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### The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body as Taught in the Pauline Espistles

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**THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY  
AS TAUGHT IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES**

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**A Thesis Presented to  
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary  
Department of New Testament Exegesis**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity**

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**by  
Norbert Becker**

**May 1946**

**Approved by:**

W. Arndt  
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## **THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY AS TAUGHT IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES**

### **I. The Fact of the Resurrection**

It is popular among New Testament critics to treat the writings of the various apostles as separate systems of theology. They speak of Pauline theology as opposed to Petrine or Johannine theology. They place the teachings of Jesus in a class by themselves. If this principle is not abused or carried too far, no harm is done. No New Testament scholar would deny that there are differences in point of view and in emphasis in the writings of the apostles. Sections from the writings of John are usually easily distinguished from those of Paul. It is also clear that their personalities are reflected to a certain extent in their writings. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, dwells at length on the concept of love. The epistles of Paul, who was by nature inclined to take a clear and strong hold upon principles and define his convictions sharply, reflect his clarity and strength. This much is fact; this much can be said without endangering the doctrine of inspiration.

The danger arises when undue emphasis is placed on these different points of view. When some one considers Pauline theology as a separate system of theology, it is evident that he



does not hold strictly to the doctrine of inspiration and the analogy of Scripture. Generally, a critic who takes such a position speaks of Paul as teaching the divine will but makes the statement with a reservation, for God, to him, is not the author of Scripture in the strict sense. This is evidenced by the fact that such a critic does not apply the analogy of faith. For example, G.B.Stevens, treating the subject of Pauline eschatology, has this to say concerning Paul's teaching of the resurrection of unbelievers: "Paul does not affirm or clearly imply any view as to the fact or manner of a resurrection for non-believers."<sup>1</sup> "If we could assume with confidence that the report of Paul's speech before Felix accurately reproduced his language in detail, the apostle's belief in 'a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust' (Acts 24,15) would be securely established; but in view of the silence of his epistles this assumption becomes a precarious one."<sup>2</sup>

How does this attitude affect the treatment of Paul's teaching of the resurrection of the body? It means that, by denying the inspiration of Scripture and, consequently, the analogy of faith, some New Testament critics reach the conclusion that Paul's concept of the resurrection is not exactly the same as that of Jesus; that Paul underwent a development of thought about the resurrection, his later statements contra-

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<sup>1</sup> The Pauline Theology, p.357.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., footnote.



dicting his earlier ones; that Paul finally taught no resurrection of the body at all.

It is our purpose to present the entire teaching of Paul on the fundamental doctrine of the resurrection. In the course of the positive presentation of Paul's teaching it will become clear that he nowhere contradicts himself but that he is consistent throughout. It will also become evident that Paul's doctrine of the resurrection is in complete harmony with the teachings of Jesus and with other parts of Scripture. When we speak of Pauline theology, therefore, we simply refer to the doctrines contained in Paul's epistles.

The doctrine of the resurrection is one of the fundamental teachings of Paul and of the New Testament. One of the very last words which we have from the pen of Paul is a warning against the perversion of this teaching. He warns Timothy of false teachers, "of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some," II Tim. 2, 17.18. A false teaching of the resurrection is so serious as to overthrow faith. Hymenaeus and Philetus evidently taught that the resurrection of which Christ spoke was to be understood mystically and by way of allegory, that it must be meant of a spiritual resurrection only.<sup>3</sup> It is true that a resurrection to new life takes place at the time of conversion. But to infer from this that there will not be a true and real

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry, Commentary.



resurrection of the body at the last day - that is perverting a fundamental doctrine and destroying faith. Whatever takes away the doctrine of a future state overthrows the faith of Christians.

Paul also stresses the importance of the resurrection in the great Resurrection Chapter: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," I Cor.15,19. If there is no resurrection of the dead, he explains, our faith has no foundation and no purpose, but all is vanity.

No part of the apostle's doctrine is developed with so little systematic fulness as the doctrine of the future life. On the subject of the resurrection itself he wrote at some length in the Resurrection Chapter. He expressed himself somewhat fully in his early epistles, especially in I Thessalonians, on the second coming of Christ. But on other topics connected with the resurrection he has not dwelt at length. His statements are rather incidental. Yet, by bringing all of these statements together we can obtain a quite complete picture of the entire system of eschatology.

In the first part of the thesis we shall set forth the passages of Paul in which he states the resurrection as a fact or implies it. The second section will deal with a description of the resurrection-body and with some of the eschatological circumstances attending the resurrection. In the first part, therefore, we are not particularly concerned with the resurrection of the body. We simply answer the questions: Will



there be a resurrection? What proof and evidence is there for it?

Every direct statement of Paul concerning the resurrection of believers is in some way connected with the resurrection of Jesus. There are a few general statements of raising the dead which are not connected with Jesus' resurrection (Rom.4,17: "God, who quickeneth the dead;" II Cor.1,9: "God, which raiseth the dead"). However, there is nothing in the context of these passages to indicate that they refer to the specific resurrection of the dead at the last day. Rather, they are employed for the sake of emphasizing God's power and strength, for God has the power to make alive that which is dead.

But every direct statement of the raising of the dead at the last day occurs in a context which speaks of Jesus' Resurrection. This is no doubt due to the fact that the resurrection of Jesus is the climax of the work of redemption, and it is the Gospel of the redemption by which the Holy Spirit creates a new life in the believer. This explains, perhaps, why Paul never has occasion to mention directly the resurrection of unbelievers. (We shall answer the question later as to whether Paul teaches a resurrection of the ungodly).

It is true that Paul frequently refers to the resurrection to new life as the result of Christ's resurrection. The classic passage is Romans 6, where believers are urged to walk in newness of life, "like as Christ was raised up from the dead."



The passage describes in detail how the believer, dead with Christ, shall also "live with Christ," v.8. Similarly, in other passages the apostle speaks of being "quickened together with Him," Col.3,2; being "risen with Christ," Col.1,3. The words used here to designate the resurrection to a new life (ζωοποιεῖν, εγείρεσθαι) are the same words used in other places to refer to the resurrection of the body at the time of the judgment. But because some passages refer to the spiritual resurrection, it does not follow that all are to be taken in that sense. Contexts show plainly that Paul speaks of the bodily resurrection in other instances. However, the two resurrections are so closely related that often they cannot be separated. Indeed, at times it seems that Paul conceives of the two resurrections as one process.

That Paul could hardly think of the resurrection to new life without thinking also of the resurrection at the last day is illustrated by a passage like II Cor.4, 10-14. He speaks of making the life of Jesus manifest in the body. This is the new life, spoken of vv.10-13. V.14, which speaks of the bodily resurrection, seems to follow naturally: "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus and shall present us with you." The two resurrections are almost inseparable in Paul's mind.

The explanation for this close relationship between the spiritual and the eschatological resurrections is to be found in the doctrine of justification, which Paul has developed



at great length. Salvation is both a present and a future fact. At justification there commences a new life which continues to grow and strengthen under the power of the Holy Spirit. But in this life the blessed realization of salvation is only begun. Salvation will be fully realized only in the immediate presence of Christ at the resurrection of the body. 11-

Professor Geerhardus Vos has made a fine study of the relation of the doctrine of justification (and ensuing sanctification) to the resurrection. He points out that Christian truth may be divided into two spheres: the forensic and the transforming. The resurrection of Christ fits into the forensic sphere (justification); the resurrection of believers belongs to the transforming sphere (sanctification). 4

That the resurrection of Christ has a forensic significance is evident from Rom. 4, 25: "Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification." The preposition διὰ occurs in both clauses and therefore must have the same constructional force in each. The first clause indicates what the force must be: Christ was delivered up "on account of our trespasses." Our trespasses were the ideally efficient cause of His death (διὰ with acc.). Corresponding to this, the second clause must mean that He was raised "on account of our justification" (διὰ with acc.). Because in His completed death our justification was virtually

<sup>4</sup> "The Pauline Doctrine of the Resurrection," Princeton Theological Review, Vol. xxvii (1929), p. 12.



secured, it needed only the passing of death from off Him, and the consequent substitution of life for death, to declare this. There was something far more efficacious in His coming to life than a mere proclamation might have been. God, through suspending the forces of death operating on Christ, declared that the ultimate consequence of sin had reached its termination. In other words, the resurrection had annulled the sentence of condemnation. Justification, therefore, is a result of the resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection of believers fits into the transforming sphere (which, of course, is the result of justification). Paul speaks in such a manner as to indicate that there is a definite continuity between the present spiritual life and the resurrection to come. We believe it possible to show that the sum-total of a Christian's experience and progress is viewed as a preparation for the crowning grace of the resurrection. The passages in which the entrance into the Christian state is represented as a being raised with Christ come into consideration here. These statements have been called "semi-eschatological in import; they take for granted that in principle the believer has been translated into the higher world of the new eon." <sup>5</sup> They establish a vital relationship between what is enjoyed already and what will be received at the end. Thus, according to Rom. 6,5, the likeness of the

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<sup>5</sup> Vos, Op. cit., p.21



Savior's resurrection is to be reproduced in the Christian. Even now believers are to reckon themselves alive unto God in Christ Jesus (v.11).

