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# The Immortality of the Soul Versus the Resurrection of the Dead

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THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

VERSUS

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

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E-200

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by

John Sattler

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THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

VS.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

When preparing a presentation on 'death' for a confirmation class, I could find only weak Scriptural proof texts supporting the "traditional" view of death as "separation of body and soul." Only a few passages spoke of the two natures in man; namely, body and soul. None spoke in terms of an immortality in man or mentioned a "separation."

The evidence to be cited below will attempt to reveal the problems that are associated with this widely accepted concept of the fate of a Christian at death as it relates to the issue of the immortality of the soul. Several misconceptions and even heresies have been born of wrong views on this subject matter. Hence it is crucial to reexamine this issue in light of the Biblical revelation. What we are concerned with primarily is the need to clearly define the terminology that is often misused and to objectively examine the traditional view of death in light of the Biblical revelation.

We will begin with a history of the phrase "immortality of the soul" and compare this with the Scriptural concept of the human personality. We will also look at the confusion associated with the "resurrection of the body" and at the popular theories

concerning the "intermediate state." These views will be contrasted with the Scriptural teachings of death, resurrection, and the life to come. Conclusions will then be drawn.

As Oscar Cullmann has pointed out, the teachings of Socrates and Plato can not be brought into consonance with that of the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> Let us see why this statement can be made, but at the same time see how Platonic philosophy has permeated much of Christian thinking on this subject.

The Platonic view of death<sup>2</sup> may be summarized thus: Man is made up of two component parts, the body and the immortal soul. The body is material, the soul is immaterial. By its very nature as material, evil, and perishable, the body is expendable.<sup>3</sup> The individuality of a man is entirely in the soul, which is immaterial, therefore spiritual and good.<sup>4</sup>

The Lutheran Encyclopedia expands the definition of the Platonic view:

The soul is a non-material entity which exists before birth and after death. The incarnation of a soul is looked upon as a fall of the soul away from the realm of ideas. Having fallen, the soul cannot fulfill itself until it can separate itself from the body.<sup>5</sup>

Gilbert Thiele carries the definition further. "Death is both an event--you die--and a state--the body is dead, stays dead, the best things that can happen to anything material. But the soul, the personality, the mind, if you will, and with it, virtue of any and all kinds, is imperishable. This is so-called philosophical dichotomy."<sup>6</sup>

It is true that Greek thought, as influenced by Plato, had a very high regard for the body, but the good and the beautiful in the corporeal are not so by virtue of this fact. It is rather in spite of corporeality. "The soul, the eternal and the only substantial reality of being, shines faintly through the material. The corporeal is not the real, the eternal, the divine. It is merely that through which the real appears-- and then only in debased form. The corporeal is meant to lead us to contemplate the pure archetype, freed from all corporeality, the invisible Idea."<sup>7</sup>

Plato proposed a dichotomy in man--a body and a soul. The body is material and therefore evil and viewed as a prison for the soul. It is impossible for Plato to comprehend a resurrection of the body. The body is evil and will be destroyed. The soul is immaterial and, by nature, immortal. It is Plato's hope that the soul will be released at death, freed of the burden of flesh. The Platonic view of death cannot comprehend a resurrection of the body nor a reuniting of body and soul in a heaven.

Augustine's view of the soul follows along in the Platonic tradition. He regards the human soul as a non-material and immortal substance which can and does function apart from the body.<sup>8</sup> However, his Christian convictions show through as he rejects the Platonic view of preexistence and reincarnation.<sup>9</sup> In the following quotation from St. Augustine's The Immortality of the Soul we should note how he uses 'soul' and 'mind' inter-

changeably. He understood the soul to be the intelligence of man.

That which is understood is so always; nothing, however, pertaining to the body is so always. Truly, the body is not able to be of aid to the soul in its striving toward understanding, since it cannot even be of hindrance.<sup>10</sup>

And also:

But mind [animos] is a certain principle of life. Thus, it is understood that everything animated is alive, while all that is inanimated, but can be animated, is dead, i.e., deprived of life. Therefore, the mind cannot die. Moreover, if the mind could ever be in need of life, it would not be mind, but something animated.<sup>11</sup>

The other Church Fathers, except for men like St. Thomas Aquinas, followed Plato's precedent. Thomas was one who stood his ground on the mortality of man and his soul. He stated that man was originally immortal but that sin brought death into the world. Christ, however, "has conquered sin and consequently its result in the separation of body and soul; and the dissolution of the former has been overcome in Christ."<sup>12</sup> Although understanding clearly the mortality of man, he still speaks of a separation at death. His thinking is clearly influenced by Plato.

