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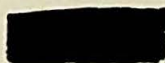
PAULINE ESCHATOLOGY IN PHILIPPIANS 1:23

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

by

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May 1969



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Eiwen

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The question of what happens after death or of eschatology--as it is often phrased in theology--is among the basic human concerns. It is not surprising that this concern has driven many Christians to carefully restudy the New Testament and particularly the writings of St. Paul in order to discover what they have to say about this topic.

There are many approaches to such a study of eschatology. One may concentrate, for example, on the Parousia, the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world. There is certainly enough that Paul has written on this subject. Modern man is often concerned, however, with another question: What happens immediately after a man dies? That this is not merely a modern concern will be shown in Chapter IV, where evidence will be brought from the intertestamental period.

When one approaches Paul with this question, however, he is rather disappointed. There are only two major passages which relate to the question of the intermediate state--2 Cor. 5:1-8 and Phil. 1:21-23. Moreover, neither of these presents a clear answer to the question. The first of these

and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and edited by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 57.

passages presents many textual difficulties, which have already been considered in a thesis at Concordia Seminary.¹

The second passage--Phil. 1:23--will be the object of study in this thesis. What does Paul mean when he says that he desires to "depart and be with Christ"? There is little doubt that ἀναλῦσαι here is a euphemism for death. That was its meaning in much of Greek literature.² The problem, hence, centers in the meaning of the next Greek phrase, οὐν χριστῷ εἶναι. Where, when and how did Paul expect to be with Christ? One cannot answer these questions easily.

This paper has not been conceived as a purely academic pursuit. The way one answers these questions becomes relevant as soon as one is faced with a death in the family or with his own death. If one takes St. Paul's statement in Phil. 1:23 as looking positively upon death, then any artificial extension of life, any prayer that a person recover from a hopeless illness, is pure selfishness. Death may be far better than life. A study of this verse can thus give a new insight on the way a Christian may face death--and life.

¹Robert Arnold Hausman, "Pauline Eschatology in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1966).

²Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 57.

This thesis will be limited to the consideration of the immediate state of the believer after his death as this is illuminated by St. Paul in Phil. 1:23. Other Pauline passages will be studied as they relate to the verse in question. There will be no attempt to determine the state of the unbeliever since Paul does not treat this question.

The second chapter of the thesis will present the major approaches to the interpretation of Phil. 1:23 and the counter-arguments that may be leveled against each of these. This will be followed in Chapter III by a contrast of these approaches with Paul's early teaching on the Parousia, and by a study of the developmental theory of Pauline eschatology. Beginning in Chapter IV the thesis will develop from the background in which Paul was likely to have formulated his statement to a study of the Pauline teaching of fellowship with Christ of which the phrase "with Christ" is a part, and finally to a specific study of this phrase in its context in Phil. 1:23. The last main chapter will conclude with a comparison of the proposed interpretation with other Pauline eschatological passages and a brief survey of the limits of the interpretation presented.

The findings of this thesis lie more in the realm of limitations than they do in that of answers. From this passage one may conclude that Paul is, indeed, talking about

an intermediate state in Phil. 1:23. The other alternatives --an immediate bodily resurrection and the final resurrection at the Parousia--do not fit into Paul's meaning here. Exactly of what this intermediate state consists is a more difficult question. Paul's only statement here is that it means "to be with Christ." A comparison of this statement with the rest of Pauline theology shows the close relationship of what Paul is affirming to what is usually called the Pauline teaching of "Christ-fellowship." In effect, one may conclude that Paul is saying here that he is confident that even death cannot interrupt the fellowship with Christ that is shared by every Christian. For Paul only this fellowship means real life.

CHAPTER II

POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS OF PHILIPPIANS 1:23

Basic to any study of Pauline eschatology in Phil. 1:23 is an understanding of how various interpreters have approached it. For most exegetes the interpretation of this verse is closely related to the interpretation of several other sections in Paul which relate to the question of the intermediate state. Among these is particularly 2 Cor. 5:1-8. In surveying the views of these biblical theologians, an effort will be made to separate their discussion of the two passages when possible, but both will play in at times.

The positions taken by various commentators and biblical theologians are basically three in number. The one with the longest history, going back to many of the early church fathers, is that which sees in this and similar verses a reference to an intermediate state which follows the death of each individual and which continues until the second coming of Christ. Of more recent vintage is the interpretation which claims that the phrase "with Christ" refers to a state of immediate resurrection after death. There is no waiting for the resurrection body that has been promised elsewhere. The third major approach to the interpretation of this verse is that of commentators who see in this verse

a reference to resurrection at the Parousia. This school believes that there is a gap between the death of a given individual and his reception of a resurrection body.

Intermediate State

The first point of view that must be considered, then, is that of the intermediate state. Its proponents teach that the biblical expression $\epsilon\upsilon\nu\ \chi\rho\iota\ \epsilon\tau\omega$ indicates that after death the person is immediately in heaven with Christ. Among those who hold this position, there are two schools. The first uses the phrase "immortality of the soul" to indicate their idea that immediately after death the soul is released to go to its eternal reward or punishment. This group is opposed by those who see in the concept of immortality a non-biblical, Platonic concept which cannot be used by Christians. The latter group also denies any knowledge of the state of the believer after death beyond the simple statement that he is "with Christ."

The first described position is that held today, in the opinion of at least one theologian, by most churchgoers.¹ The experience of this writer backs up that contention. The idea that human life has two parts, body and soul, and that

¹T. A. Kantonen, Life after Death (Philadelphia: Concordia Muhlenberg Press, 1962), p. 6.

while the body is mortal, the soul is immortal, is widespread in popular Lutheran piety.

The source of this idea lies early in the history of the church. According to Kantonen, many of the fathers identified the Christian doctrine of eternal life with Platonic immortality. This viewpoint was cemented when the Fifth Lateran Council of 1515-1517 accepted this as a dogma of the church.²

In the more recent history of the church this viewpoint was promoted in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod by the writings of Francis Pieper. He wrote that death is the separation of body and soul, and that after death, according to such verses as Phil. 1:23, the souls of the righteous dwell with Christ in Paradise.³

Some recent exegetical studies have defended this interpretation in Phil. 1:23. For example, Otto Heick writes that Paul is referring here to the immortality of the soul, in opposition to more modern views of a gap between death and resurrection. He bases such a defense on what he claims is the clear teaching of the Scripture in dividing body and soul.⁴

²T. A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954), p. 27.

³Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), III, 507, 512.

⁴Otto W. Heick, "If a Man Die, Shall He Live Again?" Lutheran Quarterly, XVII (1965), 108-09.

Likewise, John Stott in a biblical study of death makes a similar analysis. The soul or spirit is seen as surviving the crisis of death and living on in a disembodied condition.⁵

Richard Lenski in his commentary on Phil. 1:23 also takes the same approach: "The body alone sleeps in death; after death the soul is with Christ, glorious, in bliss."⁶

The origin of this position, according to Kantonen, lies in Greek philosophy and especially Plato, who taught a dualism of body and soul. Moreover, since Neoplatonism was the prevailing philosophy during the early days of Christianity it was able to have an effect upon the Christian doctrine of the early fathers.⁷

Close analysis will show that the immortality of the soul is not a biblical concept. The Platonic doctrine of *ἀθάνασία*, immortality, is not found in the Old Testament, though it was present in the circles of Palestinian Judaism, having gradually been introduced from Hellenistic sources.⁸ Likewise in the New Testament the word never refers to the

⁵John Stott, "Death: A Biblical View Of What It Is," Eternity, XVI (March 1965), 29.

⁶Richard Charles Henry Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, c.1937), p. 750.

⁷Kantonen, Life, pp. 7, 14.

⁸Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, c.1924), IV, 1017.

soul, being used only twice, once of God (1 Tim. 6:16) and once of human existence after the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:53).⁹ Paul's viewpoint according to the latter verse is that immortality is not a natural thing. Rather immortality is something conferred by God. It is something offered "in Christ" (1 Cor. 15:22).

Based on this argumentation numerous exegetes, led by Oscar Cullmann, have rejected the concept of immortality of the soul. Yet as one writer has noted, Cullmann has rejected this teaching largely on the basis of his identification of the position held by those teaching immortality of the soul with that of Plato. In defense of the criticized group it must be said that none of these theologians goes so far as to adopt Plato's doctrine with its negative attitude to the body and hence to resurrection. Those Christians who adopt the seemingly Platonic point of view believe in a different kind of immortality, which is more like the continuance of the personal self after death. Cullmann is to this extent engaged in a terminological debate.¹⁰ To be sure, the

⁹Rudolf Bultmann, "Θάνατος," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), III, 24. The dictionary is hereafter referred to as TDNT.

¹⁰J. J. Collins, "Reflections on Cullmann's Immortality of the Soul," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXII (1960), 412.

insistence on the use of the term soul does not express the variety of biblical expression. Nevertheless, the concept of immortality of the soul, it is asserted, may be in harmony with the scripture (for example, Matt. 10:28) if one remembers that this immortality is not natural but the gift of God.

Cullmann's new approach to the concept of the intermediate state as the interpretation of Phil. 1:23 does not, of course, stop with rejection of the concept of immortality. Cullmann sees the key to the understanding of the intermediate state in the phrase "with Christ." For him this phrase is very similar to other biblical expressions such as "in paradise," "in Abraham's bosom," and "under the altar," which are all alternative means of referring to nearness to God.¹¹

For Cullmann nearness to God, close fellowship with Christ, is as much as can be said about the dead in the interim period before the Parousia. Unlike many of those who go into great detail on the intermediate state, Cullmann does not believe that the dead are already sharing in all of the joys of the eternal heaven. They are simply with Christ in a period of waiting. Though man lacks a fleshly body in this state, there is no fear of separation from God

¹¹Oscar Cullmann, "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead. The Witness of the New Testament," Immortality and Resurrection, edited by Krister Stendahl (New York: Macmillan Company, c.1965), p. 38.

and Christ, for the Holy Spirit is the Christian's earnest or guarantee of the future resurrection.¹²

Cullmann also differs from many of the previously described adherents of the intermediate state in that he refuses to identify that part of man which survives after an individual's death with the Greek concept of the $\Psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$. Rather he believes it is the inner man, the real personality of man, which exists in a relationship with God.¹³

Cullmann therefore raises several valuable points which deserve consideration in the interpretation of Phil. 1:23. Such biblical theologians as Taito Kantonen have taken up the same type of argument in approaching a doctrine of the intermediate state.¹⁴ F. W. Beare in his commentary on Paul's epistle to the Philippians has given recognition to Cullmann's viewpoints. He also quotes extensively from L. S. Thornton, whose theology seems to include a theology of the intermediate state that precludes complete heavenly bliss while affirming a continuation of the life in Christ.¹⁵

¹²Ibid., pp. 39-42.

¹³Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁴Kantonen, Life, pp. 31-37.

¹⁵F. W. Beare, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1959), pp. 64-65.

Similar in viewpoint to Cullmann in his teaching on the intermediate state is E. Earle Ellis, who affirms that nothing, not even death, can separate those who have died in Christ from Him. He is not willing, however, to use the concept of the intermediate state. Ellis' hesitation appears to stem from his conviction that there can be no victory over death, that there can be no enjoying of heavenly bliss, until the Parousia.¹⁶ When carefully analyzed, however, it may be seen that Ellis' position is very similar to Cullmann's in its motivation. He recognizes the biblical affirmation of fellowship with Christ, but also rebels against the concept of a complete heavenly bliss before the Parousia. Hence he says that the dead by their membership in the heavenly body of Christ have their resurrection guaranteed.¹⁷

Other than a possible conflict with the Parousia teaching of 1 Thess. 4:15-17, which will be discussed in Chapter III, the major counterargument against the intermediate state as an interpretation of the "with Christ" terminology is the argument that if a person enjoys the "full vision of God in

¹⁶E. Earle Ellis, Paul and His Recent Interpreters (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1961), p. 46.

¹⁷Ibid. A similar point of view is taken by John A. T. Robinson, The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. 78. Robinson holds that the survival of individuals depends on one's eternal relationship with God.

the highest heavens" immediately at death as has often been argued, the resurrection of the body has nothing to add.¹⁸ According to this viewpoint the Parousia loses much of its significance. This criticism does not, however, apply to Cullmann's position as outlined above.