The same principle of continuity between the present spiritual life and the resurrection shows itself where the believers are exhorted to strive for sanctification with the thought and desire in mind that at the day of the Lord's coming they may be presented to Him in a sanctified condition. Paul expresses the hope to the Thessalonians that the Lord may make them increase and abound so that they may establish their hearts unblameable in holiness at the coming of Jesus with all His saints (I Thess.3,12.13).

The expression "to be in Christ," a frequent occurrence in Paul, also supports the idea of a continuity. The mystical union with Christ is pictured as the beginning of the sharing of His glorified state. Paul speaks of the "dead in Christ," (I Thess.4,16), indicating that this union continues after death. The lot and life of the believer is in such close communion with Christ's that the larger phases of Christ's experiences are spoken of as being repeated in him: "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him," Rom.8,17.

In view of the close connection which exists between the new life and the resurrection it is not strange that there are a few instances where it is difficult to determine which resurrection is meant. Such a passage is II Tim.2,11: "If we



be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him." On the one hand the context speaks of living the new life of good works. On the other hand, it also speaks of the physical resurrection of Jesus and the "eternal weight of glory" which belongs to the elect. Indeed, it seems that Paul has both resurrections in mind. He is thinking of the one great truth that the Christians are made alive in Christ. The new man begins that life in time; the resurrected man will continue it in eternity.

Phil.3,11, also shows the close connection between the spiritual life and the resurrection at the last day: "If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead." In the context the apostle has been speaking of the righteousness "which is by faith through Christ," v.9, and of the "fellowship of His sufferings," v.10. This idea of the life in Christ leads him to think of the resurrection, when that life will be complete. The resurrection is something which is "attained" as the result of the life in Christ begun on this earth. The expression εἰ πως does not in any way express doubt, but expectancy. Paul is certain of his resurrection; only the exact manner (πως, "somehow") is not known to him.

There are statements in Paul's epistles which beyond a doubt point to the resurrection of the body at the last day. We reserve the Resurrection Chapter for later discussion. Prominent among other references to the resurrection is



I Cor.6,16. In the previous verse Paul says that the Christian's body is for the Lord. In v.15 he asks, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" Between the two statements he asserts: "God hath both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by His own power." We can reach no other conclusion than that the resurrection spoken of is that of the body at the last day.

I Thess.4,14.16, is equally clear: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him....The dead in Christ shall rise first." Paul is here describing the events of the Parousia. This passage can refer only to the resurrection of all believers at the second coming of Christ.

II Cor.4,14: "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus and shall present us with you." Although the preceding verses speak of the new life, this statement cannot refer to the spiritual resurrection at the time of conversion. The passage does not permit such an interpretation. The future tenses (ἐρεξει, παραστήσει) rule it out. Furthermore, the καί which connects Ἰησοῦν and ἡμᾶς indicates very strongly that Paul is thinking of the resurrection from the grave. (He who raised up Jesus will also raise up us).

Rom.8,10.11, is a subject of controversy:

If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.



"Body" here is clearly the old sinful nature, while "spirit" is the new life. "Mortal bodies," according to some commentators, is the sensuous nature which will be ennobled and entirely perfected. According to others it is the living body of the flesh that will undergo transformation at the Parousia. Professor C.J.Sodergren points out that Paul seldom uses the terms "body" and "flesh" as applying to the body of clay alone, and believes that the reference here is to the spiritual body within. As a parallel he adduces Rom.6,6: "Our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be done away." <sup>6</sup> But notice the difference in tense. Rom.6 speaks of an act which has taken place in the believer ("was crucified") but Rom.8 uses the future tense (ζωοποιήσεται) and applies it to people who are already Christians. Therefore, we cannot but conclude that Paul is speaking specifically of the resurrection of mortal bodies (θνήσκει ἀναστήσεται) at the last day.

We now turn our attention to the most conclusive of all proofs of the resurrection in the Pauline epistles as it is presented in I Cor.15. We are here concerned with the first half of the chapter, in which Paul proves that there is a resurrection. Obviously, we cannot make a detailed study of all the thoughts presented in vv.4-34, but we shall consider the salient points.

There were some among the Corinthians who denied the

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<sup>6</sup> "Resurrectio Carnis," The Augustana Quarterly, Vol.xxiii, No.2 (1944), p.117.



resurrection of the dead, v.12. Paul proceeds to show the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection in the whole scheme of Christian doctrine. But first he presents overwhelming evidence for the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, on which the Christian's resurrection depends. He adduces the testimony of the eye-witnesses who saw the Lord on five different occasions after His death. He appeared to Peter (Luke 23,45), then to the twelve disciples (Mark 16,14). He was seen by five hundred brethren, some of whom were still alive at the time of Paul. This probably was in Galilee (Matt.28, 10). After that He was seen by James singly, and then by all the apostles when He was taken into heaven from Mount Olivet (Luke 24,50). Lastly He was seen alive by Paul himself (Acts 9,4). Nothing was more certain to Paul than that Jesus had risen from the dead. In some twenty different connections in his writings the apostle makes the direct statement that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Before showing the relation of Jesus' resurrection to ours, Paul inserts another argument to prove that there will be a resurrection. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, our faith is vain, preaching is vain; in fact, our entire religion is vain and worthless if death ends all. In this argument Paul seems to assume that his preaching has been accepted as true by the Corinthians. In the first verse he speaks of the "Gospel which ye also have received, and wherein ye stand."



He proceeds to show them the folly and vanity of accepting the Gospel if there is to be no resurrection. His reasoning here seems to be not so much a proof for the resurrection as it is a persuasion to believe in it.

The great proof of the Christian's resurrection is the resurrection of Christ. These two truths are so closely connected with each other that they stand or fall together. We have shown above on the basis of Rom.4,25, how the resurrection of Christ has a forensic significance, is a cause of the resurrection of believers. The picture of the "first-fruits" (ἀπαρχή), I Cor.15,20, is a much simpler one but it states the same fact. It has reference to the Old Testament feast of the First-fruits. The sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest which the Israelites were required to bring to the priest was a sample of the entire crop to be harvested. The bringing in of one sheaf was a token that a harvest of similar sheaves would follow. Moreover, the one sheaf was presented to God as a thank-offering for all the other sheaves and gave assurance that the remainder would be gathered in due time. So it is with the resurrection of Christ. The fact that He was raised from the dead gives assurance that the bodies of all Christians will be raised from the dead.

Vv.21 and 22 give a further explanation of the picture of the first-fruits, both verses beginning with the explanatory ἵνα. First we have the general statement that man is the death medium and the resurrection medium (διὰ with gen.):



"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." The absence of articles from the nouns indicates that the stress is to be placed on the quality of the nouns (ἄνθρωπος). The ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν (not ἐκ νεκρῶν) is perhaps best rendered in English by "resurrection from death." Being without the article, the phrase is not definite but stresses, again, the quality of resurrection as opposed to death.

