5-1-1963

The Old Testament Locus De Novissimis in Contemporary Lutheran Theological Thought

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Short Title

OLD TESTAMENT ESCHATOLOGY

THE OLD TESTAMENT LOCUS DE NOVISSIMIS IN CONTEMPORARY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

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by

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May 1963

Approved by: _____ Advisor

_____ Reader

_____ Reader

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen a remarkable revival of interest in eschatology. Perhaps the most convincing evidence of this was given when the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston in 1954 selected as its general theme: "Christ--the Hope of the World." This choice centered the attention of Christians the world over on Him who is the very heart of all true eschatology.

Various reasons have been advanced for this shift in emphasis which has so sharply distinguished the present century from the last--reasons that range from the gravity of the present world situation to archeological discoveries that have placed into the hands of scholars masses of ancient manuscripts which throw light upon the religions and cultures of those nations among whom the Israelites lived.[1] However, it seems to this writer that one of the most important reasons for the current revival of interest in eschatology is the renewed Christian conviction that this doctrine is not to be considered a mere adjunct to theology, a last chapter in a book on dogmatics, but instead "the key

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[1] Elmer E. Flack, "Some Aspects of Christian Eschatology," The Lutheran Quarterly, I (1949), 370-373. At the time this article was written Elmer Flack was professor of Exegetical Theology at Hamma Divinity School, Springfield, Ohio.

to all other doctrines."[2] Gustaf Aulen has expressed it thus:

> Eschatology is to the gospel not as it has been for much Christian theology--an addendum, an appendix, a doctrine alongside of a good many others without any very intimate relation to them--but it is the background against which the whole is to be viewed; faith in its totality is eschatologically conditioned.[3]

The theses on eschatology which were adopted by the Joint Inter-synodical Committee in Australia about a decade ago underscore the importance of this doctrine by declaring that "the faith of a Christian is . . . essentially eschatological; though he sojourns between the time of Christ's First and Second Advent he is continually living in the Last Times."[4]

Encouraging is also the plea that is emanating from different areas of Christendom to the effect that eschatology, if it is to be true and correct, must be Biblical and Christian. Taito Kantonen states it thus: "Christian eschatology . . . rests solidly upon Christology."[5] And the

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[2]Taito A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954), p. 2. When this work was published, Taito Kantonen was professor of Systematic Theology at Hamma Divinity School, Springfield, Ohio.

[3]Clifford A. Nelson, "The Eschatological Elements in Contemporary Preaching," The Augustana Quarterly, XXII (1943), 126. At the time this article was published, Clifford Nelson was pastor of the Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minnesota. Later he became professor of Church History at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota.

[4]Theses on Eschatology, reprinted in Concordia Theological Monthly, XXII (1951), 439.

[5]Kantonen, op. cit., p. 2.

Australian theses, referred to above, offers this somewhat more lengthy statement:

> The basis and center of all doctrines, also of the doctrine of the Last Things, is the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, His Gospel, His atoning and reconciling death, His resurrection, His ascension, His gift of the Holy Spirit. . . . When dealing with eschatological matters it is particularly necessary to practice a Christocentric approach; to adhere closely to the words of Scripture; to emphasize the clear doctrinal passages (sedes doctrinae); to interpret Scripture with Scripture; to read the Old Testament in the clear light of the New Testament; to maintain carefully the essential distinction between Law and Gospel.[6]

Kantonen expresses a prevalent view with regard to eschatology being Biblical when he contends that one cannot "simply compile all the passages in which the Bible speaks of the last things and then proceed to construct our own mosaic," but Biblical writers must be studied "in the light of their historical backgrounds and their individual characteristics."[7]

Much of the interest being shown in eschatology today centers in the doctrine as it is revealed in the New Testament; however, the Old Testament occupies a strategic position in the study of this important subject since it supplies the background for Christian eschatology.

It is the purpose of this dissertation to present in an objective manner the various views held by leading

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[6] Theses on Eschatology, p. 430.

[7] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 3.

Lutheran theologians and scholars who have written on phases of the Old Testament locus De Novissimis during the past two decades, or whose works have been republished in this period of time. This writer is aware of the mass of research that would be required if one were to undertake to offer a critical analysis of present-day scholarly thought. He will therefore assume the more modest task of presenting what might be called a composite picture of trends in contemporary Lutheran thinking with respect to the more important eschatological questions now occupying the attention of many Old Testament scholars. It is hoped that such a study will contribute in a small way to a better understanding of the truth as it is revealed in God's holy Word.

In order to ascertain as accurately as possible the general trends of thought in the Lutheran seminaries of this country, a letter was sent to the professors who are teaching at the present time in this area of theology. A request was made that they list the titles of books which in their opinion were most helpful, and which they recommended to their students as collateral reading. Below are the titles of those books which were most frequently recommended.

I. General Surveys

Bright, John. The Kingdom of God. Nashville: Abingdon, 1953.

Eichrodt, Walther. Theology of the Old Testament. Vol. I. Translated by J. A. Baker. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961.

Jacob, E. Theology of the Old Testament. Paris: Delachaux and Niestle, 1955.

Knight, George A. F. A Christian Theology of the Old Testament. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959.

Porteous, Norman. "Old Testament Theology." In the Old Testament and Modern Study, edited by H. H. Rowley. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.

Rad, Gerhard von. Old Testament Theology. Vol. I. Translated by D. M. G. Stalker. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962.

II. Special Studies

Cullman, Oscar. Christ and Time. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950.

------. Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? London: The Epworth Press, 1958.

Heim, Karl. The World: Its Creation and Consummation. Translated by Robert Smith. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954.

Kantonen, Taito A. The Christian Hope. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954.

Minear, Paul S. Christian Hope and the Second Coming. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954.

Mowinckel, Sigmund. He that Cometh. Translated by G. W. Anderson. New York: Abingdon Press, 1954.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF DEATH

That man is mortal is a fact which is universally granted. It is substantiated both by experience and by Scripture. The Lord God 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 for ever" (Genesis 3:22).[1] 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). Another man of God could become ever more specific and write: "Lord . . . thou turnest man back to the dust, and sayest, 'Turn back, O children of men.' The years of our life are three-score and ten. . . . They are soon gone and we fly away" (Psalm 90:1,3,10).

But even if death is a common experience of men everywhere, it is none-the-less mysterious and complex. When the human mind grapples with matters that concern a world beyond the present, it is not surprising that mortal men should find themselves confronted with problems for which

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[1] In this dissertation all quotations from the Holy Scripture will be in the words of the Revised Standard Version.

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. Interest has been shown, for example, in questions concerning the origin of death. For the most part, two opinions have been expressed: (a) The view that death came into the world as a result of the fall into sin by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden;[2] (b) The opinion which has gained some degree of acceptance among European theologians of the past century that Adam was created mortal, that his body being composed of the same elements as the rest of nature could hardly defy the general law of dissolution.[3]

One of the strongest and most vocal advocates of the traditional position in recent years is Francis Pieper who maintains that death is not due to the constitution of human nature, as was claimed already by the ancient stoic Seneca, for the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments

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[2]Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by Walter W. F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, 507. Francis Pieper was professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri from 1878 to 1931.

[3]Ibid., p. 509.

know of no cause of death in man but sin. When God warned Adam and Eve: "In the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Genesis 2:17), and again after the fall pronounced the verdict: "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,'. . . to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:17,19), God was plainly declaring "that death does not inhere in the nature of man as originally constituted, but came into the world only as a consequence of the divine commandment."[4]

Alexander Heidel, sharing the foregoing opinion, seeks to define more closely the nature of that "immortality" which Adam and Eve possessed prior to the fall. He explains that man's state before the fall was "not one of absolute immortality, or of absolute freedom from death," in which sense God is immortal, "but rather one of relative or conditional immortality."[5] He asserts, however, that Adam's original state could have been "turned into absolute immortality by his eating of the tree of life, which had the power, naturally bestowed upon it by its Creator (2:9), to impart imperishable physical life (3:22)." Adam was prevented from this after the fall by being banished from the

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[4] Ibid., pp. 507f.

[5] Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 143. Alexander Heidel served in the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago where he was engaged with others in compiling an Assyrian dictionary.

Garden, says Heidel, "since the acquisition of imperishability by sinful man would have entailed his continuance in sin forever and would have precluded the possibility of his renewal or restoration."[6]

Other Lutheran theologians such as Taito Kantonen and Paul Althaus, while not discussing the subject in detail, nevertheless find a very close relationship between sin and the presence of death in the world. Kantonen urges that "we must learn to connect death with God's wrath over sin. It is personal responsibility to the living God that gives death a significance for man which it does not have for other creatures." Again, "Death is the judgment of righteous God over sinful man. 'We are consumed by thy anger' Ps. 90:7. 'Behold all souls are mine. . . . The soul that sins shall die' Ezek. 18:4. The wages of sin is death."[7]

Among contemporary scholars in Europe, however, one finds that more attention is being given to the opinion that Adam was created mortal. This view is given a detailed presentation in an article which appeared in the Theologische Literaturzeitung, 1952, under the title: "Das Problem des Todes in Genesis 2 und 3." The author, Werner Vollborn, takes issue with Karl Budde who claimed

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Taito Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publications of the United Lutheran Church of America, 1954), p. 33.

that, since it was God who breathed the נשמת חיים into the body of man formed from the earth, "it is self-understood that this נשמה is immortal, and it follows from this that man, as far as possible, according to predisposition and destiny was created immortal at the beginning."[8] Vollborn argued that according to Genesis 7:22 mankind after Adam still possessed the nashmah. How then could they be mortal, if the nashmah implied immortality? He called attention also to the fact that Genesis 7:22 "affirms that נשמה is possessed by the animals," adding, "but hardly is it the meaning of the Old Testament that God made the animals immortal according to predisposition and destiny."[9] Turning then to Genesis 2:7, Vollborn asserts that the statement, "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," does not intend to say that there is infused into man with the breath a divine substance in contrast to his body, formed from the earth, but "the tenor of the verse seems to lie in this that the writer wants to indicate, through the statement concerning the breathing in of the נשמה, the activity of God in creating man."[10]

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[8] Werner Vollborn, "Das Problem des Todes in Genesis 2 und 3," Theologische Literaturzeitung, XXVII (1952), 710. At the time this article was published Werner Vollborn was pastor in Kiel and a lecturer in Old Testament at the University of Kiel.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

Vollborn contends, furthermore, that the anthropology of Genesis 2 and 3 favors the opinion that already in the beginning man was mortal. In Genesis 3:19 it is stated that man was to suffer under the sentence imposed by God until man would return to the earth. With these words the divine statement concerning Adam's punishment is concluded. It has been "spelled out" in verses 17 to 19a. What follows thereafter in verse 19b,c no longer speaks of man's sentence because of his disobedience, but "the twofold כי gives the explicit reason for the mortality of primitive man; he was made out of כי ממנה לקחת , 'for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'"[11]

Concerning himself next with Genesis 3:22ff., which he says further substantiates his view, Vollborn states that man was driven out of the garden so that he would not reach out his hand, take from the fruit of the tree of life, and become immortal.

> But if the eating from the tree of life would grant immortality, then indirectly it is thereby stated that man did not possess it in himself as his own quality, but that he in the beginning . . . was created mortal.[12]

It is quite evident at this point that Vollborn's interpretation confronts him with two important questions, of which he is fully aware: (a) If Adam was created mortal,

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[11] Ibid., p. 711.

[12] Ibid.

what then is meant in 3:17 where death is spoken of as being a result of eating from the fruit of the forbidden tree?[13] (b) If Adam was created mortal, what did St. Paul mean in Romans 6:23 when he referred to death as the wage of sin?[14]

In reply to the first question Vollborn points to Genesis 3:22 which he calls the key to the solution. He explains: "After man had eaten of the forbidden tree, it is said concerning him in 3:22 that he now had knowledge of good and evil."[15] But in what did this knowledge of good and evil consist? In essence it is that knowledge which he did not possess in the state of innocence, a knowledge which he gained in 3:19b,c, namely, that he must die. Man in his original state did not know that. Vollborn asserts that man was mortal "but because he was not aware of it, he lived in his original state as a child, without reflecting upon it. . . . He was immortal in the sense that he did not know of death."[16] But after he ate of the tree of knowledge, his eyes were opened to the fact that his life would come to an end.

In response to the second question, the writer simply replies: "According to our previous investigation the view

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[13] Ibid., p. 712.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

of Paul that death is the wage of sin is not in accord with the exegetical findings in Genesis 2 and 3."[17]

Otto Procksch favors a similar point of view although he arrives at his conclusions in a somewhat different fashion. He contends that the Genesis account of the fall into sin contains a main, basic narrative which relates the incident concerning the tree of knowledge and a fragment which the Yahwist added regarding the tree of life. Whether the main narrative, apart from the fragment, assumes eternal life for man is difficult to establish, for he says that, according to Genesis 3:19, "man would return to the earth because he was taken from it, because of the law of nature, therefore, and not on account of sin."[18] Procksch endeavors to explain the problem created by 2:17, "for in the day that you eat of it you shall die," by referring this threat "not to physical death, which indeed did not occur on the day of the fall, but to spiritual death, which placed Adam outside that living communion with God" which he had enjoyed.[19] Thus he distinguishes between that death which is man's lot according to the order of nature (2 Samuel 14:14; Job 14: Psalm 39, etc.), and death as an expression of God's wrath expelling man from

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[17] Ibid., p. 711.

[18] Otto Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1950), pp. 494f. Otto Procksch was professor of Old Testament Theology at the University of Erlangen from 1925 until his death in 1947.

[19] Ibid., pp. 495, 651.

the divine presence."[20]

Another area of concern in contemporary Lutheran circles involves the nature of death. In both Europe and America there have been voices raised in Lutheranism urging that the traditional view regarding the nature of death be restudied in the light of the Scripture. Paul Althaus, one of the more vocal exponents of this position, contends that the "theology of death must be distinguished not only from the idealistic, mystical understanding of death, but also from the traditional theological doctrine."[21]

In the present generation the traditional point of view with respect to the nature of death finds expression chiefly in the writings of Francis Pieper. Concerning temporal death he states: It is "nothing less than a tearing asunder of men, the separation of the soul from the body, the unnatural disruption of the union of soul and body which has been created by God to be one."[22] Since he supports his position chiefly on the basis of the New Testament, we shall not at this point enter further into his discussion, but proceed with the arguments of other theologians who deal more specifically with death as it is

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[20] Ibid., pp. 651f.

[21] Paul Althaus, Die Letzten Dinge (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1949), p. 91. Paul Althaus is professor of Systematic Theology and New Testament at the University of Erlangen.

[22] Pieper, op. cit., III, 536.

revealed in the Old Testament.

Henry Hamann, writing in the Australasian Theological Review in 1958, expressed his convictions in these words:

> Man consists essentially of body and soul; the soul being the immaterial part of man, the real self or ego; that which animates the body, and the severance of which from the body means death.[23]

While granting that Platonic philosophy has had a strong influence on the Christian world, he rejects the suggestion that the body-soul concept was necessarily Platonic or even Greek in its origin. The survival of the soul after death, he says, is a belief found among most primitive tribes. It is practically universal. However, such a belief should not be regarded as superstitions characteristic of

> men who are still in a very low state of development. On the contrary, we should, analogous to the thoughts expressed in Rom. 1:18ff., regard such beliefs as traditional remnants of an originally higher, purer form of religion, and hence as a true testimonium animae.[24]

Alexander Heidel suggests that the traditional view concerning the nature of death finds support also in the Old Testament Scripture, for it is said of Rachel that when she died her soul departed (Genesis 35:18). Elijah, praying for the life of the widow's son, cried: "O Lord

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[23]Henry Hamann, "Has Man a Soul?" The Australasian Theological Review, XXIX (December, 1958), 106. Henry Hamann served on the teaching staff at Concordia College, Adelaide, Australia.

[24]Ibid., p. 103.

my God, let this child's soul come into him again" (1 Kings 17:21). When the prophet Jonah was discouraged and disappointed, he asked the Lord: "Therefore, now, O Lord, take my nephesh from me, I beseech thee, for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4:3). And the preacher declares: "The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7; cf. Psalms 104:29 and 146:4).[25]

Another facet of the argument set forth by those who defend the traditional position concerning death is presented by Edmund Smits, professor of church history at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. In the spring issue of Dialog 1962, he writes that "there are two common modern misrepresentations of the traditional interpretation of immortality which must be guarded against if the teaching is to be understood." The first to which the writer points is the erroneous view that "the soul is inherently or essentially immortal, as if it were indestructible by its very nature." In reply Smits remarks that Gerhard makes a careful distinction at this point, asserting that God alone is immortal in the absolute sense of the word, but "through his grace shown at creation he gives immortality to men as well. We are created for immortality; still our immortality is not our own achievement but a

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[25] Heidel, op. cit., p. 143.

divine gift."[26] The second point to which the writer refers is a misunderstanding which arises "from a confusion between the concept of immortality as mere duration, which was widespread throughout the ancient pagan world, and the specifically Christian teaching . . . of a life with God and for God."[27] It is this latter conception which theologians of the traditional school of thought embrace. Therefore, Smits calls attention to a statement made by Luther in a funeral sermon on Psalm 116:15 in which he stated: "The death of his saints is precious and valuable to the Lord, so that he considers them like a fair treasure and a priceless jewel." The writer points out that Luther's statement is typical of the traditional attitude toward death and the future life, which clings to the belief that

> Life on earth does not simply run on and on until it arrives at a dead end where the human person, abandoned by an avenging God, is utterly annihilated. Rather, God is with the believer even in the dread hour of death and guards and preserves him to be the "fair treasure and priceless jewel" of the heavenly kingdom. There is an aspect of human personality which God finds precious, too precious to be destroyed.[28]

What then is this "aspect of human personality which God treasures" in His human creatures? Smits answers:

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[26] As quoted by Edmund Smits, "The Blessed Immortality," Dialog, I (Spring, 1962), 41. Edmund Smits is professor of Church History at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., p. 44.

> It is man's God-relatedness itself and man's capacity to grow in the life with God. According to the traditional interpretation God bestowed this relatedness on man at creation as a divine gift.[29]

This precious gift was intended to last forever, says the writer. "No matter how many times a man rebelled, the gift would not be withdrawn; his person would not be completely abandoned or destroyed by God." Man is by himself nothing but dust, but he has been raised to dignity and worth by the gift which the Lord has given him, "the gift of what is properly a divine attribute, immortality, in order that he might participate in eternal fellowship with his Creator."[30]

Thus there are Lutheran theologians who are seeking to retain the traditional stand with regard to the nature of death. But there are also many others who find in this position a doctrine "grounded in a dualistic understanding of man as consisting of body and soul . . . a belief which found vivid expression in the philosophy of Plato."[31] These theologians contend that the true Biblical view is different from hellenistic dualism; that according to the Scripture man is a unit, and death affects the entire person. Martin J. Heinecken, professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, expresses

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Althaus, op. cit., p. 91.

his opinion thus: "We are dealing with a unified being, a person, and not with something that is called a soul and which dwells in a house which is called a body."[32]

In an effort to clarify the Hebrew manner of thinking with regard to the unity of man, George A. F. Knight suggests the analogy of a coin. "A coin has two sides. Reality, similarly, may be conceived as a two-sided whole. Ideally speaking, a coin cannot . . . be split down the middle. The two sides are each but an aspect of the total oneness."[33] Applying this to the nature of man, the writer states:

> We are aware today as never before that at all levels of thought in the Old Testament the conception does not arise of man's being a union of soul and body. He may speak of one and then of the other, as he may speak of the "heads" or "tails" on the coin, but all the time man thinks of himself as just a man, one entity.[34]

But if man is a unified being, how does death affect him? Althaus replies: "Because death removes our body, it also takes away the spirit. Dying means more than that the instrument of the spirit . . . is taken. In death we are

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[32]Martin J. Heinecken, Basic Christian Teachings (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1949), p. 35.

[33]George A. F. Knight, "Eschatology in the Old Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology, IV (1951), 356. George A. F. Knight is a member of the teaching staff at the Lutheran School of Theology in Maywood, Illinois.

[34]Ibid.

snatched away in our entirety."[35] A more detailed discussion of the meaning of death will follow. However, inasmuch as the modern concept of death is so closely tied to the Old Testament view of the nature of man, it is highly desirable to discuss at this point the terminology which the Israelites employed in connection with the composition of man.

Old Testament scholars tell us that, on one hand, man consists of earthly stuff, dust and ashes; and on the other, he possesses a spiritual power which makes him, first of all, an intelligent being.[36] This spiritual power has been expressed in the Old Testament by various terms such as נֶפֶשׁ, רוּחַ, לֵב, etc., which describe it from different points of view. Modern scholarship, however, is quick to point out that these terms do not find an exact equivalent in the English word "soul." Johannes Fichtner, writing in the Theologische Zeitschrift, suggests that some of the difficulties which theology encounters today with regard to the word "soul" follow from the fact that nephesh "was translated exclusively with psyché in the Septuagint, and in the Vulgate with anima," words which did not always transmit an accurate meaning. He adds that Luther too

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[35] Althaus, op. cit., p. 83.

[36] George A. F. Knight, From Moses to Paul (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), pp. 26f. See also Ludwig Köhler, Old Testament Theology, translated by A. S. Todd (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), pp. 142f.

recognized the breadth of meaning that was contained in the Hebrew term nephesh and regretted that there was in the German language no single word that expressed in the fullest sense what nephesh meant to the Israelite.[37] However, when a single word is sought as a term most closely approximating the meaning of nephesh, many scholars prefer to translate it with "life."[38] Still it is generally recognized that even this term does not fully express the breadth of meaning contained in the word nephesh. Therefore Elmer E. Flack remarks that nephesh represents not only "life," by which term it is usually best expressed, "but also the principle of life, and by way of extension, the inner consciousness of emotional life."[39]

Knight favors the translation "personality."[40] He has also furnished one of the more detailed discussions of this term. It is his opinion that nephesh is difficult to define with one word because in the course of time it underwent a process of change and development. For ex-

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[37]Johannes Fichtner, "Seele oder Leben in der Bibel," Theologische Zeitschrift, XVII (1961), 306. See also George A. F. Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959), pp. 34f. Johannes Fichtner is professor of Old Testament in Bethel bei Bielefeld, Germany.

[38]Taito A. Kantonen, Life after Death (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1962), p. 8.

[39]Elmer E. Flack, "The Teachings and Institutions of the Old Testament," Old Testament Commentary (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 105. Elmer E. Flack, at the time that he wrote the statement quoted was professor of Exegetical Theology at Hamma Divinity School, Springfield, Ohio

[40]Knight, From Moses to Paul, p. 26.

ample in 282 instances where it is used, it seems to refer to "the principle of life, without any emphasis on what we would call its psychical side."[41] The messengers of Ahab entreated Elijah: "O man of God, I pray you, let my nephesh and the nephesh of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight" (2 Kings 1:13). Both the King James and the Revised Standard Versions translate the word as "life." In a second group of passages, in which nephesh appears 223 times, it can best be translated by the word "self," says Knight.[42] For example, in Psalm 3:2 David exclaims: "Many are rising against my nepesh." And Job tells his "comforters": "I also could speak as you do, if your nephesh were in the place of my nephesh" (Job 16:4). Finally, the writer says that there are 249 instances of "another group of meanings; for example, in Psalm 6:4 it is used with reference to life in contradistinction to death: 'Deliver my nephesh,' just means 'Save me from physical death.'"[43]

Knight states that originally the word nephesh must have meant primarily "breath," as did the Arabic term nafas. This usage can be seen in Job 41:21 where the "breath" of the crocodile kindles coals. "But the use of

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

the word in this sense was limited rather to that which itself does the breathing, and neshamah was reserved primarily to express the meaning of the word 'breath.'"[44] At this point the writer makes the interesting observation that during this stage of the development, "nephesh had some affinities with the ideas behind the Greek term pneuma. It was then used, and then only, in contradistinction to basar, flesh, as pneuma was to sarx."[45] As examples of this usage, the writer quotes Deuteronomy 12:23: "Only be sure that you do not eat the blood: for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the nephesh with the flesh." Again, in Genesis 35:18 it is stated concerning Rachel: "As her nephesh was departing (for she died), she called his name Ben-o'ni."

But Knight adds that in the course of time nephesh came to include much more content and meaning than did pneuma. Nephesh was employed also to designate "the seat of all emotions and appetites," of physical hunger (Psalm 107:9), of thirst (Proverbs 25:25), of appetite in general (Isaiah 5:14), of moral desire (Job 23:13). It was the seat of the intellect (Psalm 139:14); it was employed as a substi-

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[44]Ibid. See also Ludwig Köhler, Old Testament Theology, translated by A. S. Todd (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), pp. 142f.

[45]Knight, From Moses to Paul, pp. 26f. See also George A. F. Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959), pp. 34f.

tute for the word "brain," since the Hebrews had no equivalent. Because its scope was so broad, Knight suggests that a psychologist today might prefer to translate it by the word "personality" rather than by the term "soul."[46]

A second Hebrew word which is used to describe the spiritual side of man is ruach. Friederich Baumgärtel, writing in the Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, states that ruach in its basic, original sense may be translated "breath" or "wind." When used of man, it signifies: (a) The animating principle of the body. The entrance of the ruach creates life (Ezekiel 37:5f.). On the other hand, when God takes the ruach away (Psalm 104:29), or it returns to God, then death is the result (Ecclesiastes 12:7). (b) 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), impatience (Job 21:4; Proverbs 14:29), etc. (c) 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). (c) The seat of conviction, attitudes of will and character (Jeremiah 51:1; Haggai 1:14; Ezra 1:1; Ecclesiastes 7:8, etc.): humility (Proverbs 16:19), pride (Proverbs 16:18),

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[46] Knight, From Moses to Paul, p. 27.

longing for God (Isaiah 26:9), repentance (Psalm 51:19).[47]

Knight points out that there are 134 instances in which ruach, as the spirit of Yahweh, explains some unusual phenomenon of human conduct or character. Thus the strength of Samson was traced back to the incoming of the spirit of Yahweh into him (Judges 14:6): "the ecstasy of primitive prophecy (1 Samuel 10:6) in the same way was the direct result of the inspiration of God."[48] The writer maintains, furthermore, that in the course of time there developed the "Hebraic belief that all that is to be found in man of emotion and intellect was breathed into him by the breath of God." It was thought that man partook of the very life and nature of God when the Lord "blew 'personality' into the clay which He took in His hands when He first made man in His own image and likeness."[49] Knight asserts that this "divine origin of man's personality" is to be found particularly in the more developed post-Exilic thought. Ruach then retained the "higher association of its origin." Thus it has come about that ruach "stands for those more exceptional and unusual endowments of human nature which suggest God as their immediate source. . . .

