

Is There Conscious Life After Death? Part 2

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

This newsletter continues the study of the biblical view of death presented in the last newsletter no. 105. Two reasons persuaded me to post this complementary Bible study. First, several readers rightly observed that my previous newsletter ignored critical Old and New Testaments passages often adduced to prove the conscious life of the soul or of the spirit after death. The observation is correct and the answer is simple. The previous study was meant to be an introduction study.

Former Adventists Adopt the Belief in the Survival of the Spirit

The second reason for posting an additional study, is the deceptive promotion of life after death, not only by the media, but even by former Adventists, as indicated by the leading article of the August 2003 issue of *Proclamation*, which is entitled "Death: Oblivion or Graduation." The author, Samuel Pestes, is former Adventist. Simply stated, the position of the article is that for believers eternal life begins here and now, because their spirits live on at the death of the body.

Proclamation is a bimonthly magazine, published by former Adventists who have embraced the New Covenant Theology, which reject the Sabbath as being part of the package of laws of the OT nailed to the cross. What began as an attack against the Sabbath, is now becoming a broad attack on practically all the fundamental Adventist beliefs. The lesson is clear. Abandoning the Sabbath places a person on a slippery slope that can lead to the rejection of other fundamental biblical teachings.

The magazine is mailed out free of charge to over 30,000 Adventist leaders. The hidden intent of the magazine is not to *proclaim* biblical truths, but to *provoke* Adventists to abandon their fundamental beliefs. In view of their hidden intent, a more appropriate name for the magazine would be *PROVOCATION*.

Their provocatory tactics are having a degree of success, as indicated by a few thousand Adventists, including a good number of former Adventist pastors and Bible teachers, who have embraced their theology during the past 10 years. I have spent months dialoguing with them and exposing the flaws of their methodology and conclusions. The book *THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE* is largely the outcome of this debate.

The fundamental problem of their teachings is the *cafeteria method* of biblical interpretation. When you go to a cafeteria to eat, if you do not like the broccoli, you don't take them. But when it comes to the study the Bible, we have to eat the broccoli as well. We cannot choose only those passages that support our view. We must give adequate consideration to all the relevant passages.

A good example is the article just mentioned. The author selects few Bible texts which seem to support his view of the conscious life of the spirit after the death of the body. One of the texts is John 11:25, where Jesus says: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." He interprets this text as meaning that "because He was the resurrection and the life, our spirits have already been endowed with eternal life" (p. 8). What he means is that when our bodies die, our spirits live on.

This interpretation ignores both the immediate context and the overall teaching of Scripture. The context tells us that Jesus describes death as a sleep from which the dead will awaken at the sound of His voice. The reason believers will never die, is not because their spirit live on, but because they will awake from the sleep of death, as Lazarus did.

If, as Samuele Pestes argues, the spirit at death leaves the body and lives on without the body, then Lazarus would have had an amazing experience to share about the four days he would have spent as a spirit in some spiritual realms. Such information would have provided valuable answers to the question of life after death which was so hotly debated among the Sadducees and Pharisees (Matt 22:23, 28; Mark 12:18, 23; Luke 20:27, 33). But Lazarus had nothing to share about life after death, because during the four days he spent in the tomb he slept the unconscious sleep of death.

It is unfortunate that at the very time when leading scholars are embracing the Adventist, Biblical wholistic view of human nature, some former Adventists are adopting the pagan dualistic view of human nature, with the mortal body and immortal soul. While researching and writing my book *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* it was thrilling to read leading scholars like Oscar Cullmann, John Stott, and Clark Pinnock, defending the Adventist wholistic view of human nature, where the soul or spirit are not separate components that come apart at death, but the animating principles of the body. In the book I am citing over 400 scholars who during the past 50 years have rejected the belief in the immortality of the soul.

For the first time in Christian history, our Adventist belief in the unconscious state of the dead until resurrection morning, is enjoying considerable support by scholars of all denominations. Scholars can afford to change their views when confronted with a fuller understanding of Biblical teachings, because they speak for themselves. The situation is much different for their denominations. If they were to change their beliefs on the biblical view of human nature, they would have to abandon other beliefs such as eternal torment, prayer for the dead, purgatory, intercession of the saints, and the veneration of Mary. The ultimate result would be the collapse of their theological scaffolding.

POPE INSTALLS 31 NEW CARDINALS

On October 21, the week of Maria Theresa's beatification and Pope John Paul II's 25th anniversary, the 83-years-old health-failing Pope gave the red hat to 31 new cardinals. They are part of the elite band of the "princes of the church" who will elect the new pope.