The following verse becomes more specific and more definite: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." One of the consequences of Adam's sin is that all keep on dying (ἀποθνήσκουσιν, present tense). The consequence of Christ's resurrection is that all shall be made alive (ζωοποιηθήσονται, future act). This is, in effect, a restatement of the fact that Christ is the First-fruits of them that slept. We must keep in mind that Paul speaks here only of a Christian's resurrection. The "all" in this verse is equivalent to "all believers." Christ is not said to be the First-fruits of unbelievers nor are they made alive "in Him." The chief point here is that the Christian's resurrection is just as certain as the resurrection of Christ on which it is based.

Christ's resurrection stands out by itself as the one great proof for the resurrection of Christians. But Paul presents several additional proofs from his own experiences and from those of others. His first argument is from the custom



of being "baptized for the dead," v.29. A great number of interpretations have been given to the phrase οἱ βαπτίζοντες ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν. The whole interpretation hinges on the word ὑπὲρ, for which Thayer lists five meanings. Of these we believe that three are worthy of consideration here. The most widely accepted meaning of ὑπὲρ in this connection is "instead of." Paul would then be referring to a custom of vicarious baptizing, living Christians being baptized for those who had died without baptism. Karl Barth points out that "the occurrence of Christian vicarious baptism is at least testified from the circles of Marcionites, Gerinthians, and Montanists."<sup>7</sup> However, these groups lived much later than the time of writing of I Corinthians. It is highly improbable that Paul would allude to the perversion of this holy sacrament, one of the means of grace, without condemning the abuse as he did the other false notions which were prevalent among the Corinthian Christians.

A second meaning of ὑπὲρ is "on account of, with reference to." Many permitted themselves to be baptized because they saw how cheerfully the Christians bore suffering and how calmly they faced death in times of persecution. Christians were unafraid because they trusted in a resurrection of the dead at the last day, and this Christian assurance rested to a great extent on their baptism. "The death of Christians leads to the conversion of survivors, who in the first instance

<sup>7</sup> The Resurrection of the Dead, p.174.



for the sake of the dead ( their beloved dead) and the hope of the reunion turn to Christ." <sup>8</sup> Baptism, then, is viewed as a preparation for death. Calvin accepted this view. <sup>9</sup>

The most plausible interpretation, in our opinion, is given by Luther, who takes ὑπὲρ in the original meaning of "above, over," in the local sense. He maintains that Christians were baptized over the graves of their loved ones, thus showing their faith in the resurrection of those who had already died. The only objection to this interpretation is that ὑπὲρ is not used in its original sense anywhere else in the New Testament. While this objection is worth considering, it does not furnish conclusive proof against Luther's interpretation. We feel that no other interpretation measures up to the simplicity and the naturalness of this one.

But whatever the original meaning Paul may have been, it stands as a proof for the resurrection of the dead. The confidence in a resurrection after death expressed by being baptized ὑπὲρ νεκρῶν was useless if there were no resurrection from the dead.

Finally, Paul uses his own suffering and the dangers to his own life as a proof for the resurrection. He continues, vv.30.31: "And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?....I die daily." The argument is simple. Why should the apostle submit to persecutions if the Savior had not risen and promised to

<sup>8</sup> Expositor's Greek New Testament, Vol.xx, p.931.

<sup>9</sup> Barth, Op.Cit., p.173.



raise Paul? He could escape all perils, dangers, and punishments by ceasing to preach the risen Christ. But he refused to do so because he was convinced of the truth of the future resurrection. A specific instance of his suffering is his having "fought with beasts at Ephesus," v.32, which probably refers to the opposition of vicious men. If there were no life beyond the grave Paul would be foolish to bring these afflictions upon himself. All this should add weight to the argument for the resurrection of the dead.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the mode and manner of the resurrection, we shall consider several groups of passages in Paul which mention the future life in some way or other. Although such statements are not conclusive proofs for the resurrection, we believe that the presumption is that the resurrection-body is to share in that future life. For the sake of completeness these passages should be listed here.

The phrase "eternal life" (*ζωὴν αἰώνιον*) appears frequently in Paul's writings ( Rom.5,21; 6,23; Gal.6,8; Tit.3,7,etc.). It is possible to have eternal life without a resurrection. By the figure of synecdoche the term "eternal life" could refer to the life of the soul in eternity. By this method of reasoning, when Paul asserts that "we" shall inherit eternal life, he would mean that our souls will live forever. Taken by itself, the phrase might have that meaning. But viewed in the light of Paul's statements about the resurrection, there can be no doubt that "eternal life" refers to that life of



body and soul which is begun already in this life at the time of conversion, continued by the soul while the body sleeps in death, and fully consummated when soul and body are reunited at the last day. 11

We apply the same interpretation to passages which make mention of the future reward of Christians, of being with Christ and sharing His glory in the world to come. Here, too, we feel that the presumption is that there is to be a resurrection so that both body and soul will share the glory (Col. 3,24; II Cor.4,17; II Tim.2,10; Rom.8,18,etc.). This becomes especially evident from statements which clearly place the fulfillment of this hope of glory at the time "when Christ shall appear," Col.3,4, and "at that day," II Tim.2,8. Certainly, Paul is thinking also of the resurrection-body when he speaks of "the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom.8,18

A final proof that Paul teaches a resurrection is afforded by statement which minimize the power and influence of physical death. Death is pictured as a sleep, I Thess.4,13. The sting and the victory of death are non-existent, I Cor.15, 55. Death has been abolished (καταργεῖν, render ineffective, powerless), II Tim.1,10. There is no difference between the living and the dead, for Christ is Lord over both, Rom.14,9, and will judge both, II Tim.4,1. If the Lord is to judge the dead as He does the living, the dead will surely be made alive to receive that judgment. The bodies will rise to hear the pronouncement of judgment together with the soul.



## II. The Mode and Manner of the Resurrection

Pauline teaching of the mode and manner of the resurrection has been the object of much argumentation and speculation, for it is by far the more difficult phase. This is due to the limitations of revelation and to the limitations of human reason, which cannot comprehend "the things that are not seen."

Before entering upon the teaching of the resurrection itself we shall do well to consider the view which some modern critics have taken toward the subject. Some have taken great pains to work out a scheme of development for the apostle's convictions and expectations as to the resurrection. The starting point and the propelling power of this evolution is said to be the idea of the Spirit. By placing special emphasis on the pneumatology of Paul the critics find the following stages in the development of Paul's thinking:

1. Paul at first believed that the bodies would be brought up from the grave in the same condition they had when they were placed into the grave. This is his teaching in I Thessalonians. Decomposition of the body did not trouble Paul because he took for granted that the time until the Parousia would be very short! The idea of the Spirit, they say, is not present in this stage of thought.

2. At the writing of I Corinthians Paul believed in a transformation of the body, which was to take place at the



time of resurrection. Here, first, the idea of *Trönd* appears, whose very function is that of transformation.

3. The third stage in the development of thought is represented by II Cor. 5, 1-8 and a few statements in Romans and Colossians. Here the apostle, recognizing that the Spirit is present in the believer from the beginning of his Christian life, sees no reason for postponing the resurrection until the moment of the Parousia. To avoid "nakedness," that is, a soul without a covering body, the resurrection can take place at the moment of death. The old body can be slipped off and a new somatic garment produced to take its place. According to this theory the new body is pre-existent in heaven, waiting for the old to be done away so that the new body can take its place.

4. A fourth standpoint is attributed to Paul, although it is not said to have been a belief following the others in chronological sequence and replacing them. It is the idea that a somatic organism develops within the believer while he is still present in the body. The new body forms within the old so that at death all that is needed is the slipping off of the old.<sup>10</sup>

This alleged development of doctrine is a sample of the abuse which Paul's statements have suffered. A similar attitude is evident from the following statement concerning the

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<sup>10</sup> Arguments listed and refuted by Vos, "The Alleged Development in Paul's Teaching on the Resurrection," Princeton Theol. Rev., Vol. xxvii (1929) pp. 193-196.



intermediate state: "The time between death and resurrection he referred to in his earlier writings as 'sleep,' though afterwards, perhaps partly influenced by the semi-Hellenistic conception of his Alexandrian friend Apollos, he wrote as if he expected to be consciously at home with the Lord, desiring to 'depart and be with Christ which is very much better.' " <sup>11</sup> The meaning of the passage alluded to will become clear without our making a special refutation of such fanciful theories.