Some of the other Fathers (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Theophilus, Arnobius, Lactantius) also realized that the Platonic conception of immortality is not exactly the same as the Scriptural view. To Plato, immortality belonged to the soul by nature, for by its very nature the soul could not be mortal. The Fathers, however, taught that "in Scripture, immortality was a gift or grace of God to the soul, for by its own nature the soul was

mortal."<sup>13</sup> The Fathers understood that the immortality of the soul was not a natural attribute, but a gift of God through grace. This gift is a present reality and will not be removed by God.<sup>14</sup> Death is a separation of body and soul since man is immortal as a gift. The soul of man is immortal by grace and will survive the body in death. Therefore, there is a need for the Church Fathers to explain death in terms of a separation.

In general, it may be said that the Church Fathers believed that in the end days there would be a general resurrection of the dead. This meant the reinvestment of surviving souls with risen bodies.<sup>15</sup>

For many of us today, this view (without the "Platonic" label, of course) is easily accepted. This is most likely due to the fact that "good Lutheran doctrine" is replete with this same Platonic philosophy of the dichotomy.

Take, for example, the following definition of death in Francis Pieper's Christian Dogmatics: "Scripture teaches that physical death is not annihilation, but the separation of the soul from the body."<sup>16</sup> He supports his definition with a quotation from Quenstedt: "The nature of death is the loosening, and local separation, of the soul from the body."<sup>17</sup> The influence of Platonic thinking is very evident.

We must also note the article in Abiding Word, volume one, entitled "The Doctrine of the Last Things."<sup>19</sup> It states the following:

Two things are part of the resurrection: (1) the almighty God will gather together again the various parts



of which the bodies were made, and (2) the remade bodies will be reunited with the souls that were theirs in their temporal life. Death is separation of body and soul, while resurrection is reunion of the body and the soul.<sup>19</sup>

J.T. Mueller's Christian Dogmatics also defines death, properly speaking, as "separation of the soul from the body . . . ." <sup>20</sup>

A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism, commonly referred to as the "Blue Catechism," is not free from the Platonic distortion either. Question number 197 reads as follows:

What do the Scriptures teach of eternal life?

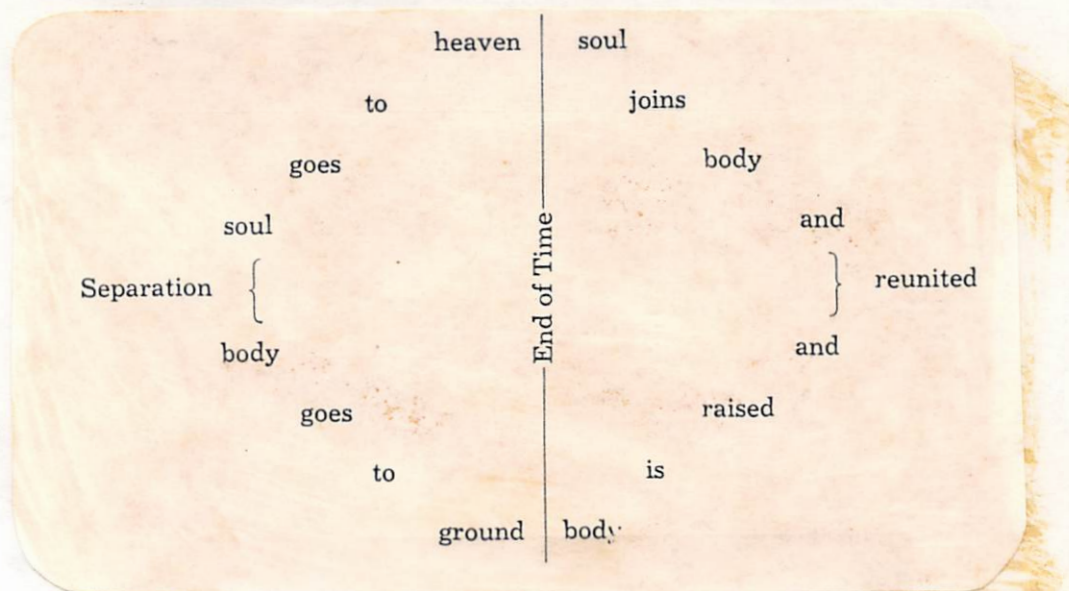
Answer: The Scriptures teach--

- A. That at the time of death the soul of the believer is at once received into the presence of Christ.<sup>21</sup>

The publication entitled Catechetical Helps, which is intended to assist in the teaching of Luther's Small Catechism, goes to the extreme of diagramming what takes place when the soul is separated from the body. The appropriate section reads as follows:

### *Life Everlasting*

1. At death the soul separates from the body.
2. The soul of the Christian goes to heaven; the body goes to the ground.
3. On the resurrection morning the body will be raised, changed, glorified, and reunited with the soul.
4. Thereupon together, body and soul, the Christian will live with Christ forevermore.



