

DRAFT # 1  
March 6-8, 1969

Ralph Bohlenmann

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL AND RESURRECTION OF THE BODY — *Itcus*

That man is mortal is a fact which is universally granted. It is substantiated both by experience and by the Scripture. The Lord expelled Adam from the Garden that He had prepared for him, "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" (Genesis 3:22). He pronounced upon him the sentence: "You are dust and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). Centuries later the psalmist wrote: "What man can live and never see death?" (Psalm 89:48).

*Transition from death to life after* →  
But even if death is a common experience of men everywhere, it is nonetheless mysterious and complex. When the human mind grapples with matters that concern a world beyond the present, it is not surprising that mortal man should find himself confronted with problems for which neither biology, nor psychology nor philosophy has the solution. Even Scripture itself does not claim to reveal all that one might wish to know regarding the nature of death.

This profound and mysterious subject has remained a challenge to scholars in all ages, and in recent years an increasing number of studies have been conducted. A special degree of interest has centered in topics such as "the immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body." Within our own Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod the question has been asked whether pastors, teachers, and professors "will be permitted to teach" that "the Bible does not teach that man has an immortal soul, which Christ died to save, and that, when a Christian dies, his soul goes to a blessed life with God," and that . . . "the Bible does not teach a physical resurrection of our flesh." (Reports and Memorials, Forty-fifth Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Synod, page 161.)

In addressing ourselves to these questions it is important that we define carefully certain terms which occur frequently in discussions of this type. We shall center our attention particularly on the following five terms: soul, spirit, immortality, death, and flesh.

### A Study of Terminology

1. The definition of the term "soul." Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines soul as follows:

The non-material part in man which thinks and wills; the personal entity of an individual regarded as separate and separable from the body and distinguishing him from others; . . . theologically the immortal substance of man which distinguishes him from the beast. . . . The ethical or emotional nature of man, as contrasted with his bodily, or intellectual powers and desires. . . . A human being, a person.

But more important, how do the Scriptures define the term "soul"? The Biblical words which are most frequently translated "soul" are nephesh in the Old Testament and psyche in the New. But it should be remembered that these words are among the most complex in Scripture. They have a broader meaning than does the English word "soul." Nephesh and psyche are frequently translated with such terms as "life", "life principle", "personality", etc. At times nephesh is used in the sense of "people" (Genesis 12:5; 46:18), or "individuals" when it is almost equivalent to the personal pronoun, I, thou, her, etc. (Genesis 27:25; Isaiah 1:14). On occasion nephesh is used for the "physico-psychical totality of man" as in Genesis 2:7 where it is said that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul (nephesh haiah). In this case nephesh means man in his entirety.

However, there are other instances in Scripture where nephesh is used to designate a component part of man, rather than the whole being. In Psalm 42:5-6 the holy writer asserts: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me." In Psalm 131:2 we read a similar statement:

"I have calmed and <sup>qu</sup>ieted my soul, like a child quieted at its mother's breast; like a child that is <sup>qu</sup>ieted is my soul." (Cf. Job 14:22: "his soul within him"; and Job 30:16: "my soul within me.") Referring to these passages Ludwig ~~K~~öhler comments: "In the Psalter the word nephesh occurs 144 times, 105 times in the form of 'my soul.' But one may not simply place it with 'I'" (Old Testament Theology, pp. 143 f.). In these cases it would be more accurate to say that man has a nephesh, rather than that he is a nephesh.

Harold Crae<sup>er</sup>ger calls attention to another important usage of nephesh when he states that it was employed in Scripture at times to represent "the personal self, the moral agent, in strong and real contrast to the body" (Lutheran Quarterly, May 1965, 118 f.). It is used in this manner in Micah 6:7: "Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" This is a question asked by the people in Micah's day rather than by the prophet. This would possibly indicate that there was also popular recognition of the contrast between the body and the personal spiritual self. (See also Psalm 34:2: "My <sup>soul</sup> makes its boast in the Lord:" also Hab. 2:4: "His soul is not upright in him.")

In the New Testament, psyche is used in the same manner on numerous occasions, referring to the spiritual self of the <sup>person?</sup> people. Peter warns his readers "to abstain from passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul," (1 Peter 2:11). He speaks of Christ as the Shepherd and Guardian of men's souls (1 Peter 2:25). He refers to the "salvation of your souls," in 1 Peter 1:9. James urges his readers to "put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). In Acts 14:22 Luke speaks of Paul and Barnabas "strengthening the souls of the disciples." In Hebrews 13:17 pastors are described as "keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account."

Of particular interest are Revelation 6:9 and 20:4 where St. John refers to those who have died the death of a martyr as souls who are in the presence of God in heaven. Jesus Himself sharply contrasts the terms "body" and "soul" in Matthew 10:28 when He encourages the disciples, "Do no fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy soul and body in hell."

According to Scripture, it is the nephesh that gives life to man. When the nephesh departs, man dies (Genesis 35:18), and when the nephesh returns, life is restored (1 Kings 17:21). Because it is the nephesh (soul) that gives man life, Scripture speaks of it as the seat of hunger, thirst, human emotions, etc. It sorrows, loves, rejoices, seeks revenge. The nephesh is the <sup>seat</sup> ~~source~~ of religious life; it seeks God, cries unto Him, thirsts for Him, praises Him, fears Him (Prov. 10:3, 27:7; Ps. 139:14; Gen. 34:3; Ps. 86:4; Ps. 27:12; Deut. 4:29; Ps. 42:2; Ps. 63:2). On the strength of passages such as these, some scholars have described the nephesh as "the personal self, the moral agent, <sup>strong & real</sup> in contrast to the body." (Lutheran Quarterly, *cf. previous page* <sup>mit identical</sup> May 1965, pp. 118 f.)

Closely associated with nephesh and psyche are also the terms ruach and pneuma, ordinarily translated in Scripture with the word "spirit." They, too, are very complex possessing various meanings. Friedrich Baumgaertel, writing in the Theologisches Woerterbuch, states that when ruach is used of man it signifies, first of all, the animating principle of the body. The entrance of the ruach creates life (Ez. 37:5 f.). On the other hand, when God takes the ruach away (Ps. 104:29), or when it returns to God, then death is the result (Eccl. 12:7). George Knight claims that the ruach "stands for those more exceptional and unusual endowments of human nature which suggest God as their immediate source. . . . It links men to God as though it were a door continually open to His approach" (From Moses to Paul, p. 28). Furthermore,

ruach like nephesh has been described as "the personal self" which functions through the body (Lutheran Quarterly, May 1965, p. 112). Consequently, the ruach like the nephesh is the seat of feelings and emotions, such as unrest (2 Kings 19:7; Genesis 41:8), discouragement (Isaiah 61:3), faint-heartedness (Exodus 6:9), etc. It is the seat of intellectual functions, rational and religious insights such as reason (Job 32:8), unusual wisdom (Daniel 6:4), insights into divine mysteries (Daniel 4:5), religious and ethical insights (Isaiah 29:24). It is the seat of conviction, attitudes of will and character (Jeremiah 51:1; Haggai 1:14; Ezra 1:1), humility (Proverbs 16:19), pride (Proverbs 16:18), longing for God (Isaiah 26:9), repentance (Psalm 51:19).