We shall follow, as nearly as possible, the chronological sequence of events which lead up to and follow the resurrection - the Intermediate State, the Parousia, the Resurrection, and the Judgment.

What is the state of the dead in the interval between their death and the day of resurrection? We reply: The apostle has given no answer beyond expressing the confident hope that the believer at death enters into fellowship with Christ. In what state or sphere this fellowship will be realized previous to the bestowal of the resurrection-body, Paul does not say. If rightly understood, the statement may be correct that "his expectation of the nearness of the Parousia naturally accounts for his entire neglect of this subject (the intermediate state)."<sup>12</sup> But it would be more correct to say that the Holy Spirit used this notion of Paul to limit the revelation to what is necessary and salutary for Christians to know.

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<sup>11</sup>F.A. Spencer, "Hope of the Resurrection," Hibbert Journal, Vol. 55 (1936-1937), p. 418.

<sup>12</sup>Stevens, Op.cit., p. 358.



We must keep in mind that Paul nowhere says that the nearness of the Parousia must be thought of as one that is measured by our own ideas of nearness.

There are three chief passages which shed light on Paul's teaching concerning the intermediate state. They all indicate that the soul is living with God during the time that the body is in the grave. The first pertinent passage is I Thess. 4,13.14, where the apostle describes the dead as being asleep. We believe it can be demonstrated that the word κοιμᾶσθαι had the same meaning for Christians that the word sleep, when used of death, has for Christians today: to be dead but not permanently dead. The concept of sleep has no bearing on the question whether the soul is consciously alive with Christ during this time. However, since κοιμᾶσθαι has been used to refer to a soul-sleep, we should make a more detailed study of the word.

Undoubtedly, at the time of the first usage of the word κοιμᾶσθαι there was a feeling of etymological significance connected with it, namely, that of a state of dim consciousness or unconsciousness in the dead. But like all other words it was subject to attrition and lost some of its original coloring. It suffered the fate of becoming a blind word, as in the case of many common words. We must reckon with the possibility that κοιμᾶσθαι had come to mean simply to be placed in the recumbent position in the grave. But it also is likely that among believers a special sense of tenderness



accompanied the act, reminding one of the ordinary act of putting a child to bed. But our main contention is that there is nothing to show that "sleep," when used of death, implied unconsciousness on the part of the dead. It is true that the pagan κοιμήσθαι was a sleep to which no awakening and no consciousness was joined. But when even pre-Christian paganism does not universally ascribe to the κοινώμενος a sleep or rest in the sense of unconsciousness, certainly no one can insist that it implied a soul-sleep or state of unconsciousness among Christians.<sup>13</sup>

I Thessalonians, then, actually gives no information concerning the intermediate state. But there is also nothing to contradict the other statements of Paul which speak of the soul being consciously alive with Christ. Paul makes explicit statements concerning the intermediate state which positively exclude its having been to his mind a state of unconsciousness such as physical sleep ordinarily induces. In II Cor. 5 the whole train of Paul's reasoning is based on the thought that there will be a differentiation in feeling in the state after death. Whether he feels clothed with a body or feels naked will be an object of perception to him. To the unconscious dead there is not and cannot be any distinction between the one state and the other; all things are alike to them. Similarly, in Phil. 1, 23, the having departed and being with Christ is estimated as far better. Certainly,

<sup>13</sup>Vos, Op.cit. ("The Pauline Doctrine, etc."), p. 8.



if there is such a thing as "better" and "worse," there must be a consciousness which can apply the standard on which the appraisal rests.

What does II Cor.5, 1-8, say about the state between the time of death and resurrection? It says much less on this point than many believe. Paul here speaks of the earthly life and mode of existence as being taken down and folded away like a tent; the new heavenly life and existence is put on like a glory-garment. Paul's longing for the glorified body, which is to replace the mortal body (*to sōmatos*), is so strong that he expresses the desire to be changed from the one to the other without going through the experience of physical death. All that the apostle says about the intermediate state is that if he dies he, that is, his soul, will be found naked until the day of judgment. He certainly does not want to say that his soul will be uncomfortable during this time of nakedness. The point which Paul wants to stress is his desire to exchange his mortal body for the glorified body, "that mortality might be swallowed up in life." Ultimately, however, he resigns himself to God's will with regard to this matter.

Because of the frequent misinterpretation of the passage under consideration, we shall study the words in greater detail. Modern exegesis uses this section for the proof for the pre-existent body, which is to be received at death. <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Vos, Op.cit. ("Alleged Development, etc."), p.208,ff.



V.1 reads: "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." A better translation on the ἐὰν-with-subjunctive-clause (καταλύθῃ) is: In case our earthly tent-house shall have been dissolved. Thus the element of the improbability of his dying (which the A.V. implies) is removed. All that the words, strictly taken, mean is that the loss of the earthly body will be made up for, sooner or later, by the resurrection-body. But does not the present tense "we have," when joined to the foregoing, imply that the new body must be in possession of the apostle when he dies? How, otherwise, could he declare that at the moment of death he has (not "will have") it? We may easily explain the "we have" as a case of imaginative projection into the world to come. Such a use of the present tense is not uncommon in language today, and it would be foolish to deny Paul the same freedom of expression. Heaven (ἐν οὐρανοῖς) is the place in which the glorified body will be received and will exist and move.

The idea of the pre-existence of the body has further been sought in the closing words of v.2, "our habitation is from heaven." But this ἐξ οὐρανοῦ simply means that the resurrection-body is from heaven because it is in a special supernatural sense from God. Thus, "from heaven" expresses the origin of the glorified body rather than its locality. Paul here expresses the desire to be clothed upon with this heavenly house, if it is God's will, without passing through



death. Hence this passage says nothing about what happens at death and, therefore, says nothing about receiving a pre-existent body at the moment of death.

V.4 bears out the fact that Paul is not thinking of something which is to happen at death. He declares: "We that are in the tent do groan being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up in life." The two alternatives are: (1) being unclothed and then being clothed anew, and (2) being clothed upon immediately. The first alternative states only that the tent dissolved will be replaced by a new structure; it does not indicate how or when this will take place.

Vv.6-8 are said to demand the modern exegesis. Here we have the statement that Paul is of good courage because at death he will be with the Lord, for to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and vice versa. This goal, to be present with the Lord, is taken to be identical with what is described in vv.2 and 4 as being clothed upon. Hence, a new body is received at the moment in which a person is absent from the earthly body. But the fallacy lies in this that the text does not indicate that "being present with the Lord" and being "clothed upon" are to be identified with each other. If Paul meant to say that the new body would be received at the time of death, in all probability he would have used a more definite mode of expression than simply "to be present with the Lord," especially since it stands in contrast with



being absent from the earthly body.

What the passage does assert is that the believer is present with God at death. Taken in the light of other Scripture passages, it undoubtedly refers to the soul's being present with God immediately after the separation of body and soul at death. Paul terms this a "nakedness" because the soul is without the covering of a body during the period between death and resurrection. Phil.1,23, states the same fact: "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." When Paul departs this life he expects to be present with His Savior; although his body will go to the grave, his soul continues to live with Christ. This is the extent of the information which Paul gives concerning the intermediate state.