The ceremony brought to 194 the number of active members of the College of Cardinals. Of them only 135 are under age 80 and thus eligible to vote in the new papal election. It is significant that of 135, John Paul has named all but five.

The fact that practically all the members of the College of Cardinals have been handpicks by the present Pope, gives us reason to believe that the next pope will continue in the footsteps of the present one.

The policy of the present Pope John Paul II could be summarized in two sentences: Reconciliation with non-Catholics and restoration of Catholic identity and unity. With non-Catholics, the Pope has aggressively pursued a policy of reconciliation, even if it meant apologizing to Moslem, Jews, Protestants, and Greek Orthodox, for the past atrocities committed against them by the Catholic Church. His goal has been to gain acceptance as the spiritual leader, not only of the Catholic church, but of mankind. His success is evident by his worldwide acceptance as the spokesman of the religious aspirations of mankind.

Within his own Catholic church, John Paul II has been determined to restore a degree of unity and identity. The prevailing dissent among American Catholics has been a major concern of the present pope. A major reason why he has come to America several times, is because he recognizes the exceptional vitality, influence and potential of American Catholicism. While in most countries of Western Europe less than 10% of Catholics attend Mass weekly, in the United States, according to a TIME poll, attendance is 54%. American Catholics are not passive spectators but active participants and generous supporters of their church. They may disagree with their church but they are deeply committed to her, though increasingly on their own terms.

The independent spirit of American Catholics is of grave concern to John Paul because he knows all too well that America is trend-setter. It influences the world not only with blue jeans and running shoes, but also with its moral and religious values. In his opening remarks upon his arrival at the Miami International airport on September 12, 1987, the Pope said that America is called by God to fulfill a noble destiny to the world. This means that the direction the American Catholic Church takes today, could well become the trend of the worldwide Catholic Church tomorrow.

John Paul sees himself as a man called by God to save the Catholic Church from disintegration by reaffirming the commitment of its members and leaders to the historical teachings of Rome. An important lesson that John Paul learned in the hot battle he fought against Nazism and communism in his own country of Poland, is that the church can survive only if it is rigorously disciplined and strongly united in essential doctrines and piety.

Consequently a major goal of John Paul's pontificate has been to forge a united church, updated in its external forms, but strongly traditional in its adherence to church discipline and teaching. One of the first steps he took to achieve this goal, was to revive the Sacred Congregation for Doctrine of Faith—formerly known as the Inquisition. This watchdog organization, presided by the German-born Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, has pressed charges against such theologians as Edward Schillebeeckx of Holland, Jack Pohier of France, Bernard Hasler of Switzerland. It has stripped Hans Kung of his post as teacher of Catholic theology at the University of Tübingen, and has suspended Father Charles Curran from his teaching post at the Catholic University of America, in Washington, D.C.

Catholic revisionists and feminists accuse John Paul of being out of touch with the reality of the Catholic Church in America. The reason is his refusal to modify the Catholic church position on divorce, birth control, celibacy, women ordination, death penalty, and the governance of the church. The truth of the matter is that it is these Catholic dissenters who are out of touch with the reality of the Catholic Church in Rome. These fail to realize that John Paul is not running a democracy, but a pyramidal hierarchy whose head is the pope and whose center is Rome.

There is a lot of speculation on who might be the next pope. A name mentioned by the media is that of the newly elected Cardinal Justin Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia. He has been a longtime friend of the pope and has held important offices, including secretary of the College of Cardinals. Whoever the new pope will be, he will follow in the footsteps of John Paul II, by resisting changes within its own Catholic, while winning the heart and souls of non-Catholics.

The latter is facilitated by the erosion of confidence in the authority of the Bible among Protestant mainline denominations. As the authority of the Bible is going down, the authority of the Pope is going up. The reason is that people resist tyranny, but welcome the voice of authority. And for many the Pope stands a bulwark of truth in a world of disintegrating moral values.

Will the next pope be the last pope before Christ's comes? No one can tell. While working as a Summer tourist guide in Rome, I learned a popular belief which I am sharing with you without endorsing its legitimacy. At the Basilica of St. Paul outside the wall in Rome, there is a series of medallions above the arches of the main nave with the picture of each pope who has govern the Catholic church, from Peter (?) to the present one. The popular belief is that when the last empty medallion is filled, the end of the world will come. The next pope is supposed to fill the last medallion. Whether or not the next pope is the last pope before the end, the Endtime signs tell us that the coming of the Lord is near, even at the door.