But it is of particular importance to note at this point that ruach and pneuma which are commonly used in Scripture to describe man's personality, his personal self, are also pictured as leaving the body of man at the time of death and returning to God (Eccl. 12:7; Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59).

It is of some significance also to note in this connection how the Bible at times describes the body of man. In John 2:21 Jesus speaks of his soma as a temple. Similarly Paul in 2 Cor. 5:1-4 writes concerning "the earthly tent we live in." Some scholars both in the past and in the present believe that passages such as these indicate that the human body of man is the temple for his spirit, his ruach or pneuma, his spiritual self.

2. The meaning of the term "death" as it is used in Scripture. The Bible contains a considerable amount of information that is descriptive of death. But again it should be carefully noted that the words "to die" and "death" are used in several different ways. "Unless these distinctions are kept in mind, and the appropriate sense recognized in any given passage, serious misunderstanding of a biblical message may result." (Lutheran Quarterly, May 1965, p. 113).

Sometimes Scripture uses the term "death" to indicate simply the end of one's physical life. It is then spoken of in language such as this: a) it is a returning to the dust or decomposition (Genesis 3:19; Eccl. 12:7; John 11:39); b) it is the separation of the spirit from the body (Eccl. 12:7; James 2:26; Matt. 27:50); c) it is the termination of the animal life in man (Matt. 2:20; Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9, 14:26); d) death is a putting off of the body (2 Peter 1:14); e) a killing of the body but not of the soul (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4); f) a departure of the soul (Genesis 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21); g) a return of the spirit to God (Eccl. 12:7; Acts 7:59); h) finally, death is described also as a sleep (Daniel 12:2; Matt. 9:24; 1 Thess. 4:13 f.). This figure of speech, however, does not point to physical death as an unconscious state, but the point of comparison is that man shall awaken to a new day in the resurrection.

But Scripture uses the term "death" not only to indicate the end of one's physical existence; it frequently speaks also of those who are spiritually dead. This is probably the meaning of those passages of Scripture which describe the unbeliever as being dead in trespasses and sins, though they are biologically alive (Ephesians 2:1,5; Col. 2:13).

Finally, the Bible refers at times to a death which is the opposite of eternal life, i.e., a death which is an eternal separation from God. Apparently this is the death that is spoken of in passages such as John 5:24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." As the life spoken of here is eternal life, so the death referred to is eternal death. A similar usage of the word death occurs also in John 8:51 f.: "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." This can hardly refer to physical death. See also Romans 6:21-23; James 5:20. At times Scripture describes hell as the "second death" (Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8).

3. The meaning of the term "immortality." In a discussion of this concept it is important to note again that "immortality" is not always used in the same sense in Scripture. Here too there are certain distinctions that are essential if confusion is to be avoided.

a. In the most absolute sense of the word "immortality" is ascribed to God alone. Paul speaks of Him in 1 Tim. 6:15-16 as "the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light." However, this statement can hardly mean that none of God's creatures have immortality even in a derived sense of the word. The apostle is certainly not denying that angels are immortal creatures (Luke 20:35-36). Instead St. Paul is making the point that God possesses an immortality which is "an original, essential, eternal, and necessary endowment."

b. Man in his original state of perfection was immortal in the sense that he did not carry within himself the seeds of physical death. In his original condition he was not subject to the law of disintegration and decomposition. Death was threatened as a punishment for sin (Gen. 2:17), and that this included bodily or physical death is evident from Gen. 3:19. (See also Romans 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21 ff; Romans 6:23).

c. The Bible speaks of an immortality which is possessed by the saints in heaven. Those who attain to the resurrection from the dead (cannot die anymore" (Luke 20:35-36). After the resurrection the believers will possess an incorruptible, immortal body. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53-54).

d. While Scripture does not specifically call the soul immortal, it certainly does not rule out this concept. Nowhere does it limit man's immortality to his life after the resurrection. Instead it asserts that Christ has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, i.e., caused it to exist (2 Tim. 1:10). Scripture promises eternal life to all who seek after immortality (Romans 2:7). What is more, it describes the Christian as possessing eternal life even now because of his relation to Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11-13). And finally, it guarantees that even death shall not sever this relationship to Christ (Romans 8:38-39).

*What about  
man, of soul  
for immortality?*

4. The meaning of the term "flesh." Ludwig Koehler defines basar as (a) "the lifeless stuff of man" (p. 136). It differs from the body in the sense that "body is the human (or animal) form which the stuff flesh assumes" (Ibid.). Brown, Driver and Briggs, however, claim that basar is used in Scripture to refer also to the body itself (Ex. 30:32; Lev. 6:3; 16:4; 1 Kings 21:27; Lev. 14:9; 15:13,16; 16:24,26,28); (b) basar means blood relationship (Gen. 2:23); (c) it points up the contrast between God and man, showing man as frail and erring (Gen. 6:3; Job 10:4; Is. 31:3); (d) the phrase kol basar is translated "all living beings, including both men and animals (Gen. 6:17; 7:21; 9:11,15-17; 8:17; Num. 16:22; 27:16, etc.).

The New Testament term sarx likewise has more than one connotation. It can have the following meanings: (a) flesh, the physical substance of the body whether of men or of beasts (Luke 24:39; 1 Cor. 15:39; Rev. 19:18,21); (b) natural or physical origin, generation or relationship (Eph. 2:11; 1 Cor. 10:18; Rom. 9:5; Rom. 1:3); (c) the sinful and sensuous nature of man (John 3:6; Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:17,19,24); (d) a living creature (1 Peter 1:24). There are still other meanings for sarx but these are the principal ones. And it is extremely

*(the whole  
man)*



important that these various usages are not confused one with the other. It is especially necessary that the term "flesh" is not identified with sin. To do so is to inject a Platonic emphasis.

#### BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR IMMORTALITY AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

But now let us proceed to a more detailed discussion of the nature of immortality as it is set forth in the Old and the New Testaments. While it is true that revelation concerning the hereafter did not burn as brightly in ancient times as it did after Christ came to this earth, still it is quite evident that the people of God in the Old Testament believed in the continued existence of man even though his body was confined in the grave. This is clear from the following considerations:

1. The patriarchs believed that after death they would be "gathered to their fathers in peace." This expression did not imply simply interment in a family grave, for Abraham is said to have been gathered to his people, even though his ancestors were buried in Mesopotamia while his body was laid to rest in the cave at Machpelah (Gen. 25:8-10). Nor was Isaac buried in the family tomb, although the phrase occurs again in his case (Gen. 35:29). Jacob died in Egypt and it is again said that "he was gathered to his people," but it was seventy days before his body was taken to Canaan and there laid to rest (Gen. 49:33; 50:3 ff.). It is written concerning both Moses and Aaron that they were "gathered to their people," yet it is quite evident that they did not rest in a common grave (Num. 27:13), for Aaron was "gathered to his people" on Mt. Hor (Deut. 32:50) and Moses died and was buried "in the valley in the land of Moab, but no man knows the place of his burial to this day" (Deut. 34:6). Thus it is an oversimplification to equate such formulae with burial in a common grave. Instead it is the opinion of scholars such as Walther Eichrodt that statements such as "he was gathered to his people" or

"he slept with his fathers" show the intense desire of the Israelite to be united even in death with their ancestors (Theologie des Alten Testaments, p. 145). And George Knight states that the Old Testament believer found it impossible to imagine any life after death that was not lived along with his people (A Christian Theology of the Old Testament, p. 335 f.). He believed that a good thing was about to happen to him when he was gathered to his people (Ibid.). It implied continued existence.

2. Another expression which writers of the Old Testament employed in order to describe the afterlife was sheol. The average Israelite thought of sheol in grim and somber terms. Procksch describes it as a "terrifying place," and a place of destruction (Job 26:6; 28:22), of forgetfulness (Ps. 88:13), of darkness (Job 10:21 f.), and of hopelessness from which there is no return (Job 7:9; 14:10,12; 16:22; Isaiah 38:12,18). But whatever may be said of the condition of those who descended into it, sheol is represented in Scripture as a state of more or less conscious existence. Thus in the opinion of the Old Testament believer there was a life after death; the grave did not end man's existence. The Israelites did have an eschatology and immortality. Gerhard von Rad also emphasizes that it would be wrong to assume, in view of this very grim and gloomy picture of afterlife, that in Israel death "radically called man and all that he lived for into question." While it is true that Israel, like other prophets, lamented over the bitterness of dying, "she never allowed the foundations of her faith to be shaken thereby" (Old Testament Theology, I, p. 389).

3. Still other theologians suggest that these descriptions of the realm of death which portray it as a gloomy existence in sheol, characterized by separation from God, do not actually express the normal hope of Israel regarding the future life, but these are statements of men who were under great emotional strain, as they faced the reality of death at a time prior to the day when God revealed to man more fully the state and condition of the dead

(Herbert C. Leupold, Exposition of the Psalms, p. 27).

It is the opinion of some scholars that Israel's true hope regarding the life after death is expressed in passages such as Psalms 16:9-11; 49:15; and 73:24, where major emphasis is placed on the thought that God will not abandon His saints in death; He will abide with them and ransom them from sheol. This series of passages indicates rather clearly that Israel did indeed believe in an immortality, a continued existence of man after death.

In his interpretation of Psalm 49:15 ("God will ransom my soul from the power of sheol, for he will receive me"), Gerhard von Rad insists that this statement can hardly refer to anything other than a life after death. What is more, it extends to the believer the promise: "Jahweh holds his pious one fast, and remains his God in every situation in life, and even death cannot remove the communion vouchsafed to him" (von Rad, p. 406). Here the emphasis is on the unbounded extent of the believer's communion with God ~~is~~ reached even over death.

Harold Craeger and Herbert C. Alleman, in their interpretation of these psalms, come to a similar conclusion. With regard to Psalm 16:10 and Psalm 49:15 they assert that here is expressed the profound spiritual perception "that the personality in communion with God either overleaps sheol or is quickly delivered from it" (Old Testament Commentary, p. 535). In this way fellowship with God is continued even in death, after which there is satisfying joy in His presence.

4. The Old Testament hope for a life after death reaches its culmination in its teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead. This doctrine is taught explicitly in passages such as Job 19:23-27; Isaiah 25:8; 26:19; and Daniel 12:12. It is of particular importance to note in the first of these texts that Job is describing an event which would transpire "after my skin has been destroyed." Hardly can this refer to an encounter with God during Job's lifetime. Yet immediately after this statement the writer makes

the brilliant confession of faith: "I shall see God from my flesh (basar), i.e., while in possession of my flesh." This he undergirds with the confident hope: "mine eyes shall behold him and not another." Conservative scholars in the past have taken this as a clear reference to the bodily resurrection.

Of special interest is also Isaiah 26:19: "Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy, for thy dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the ashes thou wilt let it fall." The Hebrew uses a very significant word for "their bodies." Nevelah means literally "a corpse" or "carcass." Does this not point rather clearly to the fact that in the resurrection the same bodies that died shall again be made alive? It is generally agreed among the scholars that this is one of the very strongest passages in the Old Testament pointing to a resurrection of the body.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is clearly stated also in Daniel 12:2: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." It is not a national resurrection spoken of here, but a resurrection of the individual. This is shown by the fact that some of those who lie in the dust of death will rise to everlasting life and some will awaken to everlasting contempt. There will be a difference in the status of those who rise.

While there is general agreement among scholars that the above passages point to a resurrection, there are other theologians who see foregleams of the resurrection in earlier Biblical writings and prefer to include a larger selection of passages in a discussion of this important doctrine. One of the foremost European scholars in this classification is Otto Procksch who traces the beginnings of eschatological thought in the Old Testament to the Garden of Eden. There Jahweh created humanity with a destiny, which was not to be death but life, and was prefigured in the tree of life (Gen. 2:9; 3:22). Though only

fragments of that early history have been preserved, it is a natural assumption that if man had remained in the original state of innocence, he would have had everlasting life. But when this blessedness was forfeited by sin, faith in an afterlife was nevertheless kept alive, says Procksch, by means of the narratives of Enoch (Gen. 5:21 f.) and Elijah (2 Kings 2), neither of whom died but were carried into the presence of God where they now live (Otto Procksch, p. 701). Thus the thought of a life with God in another world entered history at an early date.

Other foregleams of a resurrection in the Old Testament writings are to be found, according to Procksch, in passages such as 2 Samuel 23:2; Isaiah 9:5; 52:13-53:12; Ezekiel 37, etc. But none of these underscore specifically the physical resurrection of the dead to the extent that the previous passages do.