The time of resurrection is to be the second advent of Christ, which Paul designates the Parousia. Although Paul nowhere teaches the nearness of the Parousia as an absolute fact (according to human notions), we receive the impression, especially from his earlier epistles, that he believed the time to be very near and perhaps entertained the hope of living to see the day himself. He exhorts the Thessalonians by "the Parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ" to live a life acceptable to God so that they may be found blameless in that day, I Thess.3,13; 5,23. In his first epistle to the Thessalonians Paul mentions the Parousia four times; in the second epistle he makes three direct references to the second coming of Christ. He believed that the time was near; yet he made it



plain that the time was unknown to him. In his second epistle he reminds the Thessalonians that the "man of sin" must be revealed before the day will come. If some one had put the question to Paul, "When will the Parousia take place?" he would have answered, "I do not know." We speak similarly to-day about the nearness of the consummation of the world and yet admit that we have no idea when it will be realized. //

The description of the Parousia of Christ in I Thess. 3,13 and 4, 14-17, calls for special discussion. The latter passage states that the Lord will descend from heaven, the dead in Christ shall rise first, and those living will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. With this meeting of Christ in the air the statement of 3,13, where Jesus is represented as coming "with all His saints," is usually brought in some connection. This is said to imply that the Lord will be accompanied by all his heavenly saints in an embodied state, and that they are to be met by those who are still living. However, we note that I Thess. 3,13, stresses the coming with all His saints. From this it is quite clear that all, both those who are raised and those who are still living at the time of the Parousia, will together (and, I Thess. 4,17) meet the Lord in the air. We do not take this "coming with all His saints" to mean that the saints are actually to accompany Jesus in His descent to earth. It simply means that when the Lord comes He will be present with all His saints. This view brings out the basic meaning of Parousia,



namely, the idea of being present with some one rather than the act of coming to some one. //

More explicit explanation as to the attending circumstances of the resurrection is given in 4, 16. Here we learn of the "shout," "the voice of the archangel," and "the trump of God," as accompanying His descent. These words seem to indicate a summoning from afar, as it were, the dead to rise. But we do not draw the conclusion from this that the summoning is done from afar so that the risen saints may meet the Lord at some point between heaven and earth and then descend downward with Him. V.14 states that "those who are asleep.... God shall bring with Him (ἀΐσει)." But we cannot press the word "bring" here to mean that God will bring them to earth in the movement of the Parousia. It refers not so much to the act or process as to the result: The saints will be introduced into the kingdom of glory and be with Christ in the body. //

The problem has been discussed in detail as to who is the subject of the shouting and what is the relation of the voice of the archangel and the trump of God to the shouting.<sup>15</sup> Since it cannot be definitely determined just how literally this whole picture is to be taken, we do not consider it to be worthy of detailed study here. It seems that Christ will raise the dead with a command (κελεύματα) and that this will either be accompanied by or done through the voice of an archangel and the trump of God. Paul mentions the trump of

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<sup>15</sup>Vos, Op.cit. ("Pauline Doctrine"), p.5.



God again in I Cor.15,52, where it is termed "the last trump," meaning the trumpet which announces the end of the world (ἔσχατον).

Just how literally are we to understand the events at the Parousia as given in I Thessalonians? Professor Geerhardus Vos points out that "it were wrong undoubtedly to reduce all things mentioned to the rubric of figurative language."<sup>16</sup> The apostle gives no indication that he is speaking in figures. On the other hand, we must not overlook the fact that in painting by words, even with the fullest intent of accuracy, the apostle had to avail himself of a fixed medium of knowledge and language. He is compelled to use words and ideas which are limited to time and matter while he is describing events of eternity and of a spiritual world. Heaven and earth, after all, are to pass away. There is a possibility, then, of over-stressing the literalness of the language and the imagery used and missing the deeper and finer qualities and objectives of his true conception. "The literalistic may appear to our human vision nearer the real, but may, nevertheless, owing to our craving for the concrete, be more subjective than the spiritualized."<sup>17</sup>

Many hold that Pauline theology teaches two resurrections - the first that of believers, and the second that of the rest of mankind. This view is supported by appeal to two

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<sup>16</sup>Op.cit. ("Pauline Doctrine"), p.6  
<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p.7.



passages. One of these is I thess.4,16.17. "The dead in Christ shall rise first (ἀρατὴν ἄρτι πρῶτον) then (ἕπειτα) we that are alive shall be caught up." It is obvious, however, that the word "first" here is correlative with the word "then." The first event is to be the rising of the dead in Christ; the second event is to be the translation of believers to the skies. It is clear that Paul does not here speak of a first resurrection as opposed to a second resurrection. Critics say, however, that this passage is in no way inconsistent with the idea of a second resurrection, and they point to the inference that his mention of the resurrection of the dead in Christ as an act by itself implies his belief in the resurrection of non-believers as a distinct and separate event (so Olshausen, De Wette).<sup>18</sup> Weiss attempts to solve the problem by holding the view that Paul does not believe in the resurrection of non-Christians at all. But the solution is more simple than some believe. Paul mentions only the Christians' resurrection because he is comforting the Thessalonian Church concerning their departed friends. He has no occasion to take into view any except believers. The Thessalonians feared that their departed friends would be at a disadvantage at the advent of Christ; that the living would earlier and more fully enjoy its glory than the dead. Paul replies, No, your sleeping friends shall rise first; before the living enter into the presence of the Lord the dead shall

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<sup>18</sup>Stevens, Op.cit., p.351.



have been raised and all shall enter into His presence together. The living, then, shall have no advantage over the dead in that respect. There is, therefore, no occasion for Paul to speak of any except believers in this connection. There is no reference to two resurrections here.

I Cor. 15, 23, 24, is the principle passage to which appeal is made for the opinion that Paul believes in two resurrections: "Each man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end." Meyer and others understand "the end (τὸ τέλος)" to mean the end of the resurrection.<sup>19</sup> According to this view there would be three divisions of those who are raised, introduced by the three members of the sentence, ἀπαρχή... ἔπειτα ... εἶτα - first Christ as the leader, then the believers, and finally, the non-Christians. This would explain the previous expression, "each man in his own order (τάγματι, division)." However, the entire context speaks of only two divisions: Christ as the first-fruits, and "they that slept." Barth points out, and we believe he does so correctly that εἶτα is not a third member of ἀπαρχή and ἔπειτα, but is a closer definition of ἐν παρουσίᾳ.<sup>20</sup> The statement would then be punctuated: "Christ the first-fruits; afterwards, those who are Christ's. At His coming, then the end, when He shall deliver up the kingdom, etc."

<sup>19</sup>H. A. W. Meyer, Kommentar über das Neue Testament, Vol. v., p. 307.

<sup>20</sup>Op. cit., p. 162.



"The end" here does not mean the end of the resurrection, but refers to the time when Christ shall consummate His kingdom and put into subjection all hostile powers (see v.28). It must be taken in the absolute sense as denoting the end of the present world-period, the goal of human history. The end of the world is to coincide with the Parousia of Christ and the resurrection of men. Paul says nothing of two resurrections. And from this it follows that he did not hold to any idea of a reign of Christ upon earth for a thousand years or for any shorter period of time. Even chiliasts, with perhaps a few exceptions, do not look to Paul for support of their doctrine.

Did Paul believe in a resurrection of the godless? As the question stands, it must be answered affirmatively, for he is quoted in Acts 24,15, as saying that there will be a resurrection "both of the just and of the unjust." But we are here concerned with his teaching as it is set forth in the epistles. We want to ascertain whether his writing deny or affirm the resurrection of unbelievers.

Stevens points out that there are four things to remember in this connection:

- (1) Paul nowhere speaks directly of a general resurrection of all mankind.
- (2) Twice he speaks explicitly of a resurrection of Christians without a mention of non-believers.
- (3) His whole argument for the fact of a resurrection



is based upon Christ's resurrection as its ground and guar-  
anty.

(4) The application of this argument is made to Christ-  
ians alone. <sup>21</sup>

From these points it is clear that Paul has said nothing  
of a resurrection of unbelievers. Some scholars believe this  
to be a good case of argumentum e silentio. But it is just  
that and no more. Points 1, 2, and 4 above should cause us no  
difficulty. Paul is writing to Christians and for the bene-  
fit of Christians. There is no need for him even to mention  
the resurrection of the godless, and that explains his com-  
plete silence on the matter. Point 3, however, is less easily  
harmonized with the idea of a resurrection of unbelievers.  
The fact of the resurrection of believers is based on the  
resurrection of Christ. Are non-believers also to rise on  
account of the resurrection of Christ? If so, the conclusion  
must follow that it is not life-union with Christ, but a  
natural relation of Christ to all men, which secures resur-  
rection. This view is completely at variance with Rom. 8, 11,  
where the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is declared to be  
the cause of the quickening of the mortal body. From this  
Olshausen, De Wette, and others, have drawn what would seem  
to be the next logical conclusion - the final restoration  
of all men. <sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Op. cit., p. 354.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 355



It is further argued that the description of the resurrection-body is such as to show that believers only were thought of. It is a pneumatic body, that is, one animated by the divine life-giving Spirit, and suited to a holy and glorious sphere of existence. The argument is this: The Holy Spirit is in such close relationship to both the act of the resurrection and the life of the resurrected Christian that one in whom the Spirit does not dwell (unbeliever) cannot be included in the resurrection. But we can apply the same principles here which we applied to the e silentio arguments. Certainly, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit will not be the cause for the resurrection of the godless; nor will the resurrection-body be one in which the Spirit rules. But this does not in any way indicate that Paul teaches, or even believes, that they will not rise. Surely, God, who is all-powerful, and who made all things out of nothing, has a way to raise them, even if only by a single word of command.