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Even the Lutheran Agenda speaks with strong Platonic influence where, for example, prayer number one on page 82 says:

Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of those who depart hence in the Lord and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and happiness, we give Thee . . .<sup>23</sup>

This is only a sampling of what has become to be known as the traditional orthodox doctrine of life everlasting. Murdoch Dahl puts this as follows: ". . . a very great majority of commentators and writers can be grouped under the heading of those who accept what has come to be recognized as the traditional orthodox doctrine of the resurrection. They generally have this in common that they have no doubt that St. Paul is seeking to prove that the ultimate destiny of mankind is for their souls to be reunited with their bodies in a state of final incorruptibility."<sup>24</sup> It is appropriately termed the "traditional" view because it is certainly based on tradition and not on Scripture.

The Scriptural view of the soul in death cannot include the "traditional" Platonic concept of the immortality of the soul. Scripture is very clear when it speaks of death,<sup>25</sup> and nowhere does it refer to a separation of soul and body or even a dichotomy in man. Let us look at some of the Scriptural terms for the experience of death.

Death (*θάνατος*) is not something natural, willed by God, as in the thought of the Greek philosophers. It is rather something unnatural, abnormal, unwanted by God. The Genesis narrative, as recorded in chapter three, teaches us that death came into the world only by the sin of man. Death is a curse, and the whole creation has become involved in its consequences (Rom. 8:20ff, 1 Cor. 11:30). The sin of man has set in motion, by God's grace, the whole series of events which the Bible records and which we call the story of redemption. Death can be conquered only to the extent that sin is removed. For "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). This is the view of death held by the whole of early Christianity. Just as sin is something opposed to God, so is its consequence, death.<sup>26</sup> Sin stands in opposition to the holy will of God (1 John 3:4) and must be punished. Death is sin's punishment.

Death is a punishment for sin that affects all of creation--even the whole man. It is something to be feared! Oscar Cullmann observes that:

Death in itself is not beautiful, not even the death of Jesus. [Compare the death of Jesus to the death of Socrates!] <sup>27</sup> Whoever paints a pretty death can



paint no resurrection. Whoever has not grasped the horror of death cannot join Paul in the hymn of victory: 'Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? (1 Cor. 15:54) 28

Luther himself understood the fear to be felt in death.

I do not like to see people glad to die. I prefer to see them fear and tremble and turn pale before death but nevertheless pass through it. Great saints do not like to die. The fear of death is natural, for death is a penalty; therefore it is something sad. 29

He writes elsewhere:

Christians could easily bear death if they did not know it as evidence of the wrath of God. This knowledge makes death so bitter for us. But the heathen die in security. They do not see the wrath of God but imagine death to be the end of a man . . . 30

Since sin affects not only the body, but the soul as well (Matt. 15:19), we must conclude that the punishment for that sin must include the soul. Death overtakes the whole man, body and soul.

If we want to understand the Christian faith in the resurrection, we must completely disregard the Greek thought that the material, the bodily, the corporeal is bad and must be destroyed, so that the death of the body would not be in any sense a destruction of the true life . . . death is the destruction of all life created by God. Therefore it is death and not the body which must be conquered by the Resurrection. 31

Though death is the opposite of life and life's destruction, it is not, as the heathen assume, total annihilation. Scripture often speaks of death as sleep. The one descriptive phrase most often used in Scripture of death is *κοιμάσθαι* (sleep). Just a few of the examples are: Gen. 47:30, Deut. 31:16, Jer. 51:39, Dan. 12:2, Matt. 9:24, 27:52, John 11:11, Acts 7:60, 13:36, 1 Cor. 7:39, 11:30, 15:6, 20, 51, 1 Thess. 4:13, 2 Pt. 3:4.

It is quite obvious that death has something to do with "sleep." The Biblical image of sleep tends to suggest a period of restful waiting prior to the final resurrection. James Burtness states the following:

Why should anyone object to speaking of death as sleep when this term is used frequently by Jesus and Paul? Surely sleep does not suggest nightmares! In fact, sound sleep is for many of us one of life's great blessings. The reason why the image of sleep is objected to is that it is clearly incompatible with the whole immortality scheme. It suggests time rather than space as the controlling eschatological category.<sup>32</sup>

Luther often described death as "sleep." In fact, he notes that the early church carried the slumber concept into the term "cemetery."