OVERSEAS TRAVELLING

During the month of November 2003, I will present my PowerPoint seminars at rallies organized in 4 overseas countries: Sweden on October 31 to November 3; Norway on November 6-8; Montreal on November 14-15, and Singapore November 21-23. This will be my second visit to Singapore. During the last visit over a year ago, the reception and response was marvellous. I look forward to another blessed experience with our fellow believers and friends in Singapore.

The extensive overseas travelling that will take me away from home for considerable time, will make it difficult for me to prepare another newsletter before the end of November. I thought to inform you about it so that you may understand the reason for the possible delay of the next newsletter.

WHAT HAPPENED TO *POPULAR HERESIES*?

Some subscribers have asked me if I am still working on my new book on *POPULAR HERESIES*. The answer is "NO" for the moment. I got half way through the second chapter on "Trinitarian Heresies," and then I was forced to suspend the research temporarily.

What is consuming most of my time is the preparation of new PowerPoint presentations that I will deliver overseas during the next few weeks. I spent over 200 hours preparing a single lecture on "How to Build a Happy, Lasting Marriage" with 105 PowerPoint slides. In this lecture I summarize the highlights of my book *THE MARRIAGE COVENANT*, which has been a blessing to many couples around the world.

What is consuming so much of my time is finding suitable pictures to illustrate the concepts presented. I was hoping to get some help from the Family Departments of the General Conference and North American Division, but they have no visual resources for their "Family/Marriage" seminars. I contacted other organizations like "Focus on the Family," but they also have not had the time to prepare PowerPoint presentations. I downloaded from the web a dozen of PowerPoint lectures on Marriage and the Family, but they were of little help, because their slides are mostly texts without pictures.

With God's help, I found some real nice pictures which help to illustrate the biblical principles for building a happy and lasting marital relationship. I look forward to deliver this lecture first at a rally in Singapore on November 22, 2003 and then at a rally of Portuguese fellow-believers in Boston on December 13, 2003. Preparing PowerPoint lectures is time consuming, but rewarding. It takes time to find the right pictures and then blending them together with the text. The reward comes when I see the raptured faces of the congregations looking at the picture while listening to my broken Italian accent.

At present I am working on a PowerPoint lecture entitled: "The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages." I anticipate to be working on this lecture for the next two weeks. This timely presentation addresses the escalating drinking problem in our society in general and our Adventist church in particular. A survey published in *ADVENTIST REVIEW* in 1987, indicates that 58% of our American young people drink occasionally and 17% regularly. Since then the percentage has undoubtedly increased.

Part of the problem is the weakening of the conviction that the Bible teaches total abstinence. A century ago leading Protestant churches, like the Baptist, Methodist, Salvation Army, Presbyterian, and Pentecostals, all of them passionately promoted total abstinence, especially through various Temperance societies. Ellen White herself was actively involved throughout her whole life with the *National Woman's Christian Temperance Union*. The efforts of Temperance Societies influenced the passing of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States on January 16, 1919, which outlawed the "manufacture, sale or transportation" of alcoholic beverages.

Since the repeal of the Prohibition in 1933, most Christians, including an increasing number of Adventists, have come to believe that the Bible teaches moderation in the use of alcoholic beverages. To clarify my thinking in this critical area of Christian living, I took a leave of absence from teaching at Andrews to research and write *WINE IN THE BIBLE: A BIBLICAL STUDY ON THE USE OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES*. I devoted a full year of my life to this research which has been favorably reviewed by scholars of all persuasions. You can read some of their comments at my website. Click on the opening page on the heading: Comments from Scholars.

The PowerPoint lecture I am preparing on “The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages,” summarizes the highlights of my research. It is designed to help people understand in a visual way the biblical reasons for abstaining from intoxicating beverages and drugs. This lecture will be part of the new CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE SEMINAR, which I plan to present on weekends next year, in addition to my SABBATH and ADVENT SEMINARS.

IS YOUR CHURCH INTERESTED TO SPONSOR A WEEKEND SEMINAR?

If your church is interested to invite me sometimes during 2003 to present one of my popular PowerPoint seminars on the SABBATH or SECOND ADVENT or CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE, feel free to contact me by phone (269) 471-2915 or by email at sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com. I would be glad to email you the outline of each seminar together with the dates that are still open in my calendar. If we decided on a date, we will supply your church with nice color fliers which will have the name and address of your church and the title and time of each presentation.