Furthermore, there is one consideration which is decisive that Paul believed in a resurrection of the godless: All are to be judged, I Cor.6,2; 11,32; Rom.2, 5-9; 14, 10-12. These passages assert that the entire world is to be judged and that it is to be a day of wrath for unbelievers. In our mind, this judgment presupposes resurrection. There is no question that the resurrection precedes the judgment. Hence there is no question in our mind that Paul teaches, though only by implication, the resurrection of unbelievers.



Thus far we have said very little about the mode of resurrection. We are now confronted with the question put I Cor.15,35: "With what body do they come?" Two extreme views have been held. There are not a few who go so far as to say that Paul does not teach a resurrection of the body at all. On the other hand, we must guard against the extreme materialistic interpretation. We shall have to exercise the greatest caution in our description of the resurrection-body so that we say no more and no less than the words of Paul say on the subject.

First, however, let us adduce the passages of Paul which prove that there is to be a resurrection of the body. We point first to Phil.3,21: "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." The body is to be changed (*μετασχηματίζω*) and conformed (*συμμορφῶν*). "The *σχῆμα* is the fashion or appearance: the *μορφή*, the form corresponding to the very being itself." <sup>23</sup> Qualifying genitive contrast the two bodies: "The body of our lowliness" and "the body of His glory." In both instances it is the body (*σῶμα*) which is spoken of. The fashion of the body will be so completely changed that its very form will be like Christ's glorified body. Christ's glorified body is no doubt His resurrected body, of which He said, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have." The nail prints were also there to prove that the resurrection-body was the crucified body. The body of believers is to conform to this

<sup>23</sup>R. C. Lenski, Interpretation of N.T., Vol.vii, p.872.



body of Christ. This, to us, is one of the clearest statements of Paul that there is not to be the creation of a new body, but a restoration of the old body glorified in a miraculous way.

Rom.8,11, likewise bears out that the body is to be raised: "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies." We notice again the reference to a resurrection closely connected with the resurrection of Jesus, whose body was raised. Paul goes out of his way, it seems, to emphasize that our mortal bodies (not "we," but *τὰ ἰσχυρὰ σαρκῶν*) will be raised and made alive (*ζωοποιήσεται*). The bodies that have died, not new bodies, are to live again. Paul expresses the same truth again in I Cor.15, 53.54, where he states that "this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.... Death is swallowed up in victory." He points to this mortal, corruptible body and states that it is to put on Immortality. It is the raising and glorifying of the body which is to be the final proof of victory over death.

In Rom.8,23, we have the words, "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." V.21 had spoken of delivering all creation "from the bondage of corruption unto the glorious liberty of the children of God." We, too, are waiting for the consummation of the adoption, for while we are already the sons of God on this earth, that adoption will reach com-



plete perfection only at the resurrection. The adoption is further explained by the appositive, "the redemption of our body." The term ἀπολύτρωσις, as Deissmann points out, involves the idea of a ransom and was used in connection with the manumission of slaves. <sup>24</sup> Christ has paid the ransom for the deliverance of the body. The body is in slavery even after it enters the grave; corruption and decay still hold it. But at the resurrection the body is liberated from these things, for it puts on incorruption and immortality.

I Cor. 6, 13-15, brings proof for the resurrection of the body: "The body is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by His own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" Paul is lecturing to the Corinthians on the sanctity of the human body. God, he says, will destroy meats and the belly, but He will raise the body just as He raised Christ. Some assume that by using the pronoun "us" Paul corrects himself regarding the importance of the body, because our present body will not really be raised at all but a new and different body will be given us. But this is a deliberate falsehood. Such an interpretation defeats the very purpose for which the statement is inserted that the Lord will raise us up: The body is not to be used for lustful purposes, for it belongs to the Lord and He will raise it up at the Parousia.

<sup>24</sup>Cited by Lenski, Op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 452.



Finally, we look upon II Cor.4,17, as a passage representative of a group of statements of Paul which certainly imply the resurrection of the body: "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of glory." Affliction in the body works an exceeding weight of glory. Since this affliction is borne in the body, we believe it is safe to assume that Paul conceived of the resurrected body as the recipient of that final glory.

On the basis of II Cor.5,6-8, it has been alleged that Paul did not believe in the resurrection of the body, for there he states that to be at home in the body is to be absent from the Lord and to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Note, however, that the body here spoken of is the earthly tent-house mentioned in v.1. The resurrection does not come into the picture at this point. The alternatives are: To live in this body as it now is, or to die so that the body goes to the grave and the soul is with the Lord. Paul does not discuss the next stage, which is the resurrection of the body. Therefore he cannot be said to deny that the resurrection of the body will take place.

That the body will be raised is definitely established by the Pauline epistles as well as by other parts of Scripture. But as soon as we undertake a description of the glorified body we enter the realm of uncertainty. It is not that Paul is silent on the subject. His Resurrection Chapter gives a



beautiful and quite complete description of the characteristics of the resurrection-body. But the thoughts are all limited by the use of language as well as by the finite mind. Paul must use things that are seen to describe things that are not seen; things temporal to describe things eternal. Paul Himself says that it has not entered into the heart or mind of man to conceive of the beauty and perfection which God has prepared for them that love Him, I Cor.2,9. How can we expect to begin to comprehend what this glorious body will be like? It is called a spiritual body; our eyes have never seen anything but a physical body. Nevertheless, Paul's words do have meaning for us, for we can grasp the simple distinctions which the Holy Spirit intends us to know regarding the resurrection-body.

We turn now to the classic description in I Cor.15, where the subject is introduced by the analogy of the seed. V.35 poses two very closely related, yet distinct questions: "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" The first question ridicules the folly of believing in the return to life of a dead body. The second question expresses the scepticism which relates to the unimaginableness of the form of the resurrection-body. The first question is answered in v.36: To think that what is dead (νεκρῶν) cannot be raised contradicts the fact of experience that "what thou sowest is not made alive except it have died." Death is the very prerequisite to quickening. Here the figure of sowing points to



a common law of nature, but the answer to the second question, which begins in v.37, turns the figure to a slightly different use. The objectors find it impossible to form a concrete conception of the form and appearance of the resurrection-body. Professor Vos observes that the question of substance does not enter into either of the two stages of the argument. The doubters were perplexed about the quality of the glorified bodies. The average Greek mind wanted the convincing force of vision and imagination. In the following verses Paul is speaking of the present and future bodies in terms of quality and appearance. <sup>25</sup>

It is important, therefore, that we do not press the analogy beyond the point of comparison. "Analogy is a powerful instrument for removing objections, but utterly weak for establishing positive truth."<sup>26</sup> The analogy of the seed is not given here primarily to stress the continuity between the dead body and the resurrection-body, although in this case it is difficult to deny that such a continuity is implied. An example of the misuse of the analogy is found in the interpretation that a "resurrection-germ" is planted when the body dies and that it is this hidden germ which is to come forth at the last day and receive a new body while the old body itself remains dust and ashes.

The real point of comparison is the non-resemblance in

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<sup>25</sup>Op.cit., ("Alleged Development"), p.200.

<sup>26</sup>Marcus Dods, First Corinthians, p.374.



form and appearance of the seed and the plant. V.37.38 elaborate: "Thou sowest not the body that shall be, but bare grain...but God giveth it a body even as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed a body of its own." Note the difference between what is sown and what it grows to be. God will give to every seed its own body. This does not say that a new body will be created, but it will be a body different as to quality and appearance from that which was sown. Just as little as we would be able to conceive of the appearance of a plant, without previous experience, by simply observing the seed, so little can we comprehend the appearance of our glorified body by looking at our mortal frame.