The Fathers called churchyards coemeteria (cemeteries), that is, places in which one sleeps, sleeping quarters, where Christians are buried; and I wish they were still so called. So Isaiah says: "They shall rest in their beds" (57:2). To them the grave is not a tomb but, as it were, a bed in which they sleep until the time comes when they are to be awakened.<sup>33</sup>

"Sleep" provided for Luther a comfort not found in the traditional Platonic view of man:

Since death is called a sleep, we know that we shall not remain in it; but we shall awake and live again, and the time during which we sleep cannot be long. It will seem as if we had just dropped off, so that we shall rebuke ourselves for having been appalled and frightened at so fine a sleep in the hour of death . . . . We should, therefore, with all confidence and joy commit and commend our soul, body, and life to Christ, as to our faithful Savior and redeemer, even as we must, without all care, commit our life to Him in bodily sleep and rest, certain that we shall not lose it, as it seems, but, kept safely and well in His hand, it will be sustained and restored to us.<sup>34</sup>

Although death is punishment for sin, the whole wrath of God, the opposite of life, it is not total annihilation. God

chose to describe death as "sleep" because it is the closest human experience to death. "Sleep" presupposes no contact with life or the passing of time. It also presupposes that the individual will be awakened from this sleep at some point in the future. We must be careful, though, not to assume that this awakening in the future is because of an inherent property or attribute of the human makeup. The awakening from sleep is carried out by the sheer grace of God--or wrath of God in the case of the unbelievers.

It is also important, when discussing the elements of the immortality of the soul, that we cover the Scriptural definition of "immortality" and related words. Four Greek words are often mistranslated and, thus confused, when speaking of them in the English. These words are αἰώνιον, ἀφθαρσία, ἀθανασία, αἰδιος. They are most often translated as eternal, incorruptibility, immortality, and everlasting. αἰδιος occurs only twice in the New Testament in Romans 1:20 and Jude 6. In each case it refers to an attribute of God alone. He has neither beginning nor end.

Of these four words, αἰώνιον occurs most frequently. It is translated as meaning "without end." Although being without end is sometimes applied to people here on earth, it is a future hope; a reality that we already have in Christ, <sup>but</sup> will be brought to fruition in the age to come. It is not an attribute that we possess by nature (John 3:16).

The two words for immortality or incorruptibility (ἀφθαρσία, ἀθανασία) are often confused. "The word immortality does

occur occasionally in the New Testament, but it is used to designate a future hope rather than a present possession (Rom. 2:7, 1 Cor. 15:53f.), or as an attribute which belongs to God alone (1 Tim. 16:15), or as an attribute of the risen Christ (2 Tim. 1:10). In no case does it refer to a present aspect of human existence, even when qualified as a gift of God to the believer."<sup>35</sup> The immortality of man is not a Scriptural concept at all. The terminology must not be used of any present attribute of man--either of his body or his soul. Only God is immortal in the present state and is deathless by right (1 Tim 6:16).

Man has been condemned to death because of sin, and, though once an immortal creature, may no longer consider himself immortal. Man has lost this attribute. Death is the destruction of life; namely, that perverted "life" which has influenced all of creation. Immortality is now a quality only of God. If man is immortal or eternal, he is so only because of the grace of God and only so, after the resurrection on the last day. Deathlessness will occur only after death no longer exists. If we are immortal even in sin, what purpose did Christ's death serve?

We must also examine the Scriptural view of the human personality. The chief terms to be considered in order to reach the general New Testament idea of human personality, are four: ψυχή, πνεῦμα, σῶμα, and σὰρξ. We will employ primarily the Pauline usage of these words; for he speaks directly to the topic at hand and uses words that have been misused in support

of the traditional Platonic view of man.<sup>36</sup>

It is necessary to emphasize the fact that Paul's psychology is continuous with that of the Old Testament, because some scholars have tended to exaggerate the Hellenistic influences, especially in regard to the Pauline contrast of the inner and the outer man. They interpret the contrast as dualism, though this is essentially untrue to the Hebrew basis of Pauline thought.<sup>37</sup>

*ψυχή* is a term used very little by Paul. We find him using the word only thirteen times. In six passages *ψυχή* denotes physical life (Rom. 16:4, Phil. 2:30, 2 Cor. 1:23, 1 Thess. 2:18, 1 Cor. 15:45, Rom. 11:3). On three occasions it is used to denote the individual (Rom. 2:9, 13:1, 2 Cor. 12:15). The four remaining instances denote the emotional side of man or his emotions in general (Eph. 6:6, Phil. 1:27, Col. 3:23, 1 Thess. 5:23).