Immediate Bodily Resurrection

Countering the approach to Phil. 1:23 taken by advocates of the intermediate state is that adopted by proponents of immediate bodily resurrection. According to these theologians there is no waiting period after death; one receives his resurrection body immediately.

One of the proponents of this approach is Joachim Jeremias, who sees Paul's theology in 1 Corinthians 15 gradually moving in that direction. He holds that the full consequences of this new insight are finally drawn in 2 Corinthians 5. Jeremias believes that under Hellenistic influences Paul reached the conclusion that the earthly body has nothing to do with the future state, but that the individual receives a new body at the moment of death. Paul has thoroughly reinterpreted the concept of the resurrection of the dead. Jeremias sees this same view expressed in

¹⁸R. F. Hettlinger, "2 Corinthians 5.1-10," Scottish Journal of Theology, X (1957), 192.

Paul's epistle to the Philippians, although there are some verses that fall back on the old Parousia terminology (for example, Phil. 3:21).¹⁹ This opinion receives more complete expression in the theologians whose arguments are to be described below.

Though the major argumentation of Jeremias and others for the immediate resurrection is drawn from 2 Corinthians 5, several writers draw arguments for this position from Phil. 1:23. Henry Shires has seen a positive indication of the immediate resurrection in Paul's statement that Christians are with Christ after death. He also draws arguments from 1 Corinthians 15, which he claims points to an immediate resurrection, and again from 2 Cor. 5:1-8 in its statement about a house (or, as Shires interprets it, a body) which awaits us at death.²⁰ R. H. Charles in his popular work on eschatology views the subject from a similar angle.²¹

As has been suggested above, many of the proponents of the immediate bodily resurrection take their major arguments

¹⁹Joachim Jeremias, "'Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God' (1 Cor. XV. 50)," New Testament Studies, II (1955-1956), 158.

²⁰Henry M. Shires, The Eschatology of Paul in the Light of Modern Scholarship (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 90-91.

²¹R. H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism and in Christianity (2nd edition; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), p. 453.

from a supposed Hellenization of Paul's eschatology. One of the earliest of these proposals is that made by Otto Pfleiderer who saw in Paul's fear of nakedness, expressed in 2 Cor. 5:1-8, a reaction to Hellenistic belief in the immortality of the naked soul. At the same time, Pfleiderer claims, Paul compromised with the Hellenistic view by setting the concept of immortality in the form of the reception of the resurrection body immediately after death alongside of his belief in the Parousia. Such a resurrection would be accomplished by an immediate investiture in a new heavenly body. It is because of this resurrection, according to Pfleiderer, that Paul can desire to depart and to be "with Christ."²²

A more recent promoter of this position is Wilfred L. Knox, who, however, derives nearly all of his argument from the 2 Corinthians 5 passage. According to Knox, Paul clearly teaches immediate resurrection through his statements concerning the putting on of "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1). As will be shown in Chapter III, Knox sees this as a necessary Hellenizing step to avoid offending the philosophical

²²Otto Pfleiderer, Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teaching in their Historical Connections (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), I, 452-55. See also by same author Paulinism: A Contribution to the History of Primitive Christian Theology, translated by Edward Peters (London: Williams and Norgate, 1877), I, 264.

sensitivity of the Corinthians.²³ This later development in Pauline theology was also expressed in Phil. 1:23.

Another approach to the immediate resurrection is that taken by Karl Barth. Barth is an advocate of immediate bodily resurrection, which he calls "the synchronism of the living and the dead in the resurrection."²⁴ This Barth explains by the fact that for God a thousand years is as a day. The idea of synchronism is particularly derived from the idea that "whether we live or die we are the Lord's." For Barth, then, the "shall" in the phrase "the last trumpet shall sound" must be put into quotation marks. It relates to aeternum, eternity. It is at the entering of eternity that both the dead and those who live until the Parousia receive their resurrection body.²⁵ According to this interpretation "with Christ" in Phil. 1:23 gives no problem at all. Immediately after death, the individual is at the last day with all those who have died before and after him. This is possible because as one dies one goes out of time into eternity.

²³Wilfred L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), pp. 137-40.

²⁴Karl Barth, The Resurrection of the Dead, translated by H. J. Stenning (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1933), p. 207.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 208-9.

Still another interpretation is that of biblical theologian D. E. H. Whiteley, who believes that the Christian receives a "temporary phase of the eternal body," which he contrasts with the concept of a temporary body. For Whiteley this "body" is an immediate parallel to the physical body of any who are surviving at the last day. Both are a temporary phase of the eternal body; both will be changed at the last trumpet call of the Parousia.²⁶

While the teaching of the immediate resurrection has obviously attracted a number of theologians, there is also much opposition to this idea. Many of the counter-arguments stem directly from the evidence of Scripture, which has no clear statement teaching the immediate resurrection. To the contrary, according to Cullmann, Pauline eschatology is clearly based on the already-but-not-yet approach. There is a present tension between the fact that the believer has eternal life already and the fact that the resurrection of the body will take place only on the last day.²⁷ "God has delivered us from death and will deliver us" (2 Cor. 1:10).

Immediate bodily resurrection after death is also contrary to the spirit of the Scripture according to Cullmann

²⁶D. E. H. Whiteley, The Theology of St. Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 260.

²⁷Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, translated by Floyd V. Filson (Revised edition; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), pp. 237-38.

because the future of each Christian depends on the entire redemption history. In accordance with the corporate nature of Christian existence, the redemption that has begun in Christ will be completed only at the end. Even the bodily resurrection of an individual "is bound to the temporal course of this process."²⁸

Robinson takes a similar approach to this question. For the Hellenic mind the delay of the resurrection "cannot, indeed, seem anything but foolishness. For to deny continuous bodily existence would be to deny the persistence of self identity."²⁹ To the contrary Paul with his Hebraically-oriented mind would see a man's individuality resting in the "individuating Word of God."³⁰ One need not fear the delay of the resurrection until the Last Day. It is necessary because none can be fully saved without his brothers. The resurrection body signifies the solidarity of the recreated universe in Christ. Thus it cannot be complete until He is all in all, that is until the Body of Christ is perfectly complete at the Last Day.³¹

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 231-32.

²⁹ John A. T. Robinson, In the End, God: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things (London: James Clarke, 1958), p. 97.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Robinson, The Body, p. 79.

Moving on to Barth's more speculative argument, which is not hit by the foregoing counterarguments, one must recognize that this is a philosophical approach that is likely completely outside of Paul's comprehension.³² One may perhaps validly argue in that way today, but to say that this is implied in Paul's theology would be an anachronism.

There is one seemingly logical argument against the immediate resurrection that must be rejected. According to this viewpoint the body cannot be raised immediately because it still lies moldering in the grave on earth. Against this Paul contends in 1 Cor. 15:42-49 that the new body is not the corpse raised again from the dust. It is rather a spiritual body, the transformation of the old by an act of God.³³ The previously given arguments are quite sufficient without resorting to such a literalistic understanding of the resurrection body, which limits the power of God.

Resurrection Only at the Parousia

A third major way in which interpreters approach the "with Christ" terminology in Phil. 1:23 is to argue that it refers only to the fellowship with Christ after the Parousia

³²Howard W. Tepker, "Problems in Eschatology: The Nature of Death and the Intermediate State," Springfielder, XXIX (Summer 1965), 22.

³³Robinson, In the End, pp. 90-91.

and cannot refer to an intermediate state. One major proponent of this position is Wilhelm Michaelis. For Michaelis the phrase $\sigma\upsilon\nu\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}\varsigma\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$ can only mean "the full fellowship with Christ which will become a reality at the time of the Last Day, the eschatological climax and fulfillment of the $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}\varsigma$."³⁴

For Michaelis, then, the interpretation of Phil. 1:23 is the same as that in Phil. 3:11; both speak of the resurrection of the dead. For him the interpretation of the phrase in terms of intermediate state is prevented not only by its usual meaning but also in the fact that the resurrection would far outshine the blessings of any such intermediate state. In such a state Paul was uninterested.³⁵

A slightly less specific but nevertheless related position on the same question is taken by Albrecht Oepke, who sees the emphasis in Paul exclusively on the Parousia. In his opinion, Paul is completely uninterested in a microcosmic eschatology relating to the fate of individuals after death. Even in speaking of the possibility of martyrdom in Phil. 1:23, the hope of Parousia has not been abandoned (Phil. 3:20-21; 4:5).³⁶

³⁴D. Wilhelm Michaelis, Der Brief des Paulus an die Philipper (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1935), p. 26.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 26-27.

³⁶Albrecht Oepke, "παρουσία," TDNT, V, 868.

Expanding on this viewpoint, theologian Paul Althaus has written that the Christian faith knows nothing of immortality of the person. "It knows only of the awaking out of the reality of death through God's power. There is existence after death only through awakening resurrection."³⁷ All that Christians can know is summed up for Althaus in death and resurrection. We cannot know anything more of the dead.³⁸

In his analysis of Paul's theology, Rudolf Bultmann has come to the same decision. Paul holds to the Jewish-Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which begins with the last judgment. This view is presented clearly in 1 Thess. 4:13-17 and 1 Corinthians 15. Hence when Paul speaks of being "with Christ" in Phil. 1:23, Bultmann sees this as an apparent contradiction stemming out of Paul's unconcern over the descriptive elements of the future life.³⁹

There are many scriptural references to the Parousia, as shown above, which imply a gap between death and this event. Any view which lays exclusive stress on this fact must do so, however, in disregard of a number of scriptural references which speak of the intermediate state (2 Cor. 5:1-8;

³⁷Paul Althaus, Die letzten Dinge (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, c.1933), p. 114.

³⁸Ibid., p. 159.

³⁹Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 346.

Luke 23:43; Rev. 6:10), not to speak of the "with Christ" passage in Philippians, whose difficulty in meshing with a Parousia theology has been noted above.

Moreover, if the gap between death and the resurrection is properly looked upon as annihilation, what is usually called "resurrection" would rather be a brand new creation. This would be true even if that which was created were related to the old.⁴⁰ Robinson points out that the Christian resurrection is a type of new creation but not a fresh start; it is the old made new, not *νέα* but *καὶνὴ κτίσις*.⁴¹

Hoffmann adds another argument against a gap after death; namely that Paul in Philippians 1 is setting up a false dilemma for himself if in death he will be separated from Christ--no longer "in Christ" and not yet "with Christ." Death would not mean gain, but rather loss.⁴²

This survey of the major approaches to the interpretation of Phil. 1:23 demonstrates that the solution of this problem is no simple matter. Each of the viewpoints has something to be said for it. Belief in an intermediate state is immediately the most logical conclusion, but may pose some

⁴⁰ Harold L. Creager, "The Biblical View of Life after Death," Lutheran Quarterly, XVII (1965), 121.

⁴¹ Robinson, In the End, p. 82.

⁴² Paul Hoffmann, Die Toten in Christus: Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung zur paulinischen Eschatologie (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1966), p. 289.

problems with regard to passages that speak about the Parousia. Furthermore, any doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not borne out by a study of Pauline theology. Cullmann's revision of this position is attractive but is mainly negative in its proclamations and does not answer many questions.

The second approach via the teaching of an immediate resurrection also seems to adequately explain the meaning of the "with Christ" terminology. The Christian at death does not wait for the Parousia to receive his resurrection body; it is awaiting him. This explanation, however, causes even a greater difficulty than the former when it is compared with Pauline teaching on the Parousia.

The third group has avoided this difficulty by aligning Paul's theology in the Philippians passage with Paul's eschatological thought as expressed elsewhere. Proponents of this theory see the "being with Christ" as occurring for the first time on the Last Day. As has been pointed out, however, this fails to do justice to the immediacy of Paul's feeling that he will be with Christ after death.

Theologians have marshalled evidence in favor of each of these theories. The solution is not obvious. It will be necessary to examine this evidence more closely later in this paper to come to a decision on what Paul really intended to say in Phil. 1:23.