During this past year we have had already 36 weekend seminars, which have been attended by capacity crowds. We invite the local district churches for the Friday evening and Sabbath afternoon meetings. On Sabbath morning I present the same PowerPoint meditation in two churches: during Sabbath School at one church, and during the divine service at the main church that invites me. Then on Sabbath afternoon we all come together for the final PowerPoint lecture on the latest Sabbath/Sunday development.

By rallying together several churches, it is possible even for smaller congregations of 100 to 200 members, to sponsor a weekend seminar. Feel free to contact me for further information by email or phone (269) 471-2915. I will be glad to talk with you and email you an outline of my seminars.

NEW EMAIL ADDRESS

Few days ago I signed up for the Comcast Internet Cable connection, which is extremely fast. This means that in the near future I will terminate my qtm.net account.

**Please note that my new email address is:
<sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>**

Since this is the email address of my domain, there should be no reasons to change it in the future. Thank you for using my email address.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AT THE END OF THIS NEWSLETTER

At the end of this newsletter you will find the following important announcements:

- 1) The date and location of my weekend seminars for November and December 2003.
- 2) Information on how your church can purchase a state-of-the art HITACHI LCD VIDEO PROJECTORS at over 65% discount on the Factory Suggested Retail price. HITACHI has agreed to offer their line of outstanding LCD projectors to our Adventist churches and institutions at an incredible discount. Few weeks ago on September 2003 HITACHI came out with an incredibly powerful HIGH RESOLUTION, wide angle, 2000 lumens projector that they are offering to our Adventist institutions for only \$1995.00, instead of the regular retail price of \$6,595. Read the rest of the story at the end. I just bought one for myself. I am thrilled by its performance.
- 3) A special offer on the newly released (September 22, 2003) TWO CD-ROMS containing over 7000 pages of my research and all my seminars. Your special offer is only \$70.00 for the TWO CD-ROMS, instead of the regular price of \$200.00.

IS THERE CONSCIOUS LIFE AFTER DEATH? Part 2

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Belief in life after death seems to have come back from the grave. News weekly covers it. Talk-show hosts discuss it. Popular books such as Moody and Kübler-Ross' *Life After Life* and Maurice Rawlings' *Beyond Death's Door* examine case histories of out-of-body experiences. Even a few pastors have begun preaching it again.

Once regarded by the secular community as a relic of a superstitious past and by believers as something too difficult to comprehend, belief in life after death is regaining popularity. In spite of a significant decline in religious beliefs, according to a recent Gallup Poll, 71 percent of Americans believe in some form of life after death.¹ "Even many who claim no religious belief expect life to go on after death: 46 percent believe in heaven, 34 percent in hell."²

The elaborate funeral arrangements which are intended to preserve the corporeal remains of the deceased reflect the conscious or subconscious belief in life after death. In the ancient world, the dead were provided for the next life with food, liquids, eating utensils, and clothes. Sometimes even servants and animals were buried with the corpse to provide the necessary conveniences in the next life.

Today, the mortuary rituals are different, but they still reveal a conscious or subconscious belief in life after death. The corpse is embalmed and hermetically sealed in a galvanized metal casket to retard decay. It is dressed in the finest clothes and placed on plush satin lining and soft pillows. It is sent on its way accompanied with items cherished in life, such as rings and family pictures. It is sacredly and silently interred in a cemetery, which is expertly manicured, surrounded by flowers, gates, and guards. The dead are surrendered to the "perpetual care" of the Lord in a professionally maintained and landscaped cemetery where no children play and no visitors disturb them.

The concern of people to send their deceased loved ones to the world of the dead with dignity and elegance reveals a desire to ensure their comfort in the afterlife. But, is there life after death? Are the dead conscious or unconscious? If conscious, are they able to communicate with the living? Are they enjoying the bliss of paradise or the torments of hell?

In the previous newsletter, we noted that belief in the afterlife is promoted today through the polished image of mediums and psychics who claim to place the living in contact with the spirits of their deceased loved ones, the sophisticated "scientific" research into near-death experiences, and the popular New Age channeling with the spirits of the past. In spite of renewed attempts to prove conscious existence in the afterlife, we found that the Bible clearly defines death as the cessation of life for the whole person, body and soul.

Objectives of This Newsletter

This newsletter continues our investigation of the nature of death by focusing on the condition of the dead during the period between death and the resurrection. This period is commonly known as "the intermediate state." The fundamental question we pursue in this chapter is: Do the dead sleep in an unconscious state until the resurrection morning? Or, Is the soul of the saved experiencing the bliss of paradise, while that of the unsaved writhing in the torment of hell?