Paul's understanding of *ψυχή*, I think, is clear. He is not dividing man into parts. *ψυχή* or "soul" is not used to designate a particular part of man's personality. *ψυχή* does not stand in opposition to "body" or any other aspect of man. It refers to man as a whole, indivisible person. *ψυχή* is used for man as a living being with emotions. Oswald C.J. Hoffmann supports this meaning with the following statement: "The apostle is not carefully describing man's psychological structure as threefold, but is expressing the hope that his converts may be preserved in the fullness of their personality."<sup>38</sup>

St. Paul's use of *πνεῦμα* seems more important. He uses it 146 times. In the majority of instances he designates by it some divine or supernatural influence. "It is a cardinal prin-



ciple of Paul's theology that the Spirit of God, working through Christ, regenerates and sanctifies the believer."<sup>39</sup> In this sense πνεῦμα seems to be used in contrast to body as meaning the higher part of the believer (Rom. 8:8-10). But even in this classical passage, where life according to the spirit is contrasted with living in the flesh, there is no fundamental dichotomy of body and soul.<sup>40</sup> Paul is not dividing man into parts. What was mentioned above concerning ψύχη also applies here. πνεῦμα is not used to designate a particular part of man's personality. Paul is referring to the relationship that man has with God. Life according to the spirit is our relationship to God in faith. Living in the flesh is our sinful relationship to God. It is not the Body that is sinful and the soul that has faith. The whole man is both sinner and saint.

A similar differentiation exists between the words σὰρξ and σῶμα. To clarify the distinction between σὰρξ (flesh) and σῶμα (body), some definitions given by M.E. Dahl may be useful:

σὰρξ describes anything which is 'soul of life', to use the Old Testament expression. The connotation of the word is not merely, if primarily, physical, but describes the whole totality and would therefore comprehend the mental or psychological as well. It is used in biblical literature to emphasize frailty, creatureliness, weakness, etc., and is, for that reason, the opposite of 'spirit', which is always connected with the idea of strength.<sup>41</sup>

σῶμα is:

. . . the totality of man from every aspect. The word describes man as God purposes he shall be, both in creation and redemption. When adjectives or adjectival

phrases are used to qualify this word, they indicate that the human totality is being thought of under one aspect or in some state. . .42

Although these definitions are very similar, and both *σάρξ* and *σῶμα* describe the whole personality, there is a basic difference between "body" and "flesh." John A.T. Robinson states that ". . . however much the two may come, through the Fall, to describe the same thing, in essence *σάρξ* and *σῶμα* designate different aspects of the human relationship to God. While *σάρξ* stands for man, in the solidarity of creation, in his distance from God, *σῶμα* stands for man, in the solidarity of creation, as made for God."<sup>43</sup> This distinction is clearly and consistently made throughout Scripture. "Flesh" does not designate the evil material of which our bodies are made or even the form in which they appear, but the evil relationship that exists between God and man. It is man in rebellion. Therefore, Paul may easily say that "flesh" cannot enter into the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50).

The human body is not a prison from which the soul escapes at death as the Platonists put forth. Indeed, it is the very temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19)! That the Holy Spirit would dare to dwell in our bodies is an indication that they are not evil. That Christ took on a human body is proof that the body (*σῶμα*) is good (Gen. 1:31). It is the "flesh" (*σάρξ*), the sinful nature in man, that is viewed as evil in Scripture. It is "flesh" that must die and be put off before entering the kingdom prepared for us (Eph. 4:22). It is not the body as

opposed to the soul, but the sinner as opposed to the saved.

The point to be made is this: The whole personality is designated in Scripture with different terms ( *ψυχή*, *πνεῦμα*, *σὰρξ*, *σῶμα* ). They do not describe the dichotomy in man or support the idea that there are parts to a human being, but speak in terms referring to man's relationship to his God and his Creator. J.T. Robinson says that:

It is perhaps necessary to insist. . . that there is no suggestion that *σὰρξ* and *σῶμα* represent different parts of a man's make-up, and that one is mortal and the other not. Each stands for the whole man differently regarded--man as wholly perishable, man as wholly designed for God.44

Although Scripture may use phraseology that speaks of man as soul or spirit or body, it is never intended to indicate that man is anything less than a whole person.

From the Biblical point of view, man is a whole, a totality described from different points of view. The following quotation from James Burtness' article on "Immortality and/or Resurrection" explains this view of man's wholeness clearly.

When the Bible is read with care . . . it is noticed that the writers do not observe the rules of a dualistic anthropology. For instance, Matthew records Jesus as saying: "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink!" The word translated "life" is *ψυχή*, which could have been rendered "soul." But the translators do not use "soul" because it would sound strange to have the soul eating and drinking. Yet a similar use of *ψυχή* in Luke 12:19 is translated "soul." The Bible is replete with instances of assigning "bodily" functions to the soul and "psychic" functions to the body. The soul is said to hunger (Ps. 107:9) and to thirst (Prov. 10:3; 17:7). On the other hand, the bowels are said to be cruel (Prov. 12:10). And the loins are filled with anguish (Is. 21:3).