CHAPTER III

POSSIBLE CONFLICT IN PAUL'S
ESCHATOLOGICAL STATEMENTS

A Comparison of Paul's Parousia and
"With Christ" Teaching

The difficulties faced in Chapter II in evaluating the different interpretations of Phil. 1:23 become even more clear when these are compared with Paul's early teaching on the Parousia as it is found particularly in 1 Thess. 4:13-17. The question is posed very simply by Karel Hanhart: "How is it possible that Paul could speak of the resurrection of the dead at the Parousia and of his hope in death in the same epistles?"¹

One of Paul's most characteristic statements on the second coming of Christ begins with 1 Thess. 4:14. There is some debate whether the phrase *ὅτι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ* refers to Christians having fallen asleep "in Jesus" or whether this phrase refers to Jesus' agency in the bringing of the saints. Frame takes the former position while the Revised Standard

¹Karel Hanhart, The Intermediate State in the New Testament (Franeker, Holland: T. Wever, 1966), p. 71. This discrepancy between Phil. 1:23 and 1 Thess. 4:17 is also pointed out by Harold A. Guy, The New Testament Doctrine of the "Last Things:" A Study in Eschatology (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 117.

Version opts for the latter. Whatever is decided on this point the interpretation remains unchanged. Christ will bring with Him the departed saints.²

Paul claims in these verses to have a "word of the Lord." Whether this was an unwritten statement of Jesus or a special revelation to Paul is not important for the purpose of this discussion. The important thing is that Paul affirms on the basis of this word that Christians who live until the Parousia (and Paul here apparently thinks he will be one of them since he believes that the end is near), will not precede those who have died previous to that date.³

The question Paul is addressing here is the exact opposite of the modern one; it is not whether the dead will have an advantage over the living, but whether the living will have an advantage over the dead at the Parousia. The question may be raised whether it is significant that Paul does not answer this question with the clear statement that the dead have an advantage, since this is the way Phil. 1:23 is often interpreted. That Paul does not is one of the sources of the alleged conflict between Pauline eschatology in his epistles to the Thessalonians and in that to the Philippians.

²James Everett Frame, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), p. 170.

³Ibid., pp. 171-72.

To see conflict here, however, is to argue from silence, which is a dubious practice.

Paul continues his discussion in 1 Thess. 4:16 by describing the Parousia of the Lord: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." This descent of Christ will be accompanied by the resurrection of the dead at that precise moment. The exact procedure here is unknown and irrelevant. What is known is the result.⁴

With this verse a decided contrast is formed with many interpretations of Phil. 1:23 that speak of immediate resurrection prior to the Parousia. The order of the verse clearly implies that only after the command is given, only at the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God, shall the dead in Christ rise. This is clearly an event at the Parousia and not before. The verse speaks of a corporate and not an individual resurrection. The account in 1 Thessalonians 4 loses meaning if one attributes to Paul the idea of an immediate resurrection.

Another problem poses itself in 1 Thess. 4:17 where the text states that the living together with the dead will be caught up in the clouds "to meet [*eis ἀπάντησιν*] the Lord

⁴Ibid., p. 174.

in the air." One may see the implication in this statement that the dead had not previously been with Christ. This would be a radical contrast to Paul's confidence in Phil. 1:23 that he would be "with Christ" after death. As will be seen in Chapter VI, however, the passage need not be taken in this way.

At first sight, then, a study of 1 Thess. 4:13-17 appears to contrast with the most promising solutions to the question of what Paul was saying in Phil. 1:23, namely the belief in the intermediate state and that in an immediate resurrection. If "with Christ" speaks of an intermediate state it is strange that Paul makes no mention of it in 1 Thessalonians. If, on the other hand, the phrase speaks of an immediate resurrection, it lies in direct contrast to the clear teaching of 1 Thessalonians 4, which speaks of a resurrection at the Parousia.

The Development Hypothesis

The above conflict which many interpreters see in Pauline eschatology has led some of them, particularly supporters of the immediate resurrection, to hypothesize a gradual development in Pauline theology. According to this view Paul held both the Parousia and immediate resurrection beliefs at separate times.

One of the early supporters of a developmental hypothesis in Pauline theology was Otto Pfleiderer. Pfleiderer believed that Phil. 1:23 taught such a close fellowship with Christ through immediate resurrection that it made a return of Christ from heaven in a Parousia completely superfluous. Along with the second coming he also rejected the final judgment. In Pfleiderer's mind the delay of the Parousia resulted in a substitute in the form of the "Hellenistic hope of the blessedness of individuals in the other world."⁵

R. H. Charles developed a complete theory concerning the development of Paul's eschatology, arranged in four stages. The first stage, represented by Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians, consists in the teaching concerning the Parousia, final judgment and resurrection. The second stage, Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, is basically harmonious with stage one but omits reference to the Anti-Christ. The third stage, which Paul reached in his second letter to the Corinthians and that to the Romans, begins the teaching of the immediate resurrection. Finally in Paul's epistles to the Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians, Paul deals with the cosmic significance of Christ.⁶

⁵Otto Pfleiderer, Primitive Christianity: its Writings and Teaching in their Historical Connections (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), I, 456.

⁶R. H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism and in Christianity (2nd

W. L. Knox has developed the most complete explanation of this Hellenistically-oriented development in Paul's eschatology. In Knox's view Christianity had accepted from Judaism the belief in a soul which departed from the body and was rejoined at the day of judgment. In Palestine this was accepted without question. In Corinth it was different. The latter rejected any resurrection in favor of a continuation of this age. To die before the second coming could only be interpreted as punishment. Paul's answer in 1 Corinthians 15 was that Jesus' resurrection brought to men a resurrection not of the material body but of a body suited to the new condition as pure spirit. As a Hellenist Paul then goes on to describe man in 2 Cor. 5:1-4 as putting off the body. To a Jew such a conception was repulsive if it resulted in nakedness. As a result Paul describes man as putting on a new and glorious body, the eternal habitation of the soul in heaven, which, according to this approach, would occur immediately after death. He uses other Hellenistic terminology in speaking of the soul as an exile from its true home in heaven. Knox claims that Paul adopted the new teaching of the transformation of man immediately at death in order to satisfy the objection of the Corinthian Christians. These changes were

edition; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), pp. 437-61 passim.

the center of a rather radical development in Paul's theology later in his life.⁷

The caution must be advanced, however, that even Knox, while speaking of a "complete revision of Pauline eschatology in a Hellenistic sense" did not speak of such a revision in a "completely Hellenistic sense."⁸ Even the most radical supporters of a Hellenization of Paul's theology must recognize that Paul is at least showing a synthesis between Hellenism and Judaism, which is reflected in his hope for a resurrection body.

W. D. Davies, rejecting the Hellenizing argument that has just been detailed, has formulated his own development theory. Davies' solution is that the real change is one in Paul's expectation of living to the Parousia. Just as Paul as a rabbi had believed that the future age both is and comes, so Paul suggested that Christians are already partakers in the world to come. Paul, though he faces death, does not believe that this can mean a cessation of life. The only answer is, in Davies opinion, that Paul affirm the immediate reception of the resurrection body.⁹

⁷Wilfred L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), pp. 126-27; 137-41.

⁸R. F. Hettlinger, "2 Corinthians 5.1-10," Scottish Journal of Theology, X (1957), 186. See Knox, p. 128.

⁹W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology (Revised edition; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1955), pp. 311, 319.

Evidence Against Development

While some of the evidence appears to warrant a theory of development in Paul's eschatology, there is much evidence against such a possibility. Development in Paul's epistles is difficult to prove because the length of time between them is not very great; taking the date of A.D. 50 for Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians and the latest date for the epistle to Philippians as about A.D. 60 there are only ten years between them. Possibly the gap was considerably less.¹⁰

The developmental hypothesis contends that Paul in his later epistles gave up belief in the resurrection of the dead at a later Parousia in favor of the immediate resurrection of the dead. This hypothesis is called into question by Paul's frequently expressed concern with the Parousia or Day of the Lord in his epistle to the Philippians (1:6, 1:10, 2:16). A still more important passage is found in Phil. 3:20-21:

But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

These verses offer the same eschatological approach to the Parousia as in 1 Thess. 4:13-17. At His second coming Christ will change our bodies to be like His glorious body.

¹⁰Paul Feine and Johannes Behm, Introduction to the New Testament, reedited by Werner Georg Kümmel, translated by A. J. Mattill, Jr. (14th revised edition; Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1966), pp. 183, 229-35.

The problem is, however, raised by Hanhart that Paul may be describing the Parousia in Phil. 3:21 as one who expects to be alive at the Parousia. He contends that the term *σῶμα* is not used by Paul for a corpse decomposed in the grave.¹¹ If this is true, then Paul may have believed that those who died before the Parousia would receive their resurrection bodies immediately while those who lived until the Parousia would be changed at that time. If this is true, however, it means that the epistle shows one sign of being early--namely that Paul expects an imminent Parousia in which all but a few would share--while at the same time it teaches immediate resurrection, which is seen as a late development. The combination is unlikely.

Even Pfleiderer recognized the difficulty of the fact that Paul, while allegedly espousing the Hellenistic idea of immediate resurrection, still used the typical Jewish-Christian eschatological terms: Parousia, resurrection, and judgment in his later epistles. Pfleiderer is forced to suggest that Paul has not quite thought out the consequences of his new teaching.¹² This is not fair to Paul since this judgment is forced by the imposition of the developmental

¹¹Hanhart, p. 116.

¹²Pfleiderer, I, 457.

¹³Peine, pp. 235-37.

theory which is purely a hypothesis, but it does show the difficulties that are involved.

In a last-ditch attempt to defend the developmental hypothesis, one might seek to find a solution in the occasionally raised hypotheses regarding the lack of unity of Paul's epistle to the Philippians. Not only is there no sufficient reason, however, to doubt the original unity of Philippians, but none of the theories that have been presented suggests a plan in which the hypothetically early Phil. 3:20-21 would come before Phil. 1:23.¹³ This attempt, too, would prove a complete failure.

Thus it may be shown that although many claim to find in Phil. 1:23 a relatively new approach to eschatology in the concept of the immediate resurrection, this results in an insuperable conflict with the Parousia theology of 1 Thessalonians 4. Though the concept of the intermediate state does not seem at home in the one-sided emphasis on the second coming of Christ in that book, this approach does not pose the insuperable problems of the teaching of immediate resurrection.

Many have attempted to defend the hypothesis of the immediate resurrection by resorting to a theory of development in Paul. Though one may see in Paul some development

¹³Feine, pp. 235-37.

toward belief in the delay of the Parousia or at least toward the idea that he personally might not live to the Parousia, the complex development of Pfleiderer's and Knox's theories goes beyond what can readily be discerned about Paul's theology. Even in the epistle to the Philippians Paul maintains a belief in the Parousia which belies any attempt to see Paul turning away from this doctrine toward a Hellenistic belief in immediate resurrection.

Old Testament Influence

The basic Old Testament view about death, which Paul was certainly aware of from his careful schooling in the Scriptures, was that the dead did not come back in the after world. This was combined without contradiction with the popular concept of the dead lying in their tombs.¹

¹ Cf. W. W. Goodenough, Judaism in the First Century of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), II, 289. See also R. H. Charles, A Short History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Judaism, Islam and in Christianity (2nd edition; London: Methuen and Charles Black, 1913).

CHAPTER IV

THE BACKGROUND OF THE PAULINE TEACHING

The complexity of the question involved in determining exactly what Paul had in mind when he spoke of fellowship with Christ after death leads one into a study of the possible background out of which this statement emerged. The problem is which of the various sectors of influence on Paul--his Old Testament study, the influence of Hellenistic Judaism, or his Pharisaic training--caused Paul to use the terminology he did in speaking of his relationship with Christ after death.

Old Testament Influence

The basic Old Testament view about death, which Paul was certainly aware of from his careful schooling in the Scripture, was that the dead had a common abode in the nether world--Sheol. This was combined without contradiction with the simple concept of the dead lying in their tombs.¹

¹G. F. Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), II, 289. See also R. H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism and in Christianity (2nd edition; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913).