This study is divided into two parts. The first part examines the Old Testament teaching regarding the state of the dead. The study focuses especially on the meaning and use of the word *sheol*, commonly used in the Old Testament to designate the resting place of the dead. We shall learn that, contrary to prevailing beliefs, none of the references suggest that *sheol* is the place of punishment for the ungodly (hell) or a place of conscious existence for the souls or spirits of the dead. In the Old Testament, *sheol* is

the underground depository of the dead. There are no immaterial, immortal souls in *sheol*, simply because the soul does not survive the death of the body.

The second part investigates the New Testament teaching regarding the state of the dead. The study looks first at the eleven references to *hades*, which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *sheol*. We shall see that *hades* is used like *sheol* in the Old Testament—to denote the grave or the realm of the dead, and not the place of punishment of the ungodly.

Next, we examine the five passages commonly cited in support of the belief in the conscious existence of the soul after death (Luke 16:19-31; 23:42-43; Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:1-10; Rev 6:9-11). None of these texts contradict the overall Biblical teaching on the unconscious state of the dead during the intermediate period.

PART 1 THE STATE OF THE DEAD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A major challenge to the conclusion of the previous study—that death in the Bible is the cessation of life for the whole person—comes from unwarranted interpretations given to two words used in the Bible to describe the dwelling place of the dead. The two words are *sheol* in the Old Testament and *hades* in the New Testament. They often are interpreted to represent the place where disembodied souls continue to exist after the death and the place of punishment of the ungodly (hell). Thus, it is imperative for us to study the Biblical meaning and usage of these two terms .

Translations and Interpretations of *Sheol*

The Hebrew word *sheol* occurs 65 times in the Old Testament and is translated variously as “grave,” “hell,” “pit,” or “death.” These variant translations make it difficult for the English reader to understand the basic meaning of *sheol*. For example, *The King James Version* (KJV) renders *sheol* “grave” 31 times, “hell” 31 times, and “pit” 3 times. This means that readers of the KJV are often led to believe that the Old Testament teaches the existence of hell where the wicked are tormented for their sins.

For example, in the KJV, Psalm 16:10 reads: “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.” An uninformed reader will assume that the text means, “For thou wilt not leave my soul to be tormented in hell.” Such a reading is an obvious misinterpretation of the text which simply says, as rendered in the RSV, “For thou does not give me up to Sheol,” that is, the grave. The Psalmist here expresses confidence that God would not abandon him in the grave. In fact, this is the way the text is applied in Acts 2:27 to Christ, who was not left in the grave by the Father. The text has nothing to say about hell.

To avoid such misleading interpretations, the *Revised Standard Version* and *The New American Standard Bible* simply transliterate the Hebrew word into English letters as *sheol*. *The New International Version* usually translates it as “grave” (occasionally as “death”), with a footnote “*sheol*.” This translation accurately reflects the basic meaning of *sheol* as the grave or, even better, the collective realm of the dead.

Different translations often reflect the different theological convictions of the translators. For example, the translators of the KJV believed that at death the righteous go to Heaven and the wicked to hell. Consequently, they translated *sheol* “grave” when referring to the righteous, whose bodies rested in the grave, and “hell” when referring to the wicked whose souls are supposedly tormented in hell. A similar approach has been adopted by Old Testament scholar Alexander Heidel,³ who has been criticized for arbitrarily handling the Biblical data.⁴

Several evangelical authors concur with the view of the KJV’s translators in defining *sheol* as the abode of the soul, in contradistinction to the grave, which is the dwelling place of the body. In his book *Death and the Afterlife*, Robert Morey explicitly states: “The Hebrew word *sheol* is found 66 times in the Old Testament. While the Old Testament consistently refers to the body as going to the grave, it always refer to the soul or spirit of man as going to *sheol*.”⁵ To support this contention, Morey cites Princeton scholar B. B. Warfield who wrote: “Israel, from the beginning of its recorded history, cherished the most settled convictions of the persistence of the soul after death. . . . The body is laid in the grave and the soul departs to *sheol*.”⁶

Another scholar cited by Morey is George Eldon Ladd who writes in *The New Bible Dictionary*: “In the Old Testament, man does not cease to exist at death, but his soul descends to *sheol*.”⁷ The same view is expressed by J. Thomson, who writes with reference to death in the Old Testament: “At death, the body remained on earth; *nephesh* [the soul] passed into *sheol*; but the breath, spirit, or *ruach*, returned to God, not *sheol*. But in *sheol*, a place of darkness, silence, and forgetfulness, life was foreboding and shadowy.”⁸