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[47]Friederich Baumgärtel, "Geist im Alten Testament," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935), VI, 147. Friedrich Baumgärtel is professor of Old Testament at the University of Erlangen.

[48]Knight, From Moses to Paul, pp. 27f.

[49]Ibid., p. 28.

It links man to God as though it were a door continually open to His approach."[50]

Thus scholars describe the ruach as performing the highest spiritual functions in man, but they do not conceive of it as being a spiritual counterpart in man which possesses a death-defying mode of existence. Otto Procksch states that the ruach is the principle of life, not a form of life. Therefore, in the Old Testament "one always speaks of the spirit of life (ruah hajjim), but never of a living spirit."[51] Knight adds:

> From our discussion of the relationship between the spirit of God and the spirit of man . . . we are not to be misled into imagining that the spirit of man may be likened to a divine spark, a scintilla dei, set within a clay body, which will one day return to the source of that flame in the event of the death of the body. Man is an entity, quite indivisible into his various elements, even though aspects of his personality, such as his appetites, his affections, his moral purposes, may be examined and handled one by one, just as we can look at each side of a coin in turn.[52]

A third term employed by Scripture to describe certain attitudes and characteristics of man is lev. Kantonen states that "lev, meaning heart, stands for man as a whole viewed specifically in his relation to God."[53] Flack considers the lev to be one of the three members of the human frame referred to in Scripture as having psychical, and

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Procksch, op. cit., pp. 203, 459.

[52] Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament, pp. 37f.

[53] Kantonen, Life after Death, p. 8.

therefore ethical, significance. It is employed not only to express the whole range of emotional experiences, such as love (2 Samuel 14:1), joy (Judges 18:20), anxiety (1 Samuel 4:13), but it is used "especially to describe the activities of the intellect (Deuteronomy 7:17) and the will (Jeremiah 3:17)." It is the organ of consciousness, the seat of understanding.[54]

Finally, man is also flesh. In fact, the Hebrews characterized him largely in terms of the physical side of his nature. Man, like all other living creatures, is basically "flesh" (basar) and not "spirit" (ruach), says Flack.[55] He is flesh-animated-by-soul. Kantonen says: "Man does not have a body; he is a body." Again: "The Hebrew idea of the personality is an animated body, and not an incarnated soul."[56]

What then is basar? It is not to be thought of as an exact synonym of "body." Strictly speaking, "flesh is the lifeless stuff of man. . . . Body is the human (or animal) form which the stuff flesh assumes."[57] An examination of the Hebrew Scripture will soon reveal that the phrase כָּל־בָּשָׂר, "all flesh," is used in various ways in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 5:26, when the

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[54]Flack, op. cit., p. 105.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Kantonen, Life after Death, p. 8.

[57]Ibid. See also Köhler, Old Testament Theology, pp. 36f.

holy writer asks who of all flesh has heard the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire and live, then evidently "all flesh" means man. In Genesis 6:17 when it is said that all flesh wherein is the breath of life is to be destroyed in the flood, both men and beasts are meant. In other passages, such as Genesis 7:21 where Yahweh says that "all flesh died . . . and every man," kol basar refers only to the beasts. Kantonen, therefore, remarks: "The human organism has no status in its own right, nor does it serve to mark man off from other men or the rest of nature. On the contrary it ties him with 'all flesh.'"[58]

What are the conclusions to be drawn from this word-study? The trend as it is expressed in much of contemporary Lutheran literature is in the following direction:

1. The terms basar, nephesh, ruach, and lev are not to be equated with the English "body" and "soul" in their commonly accepted sense. The Hebrew has no exact equivalent for these two terms. Therefore, the conclusion is drawn that the Old Testament passage which traditional theology quotes in support of the survival of the soul after death are not pertinent.[59]

2. Modern scholarship contends that man is a psychological unity, an indivisible whole which may be seen from

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[58]Kantonen, Life after Death, p. 8.

[59]Althaus, op. cit., p. 94.

various points of view and described as flesh, body, soul, spirit, or heart.[60] But none of these should be thought of as existing by itself. Even the nephesh and the ruach are without independent existence.[61]

3. Therefore, it is said that death is not to be viewed in the traditional manner as a separation of body and soul, according to which the body returns to the dust whence it came and the nephesh goes into the presence of God to enjoy blessedness until the day of the resurrection. This "body-soul dualism" does not occur in the Old Testament.[62]

What then is death? Kantonen, following the lead of Carl Stange, points out that there are three types of answers given.

1. The answer of "biological science and the naturalistic philosophy based upon it, according to which life is solely a natural process and death its absolute end."[63] According to this view

> Man dies when the functions which characterize a living organism comes to an end. The lifeless body begins to decompose. It is attacked by lower forms of life, worms, molds, and bacteria, which transform its cells and tissues into its original inorganic and gaseous

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[60]Kantonen, Life after Death, pp. 7, 9. See Knight. From Moses to Paul, p. 30.

[61]Procksch, op. cit., pp. 459f.

[62]Kantonen, Life after Death, p. 6. See also Knight, "Eschatology," op. cit., p. 356.

[63]Kantonen, Life after Death, p. 11.

> constituents. . . . The human individual has ceased to exist.[64]

Kantonen remarks that the Biblical view of death is in full accord with the view of natural science as far as the latter goes. "Our hopes and desires cannot change this fact. Man does not differ from the rest of creation by having a soul that cannot die."[65] Death is a grim reality, but that is not all that Scripture has to say.

2. The answer of idealistic philosophy. According to this view "the soul has its own life underived from the body, and death is the release of the soul from the body."[66] Kantonen remarks that various philosophies and religions have inherited this idea of a deathless soul from primitive animism. It is a view which considers the body inferior to the soul. While the latter occupies itself with eternal ideas and values, the body is thought to seek the baser things of life and succumb to the lower passions. The soul shares neither the birth nor the death of the body. "It had an incorporeal existence before it became attached to the body, and it returns to this existence when the body dies. It does not decompose as the body does."[67]

But such a position, says Kantonen, actually denies

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., p. 17.

[66] Ibid., p. 11.

[67] Ibid., p. 12.

the fact that men are mortal. The essential self, the soul, does not die at all; it "leaps over the grave into another form of existence."[68]

3. The answer of Christian faith. Modern Lutheran scholarship excludes from its description of the Old Testament view of death any suggestion that man has a mortal part, the body, and an immortal part, the soul. As it has been previously stated, the human being is considered to be an indivisible unit, a body-animated-by-soul. Therefore, when the body dies, the soul dies also. Nothing in man escapes the grave. Death is a grim reality, a dreaded enemy because it represents the breach in man's relation to God. Therefore a pious Israelite such as Job could contemplate death only as a going into the land of no return, "the land of gloom and chaos, where light is as darkness" (Job 10:21-22). "The author of Ecclesiastes went so far as to say that the fate of man is the same as that of the beast, complete extinction."[69] Kantonen grants that this is not the general teaching of the Old Testament, but it does emphasize the creatureliness of man and his complete dependence on God. "A man may descend fearlessly into the valley of the shadow of death only if he can say, 'Thou art with me,' but life here or hereafter is not worth liv-

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[68] Ibid., p. 13.

[69] Ibid., pp. 15f.

ing when that tie is severed," for fellowship with God is the only thing that matters.[70]

Thus modern Lutheran scholarship in its description of the Old Testament view of death seeks to place the greatest emphasis on the thought that death is real, that it affects the entire person, that it represents the breach in man's relation to his Creator, a rupture caused by sin. However, it should be noted that, according to Old Testament scholarship, death is not to be equated with non-existence. Even though man is described as an indivisible unit, and death is said to affect the entire person, basar, ruach, nephesh, and lev, man is not annihilated when he dies. He does not cease to exist. Flack is expressing the view that is generally held by contemporary Lutheran theologians when he states: "Among the Hebrews there was a vigorous belief in an existence after death."[71]

But precisely what it is that the Old Testament thought of as existing after death, if not the nephesh or the ruach, is a problem which modern scholarship has not discussed at any great length.

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Flack, op. cit., p. 110.

CHAPTER III

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

It has been said that there are two indisputable realities in eschatology, the fact of death and the fact of the resurrection. But between these two events there is, from the human point of view, an interval of time, a period of waiting. This, in turn, has given rise to the question: "What is the nature of the so-called intermediate state?"[1] It has been pointed out that modern Lutheran scholars generally grant that there is existence in this interval, but opinions vary as to its nature.

Otto Procksch maintains that in the Old Testament way of thinking the dead exist but they do not live. He asserts that "existence and life are evidently distinguished" by the ancient Israelite. The difference consists in this that where there is life there is also "development, accomplishment, something which is possible only when one is in communion with God and man."[2] In death, however, "existence is isolated; it is a dull vegetation (Job 14:22), without change, without fellowship one with another (Job 3:13ff.)."[3]

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[1]Taito A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church of America, 1954), p. 36.

[2]Otto Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1950), p. 502.

[3]Ibid.

He points out that in the Old Testament Scripture one who is dead is not described as a nephesh hajja, a living soul, but he is called a nephesh mēt. His soul exists but it no longer lives and any contact with it is forbidden.[4]

Francis Pieper quotes Luther with approval:

> It is divine truth that Abraham (after death) lives with God, serves Him, and also rules with Him. But what sort of life that is, whether he be asleep or awake, that is another question. How the soul rests, we are not to know; it is certain, however, that it lives.[5]

Taito Kantonen maintains that the traditional view places too much stress on the bliss of the individual, for he says that from the Scriptural point of view "the individual believer cannot enjoy heavenly blessedness until the whole family of God's children is gathered home, which is only after the resurrection and judgment." Therefore, he adds, that present-day Lutherans are inclined to ascribe less positive content to the intermediate state.[6]

Martin J. Heinecken charges that it is only when man is falsely split up into body and soul that the speculations concerning an intermediate state arise; and he concludes: "It is no wonder that, with this view, men have had little use for a resurrection . . . and have been satis-

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[4] Ibid., p. 502.

[5] Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by Walter W. F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, 512.

[6] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 38.

fied with the redemption of only the soul."[7]

Thus opinions have varied sharply with regard to the state and condition of the dead. But for guidance in the discussion of this problem we shall examine the two principal expressions which the writers of the Old Testament employed to describe the experience of death.

The first of these is the familiar formula which reported a man's death by stating: "He was gathered to his people" (Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 49:29,33), or "He slept with his fathers" (1 Kings 2:10), or "He lay with his fathers" (Genesis 47:30; 2 Samuel 7:15), or "He went to his fathers in peace" (Genesis 15:15).

These and similar expressions, which occur in the historical books, have been interpreted in various ways. George Knight shares the opinion of Walther Eichrodt[8] and others, who believe that these statements show the intense desire of the Israelite to be united even in death with their fathers and other members of their family. Knight says that the Old Testament believer found it impossible to imagine any life after death that was not lived along with his people. He believed that a good thing was about to

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[7]Martin J. Heinecken, Basic Christian Teachings (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1949), p. 133.

[8]Walther Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Vierte Auflage; Berlin: Evangelishe Verlagsanstalt, 1950) II-III, 145. At the time this book was published Walther Eichrodt was professor of Old Testament at the University of Basel.

happen to him when he was gathered to his fathers.[9] Procksch holds that such formulae as these refer chiefly to burial in a common grave, rather than being together in the realm of death or in a life hereafter.[10]

Perhaps the majority of contemporary Lutheran theologians both in Europe and in America find little, if any, significance in these statements; they usually equate them with expressions such as "to go the way of all the earth" (Joshua 23:14; 1 Kings 2:2), or simply "to die."[11] Alexander Heidel, after a lengthy examination of the principal passages in which this formula appears, concludes that such expressions as these "are as little informative on the ultramundane whereabouts of the soul as are the words of David, uttered at the loss of his child: 'I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.'" (2 Samuel 12:23). He compares their significance also to that of the formula "to go the way of all the earth" (Joshua 23:14; 1 Kings 2:2).[12] Alfred von Rohr Sauer shares the view that these formulae cannot refer solely to a state of blessedness after death for they are used at times also with reference to the

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[9]George A. F. Knight, A Christian Theology of the Old Testament (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959), pp. 335f.

[10]Procksch, op. cit., p. 500.

[11]Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 144.

[12]Ibid., p. 189.

wicked and godless people.[13]

Herbert Leupold, however, finds a much more positive content in these expressions. Commenting on Genesis 25:8 where it is stated that Abraham died and "was gathered to his people," Leupold remarks that "this is a clear testimony to the belief in a life after death on the part of the earliest patriarch."[14] He concedes that no specific revelation on the subject seems to have been given, "but faith in the Almighty God drew its own proper conclusions as to whether God would ultimately let His children perish, and its conclusion was: He cannot." Leupold supports his position by referring to Hebrews 11:13-16, which, he says, "offers the fullest confirmation of our interpretation."[15]

The second expression which writers of the Old Testament employed to describe the experience of dying was "going to Sheol." Sheol is generally considered the common Hebrew designation for the place of the dead. Its etymology is still obscure despite the numerous efforts that have been

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[13]Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "The Eschatological Prophecies of the Old Testament and their Pertinence to Events of the Present Day," Proceedings of the Twenty-Ninth Convention of the Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1951, p. 36. Alfred von Rohr Sauer is professor of Old Testament at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

[14]Herbert C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1942), p. 694. At the time this book was published Herbert C. Leupold was professor of Old Testament at Capital University Theological Seminary, Columbus, Ohio.

[15]Ibid., 695.

made to determine its root and to discover its basic meaning.[16] Old Testament scholars of the past century often derived it from the verb שָׁאַל, "to ask," because the kingdom of the dead was "insatiable in its demands."[17] In the view of others Sheol brought to mind the depth of the underworld and was thought to have originated from שָׁאַל, "to be deep."[18] Knight claims that it may have come from a root meaning "hollow," since "it represents a great cavern in the center of the earth." He also notes that, according to some of the holy writers, there lay at the lowest point in Sheol "a pit, shahath (Job 33:18; Ps. 30:9) or bor, the ordinary word for a water hole (Ps. 28:1; 40:2; Isa. 14:15)."[19] Procksch calls attention to the fact that the article is not used with Sheol. He claims that this absence of the article indicates, as in the case of t'hom, "sea," and tebel, "globe," that the term Sheol must have been of foreign origin. He grants, however, that an Acadian

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[16] Heidel, op. cit., p. 144.

[17] Gustave F. Oehler, Theology of the Old Testament, translated by George E. Day (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 170. Gustave F. Oehler was professor of Old Testament at the University of Tübingen.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Knight, op. cit., p. 338.

equivalent (si'al) has not been found.[20]

While it is quite generally agreed that the etymology of the term is uncertain, the meaning of Sheol is less difficult to establish. Contemporary Lutheran scholars describe it as a realm located "within the innermost parts of the earth" (Deuteronomy 32:22; Psalm 139:8; Isaiah 14:13-15; Amos 9:2).[21] According to some passages of Scripture it is "beneath the waters" (Job 26:5).[22] Kantonen remarks that the book of Job gives the most adequate picture of Sheol to be found anywhere in the Hebrew Scripture, when it states: "Behold I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of gloom and deep darkness, the land of gloom and chaos, where light is darkness" (10:21-22).[23] It was called a land of silence and forgetfulness (Psalms 94:17; 115:17; 88:13; Ecclesiastes 9:5; Job 14:21).[24] Of prime importance is the fact that the Old Testament records numerous passages in which it is said that the dead

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[20]Procksch, op. cit., p. 498. Ludwig Koehler suggested a new opinion according to which Sheol presumably belongs to a small group of Hebrew words with four consonants, the last being a lamedh which was added for reasons of euphony. When the lamedh is dropped, it becomes conceivable that sheol may have come from scha'a, meaning "desolation," "waste land." Cf. Ludwig Köhler, "Alttestamentliche Wortforschung: Sheol," Theologische Zeitschrift, II (1946), 71.

[21]Heidel, op. cit., 178.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Kantonen, op. cit., p. 6.

[24]Heidel, op. cit., p. 194.

cannot praise God nor give Him thanks (Psalm 6:6; 115:17; Isaiah 38:18).

Gerhard von Rad repeatedly emphasizes that the dead were "outside the cultic sphere of Jahweh." With death the individual's participation in the cult ceased. "The dead stood outwith [sic] the orbit of the worship of Jahweh and were therefore also debarred from glorifying His deeds."[25] For Israel the real bitterness of death apparently lay in this exclusion.

Procksch describes Sheol as a "terrifying place," and a place of destruction (Job 26:6; 28:22; abaddon) and forgetfulness (Psalm 88:13) of darkness (Job 10:21f.) and of hopelessness from which there is no return (Job 7:9; 14:10, 12; 16:22; Isaiah 38:12,18). However, existence in Sheol apparently bears at least some similarity to life on earth for there "the kings sit upon their thrones as they did in life" (Isaiah 14:9). Job distinguishes between kings and princes, between rich and poor, between good and bad (Job 3:14ff.). But it is a shadowy existence, says Procksch, "cheerless and dull, without life and enthusiasm. The dead go there with body and soul; they are not entirely insensible; for the soul sorrows (Job 14:22). But this ex-

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[25] Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, translated by D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), I, 277, 369, 389. Since 1949 Gerhard von Rad has been professor of Old Testament at the University of Heidelberg.

istence cannot be called life."[26]

On the other hand, there are also passages in Job which depict Sheol as a place of rest, where there is an end of earthly toil and trouble. Job, under the weight of great affliction, visualizes death as a state in which "the wicked cease from troubling and . . . the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together; they hear not the voice of the taskmaster" (Job 3:13ff.). Ernest Brennecke attempts to explain the seeming inconsistency of Job's remarks by stating that this sufferer's desire for release from the bondage of his affliction was so intense that even Sheol appeared to him as a place altogether desirable and "not as he later remembered it as 'a land of darkness and the shadow of death, a land dark as midnight, without any order, and where the light is as midnight' (10:21f.)."[27]

Sheol was a land to which all must go. The psalmist asked: "What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?" (Psalm 89:48). Elmer Flack describes it as

> the vast "pit" (Ezek. 32:18) that was large enough to receive all the dead; so large, in fact, that it could

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[26]Procksch, op. cit., p. 499.

[27]Ernest Brennecke, "The Book of Job," Old Testament Commentary, edited by Herbert C. Alleman and Elmer E. Flack (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 694. Ernest Brennecke served as professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation at Hartwick Theological Seminary, New York City.

never be filled (Prov. 27:20). It had its tribal divisions and its racial distinctions (Ezek. 32:32f.)[28]

Apparently, however, there was no fellowship among the dead. Not only were they separated from God, and excluded from the congregation of the living, but they were also isolated from one another.[29]

Some Lutheran theologians have found in passages such as Psalm 49:14 63:19; Isaiah 5:14 and 14:13-15 indications that Sheol was a place where the wicked suffered punishment for evils committed on earth, while the pious are spared such torment. Heidel, reflecting the opinion of Franz Delitzsch, remarks concerning Psalm 49:14f. that in view of what the psalmist says in verses 8 to 11 concerning the inevitability of death, "the term Sheol refers, of course, not to the grave, but to the underground abode of the spirits. . . . The psalmist wants to say that God will save the righteous from what we would call going to hell."[30]

This is the position taken also by the Lutheran Cyclopedia. Concerning Psalm 49:14f. the writer states that according to this psalm "all men die physically, but there is a difference in their existence in the hereafter." That is indicated by the words of the psalmist: "They (i.e.,

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[28]Elmer E. Flack, "The Teachings and Institutions of the Old Testament," Old Testament Commentary, p. 110.

[29]Procksch, op. cit., pp. 502f., 652.

[30]Heidel, op. cit., p. 185.

the wicked) are laid in Sheol (AV, grave), death shall feed on them, but God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol (AV, the grave); for he shall receive me" (49:14f.). The writer adds: "Clearly there is a sharp contrast between the doom of the ungodly and the glorious hope of the believer who hopes to rest securely in the hands of his God."[31]

Von Rad recognizes the antithesis of this psalm and asserts that the fate of the psalmist would be different from that of the wicked after death for the wicked would remain in Sheol, while the righteous would enjoy the communion of God. However, he does not indicate further what is implied by "remaining in Sheol." He does not state pointedly that one would be in heaven and the other in hell.[32]

Sauer, in discussing Sheol as a place of punishment, points out that there are passages in Scripture where the word Sheol is used parallel with the Hebrew term Abaddon. This is significant because Abaddon, he says, "comes from the Hebrew verb meaning to perish and definitely contains the punitive idea which is associated with the concept of hell."[33] Sheol and Abaddon are equated also in Proverbs

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[31] "Hereafter," Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 460.

[32] Von Rad, op. cit., p. 406.

[33] Sauer, op. cit., p. 36.

15:11 where it is stated that Sheol and Abaddon "lie open before the Lord." Concerning Isaiah 14:13-15, Sauer states that the prophet, in condemning the king of Babylon for his pride, predicted that he would be brought down to Sheol, to the sides of Bor, the pit. "In this passage," says the writer, "Sheol and Bor do not refer to the grave, but to the place of torment."[34]

Replying to Jehovah's Witnesses who hold that "all the prophets of God taught that sheol, the grave, and hell are one and the same condition," Fred E. Mayer wrote: "Both the Hebrew word sheol and the Greek equivalent hades denote not only the grave or the abode of disembodied spirits, but also the place of torment."[35] This is evident, he said, "especially from the story of Korah and his band, who certainly did not go 'alive into the realm of the dead.'" For further proof he points also to Psalm 55:15, 16 where the psalmist contrasts his own condition with that of the wicked who went to Sheol.[36]

Other theologians, however, are inclined to regard Sheol as a neutral state, rather than one of punishment or reward. Kantonen asserts: "Sheol is unaffected by con-

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[34] Ibid., pp. 36f.

[35] Fred E. Mayer, Jehovah's Witnesses (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), p. 26. Prior to his death in 1954 Fred E. Mayer was professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

[36] Ibid.

siderations of punishment and reward. There were no compartments for good and bad."[37]

Lutheran scholars have not entered deeply into a discussion of the names employed by the Scripture to designate the dead. Von Rad has shown no interest at all in the subject. Knight calls attention to three names which the holy writers employed in speaking of the dead: the yid'onim, the 'elohim, and the repha'im. In a brief discussion of each he states: "Since the dead showed some modicum of intelligence . . . they were dubbed 'the knowing ones,' yid'onim (Lev. 19:31; 20:6; Isa. 19:3)." He adds that the earlier document or tradition lying behind 1 Samuel 28:13-20 took for granted that the dead could even foretell the future. He explains the second name with these words: "Because all ghosts belong to the realm of the numinous, the mysterious, the divine, they are even called in Isaiah's day, 'elohim' (Isa. 8:19; 29:4)." And concerning the third, he says: "Some writers envisage the departed as existing, not as knowledgeable creatures, but as merely shadows without bodies, or as continuing a kind of shadowy existence in a profound sleep" (Job 3:14-19; Isaiah 14:10). The word that is employed by Isaiah is repha'im. Knight says that this word may come either from the root "to be weak" (raphah) or it may be connected with the rephaim or giants who alleg-

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[37] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 6.

edly occupied the earth in olden days (Deuteronomy 2:20; 3:11,13). He also allows for the third possibility that it may have come from the verb rapha', "to heal," and so may even have a beneficent connotation.[38] Thus there is some ambiguity with regard to the precise meaning of the term repha'im. Lutheran scholars, however, offer little discussion of this word and seemingly take for granted that it is to be translated in the sense of "to be feeble or powerless."

Heidel rejects the view held by some that the dead were called elohim, "divine beings," since they possessed certain superhuman qualities and characteristics such as a knowledge of the future.[39] Instead he maintains that Samuel was called elohim (1 Samuel 28:8,11) because he was a representative of Yahweh while he was on earth. Furthermore, he points out that there is no way of determining how generally among the Hebrews this appellation was applied to departed spirits. "Nor can we tell for certain whether orthodox Hebrew theology sanctioned or condoned the application of this title to the spirits of the dead."[40] It

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[38]Knight, op. cit., pp. 338f. It may be of some interest and value to note the suggestion made by R. Gordis, "Studies in Hebrew Roots of Contrasted Meanings," Jewish Quarterly Review, XXVII (1936), 55f. according to which רפה, and רפא have a common origin and serve to express the opposing ideas of strength and weakness.

[39]Heidel, op. cit., p. 197.

[40]Ibid.

must be remembered, he says, that it was a witch who used the term in this sense.

Procksch centers his attention on the two terms, ob and jidde'onim. It is uncertain, he says, whether these beings were thought of as spirits of people who had lived earlier. Some have connected ob with the Arabian root 'aba, meaning "to return," and they have in mind a ghost which arises from the kingdom of death. Others find a connection with ob, meaning "a vent" in Job 32:19, as also the Accadian zaqiou, "spirit of the dead" is brought into relationship with the Syrian zeqqā, "vent," which is derived from the dull sound of the voice of the dead. Most of the jidde'onim are the knowing ones, a name for soothsayers.[41]

Procksch rejects as pagan superstition the notion that the spirits of the dead could be summoned from the underworld. The witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7ff.) is said to have possessed an ob by which she was expected to announce the fate of Saul. But the fact that the shade of Samuel appeared was not through her power. In Isaiah 8:19 there is indication, says Procksch, that the prophet knew and rejected the superstition regarding the soothsaying of the obot and the jidde'onim. Isaiah writes: "And when they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?" It is quite ev-

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[41] Procksch, op. cit., pp. 502f.

ident from the many times they are mentioned,[42] that the ob and the yidde'onim indeed played a part in the superstition of early and late times; but, according to Procksch, such a belief had as little to do with the prophetic religion as superstition has to do with faith.[43]

At this point a question arises: If the average Israelite thought of Sheol in the grim and sombre terms described above, and if he looked upon the dead as repha'im, weak ones, experiencing a shadowy existence in the heart of the earth, what was his attitude toward death? How could he maintain an emotional and spiritual balance in the face of such gloomy and unpromising prospects?