Related to this simple belief in a common underworld of shadows in which the dead exist while their bodies are in the grave is the Old Testament usage which speaks of death with the phrase "gathered to one's fathers" or some similar expression (Gen. 15:15; 35:29). These were simple statements to the effect that a man was buried with those who had died before him in the family tomb. Though it is true that similar words are referred to Abraham who died far from his family burial plot, this usage may be seen as an extension of the meaning of the phrase in an unusual circumstance (Gen. 25:8). Paul's statement that after death he would be with Christ goes far beyond this thought, for he spoke of being together after death with one who had been resurrected, his savior Jesus Christ.

One of the doctrines of late Pharisaic Judaism was the resurrection, which was believed to involve the revivification of the dead.² This is proclaimed in at least one late Old Testament passage. Dan. 12:2 says: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The implication in this verse, however, is that this resurrection will occur after a space of time in the grave.

²Moore, p. 295.

The earliest Old Testament concept bordering on Paul's eschatology of the intermediate state is found in Psalms 16, 49 and 73. These show a complete confidence in fellowship with God. It was impossible for the Psalmist to conceive of a state in which he should be isolated from God. For example, the Psalmist states: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou dost hold my right hand. Thou dost guide me with thy counsel, and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory" (Ps. 73:23-24). Communion of the righteous with God would be continual.³

Hellenistic Influence on Judaism

Rather than being drawn from the Old Testament the ideas of the immortal soul and that of a reward for the good after death were adopted by some Jews from Hellenistic thought.⁴ The Wisdom of Solomon adopts such a position.

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-5 reads in part:

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died . . . but they are at peace. . . . Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself.

Similarly Wisdom of Solomon 9:15 seems to have a Hellenistic tendency toward Platonic dualism in terminology: "for

³H. A. A. Kennedy, St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), p. 52.

⁴Moore, p. 293.

a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind." While, however, Hellenistic thought may be seen as being the source of some of Paul's theological language, Sevenster objects that the language of Paul (particularly in 2 Corinthians 5) can be explained without recourse to such Hellenistic sources. Paul means something different from Plato and Wisdom; he is concerned not with ridding himself of a body but with putting on the body of the resurrection.⁵

The question of a dualism in Paul stemming from Platonic thought has been a much debated one. It cannot be denied that Paul sees a cleft in man that is so deep that he comes close to gnostic dualism in his terminology. Laeuchli has pointed out several aspects of Pauline terminology that have this implication. Among these are the use of the term *νοῦς* as separate from *πνεῦμα*, the differentiation between the inner and outer man (Rom. 7:22; Eph. 3:16) and the possibility of the soul's existence outside of the body (2 Cor. 12:1-4).⁶

The latter possibility of the soul's existence outside of the body is one that is often stressed by those who favor

⁵J. N. Sevenster, "Some Remarks on the ΓΥΜΝΟΣ in II Cor. V.3," Studia Paulina in honorem Johannis de Zwaan septuagenarii (Haarlem: Erven F. Bohn, 1953), p. 213.

⁶Samuel Laeuchli, "Monism and Dualism in the Pauline Anthropology," Biblical Research, III (1958), 17-21.

the teaching of an intermediate state.⁷ This is the most simple explanation of how Paul can look forward to being "with Christ" after his body has been laid into the ground. This usage of the word *ψυχή* as soul, however, is far from being a regular one in Paul. Paul uses the term very infrequently and when he does it is clear in most cases that he is not referring to what is normally designated "soul," but to a man's existence as a person or more specifically to his life (for example, Rom. 13:1; 16:4).

Only 1 Thess. 5:23 comes close to making the Platonic differentiation between body and soul: "May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Even this verse, however, is open to Stacey's interpretation that Paul is using these terms Hebraically to describe different aspects of man who is in makeup a unity.⁸ This is shown even more clearly by Paul's usage of the phrase "*ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος*," meaning the natural man in opposition to the spiritual man (1 Cor. 2:14).

Another term which seems to indicate some form of dualism in Paul is that which has been indicated by the "inner man." For the educated Greek the true worth of man

⁷See T. A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954), p. 31.

⁸W. David Stacey, "St. Paul and the 'Soul,'" Expository Times, LXVI (1955), 274.

was found in the "inner man," a small part of the universal intelligence. The inner man lived in the prison of the body, but had an invisible place of abode in heaven, "more in conformity with his inner reality."⁹

Cerfaux believes that Paul has accepted a modification of this viewpoint into his theology. According to Cerfaux's view, then, Paul uses this terminology to indicate the means by which man can have an existence after death independent of the body. The inner man, sustained by the power of the living Christ, can subsist alone after death, until the Parousia. Yet what part of man this is cannot be isolated.¹⁰

A third term that may indicate a dualism in Paul, which is more independent of Hellenistic roots, is the term πνεῦμα. Paul uses spirit and not soul in reference to the higher life of man. The contrast between πνευματικός and ψυχικός which has been referred to previously is one piece of evidence in this direction. A second is the overwhelming prominence given to the term πνεῦμα over against ψυχή in the Pauline writings. The spirit receives its importance from Paul's view of the Holy Spirit. Thus "the guarantee of life lies not in the nature of the soul, but in the nature of God."¹¹

⁹ Lucien Cerfaux, The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), pp. 193-94.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 198-99.

¹¹ Stacey, p. 275.

The difference between the Platonic usage of the term "soul" and the Pauline usage of "spirit" is not merely a terminological one. It is far more basic than that.

From this consideration it may be seen that there is truth in both the arguments for and against dualism in Paul. There is dualistic language in Paul. As Stacey indicates, however, "it would be much truer to say that Paul is not a dichotomist, but that on rare occasions the language of dichotomy creeps into his letters."¹² Paul does not hold a true Gnostic dualism. To this view any thought of the resurrection would be unthinkable because it would return the soul to its prison. For Paul, in contrast, the body is not a prison of the self--or soul--which is to be freed. The body is rather to be transformed.¹³

Pauline terminology does not see man as divided into different segments, one or more of which may survive death while the rest are put into the ground. Rather man is seen from different points of view as body, flesh and blood, soul, spirit, and heart. Each portrays a different characteristic of the whole man.¹⁴ Thus Paul's terminology is similar to

¹²W. David Stacey, The Pauline View of Man in Relation to its Judaic and Hellenistic Background (London: Macmillan and Co., 1956), 213.

¹³Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 199-201.

¹⁴Kantonen, p. 30.

that of Hebraic thought in which body and soul together make up a נְשָׁמָה or breathing being.¹⁵

Palestinian Judaism

Far more important than any immediate Hellenistic-dualistic influence on Paul was the teaching held by the Palestinian Judaism of Paul's own day. Two separate doctrines were current among Jews of that day. One of these is the resurrection of the dead as already noted in the book of Daniel. The revivification of the righteous dead is a common idea also in the apochryphal Book of Enoch which states:

And in those days shall the earth also give back that which has been entrusted to it, And Sheol also shall give back that which it has received, And hell shall give back that which it owes. For in those days the Elect One shall arise, And he shall choose the righteous and holy from among them (Enoch 51:1-2a).

Similar testimony to belief in the resurrection of the dead is found in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Psalms of Solomon. One example is the simple statement that "They that fear the Lord will rise to eternal life" (Ps. of Sol. 3:11). Few of these statements say anything definite about the intermediate state. For the Jew belief in the afterlife was a corollary to the idea of God's justice.

¹⁵Edward W. Ohrenstein, "Immortality in the New Testament: Testimony on Eternal Life," Encounter, XXII (Winter 1961), 32.

Beyond this the Jew was not inordinately preoccupied with the individual's hereafter.¹⁶

By the New Testament era a second doctrine--the immortality of the soul--was adding itself to the first under the influence of Hellenism. This doctrine emerged gradually from belief in Sheol. An early stage of it may likely be seen in the Book of Enoch 22:8-12, which speaks of separate hollows for the souls of the good and the bad. Still more developed is the teaching of a sharp division of the dead between Paradise with its blessings and Gehenna where the dead are punished (compare 2 Esdras 7:36).

Josephus records that the Pharisees held that "all souls are incorruptible; but that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies--but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment."¹⁷

Paul Hoffmann has shown that the eschatological thought that Paul uses in Phil. 1:23 was neither a product of the moment nor a development out of some form of distinct Hellenistic Judaism but was rather an expression of thought that drew out of just such a combination of eschatological ideas as has been described as common to much of Judaism,

¹⁶Moore, pp. 319-21.

¹⁷Flavius Josephus, "The Wars of the Jews" (II,8,14), Josephus Complete Works, translated by William Whiston (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Pub., 1960), p. 478.

including Paul's Pharisaic training. Paul places the conceptions of being immediately with Christ and of awaiting salvation right next to each other in the same book without seeing a problem. This is exactly what was done in Palestinian Judaism, in reliance on Jewish apocalyptic. The dead righteous person was immediately after death in heavenly blessedness. Yet he awaited the resurrection of the just.¹⁸

Thus Hoffmann draws several parallels between Paul and Jewish thought contemporary to him. (1) Resurrection hope and heavenly blessedness stand side by side. (2) No agreement between the two is attempted; rather, though one element may be missing (as the resurrection in Phil. 1:23), both are presupposed. (3) Both the Jewish and Pauline approaches see the coming world as the new age already present in heaven. (4) Both Paul and the apocalyptic literature recognize a fellowship with the Messiah in the intermediate state.¹⁹

This final point is set out in one instance in the Book of Enoch 39:4-6a:

And there I saw another vision, the dwelling-places of the holy, And the resting-places of the righteous. . . . And in that place mine eyes saw the Elect One of righteousness and of faith.

¹⁸Paul Hoffmann, Die Toten in Christus: Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung zur paulinischen Eschatologie (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1966), pp. 315-16.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 317-18.

There is, however, a strong difference between the Jewish and Pauline conceptions here. While for Enoch the presence of the Messiah is merely one aspect of the blessings of Paradise, for Paul fellowship with Christ is of central importance. This is the foundation on which everything else rests.²⁰

With this survey it has become apparent that Paul's eschatology has not taken a completely separate course from that of the Judaism he knew. Already at the end of the Old Testament there is a sign of the resurrection thought that becomes so important in Paul's theology. Likewise the rest of Paul's Pharisaic training had its effect. It is probably through these sources, and not directly through some form of Hellenistic Judaism that Paul was influenced in his thought about the intermediate state. Paul's theology shows no strong tendency to the dualism prevalent in Hellenistic thought, though he knew and used the terminology on occasion. Rather than heading in that direction, Paul's theology reflects the parallel Jewish thoughts of eternal blessedness and resurrection without restricting himself to a narrow Hellenistic approach of the immortality of the soul.

²⁰Ibid., p. 318.

CHAPTER V

THE MEANING OF $\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$ IN PAULINE THEOLOGY

Having approached the problem of Phil. 1:23 first by the study of the variant interpretations given it by biblical exegetes and theologians, then by comparison with Paul's Parousia teaching and again by evaluating the background of the Pauline teaching, it becomes necessary to approach the problem more specifically by addressing the question of Paul's teaching concerning fellowship with Christ, which is expressed in this verse by the Greek preposition $\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$.

The Background of the Usage of $\Sigma\upsilon\upsilon$

The term $\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$ is one of two Greek prepositions meaning "with," which indicate either the relationship of persons or the relationship between people and objects.¹ The significance of this common term in the Pauline vocabulary lies in Paul's usage of it to indicate a relationship with the ascended Christ, a relationship which obviously goes beyond the common understanding of fellowship in space and time.

¹Walter Grundmann, " $\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$ - $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha$ mit Genitiv," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1959), VII, 770. This German edition will be indicated hereafter by TWNT.

The choice of **σύν** by Paul may originate in the Hellenistic Greek expressions **σὺν θεῷ** and **σὺν θεοῖς**. These are standard expressions found in every era of literature. The life of man is seen under the helping cooperation of the divinity. All of Greek literature has references to this involvement of God in human lives. The aid of God is seen not only in help coming from outside man but also within him.²

By way of contrast **μετέ** is the word used in the Greek Old Testament to express God's promise to come down and be with men. God not only aids men occasionally as the Greek writings suggested but he offers men the promise of his constant help. A great number of men received this promise of the Lord's aid. One need only think of such Old Testament men as Abraham, Jacob, Moses and Joshua.³ So likewise men experienced this fellowship in the New Testament era in the person of Jesus Christ.