5. The New Testament has also thrown valuable light on the doctrine of immortality, as it was found among the ancient people of God. Two passages in particular suggest themselves: (a) In Matt. 22:32 the Savior Himself quotes Exodus 3:6 in proof of the resurrection, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then He chides the Jews of His day for not understanding the Scripture on this point. It is evident from this incident that Christ Himself was of the opinion that the resurrection appeared at an early time in the writings of the Old Testament. (b) Hebrews 11:13-16 presents a valuable insight into the faith of the ancient patriarchs regarding a life after death. Having spoken of the faith of such ancients as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc., the holy writer added: "These all died in faith, not having received the promise, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better

country, that is, a heavenly one." This passage also throws light on the faith of the patriarchs with respect to a future life and an immortality.

6. At times there are those who point to Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 where the author seems to say that "the fate of man is the same as that of the beast. . . . All go to one place; all are from the dust and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth?" In response it should be noted that the majority of conservative scholars agree that "This is not the general teaching of the Old Testament." (Taito Kantonen, Life After Death, p. 16). A reading of Ecclesiastes will show clearly that Chapter 3:19-21 is intended by the author to set forth the view of one who seeks to learn what death is without taking God and His revelation into consideration.

Turning now to the New Testament, one finds even more explicit evidence of an immortality, that is a continued existence on the part of man in the state of death. After Christ came to this earth, bringing life and immortality to light, proofs of immortality necessarily began to multiply.

We look, first of all, at the person of Jesus Himself, and we are confronted with the very relevant question, "Did He cease to exist when He succumbed on the cross?" While it is true, the Bible does not hesitate to declare that men killed the Prince of life (Acts 3:15), God's Son died, there is no indication in Scripture that this should be understood in the sense that the God-man ceased to exist, even for a moment. On the contrary, Scriptural evidence supports the view that Jesus' spirit continued on in the presence of the Father; for as the Savior expired, He cried out with a loud voice: "Father, into Thy hands I entrust my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

But is it possible that this prayer is intended to say nothing more than that Jesus died? Is it perhaps only a poetic way of reporting the death of God's own Son? Needless to say, these words do indeed establish the reality of the fact that Jesus truly died, but it would be a most serious weakening

of the Greek terms to limit them to that purpose. If one examines carefully the statement eis cheiras sou paratithemai to pneuma mou, it becomes evident that in this context it means much more than to expire. Basically, a paratithemi means "to place down or alongside of." In its present form, which is the middle, it means "to deposit, to commit, to entrust, to hand over into the keeping of someone." Thus in the case at hand this expression reports that Jesus died entrusting His spirit into the hands of His heavenly Father.

But again could this mean simply that Jesus is asking His Father to watch over His mortal remains as they lie in the grave? Our context seems to supply the most satisfactory answer to this question. Luke 23:43 makes it quite evident that Jesus expected His spirit to live on even while He was in the state of death, for He promises the malefactor: "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." While their bodies would lie in the grave, they would be together enjoying the bliss of communion with God. It is significant that in 2 Cor. 12:2-4 the apostle, by means of a parallelism, equates paradise and heaven. The conclusion thus seems inescapable: there is continued existence even while man is in the state of death. What is more, it is not ~~only~~ a bare, uneventful, unconscious existence, but for the believer it is a life with Christ in paradise.

Nor is this a conclusion based on an isolated case. Scripture multiplies instances of this type. According to Luke 16:19-31 Lazarus dies and where is he? He is carried immediately into Abraham's bosom. And where is Abraham? He lives with God (Matt. 22:29-32). Stephen is stoned to death for his testimony of faith, but before he dies he sees heaven open and Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father, and as he succumbs, he prays in a way reminiscent of his Savior, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). In this passage there are two points to be noted: 1. Stephen conceived of his pneuma (spirit) as something which he possessed, and as something which he in

turn could entrust to his Lord while he was in death. 2. In this text two phrases are employed that are descriptive of death: Kyrie Jeesou, dexai to pneuma mou (Lord Jesus, receive my spirit) and ekoimeethee (he fell asleep). While both refer to Stephen's death, they must not be reduced to this and nothing more. Together they affirm not only that Stephen died but also that in the process he commended his spirit into the hands of Jesus. While Stephen slept in the grave, his spirit was with Jesus at the right hand of God. There is nothing in the text to indicate that his spirit also slept. In the light of Luke 23:43-46 this passage too would indicate that there is continued existence in death.

Similarly, St. Paul expected his death to bring with it life with Christ. As he languishes in prison, expecting soon to be beheaded by the Romans, it is quite apparent that he does not expect death to be the end of his existence even temporarily; nor does he give any indication that he expects to lie in the grave in a state of unconsciousness. Instead he looks forward to being present with the Lord after his departure (Phil. 1:23) for he exults: "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." That this was indeed his hope and firm expectation is evident also from 2 Cor. 5:8 where he again exclaims: "We are of good cheer, and we would rather be away from the body and home with the Lord." Again, does this not suggest that there is continued existence in death; yes, even an existence where there is joy and pleasure forevermore?

Finally, the apostle John directly suggests that the souls of the martyrs who have given their lives for this faith are even now experiencing blessedness and life in the presence of God. In Revelation 6:9-11 he tells of a vision in which he states: "I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?'



Then they were each given a white robe, and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been." This passage certainly suggests the following important points: 1) The Bible does at times speak of the souls of the dead; 2) it describes them as existing in a conscious state; 3) it notes that they are in the presence of God enjoying rest and peace in Him. (See also Rev. 14:13 which describes those who have died in the Lord as being in a state of blessedness immediately after death.)

Scripture clearly indicates that even the wicked exist while they are in the state of death. They are neither annihilated nor are they allowed to escape into unconsciousness. In Isaiah 14:9-15 the prophet described the king of Babylon descending into sheol where he is met and taunted by the other spirits. Dives dies and goes into Hades where he suffers intense pain and remorse (Luke 16:23). On the day of His resurrection Jesus descended into the phylake, the prison, where He found the spirits of the wicked who had died in the flood, and he preached to them (1 Peter 3:19-20). Judas, having despaired and taken his own life, is said to have gone "to his place," an expression suggesting punishment (Acts 1:25). It seems evident to this essayist that these passages as well as others of a similar nature, present convincing proof that the state of death is neither one of annihilation nor of unconsciousness, but one of continued existence in which the believer experiences peace, rest, and blessedness, while the unbeliever knows the torments of the condemned.