This interchange of bodily and psychic functions in the Bible is similar to our own use of the word "heart" in

connection with the concept of love, or as a term to designate the center of personal life. Yet we are so thoroughly dualistic in our thinking that even when we attempt to abolish dualism, the word which is coined for the purpose betrays a dualistic orientation. "Psychosomatic" is a word which is a combination of the words soul and body. But such a term would be unthinkable to the Hebrew, to whom it would be a simple redundancy meaning man-man. For these various anthropological categories do not refer to different parts of a man at all, but refer rather to a man as a totality, described from different points of view.<sup>45</sup>

St. Paul sees man in wholeness, even in his Greek culture. He combatted Platonic thinking continually. The new congregation in Thessalonica was beset with questions concerning the after life (1 Thess. 4:13ff). The Greek view of man was having its effect. To be certain of a correct understanding, Paul wrote: "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). Man is sanctified wholly. Each "part" of man is saved by faith in Christ Jesus.

We may conclude that if man is a totality, a wholeness, in life, then he must also be a totality in death. M.E. Dahl states that:

. . . the conclusion that death, in the biblical view, is something that affects man as a totality seems an inevitable deduction from the biblical view of life, since death is the opposite of life and its cessation . . . Therefore, if it can be shown that life is something belonging to the totality of man, then it follows that death involves man as a whole likewise.<sup>46</sup>

A number of theologians (Strange, Schlatter, P. Althaus Jr., and others) draw the conclusion that in death the entire man passes away. They reject the idea that a part of man, the soul,

is immortal, chiefly on three grounds:

- (a) according to the Scripture God alone has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16);
- (b) sin originated not in the body but in the soul of man, and therefore the soul stands primarily and above all under the judgment of death;
- (c) man's being is indivisible; his body and soul form an inseparable psychosomatic unity (Gen. 2:7, 1 Cor. 15:44) and likewise whatever befalls one, befalls the other likewise.<sup>47</sup>

It is this very point of the inseparability of man that the traditional view misunderstands the Scriptural idea of the resurrection. The credal statements "resurrection of the body" and "resurrection of the dead" that are used in the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed, respectively, are examples of this misunderstanding. "Such statements became necessary once the dichotomy of soul and body had been introduced, but the inevitable result was that the resurrection came to be thought of as of the body only . . . the soul being thought of as incapable of death except in a metaphorical sense."<sup>48</sup> These statements were inserted in the creeds with a correct understanding of the death experience, but have since been misinterpreted as support for the dichotomy of man. The following quotation from James Burtness gives a short history of the source of the phrase, "resurrection of the body," and how it came to be used despite the correct understanding of the inseparability of man.

In the New Testament we find the expression: "resurrection of the dead," but not the expression "resurrection of the body," since neither the idea nor the word are to be found in Hebrew. The resurrection of the dead is the resurrection of man. The councils, in order to avoid a Platonic interpretation of resurrection, and to ensure that the "resurrection" of Revelation should not be

confused with the "immortality of the soul" of the Greek philosophies, felt obliged to specify: cum corporibus suis. The addition was necessary in the circumstances because the biblical idea was being introduced into a world of dualistic thought. Therefore, to give the full equivalent of what the Bible calls the resurrection of the dead, they had to specify that this meant the whole man, that is, in the Greek way of speaking, the soul and the body . . . . It is something of an historical joke that the phrase "resurrection of the body," originally added to combat a dualistic anthropology, should later be used to support it.49

The "resurrection of the body" is not a Scriptural phrase, but we must beware that we do not proclaim that the body will not rise. For, indeed, the resurrection on the last day will include the resurrection of human bodies (Rom. 8:11!), but not bodies devoid of human souls (in dichotomy terminology). At the resurrection, people will rise, not just bodies. The whole man is dead and the whole man will rise.

The Scriptural view of the resurrection of the dead on the last day speaks clearly. John 5:28-29 says that, first, the dead will be raised: "For the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth. . ." 1 Cor. 15:52 makes explicit that those who will be raised from the tombs will not be just empty bodies without souls to be reunited with souls, but that the "dead will be raised . . ." Real dead people will be raised as whole persons. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that the resurrection will be of bodies in the sense of a reunification. The resurrection will be of dead people who are in the tombs, not in heaven. The dead will hear the resurrection trumpet blast, not from heaven, but from the tombs. They will be dead (John 5:28-29). The Lutheran Encyclopedia



correctly defines resurrection:

Resurrection . . . does not mean a new union between a glorified body and the soul which never ceased to exist, but the raising of man who was totally dead. This, it is suggested, also agrees most clearly with the act of justification: we possess nothing on the basis of which God could receive us into His fellowship and we do not reach heaven by virtue of an immortal soul but because God condescends to us and gives us eternal life.<sup>50</sup>

The resurrection from the dead is a more comforting miracle if those who are being raised (note the passive) are being brought forth from death. "Being raised" implies that the action is being done to us. Someone else must raise us. Being dead, we are unable to participate or help with the raising process. It is something that is done to us and for us. God, through grace, does not want us to remain in death. Death will be conquered when we are raised from death to new life!