In contrast to the frequent Old Testament passages that speak of God's being with man, there are only a few instances of the expression "we . . . with God." Both expressions are found in 2 Chron. 15:2 in which a man's being with the Lord

²Ibid., VII, 772-73.

³Cf. Ibid., VII, 774. Examples of the use of in the Septuagint to indicate the promise of divine aid are: Gen. 17:4; 28:15; Ex. 3:12; Joshua 1:5,9; Judg. 6:12; Jer. 1:8. Further references to the Septuagint may use the abbreviation LXX.

is a condition of the Lord's being with the man. Other instances in the LXX are Ps. 77(78):8,37; 3 Regnorum (1 Kings) 11:4; 15:3; Micah 6:8 and Gen. 5:22,24. These all, however, use the term μετά and not σύν.⁴

Particularly interesting are a number of texts in the Psalms which in the Hebrew speak of the fellowship which exists between God and man but in the LXX have passed over this sense and may possibly refer to the fellowship of eternal life with God. Ps. 139:14 (140:13) is the only example which uses the term σύν: "The upright will dwell σύν τῷ προσώπῳ σου." Ps. 138 (139):18 has in the LXX a free translation in which the understanding is dependent on the translation of ἐξηγέρθη. The sense may be "I will be awaked to fellowship with God." This is not the usual Old Testament usage; it is on the threshold of the usage in Phil. 1:23.⁵

The change which the LXX has made in the above verses toward fellowship with God in eternity can be associated in philosophical thinking with clear Greek ideas that speak of fellowship with the gods after death. This thought is expressed in Socrates' depiction of death as a trip in fields where men came together with the great of the past. In the Phaedo death is described as a trip which men take to the

⁴Ibid., VII, 779.

⁵Ibid., VII, 780.

gods. There are many similar examples. Most of these differ, however, in speaking of association with the dead, not with God.⁶

Pauline Emphasis on Fellowship with Christ

For Paul the Greek word *σύν* is only one means of expressing the important Pauline fellowship with Christ. As a Christian Paul knows he is one with Christ in a way that goes beyond mere imitation. In the phrase "in Christ," for example, there is a real union between Christ and the Christian, which is quite similar to the exclusive, meaningful union which a man and wife have with each other.⁷

Varying means are used by Paul to express his fellowship with Christ, which is more obscurely called Christ mysticism by some authors.⁸ One of the most frequent means by which St. Paul expresses such intimacy with Christ is his use of verbs formed with the preposition *σύν*. Two common examples are *συσκώ*, "live with" and *συναποθνῆσκω*, "die with." Though both are common in profane Greek, they take

⁶Ibid., VII, 781.

⁷Barnabus M. Ahern, "Union with Christ after Death," Studies in Salvation History, edited by C. Luke Salm (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 223.

⁸E.g. Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle (New York: Henry Holt and Company, c.1931) and Alfred Wikenhauser, Pauline Mysticism: Christ in the Mystical Teaching of St. Paul (Freiburg: Herder, 1960).

on new significance as the key to Paul's theology.⁹ Other compounds formed include "to suffer with Christ" (Rom. 8:12), "to be crucified with him" (Gal. 2:19), "to be buried with him" (Rom. 6:4) and "to be raised with him" (Col. 2:12).¹⁰

There are three main groups of sayings formed by compounding a verb with *σύν*. First are the sayings which speak of the final fulfillment; second, the sayings that deal with Baptism; and third, those that deal with a life that is changed by its relationship with Christ.¹¹ In a way these are all very similar, for they all refer to the state of the believer who lives with Christ, who is in effect living in the resurrection, whether before or after death.

Since there is a close relationship between all of the words used by Paul to indicate fellowship with Christ, it is helpful to study one of the most frequent phrases, "in Christ," to see its relation to the expression "with Christ." The question presents itself: "What does it mean to be in Christ?" To say that Christ is the location in which our life is lived does not convey much meaning in ordinary understanding. Going beyond this is the suggestion that Christ

⁹Brennan McGrath, "'SYN' Words in Saint Paul," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XIV (July 1952), 219-20.

¹⁰Otto Kuss, Der Römerbrief (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1963), p. 320.

¹¹Ibid.

is our "vital principle," Christ is our life (Col. 3:4). This does not annihilate man's human life; it offers new power for life.¹²

Union with Christ is closely associated with the Christian's baptism. By the sacrament a Christian participates in Christ's sufferings, death and resurrection. From that time he exists in a permanent communion with the dead and risen Christ, a complete renewal which needs to be accomplished daily.¹³

In effect Paul believes that the resurrection is already at work in him, both in his body and in his inner self. A Christian lives on a plane where his whole life is greatly influenced by divine power. To some degree the whole quality of his life is affected. In Paul's mind to be "in Christ" means "being under the power and influence of the personal Christ."¹⁴

In a very real way the Christian on earth is already, thus, living in the eschaton. Real life is already present for him in this life. The one who is baptized receives the gift of the Spirit as the firstfruit of salvation (compare

¹² Francois Amiot, The Key Concepts of St. Paul, translated by John Dingle (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), pp. 144-45.

¹³ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁴ Wikenhauser, pp. 63-64.

2 Cor. 5:5). In fact for Paul there is a very close relationship between being $\epsilon\nu$ πνεύματι and being $\epsilon\nu$ Χριστῷ. The ascended Christ relates to Christians through the agency of the Spirit. Paul does not draw a close line between the work of the second and third members of the Trinity. To be "in Christ" is to be "in the Spirit" and vice versa.¹⁵

The expression used in Phil. 1:23 is, however, not $\epsilon\nu$ but $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$, "with." This preposition comes up often in historical circumstances. The disciples are occasionally called those who were "with Jesus" (for example, Acts 4:13). This is a historical, spacial concept; with Christ, on the other hand, is an eschatological one.¹⁶

Even so the expression "with Christ" connotes a real fellowship with the risen and ascended Lord. This is shown by the contrast between "with Christ" and "with you all" in Phil. 1:23-25.¹⁷ The meaning of $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ has been described as "the fellowship of persons who are together, who come together, who meet each other, who work together . . . who

¹⁵Eduard Schweitzer, "πνεῦμα," TWNT, VI, 431; see also Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 348-49.

¹⁶Ernst Lohmeyer, "Σὺν Χριστῷ," Festgabe für Adolf Deissmann zum 60. Geburtstag, 7. November 1926 (Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1927), p. 231.

¹⁷Karel Hanhart, The Intermediate State in the New Testament (Franeker, Holland: T. Wever, 1966), p. 181.

stand by one another and help one another."¹⁸ Here may be seen some of the real intimacy which is referred to with these words. With Christ is thus an eschatological expression which conveys the thought that even after death the oneness of Christ and believers continues.¹⁹ The significance of this relationship will become apparent as this chapter continues.

$\Sigma\upsilon\nu \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ is not an expression adopted by Paul from another source. It is one which he formulated himself, possibly from the background with which this chapter opened. This phrase or one closely related to it such as "with him," occurs eight times in the undisputed Pauline epistles. In addition it is found four times in Colossians.²⁰

Some interpreters see a strong distinction between the $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ and $\sigma\upsilon\nu$ expressions, suggesting that unlike $\acute{\epsilon}\nu \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ which can refer to many aspects of a Christian's life, the expression $\sigma\upsilon\nu \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ is of more limited usage. Even when one considers the verbal prefixes, there is no reference to working "with Christ" or serving with him. It is only

¹⁸Grundmann, VII, 770.

¹⁹Paul Hoffmann, Die Toten in Christus: Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung zur paulinischen Eschatologie (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1966), p. 307.

²⁰These occurrences are 1 Thess. 4:14, 4:17, 5:10; 2 Cor. 4:14, 13:4; Rom. 6:8, 8:32; Col. 2:13, 20; Col. 3:3, 4.

possible to die and be buried with Christ, to be resurrected with Christ, and to be with him forever.²¹

The expression $\sigma\upsilon\nu \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ is seen by Lohmeyer as referring not to a happening in time but to one in eternity: an unending existence together with Christ. For him this expression refers to another sphere. Here one is far from Christ although "in Christ"; there he will be "with Christ."²² According to this distinction, the expression "in Christ" provides the condition after the resurrection of Christ and before his eschatological second coming; "with Christ" takes over after that.²³

The same narrow distinction is maintained by Wikenhauser. Christians will be "in Christ" until the second coming of Christ. Then they will be "with Christ." The latter is seen as being the consummation of Paul's fellowship teaching.²⁴ In the phrase "with Christ" Paul adopts an expression dealing with space to describe a relation with Christ in the "transcendental world," a relationship of a higher order.²⁵

²¹Lohmeyer, p. 221.

²²Ibid., pp. 222-23.

²³Ibid., p. 230.

²⁴Wikenhauser, p. 200.

²⁵Ibid., p. 206.

To a certain extent this distinction holds true. There is a terminological difference that is generally maintained by Paul. $\Sigma\upsilon\nu\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ generally refers to the future state of Christians. This usage is particularly evident in 1 Thess. 4:14,17 and in 2 Cor. 4:14--all of which speak of fellowship with Christ after the Parousia. Likewise Paul uses this phrase to speak of a general fellowship with Christ in the future in Rom. 6:8 and 8:32.

As Paul Hoffmann has pointed out, however, this neat distinction is not consistent throughout the Pauline epistles. Paul can also point to past and present life with the $\sigma\upsilon\nu$ expression. One example is 2 Cor. 13:4 in which Paul possibly refers to his present existence in which the power of God will become a force working fellowship with Christ for him.²⁶ The Revised Standard Version translates this admittedly difficult verse in this way: "For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we shall live with him [Christ] by the power of God."

Again in Paul's epistle to the Colossians Hoffmann notes the breaking down of this neat distinction. He uses here parallel closely those of the verbal compounds made with $\sigma\upsilon\nu$.²⁷ Col. 2:13 states: "And you, who were dead in

²⁶Hoffmann, p. 309.

²⁷Ibid.

trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." Again in Col. 2:20a Paul writes: "If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world."

These verses speak of being "with Christ" in this life. Thus the terminological difference that Paul usually employs is absent here. Paul uses the phrase much as he might have used "in Christ." While $\sigma\upsilon\nu\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ is often used to refer to a physical proximity with Christ after the Parousia this study would indicate that it must not be limited to this. By interchanging the usages of these phrases occasionally, Paul shows the close relationship between them. This is important in determining the exact meaning of $\sigma\upsilon\nu$ in Phil. 1:23.

For Paul the future eschatological existence with Christ is therefore clearly rooted in the fellowship which a Christian has with Christ in this life. Rom. 6:8 bases the confession of faith that the Christian will be with Christ on the fact that one has died with Christ. One will be with Christ after death because one is with Christ in the new life that follows baptism. "God has made [Christians] alive together with [Christ]." (Col. 2:13).

Paul Hoffmann has gone into greater detail on this close relation between the $\epsilon\nu$, $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$, and $\sigma\upsilon\nu\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$

formulas. Rather than seeking a distinction, he notes that through these expressions the entire life of the Christian including his death and resurrection is bound closely to the death and resurrection of Jesus. They all find their foundation in the phrase "Jesus Christ . . . for us." We are connected by them to God's saving act. The expressions take note of the Hebrew concept of corporate personality. Christ as the new Adam is the representative of the new humanity. What he has done is shown by these expressions to have meaning for all. Thus the expressions denote the Christian's unique relationship with Jesus Christ.²⁸

If then the question is raised of how the Christian will experience this fellowship with Christ, what part of him will continue to exist after the body is put into the grave, the answer is found in the Spirit of God, who transforms the spirits of men.