At this point, however, the question is frequently asked, "If a person upon death goes directly into the presence of Jesus or unto the place of torment, does this not detract from the importance of the resurrection or even make it unnecessary?" This poses a problem only if one clings to the philosophical presupposition that man is an indivisible unit, that when he dies, he dies in his entirety, and that there is consequently no immortality of the

soul. If one feels constrained to accept this philosophical-psychological premise, then, of course, this unity which is called man cannot at one and the same time be immortal and also look forward to a resurrection. But when one believes (as Christendom has down the centuries) that death consists in the separation of body and soul, with the soul or spirit going into the presence of God and the mortal body returning to the dust, then the resurrection occupies the central place in our faith, for it holds before all Christians the promise and prospect that not only will our souls enjoy communion with God, but even these mortal bodies of ours will be raised from the dust of the earth, reunited with the soul, glorified, and together live in God's presence forever.

2 But the principal issue in the current theological ferment is not whether there will be a resurrection of the dead; on this point most scholars seem to be agreed at the present time. But the discussion today revolves chiefly around the question whether our physical bodies will rise.

We find the answer only in Scripture. As noted above, there are already in the Old Testament key passages which point forward to a resurrection of the body (Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19; and Daniel 12:2). But in addition, the New Testament presents a number of significant and pertinent statements. Among these is 2 Cor. 5:10: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body." This passage clearly indicates that in the next life man will be responsible for the deeds which he did in his body in this life; this necessitates a continuity between man in this life and in the next, a continuity which centers also in the body, unless we are to become Platonic at this point.

A similar thought is suggested in John 5:28: "The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the

resurrection of judgment." If entirely different bodies and souls are to be created on the last day, then the words of the Lord, "those who have done good . . . and those who have done evil," become meaningless. Where then is the continuity between man in this life and in the next?

Furthermore, even the term "resurrection" itself indicates a direct continuity of the body. Unless the same body which dies and decays is again brought to life, the term "resurrection" is inaccurate. Then it would be far more exact if the Scriptures were to call our coming to life again on the last day a "re-creation" rather than a resurrection.

More important still is the fact that there are passages in Scripture which specifically state that these mortal bodies of ours shall rise from death. Of particular interest is Romans 8:11: "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through His Spirit which dwells in you." Although the verses preceding this text speak of sanctification, it is quite evident that verse 11 refers not to sanctification but to the resurrection of the Christian's body on the last day. It should be noted that the term "mortal body" in verse 11 is ta thneeta soomata, a body subject to death but still living. On the other hand, in verse 10 when the apostle is speaking of sanctification, he uses the expression sooma nekron dia hamartian, a body dead because of sin, i.e., spiritually dead. These must not be confused. Furthermore, the two terms, sarx and sooma, must be carefully distinguished in this context. Sarx is here used when the apostle speaks of man's fleshly nature, his old Adam; sooma generally means man's physical body which because of sin is subject to death.

Pertinent to the discussion is also the question, "With what kind of body did Jesus arise?" In reply it should be noted that the Savior took great pains to convince His doubting disciples that His resurrection body was the same that had died, even to the point of showing Thomas the wounds of His

crucifixion (John 20:27).

One final passage. In 1 Cor. 15:51-54 the apostle Paul describes the day of Christ's second coming, when those who are in the grave will be raised and those who have not died will be changed. He explains the events in these words:

Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'

Twice in this passage the holy writer mentions that those who have not died when Christ returns will be changed. The change will consist in this that they will put aside their perishableness, their corruptibility, and assume the quality of deathlessness or immortality. No mention is made that their bodies will not be the same which they had in this life; there is not the slightest suggestion that their bodies will suddenly cease to exist and be replaced by one that is made up of a different substance. The emphasis rather is on the change that will take place in the condition of these people; they together with their bodies will be glorified; these bodies which heretofore were mortal and subject to corruption will be rendered incorruptible and immortal.

But if this is true of those who are alive at the Lord's coming, if the change which they undergo will be one of condition, rather than substance, then will it not be similar in the case of those who will possess resurrected bodies. Our physical bodies will be restored in the resurrection, but as St. Paul writes, they will then no longer be psychikos nor sarkikos but pneumatikos, i.e., they will be physical bodies but they will no longer be laden with sin and subject to the lusts of the flesh. They will be led by man's spiritual nature.

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL AND RESURRECTION OF THE BODY  
IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Speaking generally, it may be said that the Christian Church from its very beginning was aware of the eschatological hope which the resurrection of Jesus Christ had brought. Followers of the risen Lord were conscious of the fact that physical death did not end man's existence, but that the souls of the dead live on, that Christ will come again, that there will be a blessed resurrection of the people of God, followed by a general judgment in which eternal doom will be pronounced upon the wicked while the pious will be rewarded with the everlasting glories of heaven. Most of these basic truths were recognized and believed even though they were not systematically articulated.

The primary attention of the early church, however, was centered on the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. This was a natural outgrowth of the threat posed by Gnosticism and Hellenism. These two forces, while believing in an immortality of the "soul," regarded matter as inherently evil and therefore rejected the resurrection of the physical body. Origen defended the Christian doctrine over against the Gnostics but apparently did not believe that the very body which was laid in the grave would be raised up. He described the body of the resurrection as a new, refined, and spiritualized body. While some of the early Christian Fathers shared his view, the majority of them stressed the identity of the present body and the body of the resurrection. The early church as a whole expressed its belief in the resurrection of the flesh already in the Apostolic Confession. Both Jerome and Augustine insisted strongly on the identity of the present with the future body. During the Middle Ages the Scholastics speculated a great deal about the nature of the resurrection body and often their speculations were quite fanciful. However, the theologians of the Reformation period as well as the 17th and 18th century dogmatists were generally agreed that the body of the resurrection would be identical with the present body. It was not until the advent of Rationalism

and with it the advance of the physical sciences that the resurrection of the flesh was challenged and finally denied by religious liberalism.

But now, what about the early church's belief in the immortality of the soul? History indicates that despite the early church's preoccupation with Gnosticism, which led it to emphasize particularly the resurrection of the flesh, the church fathers from earliest times clearly expressed the belief that the soul of man experiences a continued existence after death. Clement of Alexandria asserts that St. Peter and St. Paul, after their death, went immediately to "the holy place" where they found a great company of martyrs and saints made perfect in love (1 Clement 4:4-7; 6:1; 50:3). The Smyrnaean elders claim that the dead Polycarp has already obtained the crown of immortality (Martyrdom of Polycarp, 17:1). Justin Martyr stated that at the time of death the souls of the righteous go to a more comfortable place than do the souls of the wicked (Dialogue 5:3). Irenaeus explained the state and condition of the dead in these words:

The souls of Christians go to an invisible place designated for them by God and sojourn there until the resurrection. Afterwards, receiving bodies, just as the Lord Himself, they will so come to the sight of God. (Adversum Haereses 5:31.)