On the basis of testimonies such as these, Morey concludes: "Modern scholarship understands the word *sheol* to refer to the place where the soul or spirit of man goes at death. None of the lexicographical literature defines *sheol* as referring to the grave or to passing into nonexistence."⁹ Some scholars propose a modified view by holding that *sheol* is exclusively the place of punishment of the ungodly and has "the same meaning as the modern hell."¹⁰

These interpretations of *sheol* as the dwelling place of souls (rather than the resting place of the body in the grave) or the place of punishment for the wicked, known as hell, do not stand up under the light of the Biblical usage of *sheol*. This fact is recognized even by John W. Cooper who has produced what is perhaps the most scholarly attempt to salvage the traditional dualistic view of human nature from the massive attacks of modern scholarship against it. Cooper states: "Perhaps most interesting for traditional Christians to note is the fact that it [*sheol*] is the resting place of the dead irrespective of their religion during life. *Sheol* is not the 'hell' to which the wicked are condemned and from which the Lord's faithful are spared in glory. Although the Old Testament has a few hints that even in death the Lord spares and communes with his righteous ones, as we shall see, there is no doubt that believers and unbelievers all were thought to go to *sheol* when they die."¹¹

The liberal *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* states even more emphatically that "Nowhere in the Old Testament is the abode of the dead regarded as a place of punishment or torment. The concept of an infernal 'hell' developed in Israel only during the Hellenistic period."¹²

The attempt of Morey and others to differentiate between *sheol* as the abode of the soul and the grave as the resting place of the body is based on a dualistic view of human nature which is foreign to the Bible. In his classic study on *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, Johannes Pedersen flatly states: "*Sheol* is the entirety into which all graves are merged; . . . Where there is grave, there is *sheol*, and where there is *sheol*, there is grave."¹³ Pedersen explains at great length that *sheol* is the collective realm of the dead where all the deceased go, whether buried or unburied.

In his doctoral dissertation on "Sheol in the Old Testament," Ralph Walter Doermann reaches the same conclusion. He writes: "The dead were conceived as being in *sheol* and in the grave at the same time, yet not in two different places. All the deceased, because they were subject to the same conditions, were thought to be in a common realm."¹⁴ This conclusion becomes self-evident when we look at some usages of *sheol*.

Etymology and Location of *Sheol*

The etymology of *sheol* is uncertain. The derivations most frequently mentioned are from such root meanings as "to ask," "to inquire," and "to bury one's self."¹⁵ Doermann proposes a derivation from the stem *shilah*, which has the primary meaning "to be quiet," "at ease." He concludes that "if a connection between *sheol* and *shilah* is feasible, it would appear that the name is not connected with the location of the realm of the dead, but rather with the character of its occupants, who are primarily 'at rest.'¹⁶ The difference between the two words is relative. More important is the fact that *sheol* denotes a place where the dead are at rest.

Sheol is located deep beneath the surface of the earth, because it is often mentioned in connection with heaven to denote the uttermost limits of the universe. *Sheol* is the deepest place in the universe, just as the heaven is the highest. Amos describes the inescapable wrath of God in these terms: "Though they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down" (Amos 9:2-3). Similarly, the Psalmist exclaims: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol, thou are there!" (Ps 139:7-8; cf. Job 11:7-9).

Being situated beneath the earth, the dead reach *sheol* by “going down,” a euphemism for being buried in the earth. Thus, when Jacob was informed of the death of his son Joseph, he said: “I shall go down to Sheol to my son mourning” (Gen 37:35). Perhaps the clearest example of the location of *sheol* beneath the earth is the account of the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who had revolted against the authority of Moses. “The ground under them split asunder; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their household and all the men that belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them” (Num 16:31-33). This episode clearly shows that the whole person, and not just the soul, goes down to *sheol*, to the realm of the dead.

Characteristics of *Sheol*

The characteristics of *sheol* are essentially those of the realm of the dead, or the grave. In numerous passages, *sheol* is found in parallelism with the Hebrew word *bor*, which denotes “a pit” or any kind of subterranean hole, such as a grave. For example, the Psalmist writes: “For my soul is full of troubles and my life draws near to Sheol. I am reckoned among those who go down to the Pit [*bor*]” (Ps 88:3-4).¹⁷ Here the parallelism identifies *sheol* with the pit, that is, the burial place of the dead.

