

of the ground. Nothing about death even hints at there being an immortal soul that lives on.

**EFFECT OF THE DOCTRINE ABOUT
THE SOUL'S IMMORTALITY**

What a person believes about the soul is of no little consequence.

The teaching of the immortality of the human soul has been used to override the conscience of people in times of war. Religious leaders have made it appear that taking life is not so bad, as those slain do not really die after all. And those who die in battle against the enemy are promised bliss. Typical are remarks such as those reported on in the *New York Times* of September 11, 1950: "Sorrowing parents whose sons have been drafted or recalled for combat duty were told yesterday in St. Patrick's Cathedral that death in battle was part of God's plan for populating 'the kingdom of Heaven.'" The idea here expressed differs little from the ancient Babylonian teaching that the war dead gained special favors.

Misrepresentations of what the Bible says about the soul have thus contributed toward the placing of a cheapened value on human life and have made people feel dependent on the great religious systems that have falsely claimed to care for their souls.

Knowing these things, what will you do? It is obvious that the true God, who is himself "the God of truth" and who hates lies, will not look with favor on persons who cling to organizations that teach falsehood. (Psalm 31:5; Proverbs 6:16-19; Revelation 21:8) And, really, would you want to be even associated with a religion that had not been honest with you?

CHAPTER 6

The Spirit That Returns to God

THERE should be no question in the mind of any sincere investigator that what the Bible speaks of as "soul" is not some immortal part of man that continues conscious existence after death. Yet when shown the overwhelming evidence about the true nature of the soul, some persons present other arguments in an effort to support their belief that *something* within man has continued existence after death.

One Biblical text that is often used is Ecclesiastes 12:7, which reads: "The dust returns to the earth just as it happened to be and the spirit itself returns to the true God who gave it." In his *Commentary*, Wesleyan Methodist theologian Adam Clarke writes concerning this verse: "Here the wise man makes a most evident distinction between the body and the soul: they are not the same; they are not both matter. The body, which is matter, returns to dust, its original; but the spirit, which is *immaterial*, returns to God." Similarly, *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* says: "The soul goes back to God." Thus both commentaries imply that the soul and the spirit are the same.

Interestingly, though, other Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars present an entirely different view. In the "Glossary of Biblical Theology Terms" appearing in the *Catholic New American Bible* (published by P. J. Kenedy & Sons, New