Will those who are raised on the last day be any different from what they are here on earth? We turn to 1 Corinthians 15: 35-55 for an analogy employed by St. Paul from nature: the analogy of the seed. We see elements of both continuity and discontinuity. The seed that is planted will yield a plant like unto itself. An acorn does not bring forth a pine tree or tomatoes, but an oak tree. The seed is in continuity with the plant. There is discontinuity, however, in that what grows is not another seed, but something different: a new plant. The child of God is "sown" in the grave, but rather than ceasing to exist, he grows and develops into the "spiritual body" that is not in continuity with the sinful flesh. The difference between the earthly body and the resurrection body will be the

difference between our sinful, "fleshy", body and Christ's perfect "spiritual" body (Phil. 3:20-21). Our body now, as stated above, is a body of "flesh." It is a sinful body. The element of disease is only a symptom of the dreadful state our once perfect bodies are now in. That Christ was able to heal was a foretaste of the resurrection. Christ was demonstrating his power over sin which is evident in our bodies by sickness and death. The resurrection body will be a perfect body in every way--healed of all sin and thereby without defect or blemish. How that body will be different, specifically, is not given us in Scripture. We must anxiously await that resurrection day.

Another element of the last day that must not be overlooked is the fact that the resurrection will be followed by judgment. Scripture reveals to us that there will be only one judgment (Heb. 9:27). This eliminates the possibility that at the moment of death our soul separates and flies to heaven. Unless everyone flew to heaven--even the wicked and unbelievers--this would require some sort of judgment on the part of God to decide where the soul must wait. Hence we come up with two judgments after death, the one at death and the one at the last day. This is pregnant with difficulty. There will be only one judgment. The Platonic model just will not stand when placed in comparison with Scripture.

Between death and resurrection, it is reasoned that a period of time passes. Although Scripture mentions relatively



little concerning this period, there are several theories as to what this state, which is sometimes called the "intermediate state," would include. It is sometimes thought that the intermediate state consists of a "blessed state" or the "beatific vision." But this concept of the state of man after death contains problems, the worst of which consists in the following:

The "blessed state" sees man in such bliss that the resurrection of the body could add little to his happiness. Dahl's comment reads:

. . . after death [man] enjoys the Beatific Vision, a state of bliss so complete that it is hard to see what the general resurrection will add to it, even if it will satisfy the demands of an Aristotelean conception of soul and body.<sup>51</sup>

The blessed state also fails to take in to account the souls of the unbelievers. Shall they, too, experience the blessed state or are they an exception to this rule? The blessed state has its problems because it can be derived only from Platonic philosophy.

Another popular theory concerning the intermediate state is the concept of purgatory. This teaching comes only from a doctrine of man that sees death as separation of body and soul. It is tied closely together with the element stated above concerning two judgments. But the soul needs someplace to go if it is going to separate from the body. Hence the Jews invented a place called purgatory (2 Maccabees 12:43-45). It is a place of purging to cleanse the soul in preparation for heaven.

The options concerning the intermediate state that are given to us from Scripture include at least three possibilities:

- 1) sleep
- 2) a time/space realm beyond ours
- 3) the dead are dead (until the last day)

The first option has been discussed above. Scripture often refers to death as a state of "sleep." Oscar Cullmann observes the following:

We wait, and the dead wait. Of course the rhythm of time may be different for them than for the living; and in this way the interim-time may be shortened for them. This does not, indeed, go beyond the N.T. texts and their exegesis, because this expression to sleep, which is the customary designation in the N.T. of the "interim condition" draws us to the view that for the dead another time-consciousness exists, that of "those who sleep." But that does not mean that the dead are not still in time. Therefore once again we see that the N.T. resurrection hope is different from the Greek belief in immortality.<sup>52</sup>

The second option overlaps with the first, but is different. This option assumes that, when life ends, we leave the world of time and space, as we know it, and enter a realm that transports us immediately to the last day and the general resurrection.

J. Burtness has an excellent section in his article "Immortality and/or Resurrection" concerning just this point. He explains this concept of death as:

. . . when one dies he leaves this temporal existence and enters into a qualitatively different realm where God dwells. Although we may talk of a time interval between death and resurrection from our temporal point of view, it is clear that the person who dies will experience no such time lag but will be immediately in the post-resurrection era.<sup>53</sup>

There is no "waiting" or the need for a place to put the soul in death. We are pulled from time and are presently at the day of resurrection.

The third option also overlaps with the first. The assumption is that when a person dies, he is dead. The "dead shall be raised." This view does not include an intermediate state. There is no state at all. The dead do not continue to live either in body or soul. The whole person is dead and is aware of no passing time or existence whatsoever. The dead, from their perspective, are immediately raised from the dead on the last day and join the community of believers in heavenly bliss with Christ.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Platonism has, indeed, permeated Christian doctrine even today and has become the traditional view about life hereafter. Scripture speaks differently of man and sees him as a whole. It sees him also as a whole in death. Death is not separation of body and soul--but truly death. The resurrection of the dead, therefore, is, in fact, a resurrection of dead people, not just a reuniting of body and soul. If the resurrection is really a resurrection from death, the resurrection becomes a much more blessed event and an even greater miracle!