Von Rad emphasizes that it would be wrong to assume, in view of this very gloomy aspect, that in Israel death "radically called man and all that he lived for into question." While it is true that Israel, like other peoples, lamented over the bitterness of dying, "she never allowed the foundations of her faith to be shaken thereby."[44] Scholars suggest three principal reasons for this spiritual balance on the part of the average Israelite:

1. In ancient times one accepted death as the lot of mortal man according to the order of nature. Von Rad ex-

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[42]Samuel 28:3,7ff.; Leviticus 20:6,27; Deuteronomy 18:11, etc.

[43]Procksch, op. cit., p. 503.

[44]Von Rad, op. cit., p. 389.

plains that when death drew near to one "old and full of years," it was really a gracious fulfillment, "since from the start life was regarded as something limited, meted out to man, to which there could also be a condition of satiety."[45] Procksch distinguishes between death as man's lot by nature and death as an expression of God's wrath. Therefore, he states that "to go to the fathers . . . in peace, is no misfortune, but to be cast out from God is different." From this he concludes that the death of Abraham (Genesis 25:8) or Jacob (Genesis 35:29) or Job (Job 42:17) is not considered punishment, but rather the course of the world according to which life finally comes to an end.[46]

2. The Israelite strongly felt himself to be a member of the body of the community. His value as an individual was secondary to that of the nation. Von Rad remarks: "Man as a unit never really completely freed himself in an individualistic way from the collective, at least from the family." Since he lived on in his children, the greatest misfortune at the time of death was childlessness.[47] Procksch suggests that a fear of death developed only when it was viewed as a separation of man's personal life from the bosom of community life; and, more serious still, when it came to be regarded as a separation from God. In the

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[45]Von Rad, op. cit., p. 391.

[46]Procksch, op. cit., p. 652.

[47]Von Rad, op. cit., pp. 389f.

underworld one cannot praise God (Psalm 6:6; 88:11). That was the religious anguish which seized the pious (Psalm 22; 39:90).[48]

3. Another reason for Israel's spiritual balance in facing death was the common belief that death was not man's enemy but "Yahweh acting upon man." Von Rad regards this attitude on the part of the Hebrews as a most remarkable fact, when one takes into consideration how little revealed information about death the ancients possessed. In this matter "Israel displayed an obedience unrivaled in the history of religion." Von Rad continues:

> How voluble are the other religions here, how bold the mythologies! But Israel did not know death as in any way an independent mythical power--death's power is at bottom the power of Jahweh himself. Death was no last enemy, but Jahweh's acting upon men. This is the line taken by the most decisive of Israel's utterances about death, and these therefore stand in the sharpest contrast to all forms of belief in fate. Jahweh decrees death for a man, but in certain circumstances he also alters this decree (II Kings XX. 5f.)--it all rests with his freedom in giving and taking. . . . Only in Apocalyptic was death objectified and made independent as a reality hostile to Jahweh, and therefore to be destroyed by him (Is. XXV. 7f.; Test. Levi XVIII; II Esdras VIII. 53).[49]

Thus it is clear that, although the Israelite thought of Sheol in grim and sombre terms, this realization never threatened the foundation of his faith.

However, there are other theologians who approach the problem of Sheol from a point of view different from that

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[48]Procksch, op. cit. p. 652.

[49]Von Rad, op. cit., p. 390.

of Procksch and von Rad. They suggest that these descriptions of the realm of death which portray it as a gloomy existence, characterized by separation from God, do not actually express the normal hope of Israel regarding the future, but they 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 the true state and condition of the dead.[50] These Hebrew writers, in their description of Sheol, are merely repeating, therefore, views that were prevalent in those days.[51] As Job was enduring pain of body and anguish of mind, tormented by his friends, and seemingly abandoned by Yahweh, he described man's future prospects thus:

> There is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease. Though its roots grow old in the earth, and its stump die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth branches like a young plant. But man dies, and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he? As water fails from a lake and a river wastes away and dries up, so man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep" [Job 14:7-12].

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[50]Herbert C. Leupold, Exposition of the Psalms (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1959), p. 27. See also Harold L. Creager and Herbert C. Alleman, "The Psalms," Old Testament Commentary, p. 569. When this commentary was published, Harold L. Creager was professor of Old Testament at the Lutheran Theological Seminary of Canada, Waterloo, Ontario. Herbert C. Alleman was professor emeritus of Hebrew and Old Testament Literature and Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

[51]Creager and Alleman, op. cit., p. 569.

Brennecke regards this statement as a reflection of Job's attitude toward Sheol in a day of despair, while chapter 19:25-27 records the confession of his faith when "at last the gloomy specter of a hostile God is dispelled by the light of victorious faith." Brennecke explains it thus:

> the poet is here struggling with the profoundest longing of mankind, the question of the reality and nature of life beyond death . . . ; in such a psychological adventure it is not unusual for the seeking mind to waver between desire and despair and cling with the heart's intuition to a hope which reason and tradition and experience deny.[52]

Creager and Alleman, in their exposition of the Psalms, argue in a similar fashion. After characterizing Psalm 88 as "the one hopeless psalm in the Psalter," and as "a picture of utter desolation and complete dejection," they conclude: "It is to be emphasized that this is not the revealed truth about the condition of the dead, but the common idea which later revelation displaced (cf. on 139:8; 49:15)."[53] They note furthermore that Jesus on the cross did not quote from this psalm which has no breath of hope, but from Psalm 22 which ends on a triumphant note.[54]

Leupold expresses a similar opinion in the introduction to his Exposition of the Psalms. Concerning those psalms

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[52]Brennecke, op. cit., p. 508.

[53]Creager and Alleman, op. cit., p. 508.

[54]Ibid.

which lament the fact that the dead cannot praise Yahweh,[55] the writer emphasizes two points which "should be noted in coming to grips with this issue." (a) "Revelation concerning the hereafter did not burn half as brightly in the Old Testament as it does in the New." From this he concludes that it could well have happened that when doubt and distress plagued a man, he might have given utterance to "thoughts which do not always express the normal hope of Israel."[56] Grief sometimes momentarily deprives men of the little light which they may have on a subject like death. (b) In the passages listed above, "the writer apparently was thinking only in terms of that dead body that was laid into the grave before his eyes." When a man is dead, his physical person can no longer remember God nor sing His praises.[57]

Concerning the pessimistic view of death expressed in Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 where the author seems to say that "the fate of man is the same as that of the beast," Kantonen remarks: "This is not the general teaching of the Old Testament."[58]

J. A. West, in a pamphlet prepared for the Lutheran

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[55]Psalms 6:5; 30:9; 88:10; 115:17.

[56]Leupold, op. cit., p. 27.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Taito A. Kantonen, Life after Death (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1962), p. 16.

Literature Board, Burlington, Iowa, applies the same principle with reference to Hezekiah and his description of Sheol in Isaiah 38:14-18. He asserts that here "the good king tells us how he felt when he stood face to face with death," and he draws the conclusion that if Hezekiah had understood better the conditions as they exist in Sheol for a pious man, or if he had a conquering faith in Yahweh, he would not have been so terrified at the prospect of death.[59]

But if these descriptions of Sheol, as they are given in passages such as Psalm 88, do not express the true hope of Israel concerning the hereafter, then where may one find a clear statement of their faith of God's people? While Leupold is ready to grant that comparatively little information is offered in the Old Testament regarding the life beyond the grave, nevertheless he finds an expression of Israel's true hope particularly in passages such as Psalm 16:9-11; 23:4; 49:15; 73:24; and Job 19:25-27, where special emphasis is placed on the thought that even in death God will not abandon his saints but will abide with them. Concerning Psalm 16:9-16, he writes:

> Keeping close to the Lord and realizing that God will not forsake him, if he does not forsake God, the writer carries the logic of faith through to a brilliant conclusion, every part of which is valid. He

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[59] J. A. West, What the Bible Teaches about the World Beyond (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1939), pp. 14f.

> anticipates that God cannot abandon his body (v. 9). He further concludes that it is contrary to the nature of God simply to give His child over to Sheol (v. 16). [60]

In their interpretation of the same psalm, Creager and Alleman contend that "the glorious confidence of unbroken fellowship with God constitutes the true center of belief in life eternal."[61]

Kantonen asserts, on the basis of Psalm 23, that a man may descend fearlessly into the valley of the shadow of death if he can say, "Thou art with me," but life here and hereafter is not worth living when that tie is severed, for fellowship with God is the only thing that matters.[62]

But a further question concerning the intermediate state suggests itself. What is the relation between the living and the dead? Scholars point out that the Israelites exercised great care so that their dead would receive a proper burial. Heidel rejects the claim made by some theologians[63] that among the Hebrews, burial was essential to the comfort of the departed or to the safety of the survivors, as was the case in Babylonia, Assyria, and other countries.[64] He maintains that it was a deed of kindness

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[60]Leupold, op. cit., p. 27.

[61]Creager and Alleman, op. cit., p. 535.

[62]Kantonen, Life after Death, p. 16.

[63]Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 144.

[64]Heidel, op. cit., p. 166.

to bury the dead (2 Samuel 2:5), and it was a disgrace to be left unburied (1 Kings 14:11-13; 16:4; 21:24; Jeremiah 16:4; 25:33; Psalm 79:3; Ecclesiastes 6:3).[65]

In his interpretation of Isaiah 14:4-20, John Aberly remarks "a death that had no burial" was considered to be "a curse, according to general belief."[66] Therefore burial "was accorded even to criminals who had been hanged (Deut. 21:22-23), to suicides (II Sam. 17:23), and to national enemies who had been captured and put to death (Josh. 8:29; 10:26-27)."[67]

But aside from the attention given the dead at the time of burial, scholars in general assert that Israel, after a more or less long period of mourning, treated the departed with indifference. Von Rad asserts that "attention has rightly been drawn to the strange lack of significance which the dead had for the life of ancient Israel."[68] This attitude becomes understandable when it is realized that the dead were in a state of "extreme and irreparable uncleanness. They stood on the other side of all the values of life."[69] Von Rad explains the state of uncleanness as

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[65] Ibid.

[66] John Aberly, "The Book of Isaiah," Old Testament Commentary, p. 657. John Aberly, at the time that he wrote the statement quoted, was professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

[67] Heidel, op. cit., p. 166.

[68] Von Rad, op. cit., p. 389.

[69] Ibid.

follows:

> All that has died represents the utmost degree of uncleanness (Num. IX. 6: XIX. 11, 16, 18, XXXI. 19 of the dead of men; Lev. XI. 24-8, etc., of the dead of animals). The uncleanness issuing from the dead infected not only human beings in the vicinity of the dead man, but things as well (Lev. XI. 33ff.); indeed it could be passed still further through contact with what rendered unclean (Num. XIX. 22). People who were in a state of intensified holiness, the priests and Nazarites (Lev. XXI. 1ff., 10ff.; Num. VI. 6ff.), were specially menaced by the uncleanness occasioned by death. Apart from the disease of leprosy (in the cases where it was incurable), contact with the dead occasioned an uncleanness more serious in degree than all other forms of uncleanness. Therefore, it cannot be removed by ordinary lustration . . . but requires a special purifactory water compounded with the ashes of a red heifer (Num. XIX. 1ff.).[70]

Some scholars, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran,[71] seem to think that these strict regulations concerning uncleanness, which were intended to govern the relation between the living and the dead, "grew out of the hard defensive warfare which Israel waged against a cult for the dead." Von Rad seems to think that it was only natural for Israel, like other nations, to place "a sacral value on the dead and on the grave," since there was no doubt that the dead lived on and represented a power that had to be reckoned with in a very real way. They could do harm, says von Rad, but use could also be made of their higher knowledge. He asserts that one can see how close Israel stood to these ideas "from the fact that the age of Deuteronomy and Isaiah was still ex-

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[70] Ibid., pp. 275f.

[71] Eichrodt, op. cit., p. 147.

posed to the temptation to consult the dead (Is. VIII. 19; Deut. XVIII. 11)."[72] The writer grants that it is questionable whether the designation "cult for the dead" is not perhaps too exalted a title to give these isolated practices, but he maintains that they did nevertheless express "a sacral relationship with the dead which was absolutely incompatible with Jahwism."[73] Yahweh, who wanted exclusive worship, therefore, turned against this very cult of the dead and anything in any way connected with it. The result of the whole matter, says von Rad, was "a radical demythologising and desacralising of death." Their dead were absolutely outside the cultic sphere of Yahweh; they were divorced from him and from any communion with him, "because they were outside the province of his cult (Ps. LXXXVIII. 11-13). Herein lay the real bitterness of death. . . ."[74]

While Procksch is ready to grant that it was an ancient custom in Israel to place food in the graves for the dead--an act that was considered heathenish by the Deuteronomist and unworthy of true Israelites (Deuteronomy 26:14)--he contends that "an ancestor cult was not connected with the graves . . . in the true religion of Israel; instead it was prohibited as a heathen element."[75] Perhaps the sharp em-

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[72]Von Rad, op. cit., pp. 276f.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Procksch, op. cit., pp. 500f.

phasis that was placed on the fact that no one knows the grave in which Moses was laid was intended to guard against the danger of a cult. The grave was no shrine; this, says Procksch, is a sign of the power of the Yahweh religion which excluded the dead from the praise of God.[76]

As a further argument against ancestor worship, Heidel points out that the dead are not aware of what takes place on earth. On the basis of Job 14:21-22; Isaiah 63:16 and 2 Kings 22:20 he concludes that the dead are completely removed from earthly affairs and are no longer active in the history of men. "They do not return, as in Babylonia and Assyria, to molest the living, nor are they in any way responsive to the petitions of the living."[77] These, he says, are some of the reasons why the Old Testament does not recognize or legitimize ancestor worship.[78]

In an attempt to summarize the teaching of contemporary Lutheran scholarship with regard to the so-called intermediate state, mention should be made of the following points concerning which there is, more or less, general agreement:

1. Revelation concerning the hereafter did not burn as brightly in the Old Testament as it does in the New. For Christ had not yet come and "brought life and immortality

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[76] Ibid., p. 501.

[77] Heidel, op. cit., p. 206.

[78] Ibid.

to light."

2. Rather than focusing attention on the destiny of the individual, the Israelite gave considerable thought to the eschatology of the nation.

3. Although the Old Testament Scriptures only gradually begin to give expression to the doctrine of "life beyond the grave, they nevertheless sow the seeds of faith and trust in God's providential care of souls that bore rich fruit in later Judaism and in Christianity."[79]

4. Old Testament specialists generally think of Sheol as "the dark rendezvous of the dead in the depths of the earth," where the repha'im spend a shadowy existence. Some other theologians, however, suggest that many of the statements which portray Sheol as a gloomy abode do not express the normal hope of Israel, but are the opinions of men who were facing the grim fact of death and were overwhelmed by their feelings and fears.

5. Finally, it should be noted that according to modern scholarship it was not until the Graeco-Persian period that there were indications of a change in Israel's view of Sheol. Then Sheol became a temporary abode for the dead where they awaited the resurrection and judgment. The future destiny of the righteous was thought of as differing from that of the godless. In the realm of the dead they were separated.

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[79] Flack, op. cit., p. 110.

Belief in the immortality of the soul was brought into Palestine by the Jews of the diaspora; according to this doctrine "the souls of the righteous went immediately after death into the bliss of heaven and there awaited the resurrection."[80] Thereafter the designation Sheol was limited to the place of punishment where the souls of the godless underwent torment.

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[80] Joachim Jeremias, "ᾅδης im Spätjudentum," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 147f.

CHAPTER IV

THE DAY OF YAHWEH

It has been pointed out previously that the destiny of the individual Israelite received comparatively little attention in the writings of the Old Testament. Herbert C. Leupold remarks that even the psalms "may prove both difficult and disappointing to the average reader" who searches them for information regarding the afterlife.[1] By way of contrast, however, the future hope held out to God's people as a nation is presented in greater and far richer detail.

Israel's certainty regarding the future was centered in her covenant relation to Yahweh, and that covenant, says Paul Althaus, remained firm and sure due to the fact that God had founded it, not because of any superiority on the part of His people, but because of His gracious election.[2] It applied also to the future. "God's faithfulness was, is, and shall remain; it is past, present, and future" (Isaiah 54:10; Leviticus 26:44,45; Deuteronomy 4:31). God's fellowship with His people "cannot be destroyed. . . .

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[1]Herbert C. Leupold, Exposition of the Psalms (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1959), p. 26.

[2]Paul Althaus, Die Letzten Dinge (Gutersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1949), p. 12.

Whatever else may happen, one thing is certain: the grace cannot weaken and the covenant of peace cannot fail."[3] This was the foundation of Israel's certainty and hope. And it was this covenant relationship which gave rise to the expectation of "a day of Jahweh."[4]

But what was the origin and significance of this concept, day of the Lord, which held such a central place in the message of the prophets? Various explanations have been suggested. In the opinion of Sigmund Mowinckel, the day of the Lord originally meant "the day of Yahweh's manifestation in the festal cult at the New Year festival."[5] He claims that this connection is still quite evident from Amos 5:18-25. In verse 18 the prophet warns: "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness and not light." Just three verses later Amos severely denounces the feasts of the Israelites, saying: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them." Mowinckel thinks that since this denunciation is spoken in such close proximity with

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 12f.

[5] Sigmund Mowinckel, He that Cometh, translated by G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 132. Since 1940 Sigmund Mowinckel has been professor of Old Testament at the University of Oslo.

the first mention of the day of Yahweh in verse 18, there must be some relationship between the two events.[6] He then draws the further conclusion:

> Because on every day of Yahweh in the festival the people experienced His coming, which guaranteed victory over enemies, deliverance from distress, and the realization of peace, good fortune, and favorable conditions, therefore . . . whenever distress arose, the people would long and pray that there might now come a day of Yahweh, when Yahweh would show Himself as He really was, and make an end of His own enemies and those of Israel.[7]

A different point of view concerning the origin and nature of the day of Yahweh is that discussed by Gerhard von Rad in an article which appeared in the Journal of Semitic Studies, April, 1959. Claiming that research has gone beyond the material evidence, adopting too broad a basis for its investigation, the writer narrows his own study to those passages in which the concept of the day of Yahweh is actually found; namely, Isaiah 2:12; 13:6; 22:5; 34:8; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 7:19; 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1-2; 3:4; 4:14; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7-8; 14-18; Zechariah 14:1.[8]

Von Rad also questions the accuracy of those recent studies which have made Amos 5:18-20 their starting point and even consider this passage as the locus classicus. In

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Gerhard von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," Journal of Semitic Studies, IV (April, 1959), 97.

his opinion "it is more desirable to begin with texts which convey a more unequivocal and at the same time a broader conception of the Day of Yahweh."[9] He suggests Isaiah 13 and 34, Ezekiel 7, and Joel 2 as a more secure foundation for an examination of this concept. After a lengthy discussion based on the exegesis of these passages, he notes that they have certain common characteristics which suggest that they may all be dependent upon a "prescribed prophetic pattern." Among the features common to all of them are the following: (a) A call to battle. It is a sacral war, led by Yahweh Himself, and participated in by sanctified warriors, i.e., "those who prior to their participation subjected themselves to certain rites."[10] (b) Discouragement and panic overtake the enemy. "While the host is being mustered by Yahweh, even before the battle has been joined, the enemy loses heart, his courage fails." (c) Spectacular phenomena occur in the realm of nature. The day of Yahweh is characterized by "terrifying events in the sky and on earth, by darkness and earthquakes." (d) Complete victory for Yahweh. The battle ends with a picture of complete desolation. At times this is world-wide in scope. It should be noted that every passage among those listed above may not include all of these features, but each does contain

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[9] Ibid., p. 98.

[10] Ibid., p. 99.

the basic characteristics.[11]

Von Rad then draws three conclusions from his examination of these basic texts: (a) "The Day of Yahweh encompasses a pure event of way, the rise of Yahweh against his enemies. Even those passages which provide fewer details corroborate this thesis," says the writer.[12] (b) There is no support whatever in these texts for the supposition that the enthronement of Yahweh belongs to the concept of the day of Yahweh. This, most certainly, is directed against Mowinckel's opinion. (c) The imagery which surrounds the day of Yahweh is of old-Israelitic origin. "It derives from the tradition of the holy wars of Yahweh, in which Yahweh appeared personally to annihilate his enemies."[13] Von Rad grants that certain individual ideas similar to those in Israel may have existed with the neighboring people of the ancient Near East, but he says that one thing has to be insisted on, namely "that the prophets have adopted the whole concept of the Day of Yahweh from the tradition of their own people and not from foreign sources."[14] He claims that all the essential elements which belonged to "the very ancient circle of ideas" recur in the texts which are listed above. This shows "how the

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 103.

[13] Ibid., pp. 103f.

[14] Ibid.

prophets also in this case refer back to a tradition which in all its details existed, coined even phraseologically."[15]

Alfred von Rohr Sauer calls attention to the opinion held by Ernest Sellin who found beginnings of the day-of-the-Lord concept already at the time of King Ahab. Two events in particular are important. When the king met Elijah, he confronted him with the challenge: "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17). This charge was leveled against the prophet because he had announced the immanence of divine judgment. Again, sometime later when Ahab felt the need of consulting a prophet to learn the will of God, he acknowledged that Micaiah still remained as a divine instrument through whom he could inquire of the Lord, but the king admitted: "I hate him for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil" (1 Kings 22:8). Sauer concludes that it is clear from these references that these two prophets, Elijah and Micaiah, who appeared before Ahab as messengers of doom were forerunners of the great literary prophets, in whose ministry the day of the Lord played so prominent a part.[16]

In an essay presented before the Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, the same writer

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "The Eschatological Prophecies of the Old Testament and their Pertinence to Events of the Present Day," Proceedings of the Twenty-Ninth Convention of the Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (1951), p. 20.

discusses the history of the day-of-the-Lord concept. He indicates that while the term itself appears for the first time in the prophecies of Amos, the idea of judgment entered the history of mankind already at the time of the Fall. Special demonstrations of divine judgment can be seen in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, the Deluge, the confusion of tongues and the dispersion of the nations which is described in Genesis 11. Furthermore judgment was proclaimed both in the Law and the Prophets. The Law specifically threatened that if Israel disobeyed, judgment would follow, while the prophetic messages had no condition attached to them. The prophets preached that divine judgment was inevitable and inescapable since God was holy and Israel was rebellious.[17]

According to Edgar Snyder, the Israelites conceived of the day of Yahweh as "the time of God's manifestation as the Saviour of Israel, actual or ideal." God's enemies and the enemies of His people would be punished, and His purposes for His people would be accomplished.[18] Israel, it would seem, considered it to be a day of unqualified

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[17] Ibid., pp. 19f.

[18] Edgar E. Snyder, "The Book of Joel," Old Testament Commentary, edited by Herbert C. Alleman and Elmer E. Flack (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 812. Edgar Snyder, at the time that he wrote the statement quoted, was Executive Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the United Lutheran Church in America.

blessing, bringing a favorable and decisive intervention of God against her enemies. Even during the rich and prosperous reign of Jeroboam II, she longed for such a day of Yahweh.[19] Kantonen says that the Israelites felt certain of God's protection and favor because they offered the prescribed sacrifices, yet the injunction to abolish high places was ignored, and justice for the poor and helpless was unknown.[20] Therefore, contrary to the popular optimism, the prophet Amos portrayed the day of Yahweh as a day of judgment. He threatened: "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness and not light."[21] Amos saw the virgin of Israel fallen not to rise again (Amos 5:2). He saw a basket of summer fruit "which symbolized the end of the people of Israel and indicated that the Lord would not again pass by them" (Amos 8:2). He predicted that on the day of Yahweh "the songs of the temple shall become wailings . . . the dead bodies shall be many; in every place they shall be cast out in silence" (Amos 8:3).

Sauer calls attention also to the prophecies of Hosea regarding the day of the Lord. Yahweh will be like a fierce lion on that day, like a young lion who will tear the people and then leave, who will carry them away so that none shall

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[19]Amos 5:18.

[20]Taito A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954), p. 8.

[21]Ibid.

rescue them (Hosea 5:14). In a similar manner the prophet Isaiah told his hearers: "Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come" (Isaiah 13:6). This message was directed chiefly "against the proud and the lofty and against all that were lifted up and high" (Isaiah 2:12). That there shall be no escape is implied in the advice which Isaiah gave his countrymen in chapter 2:10: "Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the Lord and from the glory of his majesty."[22]

However, the day-of-the-Lord concept is associated primarily with the prophet Zephaniah, says Sauer. Three passages from the prophetic writings will serve to illustrate the manner in which Zephaniah speaks of that great day. In the first chapter of his book he refers to the sacrifice which the Lord has prepared, and for which he has sanctified his guests (Zephaniah 1:7). Later in the same chapter he describes the day of the Lord as "a day of wrath . . . , a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Zephaniah 1:15). In chapter 3 the prophet predicts that on that day of wrath the Lord would pour out upon the nations and the kingdoms His indignation, so that in the fire of His jealous wrath all the earth shall be consumed (Zephaniah 3:8).

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[22] Sauer, op. cit., p. 20.

One of the more remarkable features of the day of Yahweh will be the spectacular phenomena that will occur in the realm of nature. It will be remembered that von Rad describes these events as characteristic of that day.[23] The prophet Isaiah, in his oracle concerning the destruction of Babylon, reveals that when the day of the Lord comes, "the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light" (Isaiah 13:10). In a later chapter the same prophet declares: "All the hosts of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll, and their hosts shall fall" (Isaiah 34: 4,8). Similarly, Joel speaks of the day of the Lord as one "to be accompanied by terrifying physical phenomena, such as darkness, storms, earthquakes, meteor showers, and an unbounded terror among the nations." He writes: "And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood" (Joel 2:30f.). In the following chapter he adds: "The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining" (Joel 3:15).