But the most elaborate treatment of this subject has been offered by Tertullian in his De Anima, "A Treatise on the Soul," (The Ante-Nicene Fathers, III). He contends that the body and soul are joined at the moment of conception, and they are separated at the moment of death. He adds by way of explanation: "Undoubtedly when the soul, by the power of death, is released from its concretion with the flesh, it is by the very release cleansed and purified" (Chapter 53). Tertullian shared the views of others such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Ambrose, and Augustine that before souls were permitted entrance into heaven, they must first go through a preparatory state. Only martyrs were granted immediate entry into full glory. This exception was based on Revelation 6:9 which pictured the martyrs as existing under the altar. But even those who were in the preparatory or intermediate state had full consciousness.

*N<sub>70</sub>-Platonic!*

Tertullian states: "What, then, is taking place in that interval? Shall we sleep? But souls do not sleep even when men are alive; it is indeed the business of the bodies to sleep, to which also belongs death itself."

The early church gave evidence of its belief in the continued existence of souls after death also by its understanding of the Apostles' Creed. In this connection two statements are particularly important: descendit ad inferna and sanctorum communio. As early as 359 A.D. in the Fourth Formula of Sirmium the church fathers indicated their belief that Christ descended into hell for the purpose of preaching to the dead, which in turn implied that the spirits must have been alive and conscious enough to hear. Even more significant was the phrase "communion of saints." Although these words originally may have referred to the Lord's Supper, as Werner Elert points out in his Abendmahl und Gemeinschaft im alten Kirche, hauptsächlich in Osten, it seems evident that in the Western Church this phrase was taken to mean the "fellowship with holy persons." (J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, pp. 390 ff.). Kelly explains it thus:

Manifestly COMMUNION OF SAINTS is here interpreted as standing for that ultimate fellowship with holy persons of all ages, as well as with the whole company of heaven, which is anticipated and partly realized in the fellowship of the Catholic Church on earth.

Adolf von Harnack concurs in this interpretation; however, he enlarges the concept to include the patriarchs of all ages, the present members of the church, and all righteous future generations.

Thus by way of summary one may say that the early church conceived of death as the separation of body and soul, after which the souls of martyrs went immediately into the full glory of heaven, while the souls of other faithful Christians remained in an intermediate state in a condition of consciousness. Walter Koehler in his Dogmengeschichte (I, 110) summarizes the views of the early church thus: "Das pneuma lebt nach dem Tode des Menschen fort, so oder so, entweder im Himmel oder in der Unterwelt (pneuma ta en

phylakee, 1 Peter 3:19); der auferstandene Christus ist 'lebendig gemacht dem Geiste'" (1 Peter 3:18).

Frequently the question is raised whether Luther believed in the immortality of the soul. Evidence points to the conclusion that he held views which were similar to those of the early church fathers, except that he discounted any suggestion of an intermediate place which would resemble a purgatory, i.e., a place of preparation for heaven.

Luther described death as a separation of the soul from the body (W. A. 36, 241; W. A. 43, 218) after which the body rests in the grave (Martin Luther, Werke, XXXVII, 151) but the soul lives with God and serves Him. In his Commentary on Genesis, a work which he completed in 1537, about nine years before his death, he states:

It is certain that to this day Abraham is serving God, just as Adam, Abel, Noah are serving God. And this we should carefully note, for it is divine truth that Abraham is living, serving God and ruling with Him. But what sort of life that may be, whether he is asleep or awake, is another question. How the soul is resting we are not to know, but it is certain that it is living. (Ewald Pfass, What Luther Says, I, par. 1131).

Throughout his life Luther called death a sleep, following the terminology of the Bible; however, it is clear that he did not intend to say thereby that the soul in the intermediate state was unconscious. Commenting on Gen. 25:7-10 the reformer makes this statement:

Since it is certain that the souls live in peace, what sort of life or rest may this be? . . . there is little difference between the sleep or rest of this life and that of the future life. For in this life a man, fatigued by the day's work, enters his bedroom at night in order there to sleep in peace and to enjoy rest during the night. Nor is he conscious of any evil that is happening, be it fire or murder. But the departed soul does not sleep in this manner; it is more properly speaking awake and has visions and conversations with the angels and God. . . . (Ibid., par. 1132)

Of particular significance is a statement which Luther made regarding the question whether the soul dies and goes into the grave with the body. In his Open Letter to the Christian Nobility, he criticizes Aristotle very



sharply because of his teaching regarding the soul. The following is a brief quotation which can hardly be misunderstood:

It grieves me to the quick that this . . . conceited, rascally heathen has deluded and made fools of so many of the best Christians with his misleading writings. God has sent him as a plague upon us on account of our sins. Why this wretched fellow in his best book, Concerning the Soul, teaches that the soul dies with the body, although many have tried without success to save his reputation. As though he did not have the Holy Scripture, in which we are fully instructed about all things, things about which Aristotle has not the faintest clue! And yet this dead heathen has conquered, obstructed, and almost succeeded in suppressing the books of the living God. When I think of this miserable business, I can only believe that the devil has introduced this study. (Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 44, p. 201.)

In one of the sermons which Luther preached at the funeral of the elector, Duke John of Saxony, on August 18, 1532, the reformer urged his hearers to recognize the comfort which the Christian has in the hour of death. He explains:

Says St. Paul, if you are assailed by sorrow and grief on account of your good friends whom you have lost, then look to this death (Christ's) and mingle, yea, cover with the death of Christ all other human deaths, and so magnify this death that other deaths are only a sleep compared with it. If this is true, why should we sorrow much over the death of others or even our own death and burial? After all, it is only a man that dies, and not even the whole man, but only a part, the body, but here is God's Son Himself, here the Lord of creation dies. (Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 51, p. 234.)

As Paul Althaus points out, in Luther's theology there are two great eschatological emphases: a) He shares the view that death is "the separation of soul and body; accordingly, he also teaches that the souls enjoy a bodiless existence until the Last Day"; b) at the same time, Luther does not lose sight of the emphasis which the New Testament places also on the resurrection of the dead. Holding these two views beside each other creates no difficulty for him. (The Theology of Martin Luther, pp. 414 ff.)

The seventeenth and eighteenth century dogmatists, in principle, followed these emphases set forth by the reformer and the Lutheran Confessions.