As was shown in Chapter IV, Paul did not hold to a dualism of body and soul as did the Greeks. For Paul natural man is a unity, which is not sub-divided by death. This is not to say that the Christian after death has no means by which to continue the fellowship with God which has begun in this world. For Paul this connecting element is neither $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ nor $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, both of which began and ended with the given

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 302-09.

historical man; nor does one achieve this connecting relationship by means of the natural spirit in man. Rather this relationship is accomplished by the Holy Spirit.²⁹

To do real justice to the subject of the Spirit in Pauline usage would require an extensive treatment that is beyond the scope of this paper. This writer can only summarize here. There are many usages of the term *πνεῦμα* or spirit in Paul. First and foremost of these uses is that which refers to the Holy Spirit. Related to this use are the aspects of divine influence in the lives of believers such as the "spirit of adoption" or the "spirit of power." Opposing the Spirit and the related terms are the demonic spirits.³⁰

In referring to man, on the other hand, Paul also uses the term spirit. He uses the term "spirit," just as he does "body" and "flesh," as a general word for an aspect of human existence. Indeed he uses it as an equivalent to soul (compare Phil. 1:27) as well as to describe the whole man (2 Cor. 2:13).³¹ Paul thus occasionally uses the spirit as

²⁹W. David Stacey, The Pauline View of Man In Relation to its Judaic and Hellenistic Background (London: Macmillan & Co., 1956), p. 145. Concerning *νοῦς* see also Johannes Behm, "*νοῦς*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), IV, 958.

³⁰Stacey, p. 128.

³¹Eduard Schweizer, VI, 433.

the personal possession of every man, whether he is Christian or not.

Another Pauline usage of $\piνεύμα$ may possibly be one which refers only to the Christian man. Stacey suggests that there is a purely Christian spirit which is created in a believer when he enters the Christian life. It is a special gift to believers. Through this spirit man is able to experience fellowship with God. It is superhuman and thus distinct from the purely human $\piνεύμα$. For the believer this spirit is the "true self," "the good influence because it is moved by the Good."³²

Robinson rejects this view of Stacey that there is a specifically Christian spirit apart from the Holy Spirit. In his viewpoint spirit is not a part of man but is the Spirit of God which dwells in the human personality. Outside Christ man can have no spirit of his own; he is inhabited by alien spirits.³³

Stacey's argument may, however, be backed up with a number of Pauline statements that seem to distinguish between the Spirit of God and the spirit of the Christian man. In Rom. 8:15-16, for example, Paul states: "But you have

³²Stacey, pp. 129, 133.

³³John A. T. Robinson, In the End, God: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things (London: James Clarke, 1958), pp. 83-84.

received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." This spirit seems to be the special gift of God. Again in Rom. 1:9 Paul says: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers." Whether or not this spirit is perceivably different from that of an unbeliever may be debated but its differentiation from the Spirit of God is beyond debate. The uniqueness of the spirit as the "most profound I of Christian man" is emphasized in Stacey's opinion by its distinction from the human "mind," and more clearly yet by Paul's reservation of this term for the most profound I of Christian man. The most profound I of pre-Christian man is *ἐγώ* or *voûs* (compare Rom. 7:17-23).³⁴

The relation of the Holy Spirit to the spirit of man is a difficult question to answer. In fact it is often difficult to decide which is spoken of in a given verse. Knox claims that the resolution of this problem was beyond Paul's intention. The whole area was confused in Hellenistic Judaism and Paul carries this over.³⁵

³⁴Eduard Schweitzer, VI, 434.

³⁵Wilfred L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: University Press, 1939), p. 117.

It is necessary to say, however, that this confusion on Paul's part--or on an interpreter's part in reading Paul--should not lead one to assume a confusion between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of man. The human spirit never rises to share the divine nature. Even so the true nature of man's spirit can only be discovered in the light of God's Spirit.³⁶

Cullmann has suggested that the Holy Spirit through his transformation of the spirit of Christian man is the mediator of the resurrection. Prior to the end of time He operates with His resurrection power in our "inner life." This power was evident in the healings Christ performed.³⁷ Stacey suggests further that the Holy Spirit by transforming the spirit of man makes possible fellowship with Christ after death. Immortality of the spirit in Paul in this case would be "immortality of the regenerated spirit of the believer. The spirit is in Christ and has therefore gone beyond death."³⁸ Stacey notes, however, that this is different from Greek immortality. In Paul's theology,

³⁶Stacey, pp. 132-33. Compare also W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology (Revised edition; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1955), p. 186.

³⁷Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, translated by Floyd V. Filson (Revised edition; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), p. 235.

³⁸Stacey, p. 142.

The Spirit of God pushes its way through the barrier of death, and recreates for eternity the believer's spirit, before his body dies, and before a resurrection body is possible for him. The natural spirit has no immortality.³⁹

If Stacey's analysis of Pauline thought is accurate, then it is this spirit of the Christian man, transformed by the Holy Spirit, which is the mode of the fellowship "with Christ" which is spoken of in Phil. 1:23.⁴⁰ The burden of proof, however, is with Stacey. As will be shown in the next chapter, Paul does not rest his case on this.

The limited nature of the evidence that the spirit is the means of Pauline fellowship with Christ means that the interpretation of Paul's meaning in Phil. 1:23 must depend on his usage of "with Christ." In summary it may be seen that the prepositional phrase most likely originated in the Greek usage of *ἐν Χριστῷ* and in the Old Testament concept of fellowship with God. Paul, however, put a new Christian twist on it. For him the roots of this saying are in the fellowship which the Christian has "in Christ" on this earth. The phrase "with Christ" adds an eschatological note, yet it

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Besides Stacey, Hanhart has also promoted this position in his recent book. Paul "probably thought of his spirit or inner man as the one who would dwell with Christ after death." Hanhart, p. 122.

does not change the basic meaning of a fellowship with Christ that has begun at a Christian's baptism.

For the locale of this fellowship one is, indeed, drawn past the terms *νοῦς* and *ψυχή* to the frequent Pauline word *πνεῦμα*. The evidence here, however, is not clear enough. Perhaps Paul would be satisfied in saying that it is a person's self that has fellowship with Christ without defining what he means by this further.

Incorporeal Communion with Christ

To anticipate the conclusion of this thesis, it may be stated that what is expressed by the phrase "with Christ" in Phil. 1:23 is Paul's belief that following death he will experience an incorporeal communion with Christ which is the natural continuation of the fellowship which Paul had experienced with Christ already in this life.

The basis of this hope for Paul is an overriding conviction that nothing, not even death, can separate him from fellowship with Christ. Such a hope can be seen over and over again in the Pauline epistles. Two of the most striking instances of this are found in St. Paul's epistle to the

CHAPTER VI

AN EXPLANATION OF THE ΣΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ IN PHILIPPIANS 1:23

Chapter V has been concerned with Paul's frequent affirmation of personal fellowship in and with Christ. The evidence presented would indicate that the phrase "with Christ" is closely related to the Pauline expression "in Christ." In this chapter the writer will now apply these insights to Phil. 1:23.

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Romans, where he affirms first of all that nothing can separate him from Christ: "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels . . . nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul reiterates this belief in Rom. 14:7-9:

None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Paul leaves no room for doubt here. Even in death man does not cease to have a relationship with Christ, even as he did in this life. It is all the same either way.¹

The means of this continued fellowship with Christ is hinted at in 2 Cor. 4:16, where Paul states that though man's outer nature is gradually wasting away as he nears death, his inner nature is being constantly renewed. Though the eternal life of the Christian is at present unseen, it will become visible at the resurrection (compare 2 Cor. 4:18).² Paul put this even more specifically when he stated: "But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10). To be in Christ is to be recreated.

¹Cf. Karel Hanhart, The Intermediate State in the New Testament (Franeker, Holland: T. Wever, 1966), p. 177.

²Lucien Cerfaux, The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 344.

Paul harbors no fear of death because he knows that true life is found in continuing fellowship with Christ. The close relationship of such life before and after physical death is shown in Col. 3:3-4:

For you have died, [to the world; See Col. 2:20] and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears then you also will appear with him in glory.

Fellowship with Christ is, in fact, the only thing that Paul definitely affirms in Phil. 1:23. Though Paul may have been acquainted with the Paradise traditions that occur in the intertestamental literature, he ignores them and refers the hope directly to Christ.³ So likewise in 2 Cor. 5:8 he states: "We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

It becomes clear then that "being with Christ" connotes a type of intermediate state. As such there is no conflict between it and the Parousia, as will be discussed at greater length later in the chapter. For Paul "being with Christ" signifies here a "closer connection with Christ which is already effected through the resurrection power of the Holy

³ Joachim Jeremias, "παρουσία," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Friedrich, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), V, 771. The dictionary will hereafter be cited as TDNT.

Spirit."⁴ The dead like the living are in a condition of tension between the present and the future.

Unlike the Greek concept of life after death, such an intermediate state is founded, as Künneth has noted, "not in man himself, not in a division of the ego, but solely in the work of God, in that relationship of man to God which is confirmed in the resurrection of Jesus."⁵ The only immortality that Paul knows is that of a personal relationship with God in Christ. This makes death a privilege and victory. God alone can bring life after death through the work of the Spirit (2 Cor. 5:5).⁶

Such a non-bodily existence as is proposed here is possible only in Hebrew thinking. In Greek thought individuality is seen as being conveyed by the body. The Hebraic doctrine of man, on the other hand, sees man's individuality in being a spiritual being; his relationship with God makes him what and who he is.⁷

⁴Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History, translated by Floyd V. Filson (Revised edition; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), p. 240.

⁵Walter Künneth, The Theology of the Resurrection, translated by James W. Leitch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 273.

⁶T. A. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954), p. 33.

⁷John A. T. Robinson, In the End, God: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things (London: James Clarke, 1958), p. 86.

Hatch has contended, however, that fellowship with Christ, while true to Pauline theology in general, is not the object of Paul's thought in Phil. 1:23. This passage is rather a temporary Pauline expression of belief in the immediate reception of the resurrection body.⁸ One may indeed argue this on the basis of the difference in terminology between "in" and "with Christ." As has been shown in the last chapter, however, the close relationship between these two expressions in the Pauline letters allows no absolute distinction between them. They both connote basically the same relationship with Christ.

E. Earle Ellis has espoused a view that is closely related, but not identical to what has been called in this paper "fellowship with Christ." Ellis speaks instead of a Christian's incorporation into the heavenly body of Christ, which guarantees his resurrection.⁹ Though Ellis does not recognize his view as supporting the intermediate state, it is close to being one.

The same view is hinted at by two other biblical theologians. Alan Richardson writes: "The baptized dead, being

⁸William Henry Paine Hatch, "St. Paul's View of the Future Life," Paulus-Hellas-Oikumene: An Ecumenical Symposium (Athens: Student Christian Association of Greece, 1954), p. 96.

⁹E. Earle Ellis, Paul and His Recent Interpreters (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1961), p. 48.

in Christ, are not 'naked' (i.e. bodiless) spirits because of their incorporation into Christ's body."¹⁰ Again Robinson says that at death man puts on not the body of the immediate resurrection but that of Christ.¹¹ These statements seem to be simply another way of expressing the all-inclusive nature of fellowship with Christ for believers.

Paul thus teaches in Phil. 1:23 a complete fellowship with Christ which extends for the believer from this life to that which is to come. Paul is not alone among the New Testament writers in expressing this belief. Luke 23:43, for example, contains Christ's promise to the thief: "Today you will be with me in Paradise." Again in Acts 7:59 the implication is that Stephen believes that he will be directly received into the presence of Christ. His prayer is: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

It must be stated even more firmly that this is not a completely new Hellenistic approach to eschatology in Paul as has been argued by some.¹² Rather, if it is true that Paul's eschatology has changed to some extent between his early and his late epistles, this is due primarily to the

¹⁰ Alan Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), p. 345.

¹¹ Robinson, p. 98.

¹² These arguments have been explored in Chapter III of this thesis.

psychological change that has taken place in Paul because he now must reckon with the possibility of dying before the Parousia. At the time of his early epistles Paul believed that he and most of his hearers would live until the Parousia. Now with the possibility of a martyr's death before him Paul must reckon with the theological significance of dying before the Parousia. Hence he expresses the conviction that even death cannot separate him from Christ but means a continuing fellowship with Christ in His presence.¹³ As Cerfaux notes in this regard, "It is only by confusing attitude, hopes and teaching that one can say that Paul changed his mind, or contradicted himself."¹⁴

The major concern of Paul never was the same as that of modern man which centers around the fact and moment of death, whether or how he will survive it. Rather Paul was ultimately concerned with the Parousia.¹⁵ This is the key issue with which Paul is concerned in his epistles to the Thessalonians. Paul assures them that their dead will not miss the joy of those who live until the Parousia. Even in the later letters when Paul thought he might die before the Parousia, Paul's

¹³Kurt Deissner, Auferstehungshoffnung und Pneumagedanken bei Paulus (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1912), p. 121.