These are a few of the passages in the Old Testament which describe the terrifying physical phenomena which are to accompany the day of Yahweh. Now the question arises

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[23] Von Rad, op. cit., p. 97.

whether these are eschatological in nature, that is, whether they have reference to the final day of judgment, or to less spectacular judgments which God will visit upon the nations who were on the political scene in the days of the prophets. Lutheran theologians have replied to this question in various ways. Sigmund Mowinckel contends that there was no true eschatology, in the strict sense of the word, in pre-prophetic and prophetic times.[24] He asserts that "the prophets of doom" were always concerned with contemporary events. Their starting point was always the concrete, historical situation, and nearly always the political occasion. They were "national prophets, not private fortune-tellers and medicine-men concerned with the trivial affairs of private individuals."[25] Their message was: Today, take the right attitude to Yahweh, for you are the object of his work. Mowinckel says that in a message of this kind there was no room for eschatology. There was no conception or doctrine of the end of the world or the last things. They spoke of the destruction of Israel at the hand of Assyria or Babylon, not of the destruction of the world.[26]

But what of those passages in Scripture which very

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[24] Mowinckel, op. cit., p. 126.

[25] Ibid., p. 131.

[26] Ibid.

evidently have reference to extra-ordinary and unnatural phenomena which are said to occur in the realm of nature? Mowinckel contends that wherever eschatological sayings appear in the prophetic books, "they belong to the later strata and come from the age of post-exilic Judaism." This, he says, is evident from the fact that they treat of the restoration of Israel after the catastrope which befell the people in 587. Thus they do not actually predict the fall of Jerusalem, but they relate it as history.[27]

At this point Mowinckel places great emphasis on the importance of literary criticism in distinguishing between earlier and later elements in the material that has come to us in the Scripture. He contends that any scholarly treatment of the Old Testament books "must reckon with the fact that practically every prophetic book contains sayings, not only by the man whose name it bears, but also by a whole circle, and from various times."[28]

Johannes Lindblom, writing in Studia Theologica, 1952, shares the view of Mowinckel at least to the extent that he claims the Old Testament prophets knew nothing of eschatology in the strict sense of a teaching concerning the end of the world or of history; certainly they did not have a doctrine concerning the last times. He maintains, however, that if one understands eschatology in the sense of a hope

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[27] Ibid., p. 132.

[28] Ibid., p. 129.

for a new era when all relationships on earth will be changed into something quite different from the present, then certainly a book such as "Deutero Isaiah" is eschatological throughout.[29] Concerning Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, where the creation of a new heaven and a new earth are spoken of, Lindblom explains that the prophet here has reference to a renewal of the world rather than a new creation in the literal sense. Isaiah is thinking of a world that is filled with salvation, especially a world inhabited by the Israelites, where joy, long life, security, justice, holiness, and the peace of paradise will rule. Lindblom adds that all prophetic books that are post-exilic contain in a greater or lesser degree prophecies with national eschatological content.[30]

Regarding those passages which describe extra-ordinary phenomena in the realm of nature, he says that none of these calamities fall outside the scope of happenings which could take place at that time in Palestine. However, when some prophetic descriptions rise above the level of natural experiences, it is often to be considered poetic overstatement.[31]

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[29]Johannes Lindblom, "Gibt es enine Eschatologie bei den Altestamentlichen Propheten?," Studia Theologica, VI (1952), p. 106. Since 1947 Johannes Lindblom has been professor emeritus of Old Testament at the University of Lund.

[30]Ibid., pp. 106f.

[31]Ibid., p. 87.

Von Rad comments only briefly on the problem of prophetic eschatology. But he agrees with Mowinckel and Lindblom on the basic principle that the day-of-Yahweh concept was not originally eschatological. He concedes that it could have been such if the prophet considered the events of that day "as going beyond the ancient scheme of salvation, or if the events of the Day of Yahweh . . . pointed beyond the hitherto existing relation between Israel and Yahweh." But he concludes that "even in relatively late texts the Day of the Lord could be spoken of quite uneschatologically."[32]

Other Lutheran scholars, however, find more true eschatological content in the writings of the prophets. Otto Procksch describes the day of Yahweh as the most powerful representation of divine judgment. He calls it "der Jüngste Tag, also der eschatologische Schluszakt der Geschichte," the last day, thus the eschatological act bringing the end of history.[33]

Elmer Flack states that the prophets began more and more to envision an approaching consummation in history, a day of Yahweh, when God would establish His righteousness before the world, overthrow His enemies, and set up His

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[32]Von Rad, op. cit., p. 106.

[33]Otto Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1950), p. 578.

kingdom. The ordinary patterns of judgment appeared as times of persecution, invasion, and captivity, but Flack says that the prophets also looked to an ultimate terror for men.[34] In passing it may be noted that the same writer finds some reference to judgment also in what he calls "the dim adumbrations of retribution visited on the shades of Sheol." They provide a "preview of a final judgment."[35]

Sauer also sees eschatological content in Old Testament references to the day of the Lord. He finds this indicated in the fact that the great prophets continued to predict the coming of the day of Yahweh after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C. and even after the Southern Kingdom was led into captivity in 586 B.C. He states that this clearly shows that "the ultimate significance of the Day of the Lord went far beyond the destructive visitations which came upon the kingdoms of Israel and Judah." "It indicates that the fall of Samaria and the captivity of Judah were merely the beginning of the Day of the Lord."[36] He notes that this is also the position of Paul Heinisch who observes that "at times it indicates judgment upon a specific people, at other times a series of judgments inflicted by Yahweh, again at other times the

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[34]Elmer E. Flack, "Some Aspects of Christian Eschatology," The Lutheran Quarterly, I (1949), p. 383.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Sauer, op. cit., p. 21.

final judgment at the end of the world."[37]

Theodore Laetsch regards all of the passages in which the expression "Day of the Lord" occurs to be pointing ultimately to the final judgment. In the last analysis the jom Yahweh is that day which shall be one of vengeance unto all unbelievers, but of everlasting salvation unto all that have accepted Him as their Redeemer. But this term, he says, comprises not only this one day, but also "all its manifold heralds and forerunners and the eternities following upon the last Day. Every visitation, every judgment of the Lord . . . is a forerunner of . . . the final day of the Lord."[38]

Albert H. Schwermann, writing in The Abiding Word, maintains that the second coming of the Lord and the day of judgment are set forth with great emphasis throughout the Bible, including also the Old Testament. Among the passages which he quotes to support his view are Psalm 96:13: "The Lord . . . comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth;" Joel 2:31: "The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes;" and Malachi 4:5: "Behold, I will send

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Theodore Laetsch, Bible Commentary: The Minor Prophets (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 203.

Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes."[39]

The same author finds in Psalm 102:25f. an indication that on the Last Day the heavens and the end shall be destroyed. "Of old thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They will perish, but thou dost endure. . . ." He notes that "to perish" and "to endure" are in contrast and concludes that because of this contrast the meaning of the passage is certainly this that the world as we know it today with its mountains and valleys, rivers, lakes, and oceans, with its sun, moon, and stars, with our factories and skyscrapers, with our homes and church and schools--this entire world will disappear when the Lord comes for judgment.[40]

Does the destruction of the world, as described in the Old Testament, imply annihilation? Does the term "perish" indicate that the universe will pass out of existence, or does it mean that it will be "renovated and given a new form different from what we have now, but that essentially it will remain?" Schwermann grants the possibility of a total annihilation of the very substance of the world, and the creation of a new one; but he asserts that

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[39]Albert H. Schwermann, "The Last Things," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), III, 89. Albert Schwermann is a professor at Concordia College, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

[40]Ibid., p. 115.

the word "perish" does not necessarily prove annihilation of substance.[41]

Harold Creager and Herbert Alleman, in their commentary on Psalm 102, recognize in verse 26 a direct reference to the final judgment and destruction of the world.[42] Leupold holds the same opinion.[43] Mowinckel, however, makes no attempt to interpret the words of verses 26 and 26, although he discusses other parts of the psalm in some detail.[44]

A further question that arises at this point is this: "Does the Old Testament speak of signs which shall precede the day of judgment serving God's people as a warning?" Sauer asserts that the prophets did indeed point to such signs.[45] Isaiah foresaw a state of anarchy and social decay in his description of the day of the Lord. He describes the Lord as saying: "I will make boys their princes, and babes shall rule over them, and the people shall oppress one another. . . ; the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the base fellow to the honorable" (Isaiah 3:4f.). Besides such lawlessness, oppression and disrespect among men, the

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[41] Ibid., p. 116.

[42] Harold L. Creager and Herbert C. Alleman, "The Psalms," Old Testament Commentary, p. 576.

[43] Leupold, op. cit., p. 714.

[44] Mowinckel, op. cit., pp. 84f.

[45] Sauer, op. cit., p. 21.

coming of the day of judgment will be marked by celestial disturbances. As we have noted, passages to that effect appear in numerous prophetic writings.[46]

Snyder emphasizes that prior to the day of the Lord forces of evil will make a violent but final attack upon the people of God. He sees this foretold in Joel 3:9-17. In the first part of the chapter the prophet has condemned the nations round about His people. This is followed by a special charge against Tyre and Sidon and the regions of Philistia. A third charge is leveled against the nations who inhabit the earth at a future time. Snyder states that by then the nations against which Joel prophesied are gone. "The Greeks alone remain of those whom he condemned, and their relation to the people of Joel's day is little more than one of name."[47] The events in verses 9-17, therefore, are not such as occurred in the prophet's day. They are eschatological. Yahweh summons the nations, that is, all who are opposed to the will of God, to arms. They are invited to bring all their forces into the fray, to hold back nothing (verse 10). They are to battle against God's people Israel, but when the battle is joined, they find that Yahweh is their opponent and all the forces of His world are arrayed against them. Thus there can be no doubt as to

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[46] Supra, pp. 77f.

[47] Snyder, op. cit., p. 814.

the outcome.[48]

Another passage of the Old Testament which, at times, is interpreted as referring to the titanic struggle between good and evil in the last days is Ezekiel 38 and 39. Flack considers these chapters which describe the invasion and overthrow of God to be eschatological, dealing with events that are to take place after the exile and restoration of Judah.[49] R. H. Altus, writing in the Australasian Theological Review, states that Gog and Magog represent the enemies of the Gospel, and their final assault is the devil's last effort to destroy the Church. Just what form this assault will take cannot be determined, he says, but Scripture indicates that it will be so terrifying that the description given will suffice for Christians to recognize it.[50] Altus cautions that one should not attempt to explain all the phenomena mentioned in these two chapters of Ezekiel. He considers it quite evident, however, that prior to the end there will be an accumulation of iniquity unto the day of wrath, a bursting forth of rage against the Church by all its enemies, followed by the judgment of God, and accompanied by the Lord's final deliverance of His people.[51] The

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[48] Ibid. See also Laetsch, op. cit., p. 133.

[49] Flack, op. cit., p. 771.

[50] R. H. Altus, "Ezekiel 37-39," The Australasian Theological Review, XVII (January-March, 1946), 41.

[51] Ibid., p. 39.

completeness of the destruction to be wrought upon the foe is depicted by the burning of the weapons and the burial of the enormous number of dead. The strength of the enemy is indicated by the amount of fuel his weapons will supply.[52] Israel's safe dwelling in the land after the destruction of Gog symbolizes the heavenly Canaan where God's people will be free from all assaults of their spiritual enemies.[53]

At this point it should be noted that many Lutheran theologians have found in the Old Testament references to the coming of the great "Antichrist" who is predicted and described further in the New Testament. Kantonen rejects the theory, "long a favorite with theological liberals," that the New Testament teaching regarding the "Antichrist" originated in the Persian dualism between Ahura-Mazda, the god of light, and Ahriman, the god of darkness, and found its way through Babylonian channels into late Judaism, and then furnished the pattern for the Christian concept.[54] The writer contends that instead of being dependent "on any such speculation on the evolution of ideas," the Christian teaching concerning the "Antichrist" has its roots "deep in Scripture itself and appears again and again as an interpretation of historical reality."[55] Kantonen

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 60.

[55] Ibid.

adds that "the prototype of the concentration of destructive ungodly power in a single person is found already in the beginnings of Israel as a nation in the pharaoh of Egypt." Thereafter it appears in such figures as Jezebel and Antiochus Epiphanes. The latter in particular, he says, is the "concrete embodiment of violent and blasphemous secular power" and furnishes the content for the fourth and most dreadful "beast" of the Book of Daniel, who shall "exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods!"[56]

In the prophecy of Daniel there are four passages in particular which some Lutheran theologians apply to the "Antichrist": Daniel 7:24-28; 8:23-25; 9:24-27; 11:36-12:1. Various views in this regard have been expressed.[57]

One of the most detailed discussions of these texts is that offered by Herbert C. Leupold in his commentary on the Book of Daniel.[58] He states that all of these passages refer primarily to the "Antichrist" who is spoken of in the New Testament. This he seeks to prove by means of

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[56]Ibid., p. 61.

[57]James A. Montgomery, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel," The International Critical Commentary, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927), pp. 446-470.

[58]For a discussion of apocalyptic prophecies see infra, p. 99.

the statement recorded in Daniel 8:17 where it is said that the angel Gabriel introduced his interpretation of one of the visions with the words: "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end." The writer explains that this statement indicates that aside from the obvious relation which the vision has to the events that lie in the near future, namely, "in the time of the Persian and the Greek empires, this whole vision also serves as a type of what shall transpire at the time of the end of the present world order."[59] In other words, says Leupold, King Antiochus is seen to be a kind of Old Testament anti-christ like unto the great "Antichrist"; then also the over-throw and the defilement of the sanctuary corresponds to similar experiences of the Church; the suffering of the holy people corresponds to sufferings in the last great tribulation. Thus, he says, "the chapter loses its isola-tion from present-day events and is seen to be typical in a very definite sense."[60]

Furthermore, the important personage who shall come to Israel after seven weeks (heptads) is identified by Leupold as the Messiah or Christ (Daniel 9:25). It is to be noted, he says, that the angel Gabriel calls this important person-age both "the anointed one" and "a prince," which is entirely

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[59] Herbert C. Leupold, Exposition of Daniel (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1949), p. 361.

[60] Ibid.

in harmony with the "well-established fact that the Messiah . . . is known to have combined these two offices in one person as Ps. 110:4 and Zech. 6:13 show."[61]

This interpretation, it is claimed, agrees also with the subsequent history as it is related by the angel to Daniel. After the coming of the anointed one, the city of Jerusalem, i.e., the spiritual Jerusalem or the kingdom "shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time" (Daniel 9:25). In other words, there will follow an era of constructive work during which building will go on to an extent that is sufficient to allow men to see the Kingdom--the spiritual Jerusalem--is progressing.[62] But after sixty-two weeks (heptads) have passed, "an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and its sanctuary (Daniel 9:26). The building of Zion will be retarded when the Messiah, the Anointed One, shall lose the influence and prestige which he had before men. Leupold comments that as far as the world is concerned "Messiah shall be a dead issue. His cause will seem to have failed. God foresees and foreknows that this shall be one of the developments to be expected at the end."[63]

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[61] Ibid., pp. 421f.

[62] Ibid., p. 424.

[63] Ibid., p. 427.

The active agent who shall render the Messiah's work ineffective is called by the angel Gabriel "the people of the prince," that is, the followers of the "Antichrist." Thus there shall be many who shall manifest opposition, and they shall be organized under a rather efficient head, who is called "a prince."[64]

Leupold also points out that these chapters in Daniel present a remarkable description of the characteristics and activities of the "Antichrist." (a) He will possess stubborn self-will, so that he will act "according to his own pleasure" (Daniel 11:36). (b) "He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god." The writer calls this "the highest pinnacle of inflated pride that knows no limit."[65] (c) "He shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods." A similar statement is made in chapter 7:25. (d) "He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers . . . he shall not give heed to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all" (Daniel 11:37). Leupold remarks that devotion to a god is one of the universal loyalties of human beings. But not so in the case of this king. Because of his "highly inflated ego" he rejects not only the god of his fathers but all gods. "A more bloated pride could hardly be imagined."[66] (e) The chief object of

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[64] Ibid., p. 428.

[65] Ibid., p. 513.

[66] Ibid., p. 516.

his affection will be war. "He shall honor the good of fortresses instead of these" (Daniel 11:38). This attitude of his is in line with the common observation that if men will not have the true God, there must be something to which they attach the allegiance of their hearts.[67] (f) The attitude of the "Antichrist" toward God's saints will lead him not only to make war upon them (verse 21) but also "to wear them out." Or as Leupold translates, "to harass them continually" (verse 25). "It is his continual purpose and design to do harm to God's saints, if not by war then at least by continual harassing."[68] (g) The strange, unfeeling nature of this king will lead him to have no regard for "the desire of women" (Daniel 11:37). Leupold calls attention to the plural "women." He states that this indicates that all loyalties to womankind are meant, "not only to wife, but also to mother and sister in so far as they have a claim upon a man's regard."[69] In his comments the writer seems to favor the "traditional interpretation advocated since the days of the Reformation" that the papacy is here described with reference to its forbidding to marry. He remarks that such an attitude toward marriage "is nothing less than a direct fulfillment of this passage."[70] (h) The

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[67] Ibid., p. 517.

[68] Ibid., p. 324.

[69] Ibid., p. 515.

[70] Ibid., p. 516.

"Antichrist" shall attempt to change times and laws (Daniel 7:25). Leupold claims that these "times and laws" cannot be restricted to "festival times" and to "the law of God" as some interpreters have attempted to do, since there is nothing in this passage that would indicate such limitations. He contends that the reason for this restriction of terms to the Jewish festival "is the desire to have everything in the passage point to Antiochus Epiphanes, of whom it is known that he made an attempt to abolish the sacred festivals."[71] (i) The "Antichrist" shall make a strong covenant with many for a week (Daniel 9:27). As he seeks to take the place of Christ, says Leupold, he shall also imitate him in some ways. As the Lord made a covenant with His own, so "Antichrist" will inaugurate a covenant with the masses, but it "shall not be a gracious covenant of love as are the Lord's covenants, but a covenant of terror, compulsion and violence."[72] (j) The "Antichrist" shall cause sacrifices and oblations to cease. The double expression "sacrifice and oblation" may be construed to mean "the totality of the cult" even as the expression occurs in passages such as 1 Samuel 2:29; Psalm 40:7, etc.[73] Sacrifices as well as other gifts that might be presented at

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[71] Ibid., p. 324.

[72] Ibid., p. 432.

[73] Ibid.

the Temple in the Old Testament days were the very soul of all worship, says the writer. Therefore when these were made impossible, worship as such became impossible.[74]

(k) He shall make war on the saints and shall destroy the city and the sanctuary (Daniel 9:26). In other words, the very things which the saints of God would build during the sixty-two weeks would then be destroyed by the foe.[75]

Finally, (l) To bind men to himself, he shall bestow particular honors and rewards on those who acknowledge him (Daniel 11:39).

However, the success and prosperity of the "Antichrist" shall continue only for a season. "His end shall be with a flood" (Daniel 9:26). Leupold claims that this statement contains an allusion to that "proverbial opponent of the church of God, Pharaoh." As he was swept away by the waters of the great flood of the Red Sea and perished with his host, so shall this great enemy of the latter days, who shall openly defy the Almighty, also perish.[76]

The ultimate fate of "the Antichrist" is described in even greater detail at the close of the eleventh chapter, where it is stated that at the time of the end he shall be strongly assailed; new forces will attack him simultaneously from the north and the south; they shall possess great power

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., p. 428.

[76] Ibid., p. 429.

and employ many resources against him (Daniel 11:40).

Leupold notes that Luther saw a beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy in the active opposition that the papacy was meeting in his day after it had for a long time dominated church and state.[77]

But the "Antichrist" will repel the attack. He will not only defend himself but he will actually take the offensive, and "he shall come into the glorious land," i.e., the Church of God, and of that Church many will perish (Daniel 11:41). He will amass great wealth and gain control over "the treasures of gold and silver." But his course will be a troubled one. Rumors of danger that threaten the security of all that he has built up will prove very disturbing. As in Daniel 7:25,26 he reaches a certain point and then he encounters the judgment. Just when it seems that the Holy City must fall before him whom none seem able to resist, he will come to his end, for God's judgment cannot be resisted.[78]

It should be noted that the resurrection of the dead is spoken of in this same context (Daniel 12:2). This proximity of the resurrection to the fall and judgment of the "king . . . who shall exalt himself . . . and speak astonishing things against the God of gods" (Daniel 11:36)

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[77] Ibid., p. 521.

[78] Ibid., p. 524.

is one of the factors which have persuaded some Lutheran theologians such as Leupold to identify this king with the Antichrist of the New Testament.[79]

Other Old Testament scholars, however, are equally convinced that these chapters in Daniel have primary reference to Antiochus Epiphanes and, for the most part, relate historical events which occurred during the reign of the Seleucid kings. George C. Hackman, in his brief commentary on the Book of Daniel, claims that chapter seven, verses 15 to 28 typify this ferocious and persecuting tyrant who was so well known to Israel as the king who warred against God's people and defied the God of heaven. As the arch-enemy of God and His people, Antiochus "enforced the abolishment of religious feast days and practices," and thought "to change times and law."[80] Hackman emphasizes the seriousness of such abominations in the sight of the Israelites, pointing out that "to alter the eternal ordinances and the sacred seasons prescribed in the law (1 Maccabees 1:41ff.) was considered blasphemy."[81]

But there would be an end to this arrogant tyranny after a "time, two times, and half a time" (Daniel 7:25).

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[79] Ibid., p. 526.

[80] George Hackman, "The Book of Daniel," Old Testament Commentary, p. 789. George Hackman, at the time that he wrote the statement quoted, was pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, Bronx, New York City.

[81] Ibid.

Hackman interprets this as three and a half years, "identical with the half week in 9:27." He says that it approximates our expression, "half a decade," and adds: "History shows that this prophecy was fulfilled near the time predicted. The cruel tyrant came to an infamous end."[82]

Regarding chapter 8, verses 17 and 26b where the prophet is told by the angel Gabriel that this "vision is for the time of the end," Hackman asserts that this statement refers, not to the last days, but "to the end of the oppression and the rededication of the temple which took place in 165 B.C."[83]

Furthermore, he explains that the "anointed one," "the prince," who is to come and assist Israel in restoring and building Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25) is Cyrus the Great, who issued the decree of liberation in 538 B.C., about 49 years after the Jews were brought into exile by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C."[84] The anointed one who shall be cut off and shall have nothing, Hackman says, "cannot have reference to the Christ of the New Testament, but no doubt refers to the foul murder of the honored high priest Onias III which took place . . . in 171 B.C."[85] The prince who

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., p. 790.

[84] Ibid., p. 791.

[85] Ibid.

shall lead his followers in the destruction of the city and its sanctuary and shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease (Daniel 9:27) is Antiochus. This happened, Hackman says, in 168 B.C. when he desecrated the temple and set up abominations on its altars.[86]

According to this interpretation, chapter 11 describes the career of Antiochus. Verses 21 to 24 show his coming into power and his deceitful policies; verses 25 to 28 describe his first campaign into Egypt; verses 29 to 30a refer to his second campaign, when the ships of Kittim, i.e., the Romans, interfered; verses 30b to 35 tell of his rage aganist the Jews and the abolition of the sacrifices on the 15th of Chislev (December) 168 B.C.; verses 36 to 39 give a description of his arrogance toward God and man when he magnified himself as "God manifest," that is, Epiphanes.[87]

More difficult, however, is the interpretation of verses 40 to 45 where the writer predicts the end of the oppression and the work of the tyrant. Here he describes a third campaign which would meet with temporary success, for "he shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver." But ultimately the defeat and death of the godless tyrant would

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., p. 792.

follow and God's people would triumph.

The problem in interpretation consists in this that the annals of history tell of no such event occurring in the life of Antiochus IV. Hackman contends, however, that in verse 40 the writer of this chapter "leaves the ground of history," which he has been relating and "from this point on we have the seer's ideas of future events."[88] Thus the third campaign and the defeat which is described in this passage is imaginary; history does not corroborate the author's expectations.[89]

This view, which has gained acceptance among some Lutherans, is expressed in more detail by Raymond T. Stamm. In an article which appeared in The Lutheran Church Quarterly, he states that the writer of Daniel was a Jewish patriot who lived in the second century before Christ. His purpose was "to inject the iron of resistance into the blood of his countrymen." Since it was dangerous, however, to write an anti-Greek pamphlet, and in any case such a document would not have carried much authority because the age of prophecy was thought to be past, the author wrote under the name of Daniel, who is said to have lived in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, about 586 B.C. Thus he wrote past history in the future tense in a style which Daniel, the ancient hero, might have employed if he could have foreseen it. He used

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

this apocalyptic method up to verse 40 of the eleventh chapter; at this point he then attempted to predict what to him was still in the future. But it is precisely at this juncture, says Stamm, "that his statements no longer correspond to the history of the ancient East as we know it from other sources. What he predicted for his own immediate future was not fulfilled."[90] Thus, according to this interpretation, one ought to read the Book of Daniel, not as a book of prophecy, but "as an historical document for information concerning the Maccabaean revolt in 168-165 B.C."[91]

Finally, it should be noted that those who apply these chapters in the Book of Daniel primarily to Antiochus IV and consider them history rather than prophecy, are willing to grant that the evangelist John has employed these writings attributed to Daniel and has given them further significance by using them to describe other anti-christian forces that would appear in the New Testament era. Hackman states that while the primary meaning of these predictions must be applied to the time of the writer, "a secondary meaning of long-range fulfillment has been seen in many of

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[90]Raymond T. Stamm, "The Revelation of St. John and the Present Crisis," The Lutheran Church Quarterly, XV (1942), 289. When Raymond T. Stamm wrote the article referred to above, he was professor of New Testament at Luther Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

[91]Ibid.

Daniel's prophecies, as the New Testament apocalypse of John best illustrates."[92]

Concerning the identity of the "Antichrist" many views have been expressed, and many words of caution have been uttered. The Common Confession, Part I, which was adopted by the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church in 1950, states:

> Among the signs of His approaching return for Judgment the distinguishing features of the Antichrist, as portrayed in the Holy Scriptures, are still clearly discernible in the Roman Papacy, the climax of all human usurpations of Christ's authority in the Church.[93]

The Lutheran Cyclopedia presents the traditional view of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in more detail when it adds:

> The Apology shows that the Papacy has the marks of the Antichrist as depicted by Daniel (Art. IV:24; VIII:19; XI:25; XII:51) and by Paul (IV:4). It speaks of the Papacy as a part of the kingdom of the Antichrist (VIII:18). The Smalcald Articles hold that the Pope by his doctrine and practice has clearly shown himself the Antichrist since he exceeds even Turks and Tartars in keeping people from their Savior. . . . The Formula of Concord quotes the Smalcald Articles on Antichrist.[94]

Leupold maintains, as we have seen, that the "great horn" mentioned in Daniel 7:23-24 is the New Testament Antichrist. He also holds that "in stating that the pope is

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[92]Hackman, op. cit., p. 789.