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ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Cullmann, Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? (London: Epworth Press, 1958), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>It is also the teaching of Socrates. Both Plato and Socrates were greatly influenced by Pythagorean view of man.

<sup>3</sup>Gilbert Thiele, "The Resurrection of the Body and the Immortality of the Soul" (A paper prepared for the Pastoral Conference of the English District of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, River Forest, Ill., June 13, 1957), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, 1965 ed., s.v. "Soul and Self in Western Philosophy," by Clifford T. Hanson.

<sup>6</sup>Thiele, "Resurrection and Immortality," p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>Cullmann, Immortality or Resurrection, p. 30-31.

<sup>8</sup>Encyclopedia of Lutheran Church, s.v. "Soul and Self."

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>St. Aurelius Augustinus, The Immortality of the Soul, trans. Ludwig Schopp, in The Fathers of the Church, vol. 2 (New York: Cima Pub. Co.), Chapter 1, pt. 1, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. Chapter 9, pt. 16, pp. 34-35, underlining my own.

<sup>12</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, S.T. Supp. Qu., lxxv, Art 3. quoted in Murdoch Dahl, The Resurrection of the Body, Studies in Biblical Theology No. 36 (Naperville, Ill.: Alec Allenson, Inc.), p. 39.

<sup>13</sup>Harry A. Wolfson, Immortality and Resurrection; Four Essays, ed. Krister Stendahl, (New York: MacMillan, 1965), p.57.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. See also Edmund Smits, "The Blessed Immortality," Dialog 1 (Spring 1962): 44.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. p.55. See also Thiele, "Resurrection and Immortality," p. 21.

<sup>16</sup>Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1953), 3:507.

<sup>17</sup>Quendstedt (Syst. II. 1701) quoted in Pieper, Dogmatics, vol. 3, p. 507.

<sup>18</sup>W.F. Wolbrecht, "The Doctrine of the Last Things," in Abiding Word, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1946, 47, 60), 1:544-60.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.555. underlining my own.

<sup>20</sup>John T. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1934), p. 613.

<sup>21</sup>A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1943), p. 143, #197. *italics as written.* We must note, however, that nowhere does Luther speak in the terminology of the dichotomy of man and the separation at death.

<sup>22</sup>Erwin Kurth, Catechetical Helps (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1970), p.114.

<sup>23</sup>Lutheran Agenda, (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, n.d.), p. 82. See also the same prayer in The Pastor's Companion (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, n.d.), p. 82.

<sup>24</sup>M.E. Dahl, The Resurrection, p. 47.

<sup>25</sup>Although there is much disagreement among them.

<sup>26</sup>Cullmann, Immortality or Resurrection, p. 28-29.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 19ff.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>29</sup>W-T 1, No. 408, quoted in Luther Speaks, comp. Ewald M. Plass (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1959), #1082.

<sup>30</sup>W-T 3, No. 3140a -- S122,1310, No. 22, quoted in Luther Speaks, #1084.

<sup>31</sup>Cullmann, Immortality or Resurrection, p. 26.

<sup>32</sup>James H. Burtness, "Immortality and/or Resurrection," Dialog 1 (Spring 1962):50.

<sup>33</sup>W 46, 470, quoted in Luther Speaks, #1112.

<sup>34</sup>W 22, 402f -- E 14, 364f -- S1 11, 1865f, quoted in Luther Speaks, #1114.

<sup>35</sup>Burtness, "Immortality," p. 48.

<sup>36</sup>Oswald C.J. Hoffmann, "A Comparison of the Views of Plato and Paul on the Immortality of the Soul," (B.D. Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1936), p. 13.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>M.E. Dahl, The Resurrection, p. 121.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 125-26.

<sup>43</sup>John A.T. Robinson, The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology Studies in Biblical Theology No. 5 (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), p. 31.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Burtness, "Immortality," p. 47.

<sup>46</sup>M.E. Dahl, The Resurrection, p. 53.

<sup>47</sup>Encyclopedia of Lutheran Church, s.v. "Resurrection."

<sup>48</sup>M.E. Dahl, The Resurrection, p. 54.

<sup>49</sup>Burtness, "Immortality," p. 48.

<sup>50</sup>Encyclopedia of Lutheran Church, s.v. "Resurrection."

<sup>51</sup>M.E. Dahl, The Resurrection, p. 44.

<sup>52</sup>Cullmann, Immortality or Resurrection, p. 57.

<sup>53</sup>Burtness, "Immortality," p. 49.

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