Vv.39-41 continue to bring out the non-resemblance between what is sown and what is raised and adds the thought that the resurrection-body of one person will differ from that of another in a smaller degree. This is skilfully done through the alternate use of ἕτερος and ἄλλος. When speaking of the heavenly bodies as contrasted with the earthly bodies, Paul employs ἕτερος, indicating a "generic" difference; the difference between various forms of flesh is indicated by ἄλλος, for it is a "specific" difference; so, too, the celestial bodies differ in glory among themselves: "There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon (ἄλλη...ἄλλη)." This serves to give the more force to ἕτερος, which distinguishes the earthly body from the resurrection-body. The irradiation of glory of the resurrection-body as compared with



the glory of the present body will be so far superior that it is not merely a case of ἄλλος but of ἕτερος.

The attributes from which this difference in manifestation results are listed vv. 42-43. Four contrasts are distinguished, but they are not simply coordinate. The first three are actually a product of the last. That the earthly body exists in corruption, dishonor, and weakness is in some way connected with its being a σῶμα ψυχικόν. So also the heavenly body is characterized by incorruptibleness, glory, and power, all three of which result from its being a σῶμα πνευματικόν.

What the "natural body" is becomes evident from v. 45: Adam became a living soul (εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν). All of Adam's descendants are animated by the ψυχή, or soul, and therefore are ψυχικός. The "soul" here must be understood to mean the immaterial part of man which animates the material part, or body, making it alive. The ψυχή and the πνεῦμα, as Dr. Lenski points out, cannot really be separated; they can only be distinguished as two sides of a unit.<sup>27</sup> This side of the grave the body is "earthy," for the ψυχή causes the organs to function in the processes which are necessary for life on this earth. At death this life-giving power is withdrawn and the natural body has finished its course of life. At the resurrection the body is to be changed into a spiritual body.

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<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., Vol. vii, p. 729.



This cannot mean that the body then will be constituted of spirit, just as the σῶμα ψυχικόν cannot mean that the body is composed of ψυχή. It will be the body, as is borne out by vv.53.54, where it is stated that this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. But the new condition of the body will be such that it is the proper organ for the πνεῦμα. This does not mean that a mere reanimation will take place, substituting the "spirit" for the "soul." It means that there must be a complete transformation and glorification of the body so that it is fit for the Spirit. In the resurrection the Spirit will dominate the body completely and bring to perfection the work which He has but begun through our regeneration and sanctification in this life.

It has been alleged that v.50 argues against a resurrection of the body: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Note, however, that the succeeding words are a restatement of the same thought by the use of "parallel members:" "Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Flesh and blood clearly refers to the corruptible body, the natural body as it now exists. The body must be changed into a spiritual body in order to be fit for the future life in the kingdom of God. This passage, then, is no denial of the resurrection of the body but rather substantiates it.

Norman H. Camp makes an interesting distinction



between the body of flesh and blood and the body of flesh and bones.<sup>28</sup> As in the case of Christ, the former body cannot enter heaven but the latter can. He points out that Paul uses the expression "flesh and blood" ( e.g., Eph.6,12; Gal.1, 6) to refer to man with his natural powers and abilities. Furthermore, the life of the human body is in the blood (Lev.17,11). But the resurrection-body will be a flesh-and-bones body as in the case of Christ. There was, according to Camp's theory, no blood in His resurrected body; yet He was seen and handled and said of Himself that He had flesh and bones. The flesh-and-blood body cannot inherit the kingdom, but the flesh-and-bones body, glorified and made completely the organ of the Spirit, will live just as Jesus "now liveth by the power of God," II Cor.13,4. The flesh-and-bones body, then is the spiritual and incorruptible body.

How are we to conceive of the resurrection-body? What will be its substance? Will it be a material body? Will it consist of the very particles of the mortal body? Here is a mystery of God which we cannot hope to solve. Nevertheless it is to our advantage to witness the attempts of men to put this mystery of God into words. We present here several quotations which bring out different opinions and points of view. Some have denied that Paul teaches the resurrection of the body at all. Adolph Harnack is typical of those who

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<sup>28</sup>The Resurrection of the Human Body, pp.84-88.



take such a position. He says, with regard to the phrase, "resurrection of the body," in the Creed:

Dasz ein Satz der Lehre des Paulus widerspricht (Auferstehung des Fleisches) und daher auch nach dem Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche in seiner wörtlichen Fassung nicht aufrecht erhalten werden darf.<sup>29</sup>

That Harnack makes such a direct denial of the resurrection of the body is not strange when we keep in mind that he does not take the resurrection of Christ in the true historical sense either.

Stevens finds these two points in Paul's analogy of the seed:

(1) The new body shall not be identical with the present one, - the buried body resuscitated, - but (2) it shall be organically connected with the present body; the continuity of personality on its corporeal side shall not be broken.<sup>30</sup>

Though these words might be correctly understood, it is difficult to ascertain whether he holds to the actual resurrection of the body as Paul teaches it. We would not accept the first statement as it stands; the second also seem vague and beclouds the meaning of Paul more than it clarifies it. We would rather take the position of Professor Vos who states:

Paul affirms that what is sown is quickened, and precisely what is sown dies.... It is better to leave the whole matter where it is and commit the working out of the mystery to God, who can bring about things unsearchable to the mind of man.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Reden und Aufsätze, p.223.

<sup>30</sup>Op.cit., p.349.

<sup>31</sup>Op.cit., ("Alleged Development") p.206.



Another view point, more prevalent in the past than in the present, is brought out by a few lines from a poem by Addison:

And now from every corner of the earth  
The scattered dust is called to second birth;  
Whether in mines it formed the ripening mass,  
Or humbly mixed and flourished with the grass,  
The severed body now unites again <sup>32</sup>  
And kindred atoms rally into men.

This poem is typical of a group of poems which come to us particularly from the past two centuries. Just how correct is this materialistic conception of the resurrection? Does the statement that the resurrection-body will be identical with the old body demand that it be composed of the very same particles? Certainly, it is possible for God to gather the particles of dust of the body and recreate that body. But is it necessary? Do the words of Paul allow no other conception of the process of the resurrection? Norman H. Camp answers:

This does not necessarily mean that the exact particles of the mortal body will be found in the resurrection-body, but it means that the resurrection-body will be identical with the body that is destroyed by death, differing in no essential point, absolutely indistinguishable.

He continues with an analogy:

Man's natural body is constantly undergoing changes. Waste matter is thrown off continually and is replaced by new materials, yet every one recognizes that a man seventy years old has the same body which he had when he was seventeen, although the actual substances

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<sup>32</sup>Quoted by Sodergren, Op.cit., p.113.



composing it are entirely different. So the resurrection-body will be a material, immortal body, identical with the mortal body and revealing the same personality.<sup>33</sup>

From Dr. Stine we have the paradoxical statement:

The Creator has the power to plan and create a body different from the physical body in some remarkable characteristics, but nevertheless a resurrected body which was manifested by Jesus in His appearances, after His resurrection, to His disciples.<sup>34</sup>

The following quotation is from W.W.White, author of The Resurrection Body According to the Scriptures:

The resurrection is not the body reanimated. It is not a mere return to life in the same corruptible, weak, fleshly, natural body of the grave....Resurrection means a reunion of spirit with a new and different body, yet a body which is the particular person's own body under the law of identity, a body which can be traced back to the conditioning clue, namely, the body which was the one person's during life....All this chasing through the universe to get the identical particles of matter... is a serious misrepresentation of St. Paul. Were it feasible to enter into a thorough philosophical discussion to show what matter is, such a discussion would, I believe, make it evident that the body of the resurrection is nothing other than God's volitional repetition of the body of the grave - with splendid additions.<sup>35</sup>

Mr. White is attempting to put into words the mystery of the glorified resurrection-body. His statement seems to border on the denial of the resurrection of the body which has become subject to corruption. But if matter is not reality; if only spirit is substantial; if things that are seen are temporal, are we to hold dogmatically to the "resurrectio

<sup>33</sup>Op.cit., p.16.17.

<sup>34</sup>Charles M.A.Stine, "The Joyous Hope of the Resurrected Body," Sunday School Times, Mar.20, 1943, p.4.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted by Sodergren, Op.cit., p.122.



carnis?" Is it rationalizing and unscriptural to say that God can resurrect the body without using the very particles or material of which it was composed and that the product is the same body? We believe not.