[93]The Common Confession, reprinted in Doctrinal Declarations (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), p. 76.

[94]"Antichrist," Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 37.

the Antichrist the Lutheran Confessions were correct much as some men have ridiculed and belittled that view." But he added the qualifying note: "Though the papacy may be the outstanding manifestation of the Antichrist to date, that does not exclude other possibilities of fulfillment of this passage."[95]

Kantonen points out that in the history of the church the Antichrist has been successively identified "with various persons and institutions, such as Mohammed, the papacy, and the totalitarian states of the present century, principally Hitler and Nazism, Stalin and Communism." But he cautions that all of these phenomena and many others have antichristian traits, and "it is dangerous oversimplification to identify any one of them as the Antichrist."[96]

Edmund Schlink concedes that many statements in the Confessions name the pope as the Antichrist, but he argues that

> the eschatological judgments of the Confessions, in spite of all distinctiveness, are made still in the cautious groping and questioning of the time regarding the Scripturally attested signs of the Last Day.[97]

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[95]Leupold, Exposition of Daniel, p. 322.

[96]Kantonen, op. cit., p. 62.

[97]Edmund Schlink, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, translated by Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 283. Since 1946 Edmund Schlink has been professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Heidelberg.

He considers the confessional statements in these matters to be "only tentative answers given by the questioners themselves, and not yet the ultimate answer which God alone will provide when the Last Day comes."[98]

Thus it is apparent that various opinions have been expressed regarding the identity of the Antichrist who shall harass the Church in the latter days. Lutheran theologians and church bodies have not reached agreement in this matter, but most prevalent is the opinion that caution must be exercised lest any attempt at a definite identification fail to take into account the antichristian forces of other ages.

Those theologians, however, who find in the prophecies of Daniel a reference to the New Testament Antichrist, usually see in the last verses of chapter 11 and in the first verses of chapter 12 the assurance that the "Antichrist" shall be overthrown, and that his defeat will culminate in the consummation of all things, i.e., in the resurrection of the dead, followed by the final separation of those who shall receive everlasting life from those who are condemned to shame and everlasting contempt.[99]

Here a new element is revealed concerning the day of judgment. In Daniel 12:2 it is stated that even the dead will appear before the judgment-seat of God. This statement

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[98] Ibid.

[99] Leupold, Exposition of Daniel, pp. 526-532.

goes beyond any that has previously been set forth by the other prophets. Thus the view of the Israelites regarding judgment and the day of Yahweh found its final expression, prior to the New Testament period, in the writings of the apocalyptists.

At this point perhaps a brief discussion of apocalyptic writings may be in place.[100] At the very outset we ask: "What is the difference between the eschatological and apocalyptic prophecies of the Old Testament?" Sauer points to four distinctions between these types of sacred writings: (a) Eschatology embraces the study of eschata, that is, the last things: death, judgment, resurrection, salvation. Apocalyptic treats the same concepts but presents them as "predictions of the future that are uncovered, disclosed, divulged, exposed, through the medium of visions." Eschatology emphasizes the last things themselves; apocalyptic stresses also the manner of disclosure. (b) These two types of literature were employed in different periods of the Old Testament. While eschatology "is common to every period of Old Testament literature," it is found especially in the writings of the great prophets, from 750 to 550 B.C. Apocalyptic, on the other hand, "began with the book of Daniel which conservative scholars assign to the sixth cen-

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[100] For a detailed account of apocalyptic see H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic (Second edition; London: Lutterworth Press, 1947).

tury B.C." Critical scholars regard apocalyptic "as an inter-testamental phenomenon that flourished from 200 B.C. to 70 A.D."[101] (c) There are differences in literary form between Old Testament apocalyptic and eschatology. Sauer describes these differences as follows:

> The so-called vision is very prominent in apocalyptic prophecies, whereas in the eschatological prophecies it is usually only implied. The pictures used in apocalyptic have been called "weird, gorgeous and terrible," while the symbolism of prophetic eschatology is more natural. The apocalyptic prophecies are clothed exclusively in the form of prose, while the prose of the eschatological prophecies is so exalted that it often not only approaches the poetic but actually is poetry.[102]

(d) There are also differences in content. The eschatological prophets wrote primarily concerning the judgment and deliverance of the people of Israel; on the other hand, the apocalyptic prophecies pronounced judgment upon all sinful nations, and they also included all of the righteous in the future deliverance.[103]

Knatonen calls the apocalypticists the successors of the prophets carrying on the prophetic impulse in new forms "necessitated by the exigencies of the time."[104] Herbert Alleman and Harold Creager assert that these new forms of literature were employed because orthodox Judaism held that

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[101] Sauer, op. cit., p. 18.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 9.

all authentic prophecy had ceased, the Canon had been closed, and anyone claiming to speak as a prophet would be labeled an impostor. Therefore the only way that new prophetic messages could gain a hearing was "under the borrowed sponsorship of the spiritual heroes of the past."[105] Thus it became a common practice, says Kantonen, to attach the prophetic message to the name of some accepted figure of the past in order to gain at least some degree of acceptance.[106]

Most of the vast body of apocalyptic literature falls outside the Old Testament canon, but the majority of Lutheran scholars find apocalypses in such canonical books as Joel, Zechariah, Isaiah, and most important of all, Daniel.[107]

The purpose of these writings was to inspire and encourage the faithful to remain steadfast in those perilous times which threatened to crush the "religious as well as the political hopes of the nation." Kantonen remarks that an attitude of despair prevailed among the Israelites when they noted that the prophetic promises of divine help had thus far failed to materialize, when even the rebuilding of the temple had not brought deliverance. It was then that the apocalypticists reawakened hope by pointing to the com-

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[105] Herbert C. Alleman and Harold L. Creager, "Hebrew Prophets and Prophecy," Old Testament Commentary, p. 63.

[106] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 9.

[107] Alleman and Creager, op. cit., p. 63.

ing of a Messiah who would redress evils and establish a rule of righteousness. At this time the messianic kingdom, he says, was largely a projection into the future of "national ideals crushed in the present world, although as the head of a theocratic order the messiah was never conceived to be a purely political figure."[108]

But the hope which these apocalypticists held out to Israel necessitated a despair of the present. The world to come would be established by a miraculous and catastrophic divine intervention which would annihilate the present order of things.[109] Immense emphasis was placed on the finality and totality of the approaching world catastrophe. The writers used very vivid figures of speech and elaborate symbolism to picture that great event. They constantly sought fresh imagery to express the utter destruction which was to come upon the whole cosmos. Even the heavenly bodies would be affected, with the result that the final judgment takes on a supernatural character.[110]

Kantonen claims that underlying these writings was a "cosmic dualism." The present age belongs to Satan. God's kingdom will appear in the future. In a world that is dominated by demonic powers the people of God can only suffer,

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[108] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 10.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Alleman and Creager, op. cit., p. 64.

but their sufferings are the birth pangs of the world to come.[111] Evils are rampant; man is utterly helpless to cope with them, say Alleman and Creager. The world is too contaminated with evil to receive the Kingdom of God; hence, it must be destroyed and a new world established.[112] Thus, in post-exilic times the day of Yahweh attained an eschatological significance and became identified with the final day of judgment.[113]

But it should be noted that, while judgment was a prominent factor in the day-of-Yahweh concept, it is equally apparent that the people of God regarded that day also as one of hope and fulfillment. Flack asserts that the idea of judgment in the message of the prophets was not intended to be the primary and ultimate theme of their preaching and writing. He maintains that the thought of judgment was "subservient to the supreme issue of salvation. For spiritual Israel, redeemed and purified, there was a glorious future."[114]

Mowinckel does not discover this same spiritual content in the early prophetic message, but he does note an element of hope appearing in the writings of Isaiah. He

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[111] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 10

[112] Alleman and Creager, op. cit., pp. 63f.

[113] Ibid., p. 64.

[114] Elmer E. Flack, "The Teachings and Institutions of the Old Testament," Old Testament Commentary, p. 109.

declares that Amos and probably Hosea are the prophets who announced the destruction of Israel and Judah unconditionally and remorselessly, but in Isaiah "a new note is heard: a remnant will be converted and saved." He points out that time and again Isaiah tried to lead the people to conversion so that the remnant might be as large as possible. Even after Hezekiah had capitulated and Sennacherib had treated the city with unexpected leniency,[115] the prophet holds fast to the fact that Yahweh "has left us a remnant." Yahweh has laid the cornerstone of His house, the building of God's people on Zion, and if Israel will yield Him their trust and obedience, their faith will never be put to shame. Even if only a small remnant holds fast to the faith, God will create from it a new Israel on the old foundation.[116]

Mowinckel observes furthermore that after Isaiah the so-called prophets of doom never gave up this faith in the future. It is to be found even in those who announced the unconditional destruction of the people. As an example of this, the writer refers to Jeremiah and notes that immediately before the Chaldeans captured Jerusalem, when the prophet had become quite certain about the outcome of the war, he received a communication from the Lord, telling him that

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[115] 2 Kings 18:13-16.

[116] Mowinckel, op. cit., pp. 134f.

"houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land" (Jeremiah 32:15). Jeremiah associated this hope with those who were carried away to Babylonia. He looked upon them as the remnant from which the new people would arise in a wonderful way known only to God (Jeremiah 24 and 29). And even while the Chaldean supremacy lasted, the prophets searched in contemporary history for signs that Yahweh was about to arise, make an end of their oppressors, and restore His people.[117]

Kantonen adds the thought that the positive side of the preaching of the prophets came to the foreground particularly as the idea of the messianic kingdom developed in association with the day of Yahweh, i.e., as the kingdom was recognized more and more to be the fulfillment of that day to which Israel had been looking forward.[118]

Concerning the nature of this kingdom, Flack remarks that the prophets employed numerous patterns in order to portray their conception of the messianic kingdom. He lists, in particular, the prophetic promises concerning the return of the captives from exile (Isaiah 55:12), the restoration of the nation (Ezekiel 37:1-3), the exaltation of Jerusalem as the throne of Yahweh (Jeremiah 3:17), the destruction of idolatry (Micah 5:12), the abolition of war (Isaiah 2:4), the transformation of nature (Isaiah 11:6-9),

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[117] Mowinckel, op. cit., p. 135.

[118] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 8.

the establishment of a new covenant in men's hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34), the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29), and the coming of God to dwell forever in the midst of His people "as Jehovah-Shammah 'Jehovah is there' (Ezekiel 48:35)."[119]

But how are these passages to be interpreted and to whom are they to be applied? Are they intended to promise the nation of Israel an era in her history when she would enjoy unprecedented earthly prosperity and physical blessings? Or do these passages primarily point forward to the spiritual heritage of those who recognize in Jesus their all-sufficient Savior?

Mowinckel remarks that it is difficult to determine how much is "poetic description and how much actual reality in this picture of the future," since the prophet's thought and style are those "of rhetoric and poetry, of myth and religion; and the same style is used by the circle of his disciples."[120] But having said this, he indicates that he is inclined to apply these passages to the national and political situation in Israel. Thus they would convey a message similar to this: God has raised up Cyrus to fulfil His purpose in history. When Babylon has been conquered, the cap-

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[119]Flack, "The Teachings and Institutions of the Old Testament," op. cit., p. 109. Mowinckel provides an even more detailed description of the features in Israel's future hope. See Mowinckel, op. cit., pp. 146f.

[120]Mowinckel, op. cit., p. 148.

tives will be freed, and God will put it into the mind of Cyrus to allow the exiles to return home and rebuild Jerusalem as also the temple of Yahweh. Thus the ancient royal house will be restored, and Yahweh will endow the ruler with righteousness, piety and every virtue; then the happiness and the greatness of ancient days will again prevail in the land, and foreign nations will once more pay homage to the God of Israel.[121]

Other theologians, however, find much more spiritual content in these passages than does Mowinckel. Theodore Laetsch interprets the majority of these passages as descriptive of the New Testament Church, especially those that are introduced by "technical formulas" such as "in those days" (Joel 3:18), "on that day" (Amos 9:11), "behold the days are coming" (v. 13), "in the end of the days" (Micah 4:1), etc. As a case in point, we quote Amos 9:13-14 where the holy writer prophecies:

> Behold, days are coming, is the oracle of the Lord, that the plowman shall crowd the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that sows the seed; and the mountains shall drip with new wine, and all the hills shall be dissolved. And I will reverse the fortune of my people Israel, and they will build the waste cities, and inhabit them, and they will plant vineyards and drink their own wine and make gardens and eat their own fruit. . . .

In his interpretation Laetsch gives this passage a spiritual significance, saying: "In the Church of Christ there will be incessant reaping and harvesting. . . . The

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[121] Ibid.

work of preparing and sending out missionaries . . . will go forever." New converts will be brought into the Church with the result that God's kingdom will expand until the end of time.[122] He asserts that verse 14 does not refer to the return of Israel from the Exile, but to the "restoration of God's Church to its greatest glory after the advent of great David's greater Son."[123]

Commenting on the familiar passage Micah 4:1-3, Laetsch remarks that these verses cannot be interpreted literally, for then they would imply that the nations, men and women, young and old, would physically ascend a mountain higher than even Mount Everest in order to go up to the house of the God of Jacob. According to Laetsch, E. Koenig has called this "eine halsbrecherische Bergfahrt," a breakneck ascent.[124] Laetsch asserts that the clause "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains"[125] does not necessarily denote great physical height. The context, he says, "demands the sense of leadership, higher rank here."[126]

Concerning verse 3, especially the statement: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears

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[122]Laetsch, op. cit., p. 192.

[123]Ibid.

[124]Ibid., p. 263.

[125]This is the reading according to the King James Version.

[126]Laetsch, op. cit., p. 264.

into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," the writer contends that these words cannot refer to an earthly state of peace among the nations since the Lord of the kingdom knows of no such time when wars shall cease.[127]

John Aberly, in his interpretation of the parallel account in Isaiah 2:2-4, sees in this promise a physical rather than a spiritual condition. He states that "the vision is of what Jerusalem will be in the latter days, i.e., in messianic times." It is a portrayal of "Jerusalem idealized," "as God means her to be." Her glory which exalts her above all other kingdoms actually consists in this that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."[128] But Aberly maintains that the prophet had in mind an earthly kingdom when he saw all nations flowing into Jerusalem and Yahweh "judging between the nations and deciding concerning many people." Likewise the peace of which the prophet spoke pointed to a day of harmony among the nations when they "shall learn war no more." The writer grants that this ideal was far ahead of Isaiah's time, as it is of ours. For this reason "it

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[127] Ibid.

[128] John Aberly, "The Book of Isaiah," Old Testament Commentary, p. 646. John Aberly, at the time that he wrote the statement quoted, was professor emeritus of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

has been called the ideal of Isaiah in his youth, for youth is the time when ideals are cherished."[129]

In his commentary on Isaiah 11:6-9, where the prophet states that in the messianic kingdom "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid," Aberly remarks that this is no doubt "double figurative and indicates that the human cunning and cruelty which now so largely prevail among men shall cease to be." He grants the possibility, however, that this passage may also "prefigure peace in the animal world."[130] Thus it is quite evident that Aberly considers this prophecy also as having reference to an earthly state of peace rather than a spiritual.

At the same time, however, he cautions against a literal interpretation of verses 10 to 16, which portray the gathering together of "the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth," and the restoration of peace between the divisions of Israel herself. Concerning these verses he remarks that while there are those who look for a literal fulfillment of this prophecy in the return of Israel to Palestine, "its fulfillment should rather be looked for in the establishment of that kingdom in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one in Christ

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[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid., p. 656.

Jesus (Gal. 3:28)."[131]

P. W. H. Frederick considers Amos 9:11-15 a reference to the kingdom of God. In it are promises of both temporal and spiritual blessings. The words of verse 11, "In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old," are plainly a messianic prophecy, says Frederick, for even the ancient Jews so considered it.[132] Verse 12, "That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the nations who are called by my name," does not refer solely to the nations once included in the Davidic kingdom. According to the writer, this is not a military but a spiritual conquest. "It is a prophecy of being incorporated into the kingdom of God," as James, the head of the church in Jerusalem, interprets the passage in Acts 15:14.[133] Verse 13, "Behold, the days are coming . . . when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed," is a poetic description of the fertility and abundance, founded on the promise given in Leviticus 26:3-5, where the condi-

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[131] Ibid.

[132] P. W. H. Frederick, "The Book of Amos," Old Testament Commentary, p. 827. Frederick, at the time that he wrote the statement quoted, was professor emeritus of Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation, Western Theological Seminary, Fremont, Nebraska.

[133] Ibid.

tion is expressed, "If ye walk in my statutes."

Flack seems to favor a similar point of view. With reference to passages such as Isaiah 49:23-26, Isaiah 60:10-22, etc., which portray the nations of the earth serving Israel, bringing her wealth and doing homage before her feet, he remarks that "we must not stress the literalisms overmuch, but make allowance for poetic license and Oriental imagery."[134] Concerning Isaiah 60:10-22, he voices the opinion that while the prophet is describing the restoration of Zion and Jerusalem, the material is apocalyptic since it "looks wholly to the future and creates new (and often purely ideal) situations to correspond with the glorious truth conveyed." He adds that pictures such as this are, as it were, "a flying goal for faith to follow."[135]

Thus he avoids a purely literalistic method of interpretation which finds fulfillment only in contemporary events, without adopting a view which totally excludes all historical significance and applies these passages to the spiritual realm alone.

Kantonen thinks that the otherworldly character of the kingdom of God is frequently overemphasized, and that not enough consideration is given to the fact that throughout both the Old and the New Testaments "the same hope flashes

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[134]Elmer E. Flack, "The Book of Isaiah," Old Testament Commentary, p. 685.

[135]Ibid., p. 693.

forth again and again," pointing forward to a time when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ" (Revelation 11:15). He states that passages such as Isiah 2:4; 9:4; 11:9 and Ezekiel 36:27 actually portray the coming of the messianic age in terms of "the realization of God's purpose on earth, when nations and cultures have been subjected to his will." He says that the "earthiness" of this messianic hope is evident from the fact that it "embraces not only the whole range of cultural life but also man's total environment, including physical nature."[136] Both Isaiah and Ezekiel describe a time when the wild beasts will become tame, when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25; Ezekiel 34:25). Added to this picture is also the abolition of premature death, for "no more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old" (Isaiah 65:20).

Kantonen considers it unfortunate that these prophetic teachings have been regarded either as "symbolic representations" of man's attempt to create a better world or else as "utopian dreams" which have no chance of being realized on this earth. To interpret them thus, he says, is to for-

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[136] Kantonen, op. cit., pp. 50f.

get that the prophets do not base their hope for the world on the powers of nature or of man, but solely on "the justice and goodness of God and the adequacy of his creative power."[137] The prophet, therefore, declared: "O Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us, thou hast wrought for us all our works" (Isaiah 26:12). To this Kantonen adds that it was because the prophets saw the creative purpose of God at work in nature and in history that they refused to despair even in times of bitter disillusionment, or to think of the future of this present world only in terms of destruction.[138]

At this point a question arises: "Do these passages in the prophetic writings refer perhaps to a millenial kingdom?" A number of Lutheran theologians have produced statements in the past two and a half decades which seem to favor what has been called "the millenial hope." Kantonen calls this teaching "an important, although not the all-important, aspect of the Christian hope."[139] He grants that modern millenialists have often "inflated this doctrine into central importance and supplanted the gospel itself with their apocalyptical calculations."[140] He sug-

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[137] Ibid., p. 51.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Ibid., p. 68. See also J. A. West, What the Bible Teaches about the World Beyond (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1939), pp. 38f.

[140] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 66.

gests that in view of "modern secularization of the millenial hope" the church must always emphasize Jesus' statement: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), and "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you" (Matthew 20:25-28). But he contends that the existence of abuses must not be permitted to induce Lutheranism "to go to the other extreme and reject altogether the truth which the millennial hope contains."[141]

In support of his views Kantonen notes that the Finnish Lutheran scholar, Y. J. E. Alanen, sees in the millennial hope "a needed corrective to the 'vertical tendency,' evident in the theology of Barth, which points directly upward to a transcendent world entirely different from the present."[142] Kantonen also points out that even Althaus, who is inclined to dismiss any intermediate state of the individual after death, nevertheless acknowledges the value of "sound millennianism" in preserving the "this sidedness" of the Christian hope.[143] This is not to be understood, however, as implying that Althaus holds millenialistic views, for in reply to the question whether faith can conclude that "the consummation of history must begin as a historical consummation," he answers:

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[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid., p. 68.

[143] Ibid., p. 69.

> This "must" is difficult to establish. But above all else the idea of a millennial kingdom (Zwischenreich), a time of fulfillment prior to the end of history, is theologically untenable and self-contradictory.[144]

Francis Pieper contends that Chiliasm has no basis in Scripture for the passages to which it appeals for support[145] "speak of the spiritual glory of the New Testament Church."[146] Concerning Isaiah 2:2-3 he states that Scripture does not place the fulfillment of this prophecy in a future millennial kingdom, but it says of all believers, "who, without leaving home, have come to faith in the Gospel during the New Testament era (Heb. 12:22): 'But ye are come unto Mount Sion and unto the city of the living God.'"[147]

Regarding those passages in the Old Testament which promise that a state of peace will exist in the kingdom of God,[148] Pieper contends that they do not refer to a peace that is to be realized in a "still future millennium," but they are fulfilled

> in the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh, in the reconciliation of the world to God, in the proc-

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[144] Althaus, op. cit., p. 315. Translation is by the writer.

[145] Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:6-9; Zechariah 9:9-10; Joel 2:23-25; 3:18-20; Micah 4:1-4; and Revelation 20.

[146] Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by Walter W. F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, 520.

[147] Ibid., pp. 520f.

[148] Isaiah 2:4; 9:5; 11:6-9; Zechariah 9:10.

> lamation of this news in the world, and in the sending of the Holy Spirit, who through this message works faith in people's hearts, thus creating children of peace in the whole world and among all nations. By faith in the Gospel the Christian Church on earth possesses a peerless state of peace.[149]

Pieper notes also that the Old Testament passages which predict peace in the kingdom of God often appear in a context with prophecies concerning Christ's coming into the flesh and the subsequent preaching of the Gospel. Thus they "represent it as an immediate consequence and effect of these events." The declaration of peace in Isaiah 9:2-5 has as its cause, says Pieper, "For unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given. . . ." The state of peace described in Isaiah 11:6-9, "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb," is immediately preceded by its causa efficiens: "And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots."[150]

In a discussion of Ezekiel 37 to 39, which appeared in The Australasian Theological Review, 1946, R. H. Altus seeks to show that these chapters cannot rightly be interpreted in support of Chiliasm. The verses in question are 21 to 28, where it is stated that the children of Israel will be gathered from among the Gentiles, will become one nation under one eternal king, "David, my Servant." The author contends that these verses cannot be interpreted

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[149] Pieper, op. cit., III, 521.

[150] Ibid., p. 522.

literally since history records no such occurrences. The exiles of the Northern Kingdom never returned from their captivity, much less were the two kingdoms, the northern and the southern, ever united again under one ruler.[151] From this he concludes that we must look to the New Testament for the fulfillment of this prophecy, and "the most that can be said for the return from the Babylonian exile in this connection is that it served as a type and a shadow of greater things to come."[152]

It is also to be noted, says Altus, that the united Israel is described in these verses as a holy people, obedient to the statutes of their God, faithful, and not subject to the apostasies of the Israel of the past. This, he says, "points to a spiritual Israel rather than the Israel according to the flesh."[153]

Again, the king who shall rule over the united Israel, "my servant David," cannot be identified with any of the post-exilic rulers in Jerusalem. Rather, this David is the One referred to in Isaiah 11:1 as the "Branch from the stem of Jesse; the righteous Branch of David, Jer. 23:5-6; called David in Jer. 30:9; the Good Shepherd of Ezekiel 34:23.24."[154]

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[151] Altus, op. cit., p. 4.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid., p. 5.

Finally, Altus remarks that the covenant referred to here is not "a reaffirmation of the old one," but it is new.[155] This being the case, he concludes that "nothing concerning it can be inferred from the old covenant of the old dispensation."[156] He then closes his discussion with the profession: "We hold that the Scripture teaches that the era of this prosperity and the extension of the Church began with Pentecost and continues throughout the New Testament era."[157]

In a discussion of this subject it is important that we take into consideration the position expressed in the Lutheran Confessions. Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession states:

> It is also taught among us that our Lord Jesus Christ will return on the last day for judgment and will raise up all the dead, to give eternal life and everlasting joy to believers and the elect but to condemn ungodly men and the devil to hell and eternal punishment. . . . Rejected, too, are certain Jewish opinions which are even now making an appearance and which teach that, before the resurrection of the dead, saints and godly men will possess a worldly kingdom and annihilate all the godless.[158]

One cannot help but note that the Confessions contain only a brief reference to this issue. Kantonen offers the

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[155]Jeremiah 31:31-34; 33:14-17; Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17.

[156]Altus, op. cit., p. 5.

[157]Ibid., p. 7.

[158]Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert in collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert Fischer, and Arthur C. Piepkorn (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 38.

explanation that the reformers, in general, were too engrossed in the central spiritual content of the gospel to give much thought to the earthly side of the Christian hope. Therefore, he states, the Augsburg Confession "simply condemned the violent secularistic millennialism of the 'enthusiasts,'" represented by Muenzer and the Peasant's Revolt.[159] Schlink remarks that in view of the struggle that was going on between Christ's kingdom and the kingdom of Satan at the time of the Reformation, Luther and his contemporaries had little time for a "comfortable contemplation of details and, above all, no time for optimistic expectations which before the end look for an upsurge of the world in increasing improvement."[160]

Schlink adds that this sentence in the Augsburg Confession has experienced various interpretations. H. H. Wendt, L. Fendt, W. Elert and others claim that it rejects every kind of chiliasm, while theologians such as Vilmar, Zoeckler, and Plitt think that it condemns only "a coarse, carnal variety as promoted in word and deed by certain Anabaptists under the influence of Jewish ideas."[161] Schlink seems to agree with Plitt who observes that "it

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[159] Kantonen, op. cit., p. 67.

