreshment. That must be a body, by which punishment and refreshment can be experienced. Of this I shall treat more fully in a more fitting place. Therefore, whatever amount of punishment or refreshment the soul tastes in Hades, in its prison or lodging, in the fire or in Abraham's bosom, it gives proof thereby of its own corporeality. For an incorporeal thing suffers nothing, not having that which makes it capable of suffering; else, if it has such capacity, it must be a bodily substance. For in as far as every corporeal thing is capable of suffering, in so far as that which is capable of suffering also corporeal.

## Various Christian Commentators on Matthew 10:28

### William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary*

... "Whatever the enemies may wish to do, there is one thing they cannot do, namely kill the psuche, that is, the soul, that part of man which is immaterial and invisible."

(...)

"Jesus, then is warning against the tragic error of being constantly filled with fear because of those who are able to kill the body, as if the body were more important than the soul. He continues: *rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*. It is hardly necessary to add that the pronoun "him" refers to God. By omitting the noun itself more emphasis is placed upon God's character and activity, that is, upon whatever he is and what he is able to do. The word "destroy" is used here in the sense not of annihilation but of the infliction of everlasting punishment upon a person (25:46; Mark 9:47,48; II Thess. 1:9. As to the word "hell," which here in the original is *Gehenna* (...), it generally refers to the abode of the wicked, body and soul, *after the judgment day*." pp. 470-72.

### The Navarre Bible Commentary

"Therefore, our Lord warns his disciples against false fear. We should not fear those who can only kill the body. Only God can cast body and soul into hell. Therefore God is the only one we should fear and respect; he is our Prince and Supreme Judge--not men. The martyrs have obeyed this precept of the Lord in the fullest way, well aware that eternal life is worth much more than earthly life." (p. 108).

### The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact, *The Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew*

"He teaches them to despise even death, for punishment in gehenna is yet more fearful, He says. Those who slay accomplish the destruction of only the body, while they are perhaps the benefactors of the soul. But God punishes both soul and the body of those whom He casts into gehenna. He says "in gehenna", indicating the perpetual nature of the punishment, for gehenna is never ending." (p. 88).

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