Several times *Sheol* appears together with *abaddon*, which means “destruction,” or “ruin.”¹⁸ *Abaddon* appears in parallelism with the grave: “Is thy covenant loyalty declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in Abaddon” (Ps 88:12); and with *sheol*: “Sheol is naked before the Lord and Abaddon has no covering” (Job 26:6; cf. Prov 15:11); “Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord” (Prov 15:11; cf. 27:20). The fact that *sheol* is associated with *abaddon*, the place of destruction, shows that the realm of the dead was seen as the place of destruction, and not as the place of eternal suffering for the wicked.

Sheol is also characterized as “the land of darkness and deep darkness” (Job 10:21), where the dead never see light again (Ps 49:20; 88:13). It is also “the land of silence” (Ps 94:17; cf. 115:17) and the land of no-return: “As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up; he returns no more to his house, nor does his place know him any more” (Job 7:10).

***Sheol* and the Realm of the Dead**

All the above characteristics of *sheol* describe accurately the realm of the dead. The pit, the place of destruction, the land of darkness, the land of silence, the land of no-return are all descriptive of the realm of the dead. Furthermore we have some instances where *sheol* occurs in parallelism with death and the grave: “Let death come upon them; let them go down to Sheol alive; let them go away in terror to their grave” (Ps 55:16). By virtue of the parallelism, here *sheol* is identified with death and the grave.

Another example where *sheol* is associated with the grave is found in Psalms 141:7: “As a rock which one cleaves and shatters on the land, so shall their bones be strewn at the mouth of Sheol.” Here the mouth of *sheol* is the opening of the grave where the bones are placed.

The various figures used to describe *sheol* all serve to show that it is not the locality of departed spirits, but *the realm of the dead*. Anthony Hoekema, a Calvinistic scholar, reaches essentially the same conclusion in his book *The Bible and the Future*. He writes: “The various figures which are applied to *sheol* can all be understood as referring to the realm of the dead: *Sheol* is said to have bars (Job 17:16), to be a dark and gloomy place (Job 17:13), to be a monster with insatiable appetite (Prov 27:20; 30:15-16; Is 5:14; Hab 2:5). When we think of *sheol* in this way, we must remember that both the godly and the ungodly go down into *sheol* at death, since both enter the realm of the dead.”¹⁹

In his classic study, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, Hans Walter Wolff notes that, contrary to the ancient Near East religions where the dead were glorified or even deified, “in the Old Testament anything similar is unthinkable. Usually, talk about the descent into *sheol* as the world of the dead means no more than an indication of burial as the end of life (Gen 42:38; 44:29, 31; Is 38:10, 17; Ps 9:15, 17; 16:10; 49:9, 15; 88:3-6, 11; Prov 1:12).”²⁰ Any attempt to turn *sheol* into the place of torment of the wicked or into the abode of spirits/souls clearly contradicts the Biblical characterization of *sheol* as the underground depository of the dead.

The Condition of the Dead in *Sheol*

Since death is the cessation of life and vitality, the state of the dead in *sheol* is described in terms antithetical to the concept of life on earth. Life means vitality and activity; death means weakness and inactivity. This is true for all, the righteous and the wicked. “One fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean” (Eccl 9:2). They all go to the same place, *sheol*, the realm of the dead.

The wise man offers a graphic description of the condition of the dead in *sheol*: “There is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going” (Eccl 9:10). It is evident that *sheol*, the realm of the dead, is the place of unconscious non-existence. “For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward; but the memory of them is lost. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and they have no more for ever any share in all that is done under the sun” (Eccl 9:5-6). The main argument here is that death puts an abrupt end to all activity “under the sun,” and what follows death is *sheol*, the realm of the dead where there is a state of inactivity, without knowledge or consciousness. Such a state is best described as “sleep.”

The phrase “and he slept with his father” (cf. 1 Kings 1:21; 2:10; 11:43) reflects the idea that the dead join their predecessors in *sheol* in a somnolent, unconscious state. The idea of rest or sleep in *sheol* is prominent in Job, who cries in the midst of his sufferings: “Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? . . . For then I should have lain down and been quiet; I should have slept; then I should have been at rest. . . . There the wicked cease from troubling and there the weary are at rest” (Job 3:11,13, 17).

Rest in *sheol* is not the rest of souls enjoying the bliss of paradise or the torments of hell, but the rest of dead bodies sleeping in their dusty, worm-covered graves. “If I wait for the grave [*sheol*] as my house, if I make my bed in the darkness, if I say to corruption, ‘You are my father,’ and to the worm, ‘you are my mother and my sister,’ where then is my hope? . . . Will they go down to the gates of Sheol? Shall we rest together in the dust?” (Job 17:13-16, NKJV).