[160] Schlink, op. cit., p. 284.

[161] Ibid.

would be a mistake to turn the point of the last sentence of Article XVII against anything beyond what contemporary history suggests."[162]

E. C. Fendt, on the other hand, warns that the last century has witnessed more variations of millennialism than any previous century in the history of Christendom, and he warns that Lutheran theology too is confronted with problems in eschatology because of the millennial influence. In his opinion this is due at least in part to this that while "the fathers insisted that unclear passages of the Bible must be interpreted in the light of the clear passages," in much of the literature on eschatology today there is evidence that this rule is applied in reverse.[163]

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162 Ibid.

163 Edward C. Fendt, "The Life Everlasting," What Lutherans Are Thinking: A Symposium on Lutheran Faith and Life, edited by Edward C. Fendt (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1947), p. 310. Edward C. Fendt was dean and professor of Systematic Theology at Capital University Theological Seminary, Columbus, Ohio.

CHAPTER V

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

In an earlier part of this study it was noted that death, as it is portrayed in the Old Testament, is a stern reality which entered the world as a result of man's transgression of God's law. Attention was also centered on the opinion held by some Lutheran theologians that the realm of death, Sheol, as it is pictured in the Old Testament, was a dark rendezvous in the depths of the earth where all the dead spent a shadowy, semi-conscious existence in a state of gloom and depression; and that consequently the Israelite thought chiefly in terms of this life and the present world rather than the next.

But is this a complete picture of man's hope and destiny under Yahweh's covenant with Israel? Does the Old Testament then offer the faithful no hope for a future life in the presence of God? Were those earnest prayers of the psalmists who sought continued fellowship with God even in death never realized?

The theological literature which has appeared in Europe and in America during the past two decades gives a considerable amount of attention to these questions. Both liberal and conservative scholars find in the Old Testament writings definite evidence of a doctrine of the resurrection.

On this point all are agreed.

Different views have been expressed, however, with regard to the origin of this doctrine in Israel's religious life. There are basically two schools of thought: (a) Those who maintain that a resurrection faith did not become a part of the Jewish theological thinking until post-exilic times. (b) Those who retain the traditional position that the Holy Scripture records promises of the resurrection even from the earliest times, from events in the Garden of Eden.

Harris Birkeland, an exponent of the view that Israel's resurrection faith was a development of the post-exilic period, suggests that there are two approaches that have been employed in an attempt to trace the development of the Jewish-Christian belief in the resurrection: (a) That the belief in the resurrection "has originated as a result of a revelation or an evolution within the Israelitic-Jewish religion itself." (b) That the resurrection of the dead "is a religious idea springing from foreign, chiefly Iranian influence."[1]

From the outset Birkeland excludes the view that it might have developed from "a singular, supernatural phenomenon," which would leave out of consideration Israel's previous history and would operate as a "pure miracle." He

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[1]Harris Birkeland, "The Belief in the Resurrection of the Dead in the Old Testament," Studia Theologica, III (1949), 60. Since 1948 Harris Birkeland has been professor of Semitic languages at the University of Oslo.

claims that "no idea can become an integral part of a religious complex when this complex is not prepared for that idea," that revelation takes place in history "and has its basis in the previous history of the society in question." Therefore, if one is to understand the origin of a certain belief, one must examine the religious environment out of which it arose.[2]

But what does such an investigation of Israel's past history reveal in this respect? It indicates, says Birkeland, that the resurrection belief did not arise within Israel itself, apart from all foreign influence. Neither Moses nor his tribes believed in a resurrection from the dead when they entered the promised land.[3] Nor did it develop from Israel's contact with the "superior culture" of the Canaanites. The immigrating Israelites may have been influenced to some extent by the religion which they found in Palestine when they entered. It was a religion which spoke not only of death and life after death but also of the resurrection of nature and nature's gods. They may have identified their national God Yahweh with Baal. And they may have believed in a renewed life after death for those who could be reunited with the rising god.[4] But Birkeland points out that Israel was never in-

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[2] Ibid., p. 61.

[3] Ibid., p. 67.

[4] Ibid., p. 68.

fluenced to the extent that she conceived of her God as One who died and was revived. On the contrary, it was repeatedly stated that Yahweh was a living God who never died, as if to emphasize His superiority over all pagan deities. Therefore, "a belief in a new life after death as a consequence of a union with the reviving god was impossible on the Yahvistic line,"[5] and the old Semitic belief that men after death led a shadowy life in Sheol was preserved in Israel. For this reason, concludes Birkeland:

> We can simply disregard the religious surroundings in the Near East as directly positive impulses when we wish to explain the origin of the belief in the resurrection of man. If they have played any role, this role must chiefly have been a negative one, betraying itself in the emphasis of Yahweh as a living god and death as final.[6]

Did Israel's resurrection belief perhaps arise from her view of God's omnipotence? The reasoning behind this opinion is as follows: In the course of time Yahweh's divine power was "believed to be able to perform a wonder by restoring life after death." His power was then extended to the realm of Sheol, "so that he was believed to make certain exceptions from the rule, reviving people after they had died."[7] The Scriptural justification for this

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[5] Ibid., p. 69.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

view is sought in the so-called "Individual Psalms of Lamentation," where the sufferer often expresses a hope and at times even a strong conviction that Yahweh will deliver him from death, and in the corresponding psalms of thanksgiving where the sufferer praises God for His deliverance. Birkeland claims that in most of these cases it is quite evident that "actual death cannot have been meant, since the lamenting 'I' is speaking in the present state of 'death.'"[8] He suggests that the only plausible interpretation is, therefore, that "death" or Sheol "must have a more comprehensive meaning." Life expresses the positive aspect of one's existence and death, the negative. Thus "'Life' means good, intensive, lucky life as opposed to bad, powerless, distressing life expressed by 'Death.'"[9] Birkeland concedes, however, that there are passages in the Psalms where the sufferer actually does express the hope of a resurrection after death. An example of this is recorded in Psalm 73:24-26 where the sufferer pleads that, if he must die, Yahweh will in a wonderful way raise him up, so that he may stay with Him le olam and tamid. This, Birkeland agrees, is a bona fide reference to a resurrection from death, but he adds that

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., p. 70.

it does not yet indicate a general belief in a resurrection after death. "For the 'I' of the Psalm regards himself as an exception. He had had a special revelation, verse 17."[10] What is more, this possibility of God performing such a miracle had never been doubted by the Israelites, "and frequent are the hymnic epithets that announce his power of Life and Death."[11]

In a similar fashion Birkeland classifies those passages in Isaiah 52 and 53 which refer to the resurrection of the suffering Servant of the Lord. A genuine rising from the dead is spoken of, but it is still only "the belief in an exceptional miracle."[12]

Concerning Ezekiel 37 he states "the prophet sees the whole people rise after they are all dead. It is to be noted that . . . it is the collectivity that rises."[13]

Hosea 6:2 has much the same character, he says. "The whole context shows that a real resurrection is out of the question."[14] Thus in his opinion neither Ezekiel 37 nor Hosea 6 "testify to a belief in a general resurrection,

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 72.

[13] Ibid., p. 73.

[14] Ibid., p. 74.

only the idea and the possibility of such a belief."[15]

Summarizing his position to this point, Birkeland states that there is "no plain evidence of any belief in a (relatively) general resurrection of the dead in the Old Testament before the Persian-Hellenistic time." Before that time only the belief in some exceptional wonders is testified.[16] In addition, he claims that no special attention was paid to the resurrection of the body even in the few exceptional cases mentioned. It is the whole person as a totality that arises.

Other Lutheran scholars hold similar, though not identical views, regarding passages of the type mentioned above. Mowinckel insists that Job, instead of believing in a resurrection of the body, actually rejected as impossible any thought of a rising from the dead (14:10-12,14). He adds that neither in Psalm 16 nor in Psalm 73 is there any mention of resurrection after death.[17] Isaiah 52 and 53 are considered somewhat more important, for he says that "here the belief in a resurrection emerges in the Old Testament for the first time, but only as an unheard-of exception

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 75.

[17] Sigmund Mowinckel, He that Cometh, translated by G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 205. See also Helmer Ringgren, The Faith of the Psalmists (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 74. Also Helmer Ringgren, "Einige Bemerkungen Zum LXXIII Psalm," Vetus Testamentum, III (1953), 265-272.

on behalf of this one man." It was a special miracle performed by God for the sake of the Servant, in order that his work might prosper; and in this respect it was most significant. Mowinckel calls the resurrection of the suffering Servant "the crown of the divine purpose . . . the decisive miracle through which the Servant's work attains its end." But, having said this, he maintains that it had no bearing on Israel's belief in a general resurrection of the dead.[18]

Artur Weiser, in his exposition of Psalm 16:10, 49:13-15 and 73:24, also discourages any thinking which would conclude that these passages refer to a resurrection of the dead. In his interpretation he repeatedly explains that the psalmist's chief concern is that God is near him in those times when his life is veiled in uncertainty, and that Yahweh will "eventually see to it that everything ends well." How that will be accomplished is God's secret. The psalmist knows that "life proceeds toward a hidden glory." Even death itself cannot alter this, for faith overcomes death in "the light of the eternal presence of God."[19] Whether the overcoming of death will be a trans-

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[18] Mowinckel, op. cit., p. 205. See also L. G. Rignell, "Isaiah LII:13--LIII:12," Vetus Testamentum, III (1953), 87-92.

[19] Artur Weiser, "The Psalms," The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 514.

lation as in the case of Enoch or eternal life or a resurrection is not discussed by the psalmist. Weiser says "he allows the divine mystery to remain a mystery and does not presume irreverently to push open the gates which God still keeps closed."[20]

What then is the earliest Scriptural testimony to a general resurrection? Birkeland thinks that Isaiah 26:19 is the first passage in the Old Testament to bear clear witness to such a belief.[21] Mowinckel is in full agreement, suggesting Daniel 12:2 as an additional testimony.[22]

But Birkeland maintains that there was still another factor involved in the development of this religious hope. In his opinion the "decisive impulse" which led finally to the real formulation of this belief in Israel came from the Iranian religion. He explains his view thus:

> In the Iranian religion the belief in question existed a long time before we meet it in the Old Testament. How long, it is impossible to say. We find it in the Gathas, so it must be very old . . . . It goes so far in audacity that life conquers death through the resurrection of the dead bodies.[23]

Birkeland asserts that Israel too possessed a similar audacious faith that ventured to believe in a revivification

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Birkeland, op. cit., p. 75.

[22] Mowinckel, op. cit., p. 205.

[23] Birkeland, op. cit., pp. 74f.

of the dead. Even before the contact with the Iranian religion the Israelites expected "the apparent impossible restoration of the people." But contact with Iran "introduced several traits of a physical and cosmic nature into the picture of the day of Judgment. One of those traits was the resurrection of the dead."[24]

Birkeland sees Iranian influence reflected also in Daniel 12:1-3, "where universal dualism is in evidence." A twofold resurrection is described: the pious Israelites rise to everlasting life while the wicked rise to punishment. In Isaiah 26:19 nothing is mentioned of the resurrection of the ungodly. This, he says, indicates that the Iranian influence is more advanced in Daniel 12:2 and "corresponds to the later date of the passage."[25]

Thus it is quite evident that, according to one school of thought which includes men such as Birkeland, Mowinckel and others, foreign influence was "rather strong" in the formulation of Israel's belief in the resurrection of the dead, and it is their view that this doctrine did not find expression among the Jews until post-exilic times, or more precisely, until the Persian-Hellenistic era.

There are other Lutherans, however, who place far less emphasis on the matter of foreign influence though generally they admit a later date for the formulation of Israel's

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 77.

resurrection belief. Furthermore, they see a deeper eschatological content in the psalms.

Gerhard von Rad objects to the practice of placing such passages as Psalm 16:0, 49:15 and 73:25 in the category of psalms of lamentation which simply express a strong conviction that Yahweh will preserve the sufferer from death and Sheol. To grasp the full meaning of these passages, he says, one must understand that they are "spiritual exegeses" of the ancient promise, "I am thy portion" - one of the old sacral phrases which were handed on through the generations, offering a communion with God that could not be lost despite all external circumstances. "It was inevitable," says von Rad, "that this new idea of a life with Yahweh which survived physical disturbances would have to face up to the reality of death" and answer the question whether communion with God would continue to exist even under those most trying circumstances. It is precisely with this question that the psalmists are dealing. "So it is not at all surprising," says von Rad, "that Pss. xvi and lxxiii make very radical statements about the relationship to death of the man praying."[26]

Commenting on Psalm 16:10: "Thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit," he grants that this passage can also be taken in the sense of preservation

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[26]Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, translated by D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), I, 404.

from a death that threatens the man who is praying. It may mean that Jahweh will not let him die at the present time but will restore him to health again. "On the other hand," says von Rad, "later--at the latest Acts ii.36--the passage becomes a locus classicus for the doctrine of the resurrection."[27]

The same scholar grants that Psalm 16:10 presents certain exegetical difficulties which prevent one from making categorical judgments. However, he contends that with Psalm 73 "things are considerably clearer." He centers his attention particularly on verse 24: "Thou dost guide me with thy counsel, and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory." According to von Rad, לקח belongs to a group of concepts which suggested to the Israelite that idea of "translation."[28] This was a concept that was already quite familiar to them, for in the story of the ascension of Elijah (2 Kings 2:1ff.), or in the note about the translation of Enoch (Genesis 5:25), Israel had already given clear expression to the idea "that Jahweh had other realms at his disposal and had the power and liberty to translate men into them."[29] In later times, therefore when the psalmists employed this expression in their writings, it

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[27] Ibid., p. 405.

[28] Ibid., p. 406.

[29] Ibid.

was readily understood to have reference to the future life.

In his interpretation of Psalm 49:15: "God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me," von Rad insists that this statement can hardly be referred to anything other than a life after death for the thought of the whole psalm

> revolves, in the sense of the problem of theodicy, around the question of the grace of Jahweh in the life of the individual, and comes to the conclusion that the proud rich must remain in death. Thus then, death is the last great separator. And this is obviously the opinion of Ps. lxxiii as well.[30]

Von Rad contends that these psalms cannot simply be fitted into a series of psalms of lament or thanksgiving, for if one assumes that the holy writers only speak of a preservation from an evil end, as some have done, then one

> breaks down the whole antithesis of the psalm, for the repeated statement that the rich stay in death would in this case be no answer to this question of the man praying, if the same fate were in store for him.[31]

It should be noted that these psalms express a theological problem in its most acute form: "How is Jahweh's help to and blessing of those who are loyal to him realized in face of the prosperity of the godless?" Von Rad answers: "The consolation runs thus: Jahweh holds his pious one fast, and remains his God in every situation in life, and

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

even death cannot remove the communion vouchsafed to him."[32] Quoting J. Pedersen, he adds: "The approaches to a belief in an individual resurrection found in the Old Testament are due to a demand for the accomplishment of justice."[33]

Von Rad cautions that it would certainly be wrong to see in this hope and assurance expressed by the psalmists "a dramatic religious breakthrough." One must not imagine that life after death was "some unheard-of novelty" as far as the Israelites were concerned. It should be remembered that "as early as the time of Ezekiel the cult of a dying and rising god had forced its way into the temple itself (Ezek. viii. 14)."[34] What is added here by the psalmists is their emphasis on the unbounded extent of man's communion with God--it reaches even over death.[35] Of course, this was an important step.

But the most thorough-going change in Israel's resurrection belief, says von Rad, was introduced by the apocalyptic writings which proclaimed a general resurrection, "first apparently only of the righteous (Is. xxvi. 19), and then . . . of all, some 'to eternal contempt,' others to 'eternal life' (Dan. xii. 1-3)."[36] He describes the

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., p. 407.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

essential difference between the eschatological views expressed by the psalms and those in Isaiah and Daniel as follows:

> In the psalms, it was the word of Jahweh addressed to the individual in a wholly personal way which bore him over the threshold of death, because he abandoned himself to it completely. What was characteristic for man's situation over against death was precisely the lack of a generally accepted hope in something beyond. . . . On the other hand in Apocalyptic, the resurrection of the dead is merely one act in the great apocalyptic event of the end, the main essentials of which were already fixed in anticipation. . . .[37]

Harold L. Creager and Herbert C. Alleman, in their interpretation of the psalms, find a considerable amount of eschatological significance in the passages just discussed. With regard to Psalm 16:10: "Thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit," they hold that it scarcely does this passage justice if one refers it only to some physical deliverance from death. Here is expressed "the same profound spiritual perception" as in Psalm 49:15 "that the personality in communion with God either overleaps Sheol or is quickly delivered from it." In this way fellowship with God is continued even in death, and then satisfying joy in His presence. This, they assert, is primarily the personal hope of the psalmist, but it is also a general truth, and found in Christ its

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[37] Ibid., pp. 407f.

climactic application (Acts 2:25ff.; 13:35).[38]

The same two Old Testament scholars call Psalm 49:15 "an outstanding declaration of eternal life," and "one of the most important statements in the O. T. on the problem" of the prosperity of the wicked. The solution consists in this that "although all die and man cannot ransom himself or his fellows, God will rescue his own from the gloom of Sheol, that they may be with him."[39]

Although Taito Kantonen does not discuss, in particular, the psalms and their relation to the life after death, he apparently shares the views of Irving F. Wood and others who assert that Israel's resurrection hope arose out of certain ethical problems. As more and more of God's faithful "suffered and sometimes died for the preservation of the national faith," a number of important questions arose which threatened the faith of the Hebrews in the justice of God: "Would God give them no recompense? Would the triumphant wicked die in prosperity and God give them no punishment? . . . Under this pressure a new factor, the resurrection, was added to the picture of the state after death."[40] Apparently Kantonen considers Isaiah 26:

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[38]Harold L. Creager and Herbert C. Alleman, "The Psalms," Old Testament Commentary, edited by Herbert C. Alleman and Elmer E. Flack (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 535.

[39]Ibid., p. 551.

[40]Taito A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954), p. 7.

14-19 the first explicit prophetic reference to the resurrection, although he points out that even here it is "a particularistic dogma affecting only the dead of Israel," for the passage specifically states that the "enemies of Israel 'are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise.'"[41] He finds a further development of the doctrine expressed in Daniel 12:2, which he calls "the nearest approach to universal resurrection." Here resurrection extends to both the righteous and the unrighteous.[42]

Another section of Scripture which has claimed the attention of scholars and theologians in their discussion of the resurrection is Job 19:25-27. Concerning this passage Weiser states that here Job's faith arises out of deepest depression and "soars to its greatest heights, to a final certainty which it had not previously reached."[43] He claims that one does not do justice to this most renowned passage in the Book of Job, when one understands it merely as a "flight from cruel reality into the dream-land of credulous phantasy." Instead here is a "bold venture of faith." Only gradually did Job attain to this degree of

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., p. 8.

[43] Artur Weiser, "Das Buch Hiob," Das Alte Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhöck und Ruprecht, 1951), XIII, 146. Also Carl Stange, "Das Problem Hiobs und Seine Lösung," Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie, XXIV (1955), 342-355.

certainty. At first it was only a groping, then a prayer, and finally with chapter 19, verse 25 "the full certainty of faith breaks through and floods everything with its brilliant light," as he confesses: "I know that my Redeemer lives."[44] Job's hope, says Weiser, was founded entirely and exclusively on the living God; therefore he called Yahweh יְהוָה. גֹּאֵל meant originally the blood-avenger, who undertook the task of avenging a murder; then it was employed to designate the relative of a dead person, who represented him as the executor of his estate and guarded the interests of the family (Ruth 2:20; 3:9; 4:1ff.), or redeemed the lost property (Leviticus 25:25ff.; Numbers 5:8). By applying the name גֹּאֵל to God, Job is alluding to that close, special relationship of God to man according to which Yahweh, as the executor, administers man's inheritance in heaven when he is no longer alive. Job's confidence, says Weiser, is not founded on some more or less impersonal form of adjustment in the beyond, but on the fact that God lives--He who is not limited in His power by death; He who is not only a witness in Job's behalf (16:19), but who as the Living One will go into action for him and even appear before him. Weiser sees in this thought a "break through" in the Old Testament concept of God.[45]

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[44] Weiser, "Das Buch Hiob," op. cit., p. 148.

[45] Ibid., pp. 148f.

In the last half of verse 25: "He shall stand at the last day upon the earth," Job is speaking of the theophany in which he will experience a decisive encounter with God. Weiser thinks that this theophany had its roots in the cult of the covenant festival.[46]

Weiser translates verse 25b, "as the last one (als Letzter) he shall stand upon the dust," i.e. the theophany is the last act in the drama of Job; in it the final decision will be made, and it will be determined neither by the verdict of Job's friends nor by the reality of his death, but by the fact that God Himself will act in Job's behalf. When this will happen is not stated. The interpretation which assigns it to the last day, says Weiser, is not founded on the original Hebrew text. Job is reluctant to discuss such details. What is important to him is the fact that it will occur, not the manner in which it will take place. "The special and primary interest of faith clings really only to the fact of the divine activity, not to the mode in which it will be carried out."[47]

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[46] Ibid., p. 149. Weiser explains his view thus: "The fact that Jahwe 'arose' (cf. Ps. 3:7; 7:6; 9:19; 46:11; 76:10, etc.), i.e. lifted Himself from Sinai . . . and 'appeared' before His covenant people, was in their estimation the high point of the festival, for the covenant was sealed anew and their salvation became real in the encounter between their God who was thought to be present above the ark and them His covenant people. These traditional roots throw light on the form of Job's hope which he here expresses."

[47] Ibid.

Only one detail is stated more fully and emphatically: God will appear "on the dust." This expression, Weiser says, is not clear, but in view of the context, particularly 16:18f. and 19:26, it would seem to refer first of all, to the theophany after the death of Job who will return to the dust (Genesis 3:16). "If one wishes to see in the crisis a designation of a place . . . one can indeed think of the appearance of God upon Job's grave."[48]

The expressions "after my skin has been destroyed" and "from my flesh I shall see God" are not totally clear, according to Weiser. But when one takes into consideration the emphasis in this passage, the negative form of the expression, as well as the term נקף these words would seem to point to an event after Job's death. To maintain that this refers to an encounter with God during Job's lifetime, one would require a more exact statement to that effect. But if these events and experiences take place after Job's death, they will occur when he is no longer in the body. Obviously Weiser does not see in verse 26 a proof of the bodily resurrection, for he offers the translation: "Without my skin . . . and without my flesh I will see God." He finds the major emphasis in this passage resting on the theophany which Job will behold, rather than on any detail having to do with Job's person. The vision will be for the sufferer the highest degree of bliss "outshining all

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[48] Ibid., p. 150.

earthly darkness with heavenly light."[49]

Weiser also calls attention to the "stammering style" in verse 27, which cannot be duplicated in translation. It is a style that "breathes the surprise of a man who stands astonished in the presence of a miracle which he is still unable to grasp" and stammers forth: "I myself, I personally shall see God, for me," that is, no longer as my foe but devoted to me as a friend, interested in my salvation. Therefore, his faith breaks forth in a final expression of certainty that God, even in the deepest depths, is still his friend who will bring to reality the bliss of fellowship with Him and his personal vindication--even if it does occur only after death--and will bear him into His eternal presence.[50] This experience will concern Job and God alone. No stranger will behold the mystery of this remarkable meeting. For the solitude which Job experienced in his suffering and death, there will be a corresponding solitude in his encounter with God. With this grace he is satisfied. He does not attempt to raise the veil of divine mystery which is spread over his hope. Reverence for God's wonder forbids him to desire, with frivolous curiosity, to penetrate further into the mystery. He can only give expression to his feelings: "A burning desire

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[49] Ibid., p. 151.

[50] Ibid.

to stand at last before God and behold His faithfulness, is the feeling which fills him and consumes his inward being."[51]

Thus it will be noted that Weiser sees in this passage of Scripture an emphasis similar to that which he discovered in the Psalms. Fellowship with God is central in each of these instances. Like the psalmists Job too was confident that his relation to Yahweh would span even death. But how that would be accomplished, whether by a translation or a resurrection or in some other manner, was God's secret to be revealed at His chosen time.

Another exposition of Job 19:25-27 is that offered by Ernest Brennecke who shares the view that this passage refers to an experience beyond death. In this he takes issue with Karl Budde who claims that chapter 19 must be explained in accordance with 14:14ff., where the ardent hope of a future life for a brief moment arises only to be abandoned absolutely, "that therefore Job here looks forward to an act of divine intervention occurring before his death."[52] He contends that Budde "overlooks the fact that the poet is here struggling with the profound longing of mankind, the question of the reality and the nature of life

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Ernest Brennecke, "The Book of Job," Old Testament Commentary, p. 508.

beyond death," and that under such circumstances it is not unusual for even the faithful to waver "between desire and despair and cling with the heart's intuition to a hope which reason and tradition and experience deny."[53] Brennecke finds in this passage evidence that "a great change will occur after death, a change involving compensation for the inequalities of this life." God who previously seemed to be the enemy of Job will then reveal His true purposes and vindicate His servant. In his interpretation of the words, "mine eyes shall behold him, and not another," Brennecke makes this strong statement:

> He will see God by that ecstatic inner vision hasah which is the prerogative of the prophetic mind. Here is more than the shadowy existence of the shades in Sheol, without memory and hope, without self-consciousness and soul-activity; and in complete harmony with the teaching of our Lord (Matt. 22:32), the poet is convinced that God remembers the soul of his servant and will impart to it eternal life.[54]

To this point we have discussed primarily those theological writings on the contemporary Lutheran scene which present the view that the doctrine of the resurrection is of post-exilic origin and appears most clearly in Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:1-3. There are other Lutheran theologians, however, who find "foregleams" of the resurrection also in earlier Biblical writings and prefer to include a larger selection of passages in a discussion of this im-

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., p. 509.

portant 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 Yahweh created humanity with a destiny, which was not to be death but life, and was prefigured in the tree of life (Genesis 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 (Genesis 5:21f.) and Elijah (2 Kings 2), neither of whom died but were carried into the presence of God where they now live.[55] Thus the thought of a life with God in another world entered history at an early date.