However, they do articulate in a more systematic way the condition of the soul while in the intermediate state. They reject both the Roman Catholic view that there is a purgatory and the Anabaptist doctrine of soul-sleep (psychopannychism) according to which it is asserted that the souls of the departed are in a state of unconscious sleep as long as the body lies in the grave. In a positive way they assert, "we believe that the souls of the godly attain essential blessedness immediately after they have been separated from the body . . . but that the souls of the wicked undergo their damnation" (Baier, p. 364). Nor do they, by emphasizing the immortality of the soul and the positive character of the intermediate state, intend to detract from the significance of the resurrection of the body on the last day. In the spirit of Luther they assert that "the souls of . . . the believers in Christ are in the hand of God, awaiting there the glorious resurrection of the body, and the full enjoyment of eternal blessedness" (Hutter, Loc. Th., 297). Thus, according to the orthodox theologians, the separation of body and soul which is occasioned by death, is not one of permanent continuance, but the time will come when God will awaken the body and reunite it with the soul that belonged to it before death. In the words of Hollarz: "The resurrection of the dead consists formally, (a) in the reproduction or restoration of the same body which had perished by death, out of its atoms or particles which had been scattered thence and dispersed; (b) in the reunion of the same with the soul" (Ex. Th. 1245).

As to the nature of the resurrection body, the seventeenth and eighteenth century dogmatists were agreed that it will be in substance the same body with which the soul was united in this life, but it will be endowed with new attributes, adapted to the nature of the circumstances then existing. In the words of Martin Chemnitz:

In the resurrection, likewise, there will be spiritual bodies, not that they will be changed into spirits, or that they will be of the same substance as the Holy Spirit, for they will have and

retain the nature of substance of the body as Job says, "In this flesh of mine I will see my God," (Job 19:26). And in the creed we confess our faith in the resurrection of the flesh (De Duabus Naturis, p. 175).

Turning now to the Lutheran Confessions we find that they too speak with clarity on the points under discussion in this paper. We shall note especially what the confessional writings teach with reference to the following points: 1. Man is a composite being, consisting of body and soul, two realities which must be distinguished carefully from one another; 2. both body and soul are subject to eternal death; however, only the body succumbs to physical death; 3. the saints are in the grave and in heaven; 4. man's physical body shall rise.

The Lutheran Confessions include man under the rubric "creature" (L. C. First Part, 207, 211, et al.). They clearly indicate his continuity with the rest of creation. Luther wrote in the explanation of the First Article: "I believe that God has made me samt allen Kreaturen (una cum omnibus creaturis), a phrase with a meaning not fully expressed in the English "and all creatures" (Cp. L. C., Part Third, 2).

The Lutheran Confessions are aware, however, of the "differentia" which gives man a unique position among creatures. Exclusively to man, in addition to his physical nature (body), the Confessions ascribe a soul. "By God's creation . . . man has a body and soul"; God is man's Creator who creates body and soul for him" (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl. Art. I, 38, 42).

Both man's body and soul are real entities which must be distinguished one from the other so that the soul does not come to be regarded as merely a "quality" or "function" of man's existence. The Confessions in many ways indicate that they believe man's soul to be as real as his body. The Athanasian Creed (35) regards the body and soul of man to be analagous to the two natures in Christ, and therefore equally as real as the two natures. One aspect of the Descent controversy makes it plain that the theologians of the

Augsburg Confession ascribed to the human nature of Christ a body and soul, and that these were distinguishable to the extent that some thought it possible for one to descend into hell without the other (F. C., Epit. IX, 1). The body and soul are so real and so radically different one from the other that each apprehends Baptism in its own manner (L. C., Baptism, 45).<sup>1</sup> Luther rejects as pagan all doctrines which imply that Christ died only for man's body and not for his soul (S. A., Part III, Art. I, 11). The Formula of Concord in three passages, in offering a formal definition of the term "nature", ascribed to man both body and soul (Thor. Decl. I, 33, 41, 51). The Large Catechism lists man's soul together with his body, property and money, without the slightest suggestion that the soul is not as real as the other items mentioned (L. C., Creed, 22).

While man's body and soul are each true realities that can and must be distinguished from each other, they are united in man's person in such a way that this union can be regarded as analagous to the union of the two natures in Christ (Athanasian Creed, 35). Body and soul are so intimately united that the body shares in salvation in virtue of its union with the soul—" . . . der Leib aber, (wird selig und ewig leben) weil er mit der Seele vereinigt ist" (L. C., Baptism, 46). Tappert: ". . . body and soul shall be saved and live forever: the soul through the Word in which it believes, the body because it is united with the soul. . . .").

If the body-soul analogy is pressed beyond the tertium comparationis, it will imply more than it was intended to imply; —then it will affirm not only that body and soul are two distinct realities as are the divine and human natures of Christ, and that these two realities are one man just as God and man are one Christ, but it will imply that just as Christ's two natures are forever inseparable, so body and soul are inseparable even in death. Such an implication of the body/soul analogy the Confessions do not support. "We await the time when our flesh will be put to death, will be buried"—but not the soul.

(L. C., Third Article, 57).<sup>2</sup> Luther thinks that if people did not expect some advantage to accrue to them through their so-called honoring of the dead, then "the saints will cease to be molested in their graves and in heaven" (Sm. Art., Part II, Art. II, 28). The Formula of Concord (Thor. Decl., Art. I, 37) quotes Eccl. 12:7: "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."

Passages such as the above, if carefully borne in mind when we read Luther's statement in the Sm. Art. (Part III, Art. I, 11) that not only the body but also the soul is subject to death, will help us to see that Luther does not mean that the soul dies with the body at the end of our earthly lifetime, but that the soul as well as the body is subject to eternal death because both have been corrupted by sin, and therefore the soul is in need of redemption equally as much as the body. Nor does the notion that the soul dies with the body find any valid support by means of such an argument as this: the Formula of Concord (Thor. Decl., Art. I, 51) defines man's nature as body and soul; the Epitome (Art. I, 10) says that "the nature which we now bear will arise and live forever"; therefore, both body and soul die and rise again! Such an argument overlooks several factors: in the first place, in the passage cited from the Thor. Decl., the Formula of Concord is not defining man's nature, but the term "nature"; in the second place, it is defining this term in a specific context,<sup>3</sup> namely "in the statement, 'God creates man's nature.'" When we say, "God creates man's nature, then we mean by the term "nature" both body and soul. This has nothing to do with the meaning of the term "nature" in the statement, "our nature will rise." The term "nature" does not have the same meaning in both instances. What the term "nature" means in the statement, "our nature will rise", must be determined by letting the Confessions interpret themselves. This requires that we hear everything they have to say, and will not permit us to ignore the implications of Luther's remark about saints in the grave and in heaven, and of Melancthon's concession that perhaps the saints

in heaven pray for the Church (Apol. XXI, 9. Cp. also Sm. Arts. II, III, 26). The Confessions speak of the flesh rising and of our "keeping" this soul (Form. of Concord, Thor. Decl., Art. I, 46) in the resurrection, but nowhere do the Confessions speak of a resurrection of the soul. "Our flesh will be put to death,<sup>4</sup> will be buried . . . and will come forth gloriously and arise" (L. C., Creed, 57)<sup>5</sup>—but not a word about the death or resurrection of the soul. In the statement, "our nature will rise", the term "nature" means our flesh or bodies.