¹⁴Cerfaux, p. 191.

¹⁵Robinson, p. 10.

interest never became as morbidly specific as modern man's. He is satisfied to affirm that he will be "with Christ" at death.

When Paul does express a belief in immediate fellowship with Christ, it is not limited to those who experience martyrdom, as he believed he himself would, although some theologians hold this to be the case. Lohmeyer¹⁶ and Rex¹⁷ are among those who adopt this position, hoping in this way to avoid conflict with 1 Thess. 4:17. As has been stated above, however, one need see no conflict here. Rex, in fact, confutes his own view by applying what Paul supposedly meant to limit to himself to all Christians. It is far less valid to reinterpret Paul's views oneself than to see a slight change of expression in Paul's writing. There is simply no basis for seeing this verse as a special resurrection for martyrs only. Paul is claiming no special privilege for himself and other martyrs. His statement rather derives from the real nature of the Gospel which he also proclaims.

On the other hand, while this fellowship with Christ which Paul proclaims is not limited to martyrs, it is limited

¹⁶Ernst Lohmeyer, Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930), pp. 63-64.

¹⁷H. H. Rex, "Immortality of the Soul, or Resurrection of the Dead, or What?" Reformed Theological Review, XVII (March 1958), 76-77.

to those who are Christ's own. Only those who have had fellowship "in Christ" in this world can be "with Christ" in the next. St. Paul does not tell us what will happen to non-Christians. His primary concern is with the future of believers and even more specifically with their future relationship with Jesus Christ.¹⁸

Death as Gain

If then the phrase $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\epsilon\chi\omicron\mu\epsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ expresses a continuation of the fellowship with Christ which the believer has already experienced in this life, the question may validly be raised in what way Paul can speak of death as gain. This expression can easily be interpreted, as many have, to mean that the Christian at death experiences all the blessedness of the eternal heaven.

There is no doubt that Paul does express such a feeling of gain in death. The expression occurs several times in these verses. The most obvious expression of this occurs in Phil. 1:21 which states: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." The use of $\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\rho\delta\omicron\varsigma$ here throws death into contrast with all of the physical blessings which Paul rejects as gain in Phil. 3:4-7.

¹⁸Henry M. Shires, The Eschatology of Paul in the Light of Modern Scholarship (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 85.

This gain is expressed again in Phil. 1:23 by the multiplication of adjectives which Paul uses to describe his desire to "depart and be with Christ." The English "far better" is an understatement when compared with the Greek πολλῶ μᾶλλον κρείσσον. Blass and Debrunner's Greek grammar notes that the πολλῶ heightens the comparative which has already been expressed by the Greek words μᾶλλον and κρείσσον.¹⁹ Again in Phil. 1:20 this great desire is expressed by the Greek word ἀποκαρδοκία which shows Paul's "eager expectation."²⁰ He shows no fear of death.

Paul's treatment of death as gain in these verses has caused some interpreters, notably J. Dupont, to find a Hellenistic influence on Paul in them.²¹ There can be no doubt that such a treatment of death as gain was characteristic of some parts of Hellenism: Platonism and Neoplatonism, in particular. In this usage death is a liberation from an

¹⁹F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and revised by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 129.

²⁰Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 92.

²¹Jacques Dupont, Syn Christo: L'union avec le Christ suivant saint Paul (Bruges: L'Abbaye de Saint-Andre, 1952) as discussed in Paul Hoffmann, Die Toten in Christus: Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung zur paulinischen Eschatologie (Münster: Verlag Aschendorff, 1966), p. 296.

evil body. The soul attained its true life as it was progressively released from the body.²² This same approach may be noted in Tobit 3:6, where Tobit prays:

For it is better for me to die than to live, because I have heard false reproaches, and great is the sorrow within me. Command that I now be released from my distress to go to the eternal abode; do not turn thy face away from me.

As Bultmann notes, however, this is not the approach of the New Testament or, indeed, of Paul. Death is never seen as a friend to which one looks forward.²³ Indeed, Paul writes, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). The question arises whether Paul is contradicting himself here or if not exactly how gain may be interpreted.

The first possible answer to this question is suggested by Karl Barth who sees in this gain not the benefit of being with Christ after death but rather a "magnifying of Christ." Barth notes that Paul has already spoken of fellowship with Christ before death. From this Barth draws the logical conclusion that the gain which Paul speaks of must go beyond this. Barth's choice is the gain of Paul's being able to serve Christ by his martyrdom. By this single act Paul would, according to this viewpoint, glorify Christ more than he

²²Rudolf Bultmann, "Θάνατος," TDNT, III, 10-12.

²³Ibid., III, 14.

could by any action in this life. Death, thus, would be gain.²⁴

There is, indeed, a great deal of truth in this explanation. Paul did look favorably on martyrdom. Yet there is a deeper truth involved there which is indicated by the close relationship of the expression "far better" to the hope of being "with Christ." Lenski has suggested that the main truth that Paul expresses in these verses may be seen in a paraphrase of Phil. 1:21, "For me to live is Christ and to die is also Christ." Death is a continuation of the fellowship with Christ in this life. The use of the word "gain" says only that this relation will be intensified after death.²⁵

Such an intensification of fellowship is the result of the fact that in death Paul would reach the end of the process which began for him, as for all Christians, at his baptism. This process continues through life and finally reaches its conclusion with one's death in Christ²⁶ (compare Gal. 2:20). Through death the Christian escapes the domination

²⁴Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Philippians, translated by James W. Leitch (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1962), pp. 38-39.

²⁵Richard Charles Henry Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, c.1937), pp. 746-47.

²⁶Barnabas M. Ahern, "Union with Christ after Death," Studies in Salvation History, edited by C. Luke Salm (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 22.

of sin and consummates in his physical death the sacramental death of baptism.²⁷ Death is a gain, finally, because it makes one's union with Christ indissoluble. There is no longer the possibility of falling away.²⁸ On death one is "in Christ" forever.

When one looks upon death in this way one can indeed see that there was gain for Paul in death. This gain was not, however, in an attained freedom from the body, nor in an immediate resurrection, nor even in an immediate reception of the totality of the blessings of heaven. Rather, for Paul, this gain was seen in the new irrevocability and totality of his relationship with Christ which began in this life. As long as Paul remained in this life there were many distractions from his fellowship with Christ, many temptations to apostasy which would mean the breaking of the bond which even death could not otherwise break. With death the same fellowship would be his without distractions and without the possibility of falling away. This is the gain to which Paul looks forward at death.

²⁷ Francois Amiot, The Key Concepts of St. Paul, translated by John Dingle (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962), p. 241.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 173.

²⁹ See discussion supra, p. 27.

Philippians 1:23 Compared with
Pauline Eschatology Elsewhere

Having faced the problem of what St. Paul means by gain in Phil. 1:23, the biblical theologian is confronted with the question of exactly how the interpretation of Phil. 1:23 relates to Paul's teaching in other eschatological passages.

The first passage which presents itself in this regard is 2 Cor. 5:1-8. As was stated in the introduction to this thesis, this passage poses many difficulties which eliminate it as a source for clear teaching. What the writer hopes to show at this point is that the proposed interpretation of "with Christ" in Phil. 1:23 is capable of agreement with several interpretations of the 2 Corinthians 5 passage. To do any more would be to go beyond the bounds of this thesis.

The major problem is that many exegetes use 2 Cor. 5:1-8 to prove that Paul has been influenced by Hellenism to change his view to that of immediate resurrection.²⁹ From this passage they extend the same approach to Phil. 1:23. The source of such teaching is found in Paul's description of a "building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," which having been put on will assure a man that he "may not be found naked" (2 Cor. 5:1-3). These words are taken by such interpreters to indicate that Paul, fearing the

²⁹See discussion supra, p. 27.

nakedness which they equate with the existence of the soul outside of the body, affirmed an immediate resurrection which takes place at the time of a man's death.³⁰

One need not, however, interpret this passage in this way. One possible interpretation that eliminates this problem is that presented by Frederick Danker. According to Danker's viewpoint Paul is willing to agree to death only if it means not nakedness but resurrection. He argues that $\epsilon\phi\omega\varsigma$ in 2 Cor. 5:4 is contractual language to indicate to the Corinthians who denied the resurrection that this faith is precisely that which makes death lose its fear. According to Danker, then, Paul is not here arguing for an immediate resurrection, but rather states that he has no fear of death because his heavenly habitation awaits him. In this condition disembodiment is no tragedy for it is only temporary.³¹

Somewhat related to Danker's viewpoint is the argument presented by Albrecht Oepke that the nakedness that Paul appears to fear in 2 Cor. 5:2-4 is not that of an intermediate state of the soul but that of unbelievers who lose the earthly body without having the hope of a heavenly body which believers

³⁰See for example Otto Pfleiderer, Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teachings in their Historical Connections (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), I, 452.

³¹Frederick W. Danker, "Consolation in 2 Cor. 5:1-10," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIX (September 1968), 553-55.

have.³² Alfred Moore has a slight variation of this argument; he holds that the wicked are naked not in lacking the resurrection but in lacking the condition of being "in Christ."³³ Hence in either of these cases there is no need to propose that Paul is here teaching an immediate resurrection.

Taking still another viewpoint is R. F. Hettlinger, who makes a complete survey of all the possible interpretations of this verse only to conclude that if Paul indeed speaks of being clothed between death and the resurrection it does not mean that one receives his resurrection body immediately. All will receive their new bodies on the last day. Rather Hettlinger suggests that one is clothed at death with the body of Christ.³⁴ To this writer the phrase "body of Christ" used in this way (which is similar to the way both Ellis³⁵ and Robinson³⁶ use it, as noted earlier in this chapter) can mean nothing else than the fellowship with Christ as described in this thesis.

³²Albrecht Oepke, "δύω," TDNT, II, 318.

³³A. L. Moore, The Parousia in the New Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), p. 119 footnote.

³⁴R. F. Hettlinger, "2 Corinthians 5.1-10," Scottish Journal of Theology, X (1957), 193.

³⁵Ellis, p. 41.

³⁶Robinson, p. 96.

It is not the purpose here to decide the proper interpretation of the 2 Corinthians 5 passage. The point to be made is that each of these three major approaches is in basic agreement with the interpretation of Phil. 1:23 that has been defended. There is no need to interpret the passage in terms of an immediate resurrection.

Indeed 2 Cor. 5:8 makes the same affirmation as does Phil. 1:23 in that Paul states: "We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." Paul knows even in this passage that when he dies his body will be put into the ground, yet he is confident that even death will not be able to interrupt that fellowship with Christ which is already his as a Christian.

A second problem to be faced is the relationship of Paul's affirmation of fellowship with Christ in Phil. 1:23 to Paul's teaching in his Parousia passages, particularly 1 Thess. 4:13-17, which was presented in Chapter III of this thesis.

A careful study of Paul's thought in the Philippians passage shows that there is no real contradiction between this and Paul's teaching on the Parousia. It is true that Paul never mentions the intermediate state in 1 Thessalonians 4. Yet this does not prove that Paul did not consider such a possibility. Still less does it prove that Paul has done anything more in Phil. 1:23 than formulate an idea in response

to his new situation of facing death as was described earlier in this chapter.³⁷

In fact, Paul used some expressions in 1 Thessalonians 4 which are very similar to the "with Christ" statement of Phil. 1:23 in showing confidence in the fact that the dead are still in the fellowship of Christ. In 1 Thess. 4:14 Paul uses the phrase *σὺν τῷ Ἰησοῦ* which together with the participle may speak of the dead as "being asleep in Jesus." Bicknell suggests that this phrase is similar in interpretation to "with Christ" in that it shows that Christians are not separated from Christ even in the moment of death. The phrase *οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ*, the dead in Christ, in verse 16 appears to be saying the same thing. The Christian having died is "under the control of the indwelling Christ or Spirit."³⁸ Believers are "in Christ" not only before death and at death, but also during the time between death and Parousia.