Procksch sees a second foregleam of the resurrection in the figure of the Messiah, alluded to in the words of David recorded in 2 Samuel 23:2 and, above all, appearing in much fuller splendor in the prophecies of Isaiah (9:1-6; 11:1-9), then also in Jeremiah (23:6). His reasoning is as follows: "The Messiah is a man; his kingdom appears on earth; still it will continue without end (Isaiah 9:5) into

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[55]Otto Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1950), p. 701.

eternity, with no mention being made of death."[56] This implies immortality.

In Ezekiel a change occurs inasmuch as the prophet takes death into account when he speaks of the Messianic Kingdom, but reference is also made to a resurrection. It is implied in Ezekiel 34 where David, already dead, is declared to be the coming ruler (verse 23), but it is set forth with clarity three chapters later. Procksch maintains that Ezekiel 37 "cannot have reference to a return of the captives from exile" but must signify rather "a quickening of single individuals and their resurrection from their graves." To this he adds:

> When finally Ezekiel . . . promises the righteous life and announces death to the godless (18:9), and indicates that life is the fruit of righteousness (19) and death the result of sin (20), death and life can hardly be considered a mere earthly destiny; instead it must contain an eschatological significance. It implies a final judgment in which both the way of life and of death reach their destination.[57]

According to Procksch, a third reference to the resurrection is recorded in Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 where the suffering Servant of Yahweh is described as an exalted One standing in the presence of the king. But the context makes it clear that this occurs after he has been removed

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

from the land of the living, having given his life as an offering for others (52:13). Since this Servant of Yahweh was without sin, death had no power over Him; His sacrifice thus did not mean His annihilation but provided a passage-way through death into an exalted life.[58]

Procksch sees a further reference to the resurrection in what he terms the Apocalypse of Isaiah, i.e., Isaiah 24 to 27. He suggests that in this text God is preparing His people for the "great feast," when the cover will be removed from their eyes and death will be destroyed eternally (25:6). Then will be fulfilled the petition of the prophet who pleaded that Yahweh's dead might again live and their bodies awaken (26:19). The people of God shall go into the chamber of death and there conceal themselves until the wrath of God is passed (26:20).[59]

But the resurrection faith of Israel is expressed in its fullest certainty, says Procksch, in "the Maccabean part of the Book of Daniel (Daniel 12:1f.)" Here judgment overtakes the kingdom of Antiochus IV (11:45), accompanied by great tribulation and affliction until God's people are

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[58] Ibid., p. 702. See also L. G. Rignell, "Isaiah LII:13--LIII:12," Vetus Testamentum, III (1953), 87-92.

[59] Otto Procksch, op. cit., p. 702. See also Artur Weiser, The Old Testament: Its Formation and Development, translated by Dorothea M. Barton (New York: Association Press, 1961), p. 192.

rescued, i.e., all those whose names are written in the Book of Life. Many shall be raised from the sleep of death, some to everlasting life, others to eternal rejection. Procksch too holds the view that "here a two-fold resurrection is proclaimed . . . but no general resurrection is as yet announced."[60] Not even all of Israel shall be revived; only those whose names are recorded in the book of destiny; on the one hand, there will be those previously mentioned in Daniel 11:32 as having broken the covenant; on the other hand, those who know God; the former will be condemned, the latter invited into eternal life.[61]

Concerning the extent of foreign influence in the development of the resurrection faith of Israel, Procksch declares that "the frequently quoted teachings of Zoroaster could not have affected pre-exilic eschatology. However, one need not deny all outside influence," particularly in the extra-Biblical apocalyptic writings. "Persian eschatology may have given form and color to the Jewish faith," but this admission does not invalidate the principle that the apocalyptic writings found their primary source in pure Hebrew thought. The post-exilic expectation of the resurrection, says Procksch, is firmly founded on the Old

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60 Procksch, op. cit., p. 704.

61 Ibid.

Testament prophecies, chiefly on that of Daniel.[62]

It should be noted finally that he discusses also Psalms 16 and 73, two of the passages which have frequently been employed in the interest of the doctrine of the resurrection. In his opinion, however, they refer more to the doctrine of everlasting life than to the resurrection; we shall, therefore, present his views in chapter six.[63]

Alfred von Rohr Sauer, in an essay presented at the Northern Illinois District convention in 1951, called attention also to such passages as Deuteronomy 32:39, 1 Samuel 2:6, and 2 Kings 5:7 which speak of the Lord's slaying and making alive. He stated that inherent in these passages is the idea that "God can and will effect a resurrection of the body."[64] To say that these expressions merely mean that the Lord "brings men to the brink of death only to save them from death's clutches does not constitute an adequate explanation of the texts."[65]

He made reference also to the four Servant-of-the-

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[62] Ibid., p. 705.

[63] Ibid., p. 711.

[64] Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "The Eschatological Prophecies of the Old Testament and their Pertinence to Events of the Present Day," Proceedings of the Twenty-Ninth Convention of the Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (1951), 38.

[65] Ibid.

Lord poems in Isaiah which show that "the prophets of the Old Testament were taught to look for the resurrection of Him who was to be the first fruits of them that sleep." As an example, in Isaiah 53:10 the Lord indicates that after the Servant had given His soul into death, He would see His seed; he would prolong His days. Commenting on this passage, Sauer remarks: "The very fact that the deceased Servant was described as again being able to see and to stretch out His life implies that He would be restored to life."[66]

Among other passages which he quotes in support of the Old Testament resurrection faith are Hosea 6:2 where the prophet asserts: "After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we will live in his sight." Also Hosea 13:14 where the Lord promises: "I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death; O death, where are thy plagues; O Sheol, where is thy destruction."

In Ezekiel 37 he notes in particular verses 12 and 14 where the Lord

> . . . uses language that unmistakably refers to the resurrection when he says: "O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel . . . And I shall put my Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.[67]

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., pp. 38f.

Concerning these passages Sauer remarks: "Surely the terms that are used in these passages reflect a promise of the fact that the Lord will raise His people from the dead."[68]

In his interpretation of Job 19:25-27, a passage which scholars agree presents some difficulty, the writer points out that Luther's translation is practically identical with Jerome's in the Vulgate and is "exceedingly free." He suggests the following as a more literal translation:

> I know that my Redeemer lives and that as the last one He shall rise (stand) upon the dust; and after they have bruised this skin of mine, I shall (still) see God in my flesh; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not a stranger.[69]

According to the essayist, this passage makes reference to "a living Redeemer, to a seeing God, to a seeing God in the flesh," but he emphasizes that it does not refer to "an arising from the dust of the earth or to a being covered with one's own skin again." Hence, a resurrection of the individual "is really only implied in the confident assertion of Job that he shall see God in his flesh."[70]

However, he finds a "very striking reference to an individual resurrection in the Old Testament" in passages

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[68] Ibid., p. 39.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid. See also Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 212-218.

such as the following: "Thy dead shall live, my corpses shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust" (Isaiah 26:19). "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). "All they that sleep[71] in the earth shall eat and worship; all they that go down to the dust shall bow down before Him" (Psalm 22:19). "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15).[72]

Another Old Testament exegete who maintains that there are direct references to the resurrection also in pre-exilic writings is Henry C. Leupold. It is perhaps significant to note, however, that he does not urge the view that the resurrection is implied in the events that took place in the Garden of Eden. Furthermore, in his interpretation of Genesis 5:21f., he remarks that the translation of Enoch does not involve the thought of the resurrection as much as his glorification, since Enoch had not died.[73]

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[71]Sauer employs the reading which appears in the footnote of Biblia Hebraica, edited by Rudolf Kittel (Stuttgart: Privileg. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1929-1937), p. 993.

[72]Sauer, op. cit., p. 39. See also Theodore Laetsch, "Sermonic Study on Isaiah 26:19," Concordia Theological Monthly, XX (March, 1949), 175-180. Also Heidel, op. cit., p. 218.

[73]Herbert C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1942), p. 244.

There is, however, a more direct reference to the resurrection in Psalm 16:10-11:

> For thou does not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit. Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Leupold explains that in this section of the psalm David "is developing more fully what possibilities are latent in this close fellowship with his God that has come to be a reality in his life," and he arrives at the conclusion that as long as he retains his hold on the living God to whom he stands closely bound by faith, even death, Sheol itself, will not be able to gain the mastery, for God will actually prevent his passing into the power of Sheol.[74] Leupold explains the matter even more closely when he adds that the writer does not express the thought that he hopes merely to escape from death "but rather the bolder thought that death shall not get dominion over him. Never did faith wax bolder in dealing with this problem."[75]

According to Leupold the resurrection is still more explicitly stated in Psalm 17:15: "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form." Commenting on this verse Leupold charges that many interpreters fail to find

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[74]Herbert C. Leupold, Exposition of the Psalms (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1959), p. 151.

[75]Ibid., p. 152. See also Heidel, op. cit., p. 210.

here a clear statement of the hope of a resurrection for the reason that, it is claimed, God's people could not have had a clear conception of the blessedness of the hereafter at this early point in their history.[76] To this he replies:

> But it can be demonstrated that that hope has always been a part of godly faith, dimmer, indeed, in patriarchal days and still much in need of clarification in the early days of the monarchy. But both Ps. 16 and Ps. 17 offer clear-cut testimony as to how faith practically postulates such a solution, and how saints grew in experience to see that on the premise of true trust in God hope of complete fruition of His presence is a logical necessity. A very unsatisfactory interpretation is that which dreams of the singer's spending the night in the temple of God and waking up in the morning with his doubts allayed (Schmidt, Leslie, etc.). Such an interpretation scarcely does justice to the statements made. This view was originally projected by Mowinckel (Psalmenstudien, I, 155).[77]

Leupold sees a resurrection promise implied also in Psalm 49:15: "God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me." Of special significance is the last clause; the same verb is used here that was employed in the case of Enoch (Genesis 5:24). It can be translated "will receive me," or "will take me hence." The net result is the same, according to Leupold. But, he asserts, "To claim that the verse refers only to the deliverance from the premature death of the wicked scarcely does justice to it."[78]

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[76] Leupold, Exposition of the Psalms, p. 160.

[77] Ibid., pp. 160f.

[78] Ibid., p. 386.

The same Old Testament exegete considers Psalm 73:23-26 one of the best statements "of Old Testament faith in the hereafter." He points out that in these utterances "a fulness of faith and conviction speaks . . . that scarcely ever mounts to higher levels in the whole of the Old Testament."[79] Especially verse 24 is pertinent to our present discussion. Here it is said that the writer develops the potentialities that lie in being upheld by God. In the future God will guide his child well and wisely along the tortuous paths of life, according to the plans which He has devised for His own; and after a life of such divine guidance "there will come acceptance into His immediate presence in glory." Leupold identifies this glory with heaven and again notes that the same verb is used in this instance that was employed by the holy writer with regard to Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:3,5,9,10). Since the psalmist did not expect to escape death, this statement must point to a resurrection.[80]

Leupold shares the views of most exegetes that Daniel 12:2 is a clear and unambiguous statement of the resurrection faith of Israel. It will serve no useful purpose therefore to repeat his interpretation in detail. It should be noted, however, that he does not agree with many contemporary Lutheran theologians who maintain that Daniel

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[79] Ibid., p. 531.

[80] Ibid., p. 530.

12:2 presents the first totally clear statement on the resurrection of the individual.[81]

Francis Pieper, who wrote his Christliche Dogmatik at a time when scholars such as Christoph Ernst Luthardt and Andrew George Voigt were propagating the view that the resurrection faith was a gradual development among Old Testament believers,[82] sought to defend the traditional position that the Holy Scripture records promises of the resurrection even from earliest time. He presents the following arguments: (a) Christ Himself indicated in Matthew 22 that the Old Testament contains clear references to the resurrection of the dead when He charged the

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[81] Herbert C. Leupold, Exposition of Daniel (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1949), pp. 533f. He outlines his views thus: "Some interpreters find in these verses 'the earliest passage where the belief (of the resurrection) is unambiguously set forth' (Bevan). If this is to be understood in the sense that the doctrine of immortality was a late development in the faith of Israel, we cannot agree with the statement, for Ps. 16:9-11; Job 19:25-27; Isa. 26:19, rightly interpreted, already teach the resurrection of the body even as many other passages, such as Gen. 25:8, give evidence of the general belief in immortality among the patriarchs at a very early date. We personally doubt that there was ever a time when the faith of God's people did not include the doctrines of immortality and the resurrection, though it is hard for us to determine with what measure of clearness they were revealed. These are not truths that the religious genius of Israel began to discern for the first time in the days of Daniel or even as late as the Maccabees."

[82] Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by Walter W. F. Albrecht (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, 535.

Sadducees with ignorance of the Scripture (verse 29) because they denied the resurrection of the dead, even though they had only the Old Testament. (b) Jesus pointed to a large number of Old Testament texts which teach the resurrection when He asked the Sadducees:

> Have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (verses 31-32).

From these words of Jesus, Pieper concludes that wherever in the Old Testament we find the divine promise of grace, "I will be thy God" (at the institution of circumcision, etc.: Genesis 17:7; 26:24; 28:13; Ezekiel 37:27, etc.), the resurrection of the dead is taught. (c) Genesis 3:15 is the earliest reference to a conquering of death. When the crushing of the serpent's head was announced, the destruction of the devil's work and rule was also promised, and with it the abolition of death since death came as the result of sin introduced into the world by Satan. In support of his position, Pieper quotes Luther's comment regarding Genesis 3:15:

> This passage at once includes deliverance from the Law, sin, and death and reveals a clear and sure hope of the resurrection and restoration in the hereafter. For if the serpent's head is to be crushed, certainly death, too, must be done away with and destroyed.[83]

Pieper concludes by saying: "The Christian faith is as ancient as the first promise of Christ, Gen. 3:15, and in-

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[83] Ibid.

cludes deliverance from death along with deliverance from the guilt of sin."[84]

Thus it is evident from contemporary Lutheran literature that there is, on the one hand, a general acceptance of the view that the Old Testament contains clear references to the resurrection of the dead, including a resurrection unto everlasting life and unto everlasting damnation. But, on the other hand, it is equally clear that there are diverse opinions particularly regarding the origin of this fundamental doctrine. Some maintain that the resurrection belongs to the basic teachings of the Holy Scripture, that it was revealed in simplest form in the Garden of Eden, and that it was embraced by the earliest believers. Others consider the resurrection faith a gradual development which did not appear in its complete, unambiguous form until the time of Daniel which they usually place in the Hellenistic period.

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[84] Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

MAN'S FINAL DESTINY

That God created humanity with an everlasting destiny is generally granted by contemporary Lutheran theologians; that He intended the ultimate goal of man's existence to be life in His presence with the enjoyment of a blissful fellowship between Creator and creature is nowhere denied; that revelation relative to everlasting life and eternal death is to be found already in the Old Testament is not disputed. But there have been different views expressed with reference to the origin of these teachings, and particularly regarding the time that they appeared in the writings of the Old Testament prophets and holy men.

Sigmund Mowinckel maintains that beliefs involving eternal rewards and punishments developed only in later Judaism. He grants that there was among the people of God "a future hope" which included the national, religious, and moral restoration of God's people after the exile, but this hope centered solely in the things of this present life rather than in those of the world beyond. He contends that even "Deutero-Isaiah" does not yet present a true eschatology. "We miss the conception of a definite end to the present order, and of a new world of an essentially

different character from this one."[1] Mowinckel asserts that this thought-pattern needed time to develop, and what is more, something new had to be added. "The Jewish future hope became eschatological in the strict sense when it was linked to a dualistic view of the world,"[2] which sharply distinguished between "this age" and "the age to come." In this aeon the kingdom of Satan prevails, with misfortunes and evils of every kind. But the coming aeon will be the very reverse of this, "the wholly Other." In it God will overthrow Satan's dominion, destroy all his evil angels and demons, release the sinner, end all sin, misfortune and suffering, and establish His kingdom. Then the pious will receive as their reward all happiness and bliss "on a re-created earth or in a realm beyond, in paradise, or in heaven."[3] The devil, his angels, and the wicked will be thrown into Gehenna and suffer eternal punishment.

Mowinckel maintains that this dualistic view of life and of the world was worked out in the course of the earlier Hellenistic period, "no doubt under the influence of Persian religion which was dualistic from the beginning."[4]

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[1] Sigmund Mowinckel, He that Cometh, translated by G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), pp. 153f.

[2] Ibid., p. 263.

[3] Ibid., p. 264.

[4] Ibid.

But there was still another factor which was instrumental in the development of eschatology in later Judaism; namely, apocalyptic, which Mowinckel describes "as inspired learning or revealed theology, with eschatology as its centre." Circles of "prophetic disciples" would read the ancient prophets in the light of the future hope, interpreting, for instance, the predictions about Assyria in the book of Isaiah as referring to the last age. Thus also the prophecies concerning Gog and Magog developed into the idea of the "last great universal tribulation, when all Satan's powers, all the spiritual forces of evil under heaven, would assemble to destroy God's people."[5] Towards the end of the present age, sin, wickedness and misfortune will reach its climax. The powers of nature will fail. There will be bad seasons and poor crops. Ominous happenings of every kind will take place, signs in the sun and in the moon.[6] More and more the end was thought of as a judgment, not, however, in the ancient Jewish sense of victory over God's enemies, but in the forensic sense of a judicial process "in which God Himself, 'the Ancient of Days,' will sit in judgment on men, angels, and demons, and finally will pass sentence on Satan himself."[7] Both

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[5] Ibid., p. 266.

[6] Ibid., p. 272.

[7] Ibid., p. 273.

the living and the dead must appear for judgment. Therefore the dead will rise from their graves. After resurrection and judgment, the pious enter upon everlasting life (Daniel 12:2). The new world appears (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22, etc.). This means not only the new age, but a real creation of a new heaven and a new earth.[8] Mowinckel remarks that later Judaism understood this literally, and therefore made reference to a destruction of the world by fire, preceding the new creation of the world. He thinks that this idea of a world conflagration is Persian in origin.[9]

Mowinckel finds it significant, furthermore, that the new life is not thought of as a purely spiritual one, as would have been the case in Greek or Gnostic thought. It is rather a perfecting of physical, bodily existence on this earth, "a restoration of the perfection which existed at creation, a transfiguration of bodily life, not the abolition of it."[10] He claims that this conception brings out the ancient Israelite realism, with its healthy opposition to the purely spiritual. "The transcendental and superterrestrial never becomes the merely spiritual, ab-

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[8] Ibid., p. 274.

[9] Ibid., p. 275.

[10] Ibid.

stract, invisible, intangible, and empty." In biblical religion the "wholly other never becomes that which can be expressed only by negations."[11] He grants that in later Judaism a process of spiritualization appears in which this "corporeal eschatology" is blended with conceptions of a purely heavenly paradise, "and a state of bliss for the souls of the dead, which begins after death, in the abodes of the righteous, the holy, the elect in heaven." But he thinks that this development is the result of Persian influence.[12]

Artur Weiser, in his discussion of man's eternal destiny, repeatedly places emphasis on man's communion with God. On the basis of the materials available one receives the impression that he does not concern himself so much with the historical development of this concept in Israel, but rather with its significance for the child of God. Already in this life the pious are in communion with the Lord, and in the hereafter this blessed relationship will be experienced in fullest measure. Frequently he cautions against the attempt to describe this experience in greater detail. He notes that Job is content with the assurance that he will see God and does not seek, in frivolous curiosity, to penetrate farther into the divine

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 276.

mystery.[13] Commenting on Psalm 16:11, "Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures forevermore," he remarks that even after death the psalmist will live a life in communion with God. "The future form of this existence is at present still hidden from the poet." But God will remove the veil from that mystery and "then the psalmist will be able to share in the perfect fulness of joy in God's presence and in blessed communion with Him."[14] Again, in his interpretation of Psalm 49, Weiser seeks to wave aside all minor details and come to grips with the real issue when he notes that it is this relationship to God which, in the view of the psalmist, represents man's true life. This is why he may cherish the hope that God will redeem him from death and by receiving him, will "hereafter establish a living communion between himself and the poet which will be even more intimate than the one which already exists at present."[15]

In his interpretation of Psalm 71, especially the words "afterwards thou wilt receive me to glory," he asserts that it is God who guarantees the glory, and the life lived in communion with him is the basis on which this indestruct-

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[13]Artur Weiser, "Das Buch Hiob," Das Alte Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhöck und Ruprecht, 1951), XIII, 151.

[14]Artur Weiser, "The Psalms," The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 178.

[15]Ibid., pp. 389f.

ible and victorious assurance of faith can become a living reality.[16] Weiser feels that it is totally beside the point to inquire whether the poet conceived of the overcoming of death "as a 'translation' (cf. Enoch, Genesis 5:24) or as eternal life or as a resurrection after the manner of the hope developed in the mystery cults of his time."[17] How this will all come to pass is not the concern of the psalmist. He simply allows the divine mystery to remain a mystery.

While Gerhard von Rad in his Old Testament Theology does not write at any great length about a life after death to be spent in the presence of God, he does make a number of significant statements which have a bearing particularly on the "development" of the Old Testament belief in everlasting life. He allows for the possibility that such a belief existed in Israel at a comparatively early date, for he suggests that the translation of Enoch (Genesis 5:24f.) "gives clear expression to the idea that Yahweh had other realms at his disposal, and had the power and liberty to translate men into them."[18] The verb laqah, he says, "is a theological term for translation into otherworldly

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[16] Ibid., p. 514.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, translated by D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), I, 406.

spheres of existence (2 Kings 2:10; Ps. 49:15)."[19] In his commentary on Genesis 5:24 he then remarks that "this passage . . . gives the impression of being only a brief reference to a much more extensive tradition"; after which he concludes that "it is an open question whether much of the apocalyptic Enoch tradition is not really very old and precedes in time (not follows) the Priestly narrative."[20]

Furthermore, since laqah was a terminus technicus for translation into otherworldly spheres of existence, von Rad interprets the psalms which employ this term as having direct reference to a future existence. Concerning Psalm 49:15 he asserts that this statement can hardly be referred to anything other than a life after death. In a footnote he adds: "To assume that Psalm 49 only speaks of a preservation from an evil end is to break down the whole antithesis of the psalm."[21] And the same is true, he says, of Psalm 73.

Von Rad readily concedes, however, that the apocalyptic literature presents a much clearer description of the future life. Daniel 12:1-3 declares that some of the dead shall arise to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. The difference between the psalms

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[19]Gerhard von Rad, Genesis: A Commentary, translated by John H. Marks (London: SCM Press, LTD, 1961), p. 70.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, p. 406.

and the apocalyptic writings in regard to the life after death is quite apparent. "In the psalms," says von Rad, "it is the word of Yahweh addressed to the individual in a wholly personal way." There was as yet no generally accepted hope in something beyond. In the apocalyptic literature, however, the great events of the end overtake the whole world.[22]

Otto Procksch finds a promise of everlasting life offered to mankind even before the time of Enoch. In his opinion it existed already in the garden of Eden. While it is true that essentially only God is everlasting, "the tree of life indicates that according to God's order of creation man was not to be excluded from eternal life."[23] And even when this original plan was frustrated by man's fall into sin, a new way was provided by the messianic Servant of Yahweh, according to which mortal man was still to enjoy communion with his Maker. There is, however, this difference: the everlasting life to which man now arises is "an other-worldly state." Procksch strongly emphasizes the fact that man in his present sinful condition cannot see God face to face and live (Exodus 33:20). Even Isaiah, the mightiest of the prophets, feared that he must die since he had gazed upon the most holy Lord (Isaiah 6:5).[24]

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[22] Ibid., p. 407.

[23] Otto Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1950), p. 705.

[24] Ibid., pp. 706f.

When God does permit Himself to be seen by men, that vision indicates supreme favor on His part, which brings with it life rather than death (Genesis 12:6; 18:1ff.; Judges 6:12ff.,24).

Among other passages in Scripture which imply the promise of communion with God and everlasting life, Procksch lists the following: (a) Isaiah's prophecy concerning Immanuel. He argues that, since Isaiah expected the birth of Immanuel to occur in the near future, he evidently hoped to share in the blessings of the messianic era. That is confirmed, he says, also by the "Christmas prophecy (9:1-6)" where the birth of Immanuel is said to signal the opening of the messianic era in which also the prophet and his disciples are to have part for Isaiah specifically writes: "Unto us a child is born."[25] (b) Post-exilic prophecies such as Job 19:25-27. Procksch remarks that already in chapter 14, at the end of his first speech, Job ponders the possibility that God may allow him to die only in order to raise him up again after His anger is past and to recall him to fellowship (14:13). Although this hope soon vanished, it broke forth anew in chapter 19, verses 25 to 27 where Job gives expression to the conviction that he shall indeed see God. Procksch says that this vision of which Job speaks, must refer to everlasting

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[25] Ibid., p. 708.

life.[26] (c) Passages in the Psalms. "The question of eternal life," says the writer, "has also excited the psalmists." He considers it significant that the passages which here come under consideration contain text-critical problems. Therefore opinions are divided regarding their precise meaning. One school of thought affirms that the psalms contain statements of faith concerning a life after death; another school of thought denies this. Procksch shares the view of the former group. In his opinion Psalms 1, 11, 16, 17, 49, 73, and 139 make reference to a condition after death in which the godly will enjoy communion with Yahweh. In his interpretation of Psalm 49 he remarks: For the pious there is a deliverance from death, not however, in the manner that "Enoch and Elijah were snatched away; but here one is to think of a victory over death followed by a new life."[27] With reference to Psalm 1:5, "The wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous," he suggests that the judgment spoken of here is that which will occur on the last day when the righteous and the wicked will finally be separated. The congregation of the godly will survive the judgment, but the way of the ungodly will lead to destruction.[28] In Psalm 11 a similar thought

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., p. 709.