Thus, for many centuries Christendom has consistently retained its belief in the immortality of the soul and alongside it, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Only within recent years has this confessional principle been seriously challenged by theologians in the Christian Church. But even in the current dialogue it is becoming evident that there is a growing concern on the part of a number of prominent scholars who are cautioning the Church against assuming too sharp a cleavage between Hebrew and Greek thought in early Christian times—an assumption which subsequently led to the opinion that according to Hebrew and early Christian thought, man is an indivisible unit of which nothing escapes the grave at the time of death, and that any suggestion of a dichotomy of body and soul was derived from Platonic philosophy rather than Scripture.

Already fifty years ago R. H. Charles in his book entitled Eschatology—the Doctrine of a Future Life, challenged the popular opinion that the Judaeo-Christian belief in the immortality of the soul had been derived from Greek philosophy. Again, in 1956 when Dr. Wolfson presented one of the Ingersoll Lectures at Harvard on the subject, The Immortality of Man, this well known scholar took sharp issue with Oscar Cullmann, who in the previous lecture had contended that "the Bible does not teach, and Jewish religious thought did not believe in the separate identity of body and soul and in the non-extinction of

the latter at death." In his lecture Dr. Wolfson demonstrated how carefully the early church fathers were so as not to be contaminated by Greek and pagan philosophy. In December 1958 Dr. Henry Hamann published an article in the Australasian Theological Review in which he discussed the subject, "Has Man a Soul?" In this article he too presented significant arguments in support of the classic Protestant view regarding immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body. In May of 1965 two articles appeared in the Lutheran Quarterly which defended the traditional position of classic Lutheranism. The first was written by Otto W. Heick, professor of Systematic Theology and History of Doctrine in the Lutheran Seminary of Canada at Waterloo, Ontario; the second was the work of Harold L. Creager, for many years professor of Old Testament in the L.C.A. Dr. Creager began his article with these pointed words: "In view of the strong testimony of Scripture to the continuance of personal existence after physical death, it is astonishing that there is a considerable trend toward denying it" (Lutheran Quarterly, XVII, 111). Perhaps the most thought-provoking treatment of this subject is that of James Barr, professor of Old Testament Literature and Theology at the University of Edinburgh. In his book entitled The Semantics of Biblical Language, Dr. Barr presents a critical examination of the way in which recent theology has used linguistic phenomena from Hebrew and Greek in order to delineate a Hebrew way of thinking, to develop a synthetic picture of Biblical theology, as well as throw light on the Semitic background lying behind the New Testament terminology. He asks whether the methodology employed by contemporary theology is as scholarly as it should be.

VIEWS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD WITH RESPECT  
TO IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL AND RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Throughout its history The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, on the basis of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions, has held and confessed the following basic truths with respect to Immortality of the Soul and Resurrection of the Body:

1. Man, as he ~~was~~<sup>was</sup> created by his Maker, was an intelligent and moral being, consisting of body and soul, united in one complete person.

2. His fall into sin brought upon him death: temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

3. Temporal death is the termination of man's physical life by the separation of his immortal soul from his mortal body. It marks the end of his present life and results in the decomposition of his "natural" body.

4. Holy Scripture reveals but little concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection. In speaking of last things, it directs our attention primarily to the Second Coming of Christ and the events clustering around it. With Paul we Christians confess: "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21).

5. We thank God, however, for the revelation which He has condescended to grant us concerning the intermediate state. Of the souls of the believers the Word teaches clearly that, in general, they are in God's hands (Acts 7:59), but also in particular that they dwell with Christ and are in Paradise (Phil. 1:23; Luke 23:43). Concerning this state Paul assures us that it "is far better", i.e., better than his communion with Christ here on earth. Moreover, the life "in Paradise" which Christ promised the soul of the believing malefactor clearly bespeaks a blissful state of the soul after death. Thus it is evident from Scripture that those who die in the Lord are immediately in a state of



blessed enjoyment of God, even though we may know nothing further concerning the manner of their blessed communion with Christ.

6. A soul sleep which excludes a blessed enjoyment of God (psychopannychism) must be rejected on the basis of Phil. 1:23 and Luke 23:43.

7. Concerning the resurrection, Scripture teaches that "all who are in the grave shall hear His voice and come forth" (John 5:28). The same body that died and saw corruption in the dust of the earth shall again be made alive (Dan. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:44; Rom. 8:11). However, the resurrected bodies of the faithful shall be changed into incorruptible, glorious, and spirit-controlled bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-44; Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43; Phil. 3:21).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Denn Darumb geschicht solchs beides in der Taufe, dasz der Leib begossen wird, welcher nicht mehr fassen kann denn das Wasser, und dazu das Wort gesprochen wird, dasz die Seele auch kon'ne fassen."

<sup>2</sup>For Luther's use of the term "flesh" see par. 60—and for Tappert's manipulation of the statement from Luther's exposition of John 1, 14 (WA, 10<sup>I</sup>, 235) see Book of Concord, p. 418, note 4.

<sup>3</sup>If the context in which a term is defined is not taken into consideration, then confusion results such as appears in Tappert: Book of Concord, p. 418, note 4. Here the fact is overlooked that Luther in one instance is defining the term "flesh" as used in the statement, "The Word became flesh," and in another instance he is defining the term as used in the Creed!

<sup>4</sup>The only "death" of the soul of which the Confessions know is that which Luther calls "destruction", i.e., eternal death (Cp. Sm. Art., Part II, Art. IV, Papacy, 14). The death to which human nature is subject (i.e., temporal death) is a bodily evil (Apol. II, 47)—which together with eternal death (the tyranny of Satan) was a consequence of the Fall. The Apology, in discussing the "death" to which the saints are subject, quotes Rom. 8,10 and interprets it to mean that the body is being killed; it speaks of death as a putting off of the sinful flesh; and it quotes Augustine to the effect that the saints still remain subject to the physical death which God imposed because of sin—the implication being that they are not subject to soul death (Art. XII, 151; 153; 161). "Mortem corporis" — "den naturlichen Tod." "Et mors ipsa servit ad hoc, ut aboleat (des sundlichen Fleisches ein End mache) hanc carnem peccato. . . ."

<sup>5</sup>In "that life" we shall be perfectly holy "in einem neuen unsterblichen . . . Leibe (Latin: vitam) - L.C. Creed, 58. Luther certainly believed that in "that life" we shall also have an immortal soul—but the thrust of his statement in this context is that then we shall also have an immortal body. The implication is plain! We do not need to wait until "that life" for immortality of the soul.