At the same time the Parousia is the ultimate goal just as much in Phil. 1:23 as in 1 Thess. 4:16. This is why there can be no immediate resurrection. Rather the relationship

³⁷Supra, pp. 69-70.

³⁸E. J. Bicknell, The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1932), p. 45. James Everett Frame, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), p. 175.

between the state of fellowship with Christ before the resurrection and that after it may be expressed as being already-but-not-yet.³⁹ Similarly Hanhart has expressed this relationship in the idea that life with Christ both "is and comes."⁴⁰ The events of the Parousia mean a revelation of that which had previously been hidden.⁴¹ At that time the relationship with Christ will receive a completeness that can be true only in the resurrection.

Since the idea of fellowship with Christ after death does not contradict the clear Pauline Parousia teaching, there is no need to hypothesize an unlikely Hellenistic development in Pauline eschatology as the proponents of the immediate resurrection have done. The idea of a continuing fellowship with Christ is indeed in complete agreement with all of Paul's theology.

The Limits of Interpretation

While the information that has been presented in the earlier portions of this chapter indicate a clear Pauline teaching of a continued fellowship with Christ after death, it is necessary to point out that this is just about as far

³⁹Cf. for instance, Cullmann, p. 86.

⁴⁰Hanhart, p. 71.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 77.

as one can go in interpreting the Pauline material. The resolution of other questions regarding the intermediate state goes beyond the Pauline text. Marvin Vincent has made this limitation very clear in his commentary on Philippians. He claims that Paul probably had no intent of formulating doctrine as he was writing Phil. 1:23. About the most that can be said beyond the affirmation of fellowship with Christ is that death places believers into a "condition of preparation for perfect glorification."⁴²

The probable reason for this failure on Paul's part to delve into the description of the intermediate state any further is seen by Paul Hoffmann as being the fact that all of Paul's thinking was centered on his relation with Jesus Christ. Compared with this, speculation concerning the reception of the resurrection body or the relationship of the present and future time was uninteresting.⁴³

Indeed, the very concept of the intermediate state may be an invalid one. As Hanhart has pointed out, this concept becomes a reality only by combining two series of verses: those referring to the Parousia from the viewpoint of men living in this age and those referring to the hope of a

⁴²Marvin R. Vincent, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), p. 29.

⁴³Hoffmann, p. 315.

believer after death for life in the new age. It may not be valid to make this combination.⁴⁴ The intermediate state becomes a reality for men who can speak in no other terms but those of time. A man is put into the grave, but will rise again. From the point of view of time there is an interval.⁴⁵ The question arises, however, whether there is one from the point of view of eternity.

As was noted earlier in this thesis, Barth believes that immediately at death one is at the Parousia; as Ellis has phrased it, there is an "altered or suspended time factor" for the dead.⁴⁶ Though, it is unlikely that St. Paul intended his epistles to convey such a modern concept, one may still apply this concept to the Pauline teaching without a great problem. The important point to note is that the fellowship with Christ that is begun during a believer's life is not interrupted even by death.

Beyond this Paul does not attempt to state clearly what part of man will live after death. This was of little importance to him.⁴⁷ To be sure, the writer has indicated

⁴⁴Hanhart, p. 78.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 76.

⁴⁶Ellis, p. 48. See also supra, p. 16.

⁴⁷J. N. Sevenster, "Some Remarks on the ΓΥΜΝΟΣ in II Cor. V.3," Studia Paulina in honorem Johannis de Zwaan septuagenarii (Haarlem: Erven F. Bohn, 1953), p. 212.

in Chapter V that Paul's doctrine of the renewed spirit of man may provide a means for such fellowship if such were seen as a necessity. It is doubtful, however, that Paul went even this far in formulating his thoughts. His belief in the all-powerful fellowship of Jesus Christ precludes such a necessity.

Finally one must note that even the term "sleep" which has been adopted by Oscar Cullmann as a description of the state of the dead during the intermediate state⁴⁸ goes beyond the intention of Paul in this verse.

The term "sleep" in the Pauline letters is a euphemism for death. The term is, in fact, known in much of classical Greek literature as well as in the Old Testament with this same meaning. An Old Testament example is Ps. 13:3, where the Psalmist says: "Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." Inter-testamental literature also uses the term.⁴⁹ The same is true of the New Testament Gospels in which the term is used in Matt. 27:52 and Mark 5:39 and parallels.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Oscar Cullmann, "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead: The Witness of the New Testament," Immortality and Resurrection, edited by Krister Stendahl (New York: Macmillan Company, c.1965), pp. 44-45.

⁴⁹For example, 2 Macc. 12:45.

⁵⁰For a good survey of the usages see Robert E. Bailey, "Is 'Sleep' the Proper Biblical Term for the Intermediate State?" Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, LV (1964), 162-63.

Beyond this simple usage as a euphemism for death, Barth sees this term, when used in regard to believers as it is in Paul, as the expression of the peacefulness in which a Christian can meet death. The real conflict with death has already been fought out when the Christian died with Christ in his baptism.⁵¹

When one seeks to move beyond this point in understanding the intermediate state, the term "fall asleep" instead of giving answers expresses only the fact that Paul and indeed most New Testament Christians were not interested in finding an answer to these questions.⁵² They were satisfied with their fellowship with Christ.

The meaning of the $\sigma\upsilon\nu\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ in Phil. 1:23 is thus at the same time very broad and very limited. On the one hand it is very broad--as broad as the continuing fellowship with Jesus Christ can be. On the other hand, it is very limited; for Paul has not attempted with this verse to answer any of the questions that become so important for modern man.

Paul does not see the necessity of describing how and when man would be with Christ after death. For Paul it is enough that he believes that his is a fellowship with Jesus

⁵¹Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, translated by Harold Knight, et al (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, c.1959), p. 638.

⁵²Ibid., p. 639.

Christ, begun at his baptism and continued throughout his life, that even death cannot interrupt. For Paul the dead, like the living, exist in a condition of tension between the present and the future.

This faith is not a new development in Paul's theology. It is completely consonant with Paul's earlier teaching of the Parousia. Now, facing death, Paul is simply forced to express his faith that is ready for even that contingency. This faith, stemming from the reality of Jesus Christ for Paul, expresses the overwhelming power of the relationship with Jesus Christ which is true for all, not only martyrs.

Though this power is already at work in believers on this earth, death is gain. This is true not in the Hellenistic sense, but rather in the sense that death results in a final indissoluble union with Christ.

This fellowship with Jesus Christ is founded in the very heart of Paul's theology. It is this fellowship which Paul proclaims by the term "with Christ" in this passage. It is this fellowship which is expressed in 2 Cor. 5:1-8. Finally it is this fellowship which will become visible in the second coming of Jesus Christ, when he comes to take us bodily to himself.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

With the decision in Chapter VI that $\sigma\upsilon\nu \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ speaks of the immediate fellowship of the believer with Christ after death, this thesis has reached its goal. In conclusion it must be said that the results of the thesis are more negative than they are positive. While every attempt has been made to ascertain exactly what the nature of the state is which is designated by Paul as $\sigma\upsilon\nu \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$, the evidence does not permit this.

Three main approaches used by various exegetes have been investigated as possible solutions to the meaning of "with Christ." One of these, the belief in the immediate resurrection, can be upheld only at the disregard of major Pauline evidence. There is no clear statement which in any way teaches the immediate resurrection. In fact, the Pauline Parousia passages are in direct contradiction with this idea. The only resource that advocates of this position have is the possibility of development in Pauline theology. Yet this is very doubtful. In the epistle to the Philippians itself Paul clearly teaches the same Parousia that he does in his earlier books. Thus all of the evidence is against this view.

Another possibility lies in the idea that Paul in the $\sigma\upsilon\nu\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ is speaking about fellowship with Christ only after the Resurrection. Such an interpretation eliminates any possible conflict with Paul's Parousia passages. Yet it contradicts the immediateness which Paul sees as characterizing his fellowship with Christ. If death interrupts fellowship with Christ there is no gain in death. Rather it will mean loss. Moreover, this interpretation rests on a distinction between the meaning of "in Christ" and "with Christ" that cannot be borne out absolutely. One may indeed be "with Christ" during this life and also after death, even though this occurs before the Parousia.

Rejecting these two possibilities the natural conclusion is that Paul is here teaching an intermediate state, which lies between the individual's death and the Resurrection. Even this conclusion cannot be made unreservedly, however. Many proponents of this view believe that Paul is teaching here an immortality of the soul, which shares immediately after death in all of the blessings of heaven. Regardless of whether one may argue immortality of the soul from other portions of the Scripture, this cannot be determined on the basis of Pauline teaching. To the contrary Paul sees immortality not as something natural to the soul, but as the gift of God. Moreover, Pauline teaching here is

in Palestine. Paul, like the Judaism of his day, lays great

completely silent about the question of whether the soul enjoys all of the blessings of heaven at death.

Paul What Paul is affirming with his usage of $\sigma\upsilon\nu\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ in Phil. 1:23 is his confidence that nothing, not even death, can separate him from his savior, Jesus Christ. At death the fellowship that he has known with Christ in this life will continue without interruption. It is this fellowship that fills all of Paul's theology. He believes that the entire life of a Christian is "in Christ" and "with Christ." This fellowship with Christ is what gives the Christian new life.

When one has affirmed this teaching of a continued fellowship with Jesus Christ, one has gone as far as Paul goes in defining what he believes the state after death to be. Paul's main concern is the Parousia, not only in 1 Thessalonians but also in this Philippians passage. Hence he does not expressly define his expectations in the intermediate state. Even the reference to sleep is not a definition of the nature of the state but rather is a euphemism for death.

The source of Pauline teaching in his phrase "with Christ" does not lie in Hellenistic influences on Paul's teaching as advocates of the immediate resurrection have claimed. Rather it lies right in Paul's Pharisaic training in Palestine. Paul, like the Judaism of his day, lays next

to each other the dual concepts of resurrection hope and heavenly blessedness without seeing a contradiction. For Paul, however, the heavenly blessedness is found in nothing more than fellowship with Christ.

Moreover, the very question of how Paul would have fellowship with Christ after death was beyond his concern. Rather than limiting the fellowship to his mind or soul or even spirit, Paul might likely have said that he as a person, his "inner self," would be in fellowship with Christ without defining what he meant by this. Paul would be in fellowship with Christ; that affirmation was enough.

The implications of this study are far-reaching. If Paul had taught in this passage that at death there is a gap in one's fellowship with Christ that is terminated only at the Resurrection, then there could be little comfort in death; it would mean separation from the Savior. If, on the other hand, Paul had taught that upon death one achieves a fellowship with Christ for the first time, then death would indeed be better than life. Life would mean only biding one's time until death. But Paul teaches neither of these things. Rather Paul affirms that at death one is together with Christ in the same fellowship which one experiences throughout one's life as a Christian. Life and death are on an equal plane in respect to the fellowship with Christ. In both the resurrection is experienced in a way that will be incomplete

until the second coming of Christ, but in both its power is already felt.

Paul thus does not play down life in favor of death. Death indeed is gain, but only in the confirming of the fellowship which is already his during life. This is far different from the Hellenistic negative view of bodily life. Burtness has expressed the difference in this way:

If man is essentially an immortal soul unfortunately incarcerated for a time in a mortal body [as was the Hellenistic view] the clear implication is that the whole material order is less real, less important, less valuable than the spiritual order. . . . If man is essentially a creature of God . . . destined for resurrection in Christ, the clear implication is that the entire created order is the object of God's love.¹

Paul reaches the latter conclusion. His is a fellowship with Jesus Christ that reaches across the boundary between life and death. There is no fear in death, but neither should there be any rejection of life. Paul is willing to affirm that both life and death receive their true meaning in Jesus Christ, his Lord. This affirmation of faith in the intimate fellowship which each Christian has with Christ is all that one can ascertain from the expression "with Christ," but it is more than enough.

¹James H. Burtness, "Immortality and/or Resurrection," Dialog, I (Spring 1962), 51.

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