[28] Ibid.

is expressed. Verse six states that "on the wicked Yahweh will rain coals of fire and brimstone" as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. The upright, however, "shall behold his face." Procksch explains: "Since this beholding God will take place after judgment has been spoken on the godless, it must be meant in an eschatological sense."[29] In Psalm 17:13 the holy writer calls upon Yahweh to exercise judgment against the ungodly. He then expresses the confident hope that while they shall die, he will remain alive (verse 15). Not that he shall be snatched away from the approaching judgment, but after the judgment he shall behold God. He shall gaze upon his form, which Moses alone here upon earth was privileged to see (Numbers 12:8), and when he awakes he shall be satisfied in beholding it. "This awakening," says Procksch, "cannot simply refer to an average morning but only to the sleep of death," concerning which the word <u>heqis</u> is used also in the Apocalypse (Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2). "This is the only natural interpretation, but many shun it because they do not wish to recognize resurrection thoughts in the psalms."[30] Psalm 139:18 also speaks of such an awakening after death when it states: "When I awake, I am still with thee." The Targum interprets this as pointing forward to an awakening

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[29] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 710.

[30] <u>Ibid</u>.

in a future world.[31]

Procksch classifies Psalms 16 and 73 as two of the "most profound" writings in the Old Testament, dealing with everlasting life. In the first of these poems, he says, the author portrays the blessedness of fellowship with God in most exquisite pictures. He indeed knows the joy in the Lord which removes all complaint. In the last two verses he contrasts the underworld with the path of life: "Thou does not give me up to sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit. Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Procksch contends that the path of life here stands in contrast to the entrance way into the realm of death, which is the underworld. The path of life is not life itself but it is the way leading to that goal. "Therefore standing in opposition to the nether-world must be the celestial life in which there is fulness of joy experienced in God's presence and lasting forever."[32]

In a similar manner Procksch interprets Psalm 73 which he calls "the most powerful testimony to fellowship with God." The psalmist is troubled with the question, "Why do the godly have to suffer while the wicked prosper?" But he sees a preliminary solution in the orders of God according to which the wicked will fail, i.e. they will face God's

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[31] Ibid., p. 711.

[32] Ibid., p. 712.

judgment after which they will pass away. On the other hand, the psalmist will always remain with God, who holds him by the hand, guides him with His counsel, and "carries him away upon the path of glory (Genesis 5:25; 2 Kings 2:9)."[33] Procksch describes the glory which the pious shall inherit in these words:

> Then the mighty eruption (Ausbruch) of blessedness in communion with God, in which heaven and earth may pass away, body and reason may fail, but God will remain our possession in all eternity.[34]

Procksch calls this verse "the highest point to which the theology of the Old Testament attains."[35]

Alfred von Rohr Sauer, discussing the promise of everlasting life in the Old Testament, lists four sets of passages which refer to future bliss in the presence of God: (a) Those texts which speak of people whose names are written in the book of life. He notes, for example, that Isaiah, speaking of the faithful remnant, declared that they would be called holy, "everyone that was written among the living in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 4:3). Furthermore, Moses, while pleading with Yahweh that He might forgive Israel after their sin of worshipping the golden calf, presumed to say to the Lord: "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin--good; but if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

hast written" (Exodus 32:32). Of particular interest is the event when Daniel offered the comforting assurance: "At that time Thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be written in the book" (Daniel 12:1).[36]

(b) Passages in which the prophets used the picture of Paradise to describe conditions that will prevail in the glorious kingdom of the future. Among the passages quoted is Isaiah 51:3 where the prophet states:

> For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and voice of song.

Also Ezekiel 47:1-12, of which we shall quote only the last verse:

> And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing.[37]

(c) Passages which speak of an eternal, joyful communion with God, e.g. Hosea 2:19f., where the prophet describes eternal fellowship with God under the figure of a betrothal. Through the mouth of Hosea Yahweh promises His

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[36] Alfred von Rohr Sauer, "The Eschatological Prophecies of the Old Testament and their Pertinence to Events of the Present Day," Proceedings of the Twenty-Ninth Convention of the Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (1951), 40. See also Herbert C. Leupold, Exposition of Daniel (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1949), p. 528.

[37] Sauer, op. cit., p. 40.

people:

> And I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord. . . .

Sauer states that Isaiah implied such lasting fellowship with God when He assured the spiritual Israel of a glorious change of name, saying:

> You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My delight is in her, and your land Married, for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. . . . As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you (Isaiah 62:4-5).[38]

The eternal fellowship with God was also pictured as a festive banquet, as is evident from Isaiah 25:6-8:

> On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. . . . He will swallow up death forever.

Sauer points out furthermore that the Psalmist had this blessed fellowship with God in mind "when he spoke of God's taking or receiving him to glory, and of God's being his portion forever (Psalm 73:24,26)."[39] (d) Passages in which the "concept of eternal life in the Old Testament is characterized by the absence of sin and evil."[40] In Isaiah 1:25,26, the Lord, speaking through the prophet, declares:

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., p. 41.

[40] Ibid.

> I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye, and remove all your alloy. . . . Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

And in Isaiah 60:21 the Lord promises: "Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever."[41] This condition of sinlessness is described further in Zephaniah 3:13 where it is stated that

> those who are left in Israel, they shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall pasture and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

The views held by Herbert Leupold regarding everlasting life in the Old Testament have been presented in the previous chapter which dealt with the resurrection. We shall not repeat them, therefore, at this point.[42]

Francis Pieper, in his discussion of everlasting life, quotes almost exclusively from the New Testament. The two passages which he takes from the Old Testament are Psalm 16:11 and Daniel 12:3. He employs the first of these to show that, from the positive point of view, everlasting life will consist in this that the "blessed" will be "filled with unutterable bliss."[43] He quotes Daniel 12:3 in connection with the degrees of glory and makes this

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[41]Note that this verse appears in a context which describes a day "when the sun shall be no more your light by day."

[42]Supra, pp. 153-156.

[43]Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by Walter W. F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, 552.

comment:

> There are no degrees of bliss, because all the blessed are perfectly happy, that is, every one of them will find full contentment for himself in beholding God. However, Scripture does teach that there are degrees of glory . . . corresponding to differences of work and fidelity here on earth. This teaching has been summarized in the Latin verse: "Omnibus una salus sanctis, sed gloria dispar," and it is proved by Scripture texts such as . . . Dan. 12:3.[44]

In a footnote he adds: "In Dan. 12:3 those who have led many to a knowledge of salvation and to righteousness are specially mentioned among the risen saints."[45]

Finally, it should be noted that Pieper's primary emphasis in his discussion of the nature of everlasting life rests on a point that has been stressed by numerous Old Testament theologians, namely, that the bliss of heaven consists in beholding God face to face and living in His presence forever.[46]

Albert H. Schwermann, writing in the Abiding Word, employs passages from the Old Testament in support of three major points: (a) In heaven there will be freedom from sin and from all of its consequences. God "will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord . . . will wipe away all tears from off all faces" (Isaiah 25:8). "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee

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[44] Ibid. See also Leupold, op. cit., pp. 532f.

[45] Pieper, op. cit., p. 553.

[46] Ibid., p. 550.

away" (Isaiah 35:10). "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them" (Isaiah 49:10). "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isaiah 60:20).[47] (b) "The heaven which God has in prospect for us is not only a place where we shall be delivered from all evil, but also a place of unspeakable joy."[48] The psalmist says of God: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). The prophet Isaiah writes:

> The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrows and sighings shall flee away. (Isaiah 35:10)

Schwermann claims that the psalmist refers to this same joy of heaven which we shall experience after the sorrows of this life when he exclaims in Psalm 126:5,6:

> They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.[49]

(c) In heaven we shall see God. Job exultantly rejoices when speaking of his resurrection: "In my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:26).[50]

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[47] Albert H. Schwermann, "The Last Things," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), III, 123f.

[48] Ibid., p. 125.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., p. 126.

Edward C. Pautsch, in chapter XXVII of the Abiding Word, reflects the views expressed in various doctrinal essays[51] produced by theological leaders of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in past generations. Because of the nature of his sources it is important for us to note that Pautsch presents the following points:

1. "The thought of eternal life is fundamental to the entire Old Testament and finds expression already in the account of man's creation."[52] He asserts furthermore that "only then could it truly be said that man was created in the image of God if he was created for eternal life; for God is immortal." He maintains also that the words which the Lord spoke to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17) definitely imply that "if man did not eat, he would not die, but live forever." Finally, after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, God promised the world a Redeemer who was to deliver them from the power of Satan, and, Pautsch says, that included his power of depriving them of eternal life, of eternal separation from God. "The promised Redeemer would restore to them the hope of life eternal in

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[51]Edward C. Pautsch, "Eternal Life," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), I, 561. When this article was written, the writer was pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Athens, Illinois.

[52]Ibid., p. 563. See also Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 143.

everlasting communion with God."[53]

2. The translation of Enoch and Elijah into heaven teaches the certainty of life eternal as a gift of God to His believing children.[54]

3. "The statement so often repeated at the death of the Old Testament believers: 'He was gathered unto his people' (Genesis 25:8,17; 35:29; 49:29; Numbers 20:24; 27:13), implys . . . the teaching of an eternal life."[55] By way of explanation he adds:

> Certainly they could not be gathered to their people if that people no longer existed. None less than our Savior Himself argues thus when from the words of God spoken of the departed Patriarchs: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6) He makes the inference: "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," thereby affirming that these three were already in eternal life.[56]

4. There are a number of passages which indicate how clearly the Old Testament saints understood the doctrine of everlasting life. Dying Jacob exclaims with the assurance of faith: "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord" (Genesis 49:18). David confidently states: "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."[57] In addition to these,

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[53] Pautsch, op. cit., p. 563.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., pp. 563f.

[57] Ibid.

Pautsch lists also the following passages: Psalm 17:15; Job 19:25-26; Isaiah 25:8; 26:19-20; and Daniel 12:2.

Taito Kantonen, like many other theologians, draws the doctrine of everlasting life almost exclusively from passages in the New Testament.[58]

The doctrine of eternal damnation in the Old Testament receives even less emphasis from contemporary Lutheran theologians, the reason being, as is generally recognized, that the Old Testament scriptures contain comparatively few passages which clearly refer to eternal death. Sigmund Mowinckel discusses this subject very briefly, merely noting that there were "different views concerning the fate and the location of the damned." The only passage in the Old Testament which he quotes is Isaiah 66:24:

> They shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

In his discussion of this verse, Mowinckel refers to Gehenna and describes it as the "fire, which is fairly clearly distinguished from Hades, and located in the valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem, where children have been sacrificed." But he states that Gehenna can also be conceived in "cosmic

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[58]Taito A. Kantonen, Life after Death (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1962), pp. 46-54. See also Taito A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954), pp. 108ff.

terms," as belonging purely to the world beyond, and as always having been in existence. In his opinion, the Persian ideas have here been fused with Jewish teaching about the valley of Hinnom or of Jehoshaphat, where the heathen powers will be destroyed, and apostates will be punished with endless torture.[59]

Joachim Jeremias, writing in the Theologisches Wörterbuch, adds this observation that the threats of judgment which were spoken against the valley of Hinnom in Jeremiah 7:32 and 19:6 supplied the motivation for this ill-reputed valley after the second century B.C., being considered the entrance way to hell. Soon thereafter the name gehinnom was applied to hell itself.[60]

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[59] Mowinckel, op. cit., pp. 276f.

[60] Joachim Jeremias, "γέεννα," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 655f. See also "Hereafter," Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 460. Here the author comments: "Gehenna was originally the name of a deep, narrow glen southwest of Jerusalem which was so called from the cries of little children who were thrown into the fiery arms of Moloch. After these horrible sacrifices had been abolished by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:10), the Jews cast into it not only all manner of refuse, but even the dead bodies of animals and of unburied criminals to be burned. From this defilement and former desecration, Gehenna was applied to the abode of the wicked after death. It is so used in Matt. 5:22,29; 10:28; Mark 9:45,45; Luke 12:5, and James 3:6."

CHAPTER VII

SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

As it was pointed out in the introduction, the purpose of this dissertation is not to offer a critique of contemporary Lutheran views regarding Old Testament eschatology. That task would require far more intensive examination of problems in exegesis as well as in Biblical introduction. This present study is intended rather to offer a composite picture of what might be called trends in contemporary Lutheran thinking with respect to certain important questions which are now occupying the attention of church bodies the world over. It is hoped that seeing Lutheran opinion in composite form may stimulate more exhaustive study of the Scripture so that in the end the truth as it is revealed to us in God's holy Word may be served.

A study of this type does, of course, lead one to a number of interesting and, I believe, significant observations. First, one finds clear indication of the fact that on the contemporary theological scene, there are broad areas of agreement and of disagreement. Looking at the areas of agreement, one discovers that:

1. Lutheran theologians both in Europe and in America generally hold that the Israelites believed in an existence

after death. Death is not to be equated with non-existence. Even those theologians who insist that man is an indivisible unit, and that death is a stern reality which affects the entire person, indicate that they do not thereby favor a doctrine of annihilation according to which man ceases to exist at the time of death.[1]

2. Lutheran theologians also agree that the nature of the afterlife is not as clearly defined in the Old Testament as it is in the New, since the light of revelation did not burn as brightly in those early centuries as it did later on when Christ brought life and immortality to light. According to the Old Testament Scripture, all men, both good and bad, are pictured as entering Sheol at the time of death (Genesis 37:35; Job 7:9; 14:13; Psalm 89:48, etc.), a land of forgetfulness and silence, a place where there is no praise of God.[2]

3. It is generally recognized that the destiny of the individual, however, received less attention in the Old Testament than did the future of the nation. Israel's certainty regarding her future centered in her covenant-relationship to Yahweh.[3] This gave rise to her expectation

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[1]Elmer E. Flack, "The Teachings and Institutions of the Old Testament," Old Testament Commentary, edited by Herbert C. Alleman and Elmer E. Flack (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 110,

[2]"Hereafter," Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 460.

[3]Paul Althaus, Die Letzten Dinge (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1949), p. 12.

of a day of the Lord which would spell judgment for all of God's foes, also those within Israel. But more important, it also gave promise of the advent of a messianic kingdom which is described in terms of peace, prosperity, and communion with God.[4]

4. There is a consensus among Lutheran theologians that the Old Testament, more particularly, the Book of Daniel, contains references to the coming of a godless personage who later was given the name "Antichrist."

5. Of special significance is the importance which Lutheran theologians generally attach to the Old Testament belief in the resurrection. While scholars concede that in the Old Testament the destiny of the individual received comparatively little attention, and even then Sheol often stood forebodingly in the foreground, nevertheless it is the consensus that Sheol was not regarded as constituting man's final destiny. Frequently emphasis is placed on communion with God both in this life and in the next; and more important still is the fact that liberal and conservative scholars find in the Old Testament writings definite evidence of a doctrine of the resurrection.

6. Finally, there is agreement among contemporary Lutheran theologians that, according to the Old Testament,

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[4] Sigmund Mowinckel, He that Cometh, translated by G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), pp. 146f.

God made man with an everlasting destiny, that He intended the ultimate goal of man's existence to be life in His presence with the enjoyment of blissful fellowship, that all men, however, will not attain to that reward of grace, since according to Daniel 12 some will rise to shame and everlasting contempt.

But in these areas of theology there are also unresolved issues, which are consequently the subject of continued discussion. The most important issues being debated by contemporary Lutheran theologians are the following:

1. The nature of death in the Old Testament. Is it the separation of soul and body, according to which the body dies but the soul lives on? Or, is death "the unconditional end of the body-spirit existence?"[5] Is it correct according to Scripture to say that "the whole person, body and soul, is involved in death?"[6]

2. The nature of the intermediate state. Does the Old Testament teach that all individuals, good and bad, at the time of death enter Sheol, a dark rendezvous in the depths of the earth where all the dead spend a shadowy, semi-conscious existence in a state of gloom and depression?[7] Or, is there something in the Sheol passages which

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[5]Taito A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954), p. 33.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., p. 38.

is customarily associated with Gehenna? Furthermore, do the statements in the Old Testament which portray Sheol as a gloomy abode actually express the normal conviction of the Israelite, or do they merely describe the anxieties and fears of individual Israelites as they faced the grim fact of death? And is the true hope of God's people concerning the afterlife eventually expressed rather in such passages as Psalm 16:9-11; 23:4; 49:15; 73:24; and Job 19:25-27?

3. The identity of the Antichrist. Is the pope the "great horn" mentioned by Daniel (7:24-25), in the sense that there can be no other in addition to him? Or, is it a dangerous oversimplification to identify anyone as the "great horn" or the Antichrist?

4. The nature of the Messianic Kingdom described in Isaiah 2:4; 11:6-9; 13f; 65:17-25; Jeremiah 3:17; Micah 5:9ff.; Ezekiel 34:25ff.; Jeremiah 31:31-34, etc. Are these passages intended to promise the nation of Israel an era of unprecedented prosperity and physical blessings? Or, do these passages point forward primarily to the spiritual heritage of those who recognize in Jesus their all-sufficient Savior? Do any of these passages give promise of a millennial kingdom?

5. The origin of Israel's resurrection faith. Is the doctrine of the resurrection of post-exilic origin, or can early traces of this faith be found even among the

events that took place in the Garden of Eden? What, if any, was the extent of foreign influence in the formulation of Israel's resurrection faith?

6. Man's final destiny. Was heaven and hell unknown prior to the exile, or did the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, the translation of Enoch, etc., already imply everlasting life for God's children?

These are the major areas of discussion on the subject of eschatology in contemporary Lutheran literature; and as theologians and scholars have sought to supply the answer to the questions, they have aligned themselves in various schools of thought. Holding perhaps the most liberal position are scholars such as Sigmund Mowinckel, Harris Birkeland, John Lindblom, and Werner Vollborn. It will be remembered that Mowinckel espouses the view that in Israel all true eschatology is post-exilic and came into Israelite circles with the adoption of a dualistic world view under the influence of Persia. He is known particularly for the emphasis which he has placed on the New Year's festival, maintaining that all of Israel's hope associated with the day of Yahweh had its beginning in the religious experiences connected with the festival of Yahweh's enthronement which occurred on New Year's Day. He rejects the traditional view that the concept of the Messiah and the Messianic Kingdom came into existence when God proclaimed through the bearers of His revelation a series of messianic promises.

He says that the Messiah does not appear in Jewish expectations until the last century before Christ. Robert Marshall, in reviewing Mowinckel's He that Cometh, makes this significant statement: "Mowinckel cannot tolerate any attempt to write history to suit the presuppositions of a dogmatic theology. In his exegesis of 'messianic' passages, he never follows the orthodox interpretation."[8] In his lengthy treatment of the Isaiah servant songs, Mowinckel rejects the messianic possibilities. The suffering servant was a prophet. The mother of Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 was the wife of Ahaz. The child was not a messiah but a king.[9] As noted above, Harris Birkeland adopts the views of the more liberal scholars with respect to the resurrection of the dead; and Vollborn shows liberal tendencies when he takes issue with Karl Budde's statement that man was created immortal.

Representing a position which is more generally held by European liberal scholars is Gerhard von Rad. In some respects his writings reflect the turn toward a more conservative position which has taken place in Old Testament theology. He points with some satisfaction to the "convergence . . . which has come about during the last twenty or thirty years between introductory studies and Biblical

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[8]Robert Marshall, Review of He that Cometh, by Sigmund Mowinckel, The Lutheran Quarterly, IX (1957), 277.

[9]Mowinckel, op. cit., pp. 117f.

theology." He remarks that it has not been so very long ago that a theology of the Old Testament "could learn very little beyond questions of date and of this and that in matters of form from those introductory studies which were working mainly on the lines of literary criticism."[10] That, however, has been changed.

Von Rad, in accord with most liberal scholars, holds that there occurred in Israel a development of doctrine. Therefore, he maintains that Old Testament theology should "start with a study of the few ancient credal statements which became constitutive for the Israel of all ages."[11] Not that a history of these fundamental statements should be reconstructed, for their date and place of origin can no longer be determined; instead these materials should be allowed to stand in the context in which Israel arranged it. In this way, he says, "there comes more clearly into our field of vision . . . those ever new attempts to make the divine acts of salvation relevant for every new age and day."[12] For this reason von Rad does not favor "a theology which attempts to grasp the content of the Old Testament under the heading of various doctrines (the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man, etc.)." He claims that

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[10]Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, translated by D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), I, v.

[11]Ibid., I, vi.

[12]Ibid.

such a treatment of Old Testament thought "cannot do justice to these credal statements which are completely tied up with history, or to this grounding of Israel's faith upon a few divine acts of salvation."[13]

In his discussion of eschatology, he strongly emphasizes the importance which the cult had in the thinking of Israel. It represented man's relationship to God, and because death severed this relationship and excluded man from the cultic sphere of Yahweh, death was a most bitter experience for the Israelite. It will be remembered also that von Rad placed comparatively little emphasis on foreign influence in the formulation of Israel's resurrection faith. Passages like Psalm 49:15 and 73:25 "can hardly refer to anything other than a life after death." Still only the apocalyptic writings bring the final breakthrough and teach a general resurrection.

Paul Althaus shares the basic views held by liberal theologians, but he differs from the majority chiefly in the degree to which he takes issue with the traditional views concerning eschatology. He is particularly vocal on the subject of death, asserting that the "theology of death must be distinguished not only from the idealistic, mystical understanding of death, but also from the traditional theological doctrine." He adheres closely to the opinion that

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13 Ibid.

"death affects the whole person."[14] Furthermore, speaking of the intermediate state, he faults traditional theology because it regards death as the entrance into heaven. Such a view, he says, "does not do full justice to the meaning of death, resurrection, and judgment. . . . It places too much stress on the bliss of the individual."[15] Karl Heim is in substantial agreement with Althaus on these issues.[16]

One of the more conservative of contemporary Lutheran scholars on the European scene is Otto Procksch. That becomes particularly evident in his views regarding the Old Testament doctrine of the resurrection and everlasting life. He traces the beginnings of eschatological thought to the Garden of Eden. Already there it appears that Yahweh created man with a destiny which was not to be death but life in the presence of God. Procksch, however, does accept some of the basic results of historical criticism such as the dual authorship of Isaiah, the late dating of Daniel, etc.[17]

But what are the trends of thought which are appearing on the American scene? One who seeks the answer to this important question will soon discover that there are

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[14]Paul Althaus, op. cit., pp. 80ff.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Karl Heim, Die Gemeinde der Auferstandenen (Munich: Neubau Verlag, 1949), pp. 215ff.

[17]Otto Procksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1950), pp. 706, 710.

considerable difficulties involved in research of this type. Source material is somewhat limited. Few monographs have been written on eschatological subjects. Even articles in Lutheran theological journals are not as plentiful as one might wish. Much of the material that has been published deals with eschatology from the point of view of the New Testament alone, or it discusses the historical aspect. Many professors and teachers who hold important chairs at colleges and seminaries have not given expression to their points of view in writing. These are a few of the difficulties which confront the student doing research in this area, the result being that answers can be only limited in scope and only relatively accurate.

However, working with the materials available, one may classify Lutheran theologians in America in the following five groups:

1. Those who in their writings reflect views which are similar to European thought patterns. They may not be in full agreement with any one scholar, but they indicate a strong sympathy for the more liberal views that are being expressed in Europe and are critical of the traditional conservative position. In this classification one might include such theologians as Taito Kantonen, Elmer Flack, Raymond Stamm, George Knight, etc. Kantonen apparently has been influenced by the thinking of men such as Oscar Cullmann, Paul Althaus, Karl Heim, Carl Stange,

Walter Künneth, etc. At the same time it is quite evident that he does not share all of the views of Althaus and Heim regarding death and particularly the intermediate state.

2. Those who have expressed more moderate views while still embracing some of the basic opinions current among European scholars. In this classification one might include such theological leaders as Herbert C. Alleman, Otto W. Heick, Clifford A. Nelson, etc.

3. Those who defend the conservative point of view although they have acquired a thorough understanding of more liberal European theological thinking, and in their writings seek to take into account what is being said by others. Among these are Old Testament specialists such as Harold L. Creager, Henry C. Leupold, Alfred von Rohr Sauer, Alexander Heidel, etc. While grappling with the important problems that are confronting the theological world today, they express views that are farther removed from the more liberal trends espoused in Europe.

4. Those who support the traditional point of view and have entered into actual debate with those holding a more liberal point of view. Among these are men such as R. H. Altus, William Beck, H. Hamann, and Edmund Smits.

5. Those who hold a conservative opinion but state their views in a less polemical and more positive fashion. In this classification one might include such writers as

Theodore Laetsch, Albert H. Schwermann, Edward Pautsch, and others who have prepared articles for The Abiding Word, the Lutheran Cyclopedia, etc.; also the authors of those standard works of the past such as Christian Dogmatics by Francis Pieper, Theology of the Old Testament by Gustave Oehler, and The Old Testament Commentary by Franz Delitzsch, which are classical works that accurately express the traditional viewpoint, but because they were written in reply to problems of another generation, they are not oriented toward the crucial issues of the present decade. This is not to imply that such works are not of considerable aid to the professors, pastors, and teachers in the Church, but by the very nature of the case, there are theological issues confronting the world today which are not discussed in them.

And now, summing up the results of our study, this writer has found that a very active discussion of eschatology is being carried on by many leading Lutheran theologians both in Europe and in America. European scholarship in particular has not only revived interest in the pursuit of eschatological studies but it is also molding opinion regarding such subjects as the nature of man, the nature of life after death, the development of eschatological thought in the Old Testament, the extent of foreign influence in the formulation of Israelite views concerning the future life, etc. These scholars are favoring views which are basically different from the traditional position

of the Lutheran Church. They have maintained, however, that their conclusions are founded on Scripture as well as recent discoveries by archeologists and historians.

Articles appearing in the Concordia Theological Monthly and sermons in the Concordia Pulpit support the traditional point of view. The Abiding Word has republished doctrinal essays produced by theological leaders in past generations as they sought to preserve the truth against Modernism, Rationalism, etc., There is, however, an evident lack of literature being produced in our midst which comes to grips with current issues. With more and more theological literature flooding the market in the form of paper-back editions, it is highly desirable that scholars in our midst offer students of theology, pastors on the field, and laymen in congregations critical studies of current theological thought. It appears to this writer that our church is operating in an age and against a background when we cannot stand aloof and ignore what is being written and said. On the issues being discussed by others we must ourselves arrive at a decision and allow our views to be heard.

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