The quotations given above all serve to emphasize one thing: Human reason cannot grasp the manner of the resurrection and all attempts of men to put this mystery of God into words are extremely insufficient and meaningless. We prefer to leave the resurrection as one of the hidden mysteries which will be revealed only when the time comes. Paul confesses that it was a mystery to him just how the body is to be changed to conform to the glorious body of Christ. He asserts that God will do this miracle "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself," Phil. 3, 21. God's almighty power will achieve the transformation which is unfathomable to us. We are satisfied to hold to the statement that our body is to be raised and glorified, conformed to Christ's glorious body; that it shall be without corruption or decay, perfected by God to live the life which is to be animated by the Spirit of God and be His organ completely.

Thus, when attempting to describe the resurrection-body we are merely repeating the words of Paul and of the Scriptures. Beyond this we cannot go, and any attempt to do so is rationalization and displays subjectivity which extends beyond the bounds of absolute truth and certainty.



### III. The Life of the Resurrected

Immediately after the resurrection of the dead Christ will pronounce judgment upon all men, II Cor.5,10. Those who are still living at the Parousia will be miraculously changed without experiencing the sleep of death. At the same moment when the dead are raised, "at the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," the living will be changed, I Cor.15,52. In this respect it is said of Christ that He will judge both the quick and the dead, II Tim.4,1.

The statements of Paul regarding the punishment of unbelievers are few but definite. He pictures the Lord Jesus as coming from heaven "with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power," II Thess.1,7-9. Later in the same epistle he adds: "That they might all be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness," 2,12. In Rom.2 Paul speaks of the "day of wrath," and of the Lord's rendering "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul that doeth evil," v.5.8.9. The apostle does not elaborate on this suffering of unbelievers, but does state that it is to be everlasting and almost unbearable. Perhaps the first passage cited above hints as to what the essence of their suffering is to be. The wicked



are to be eternally banished from the presence of God. While the blessed are enjoying "the glory of His power," the godless are in eternal agony, for they had rejected the opportunity to enjoy the same glory. A further description of the eternal destruction Paul does not give. He was so completely occupied with comforting and instructing Christians that he had no occasion to go into detail on a subject which had no direct bearing on them.

For the blessing to be given the resurrected Christians Paul usually employs the familiar phrase, "eternal life." But his description of this future life is very much limited in its scope. It belongs, on the whole, to the unseen mysteries of God. However, here and there the writings of Paul throw some light on certain features of the future life of the blessed. For one thing, they will have a more direct knowledge and a better understanding of the mysteries of God - His wondrous works and especially of His providential dealings with them. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known," I Cor.13,12. This does not mean that the saints will know everything, but that as far as their knowledge will extend it will no doubt be inerrant. We have reason to believe that subjects like the incarnation, the redemption, and the Holy Trinity will be more fully understood.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>L.F.Gruber, What After Death?, p.240.



Perhaps the most glorious feature of the future life of the believers is that they shall be "ever with the Lord," I Thess.4,17, and "face to face" with God, I Cor.13,12. To spend eternity in the presence of the Lord is the goal toward which Paul is striving. He pictures the Christians as "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom.8,17. Being present with Christ in the resurrected, glorified body is the future glory of which Paul speaks: "If so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom.8, 17.18. Words cannot express the glory of the future state of believers, but some of the most eloquent passages in the Pauline epistles are those in which the apostle speaks of the glory of the redeemed. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," II Cor.3,18. "Our affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," II Cor.4,17.

Several statements of Paul indicate that there are to be "degrees of glory," a teaching which is more clearly presented in the Gospels. We hesitate to use the phrase, "degrees of glory," for it is not employed by Scripture and the word "degree" may be misunderstood. Two statements of Paul touch the subject. It seems undeniable that Paul is speaking of the difference among resurrection-bodies in



I Cor.15,41: "There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another in glory." It is hardly probable, though perhaps possible, that Paul is using the differences among the heavenly bodies to illustrate the difference between the earthly body and the resurrection-body. He has brought out this contrast already by comparing terrestrial bodies with celestial bodies and contrasting their glory by ἕτερος... ἕτερος. Contrasting the glory of heavenly bodies among themselves, he employs ἄλλος...ἄλλος, thereby indicating that there is to be a difference among the resurrection-bodies of believers. What this difference is, we can only conjecture. It cannot be a degree of happiness, for all are to be equally satisfied. Furthermore, that one star differs from another in glory cannot refer to a degree of happiness or feeling of satisfaction, for the star is not conscious of its glory. Just as individuals are not alike in their capacities to love, know, and serve, so they will differ in the hereafter. Each will receive according to his capacity to receive and to use and each will be equally satisfied.<sup>37</sup>

One other passage of Paul seems to point toward differences in rewards of grace. II Cor.9,6: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." The subject being

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<sup>37</sup>Gruber, Op.cit., p.241.



discussed is Christian giving and the contrast is between two types of Christians. It is possible that the passage speaks of blessings or rewards to be given in time rather than eternity, for God often promises temporal blessings to him who gives freely and cheerfully. But we believe that this is to be carried over into the life to come. That this is implied in the passage under consideration is substantiated by other sections of Scripture which employ the figure of sowing and reaping to designate the reward of the future life. Gal.6,7.8, for example, states that he who sows to the Spirit shall reap everlasting life. To reap bountifully or sparingly, therefore, must mean that there is to be a difference of some kind in the resurrection-bodies, but what this difference is to be has not been revealed.

Several other questions generally arise when we think of the resurrection-body. One of these is: Will Christians recognize each other in the world to come? Paul's answer is only by implication, but it is affirmative. The Thessalonians are to be comforted by the fact that their beloved dead will be awakened from their sleep. The great comfort is in the thought of a blessed reunion with their loved ones. From this it seems certain that there is to be recognition and fellowship in the life to come. If Christians are to have a more perfect knowledge, as is stated I Cor.13,12, future recognition is certainly included. An additional proof is I Thess.2,19.20: "What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing?



Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy." Here St. Paul openly declares that he will rejoice in eternity over his converts in Thessalonica whom he will recognize in the presence of his Savior. The promise holds out little comfort unless it predicates personal identity.<sup>38</sup>

Another question often raised has to do with the form of the resurrection-body. Will a person born without arms have arms in the future life? Will infants remain infants? But such subjects are absolutely untouched by Paul. We can only say that we cannot conceive of a glorified body from which all imperfections have not been removed. If being an infant is a hindrance in the life to come, the Lord surely has some means of perfecting that body. We can only repeat the words of Paul that our mortal bodies will be raised; yet "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him." Beyond this we cannot go.

#### IV. Paul's Application of the Resurrection Doctrine

For the sake of completing Paul's picture of the resurrection as well as for the sake of our own spiritual edification, we ought to consider the application which Paul makes of this teaching. There are chiefly two applications.

The first use of the doctrine of the resurrection is for comfort. After the brief but beautiful discourse to the

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<sup>38</sup>W.A.Maier, "Will We Recognize Each Other in Heaven," p.1.



Thessalonians on the subject of the resurrection, the apostle appends: "Wherefore comfort one another by these words," I Thess.4,18. The resurrection is the one great hope toward which the Christian strives. If we have hope in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most miserable, I Cor.15, 19. But it is the prospect of the future glory, of being eternally present with God together with the saints, which changes the child of God's condition from one of misery to one of hopeful expectation. For this reason the hope of the resurrection is the dominant theme of the Christian funeral address, so that Christians "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope."

Secondly, Paul employs the doctrine of the resurrection as an exhortation to good works. At the resurrection every one is to "receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," II Cor.5, 10. Accordingly, we find Paul stressing repeatedly that Christians should strive for sanctification in this life so that they may be found acceptable in the day of the Lord. Paul says of himself that he is striving to attain unto the resurrection, Phil.3,11. As Jesus was raised and as we are to be raised, so now already we should walk in newness of life, Rom.6,4. All of these things are summed up in the comprehensive exhortation at the close of the great Resurrection Chapter. The brilliant discourse is followed by this application to the lives of the Corinthian Christians and



to all Christians since that time: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord," I Cor.15,58.

Finis



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