The dead sleep in *sheol* until the End. “A man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake, or be roused out of his sleep” (Job 14:12). “Till the heavens are no more” is possibly an allusion to the coming of the Lord at the end of time to resurrect the saints. In all his trials, Job never gave up his hope of seeing the Lord even after the decay of his body. “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25-27; NKJV).

In summation, the condition of the dead in *sheol*, the realm of the dead, is one of unconsciousness, inactivity, a rest or sleep that will continue until the day of the resurrection. None of the texts we have examined suggests that *sheol* is the place of punishment for the ungodly (hell) or a place of conscious existence for the souls or spirits of the dead. No souls are in *sheol* simply because in the Old Testament the soul does not survive the death of the body. As N. H. Snaith flatly states it: “A dead body,

whether of man, or bird, or beast is without *nephesh* [soul]. In *sheol*, the abode of the dead, there is no *nephesh* [soul].²¹

The Taunting Ode on the King of Babylon

The conclusion we have reached regarding *sheol* as the unconscious realm of the dead is challenged by those who appeal to two major passages that allegedly support the notion of conscious existence in *sheol*. The first passage is Isaiah 14:4-11, which is a taunting ode against the king of Babylon. The second is Ezekiel 31 and 32, which contain a parabolic dirge over the Pharaoh of Egypt. On the basis of these passages, Robert Morey concludes: "Those in Sheol are pictured as conversing with each other and even making moral judgments on the life-style of new arrivals (Is 14:9-20; 44:23; Ez 32:21). They are thus conscious entities while in Sheol."²² In view of the probative value attributed to these passages for conscious existence in *sheol*, we need to briefly examine each of them.

The oracle in Isaiah 14 is a taunt song against the king of Babylon, in which the "shades" of the dead, mostly kings subdued by the conquering arms of Nebuchadnezzar, are personified in order to utter God's doom upon the tyrannical king. When the king joins them in *sheol*, these departed monarchs are portrayed as "shades—*rephaim*" (a term to be examined shortly) rising up from the shadowy thrones to mock the fallen tyrant, saying: "You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us! Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, the sound of your harps; maggots are the bed beneath you, and worms are your covering" (Is 14:10-11).

Here we have a graphic description of the corpse of the king in the grave being eaten up by maggots and worms; not of the soul enjoying the bliss of heaven or the torments of hell. The language of the passage fits, not the image of "departed spirits," but the portrayal of buried dead. It is evident that if the kings were "departed spirits," in *sheol*, they would not be sitting on thrones.

In this impressive parable, even the fir trees and the cedar of Lebanon are personified (Is 14:8) and utter a derisive taunt against the fallen tyrant. It is evident that all the characters of this parable, both personified trees and fallen monarchs, are fictitious. They serve not to reveal the conscious existence of souls in *sheol*, but to forecast in striking pictorial language God's judgment upon Israel's oppressor, and his final ignominious destiny in a dusty grave, to be eaten by worms. To interpret this parable as a literal description of the afterlife means to ignore the highly figurative, parabolic nature of the passage, which is simply designed to depict the doom of a self-exalting tyrant. Time and again in the course of this research, I have been surprised by the fact that even reputable scholars often ignore a fundamental hermeneutical principle that symbolic, parabolic language cannot and should not be interpreted literally.

Parabolic Dirge over Pharaoh of Egypt

In Ezekiel 31 and 32, we find a parabolic dirge over the Pharaoh of Egypt, very similar to the one in Isaiah over the King of Babylon. The same personification of nature is used to describe the overthrow of Pharaoh by the king of Babylon. "When it goes down to Sheol I will make the deep mourn for it, and restrain its river, and many waters shall be stopped; I will clothe Lebanon in gloom for it and all the trees of the field shall faint because of it" (Ez 31:15).

The portrayal is highly figurative. The various rulers that in this life caused great terror, now lie in *sheol*, with "their graves round about them" (Ez 32:26). "They do not lie with the fallen mighty men of old who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose shields are upon their bones" (Ez 32:27). In this figurative language, the mighty are portrayed as buried in *sheol* with their swords as a pillow under their heads and their shields as a blanket over their bones. This is hardly a description of souls enjoying the bliss of paradise or the torment of hell. It is

rather a figurative representation of the humiliation of the grave that awaits those who abuse their power in this life.

In his book *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment*, Robert A. Peterson, a Presbyterian scholar, acknowledges that “Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 31 and 32, chapters traditionally understood as referring to hell, make better sense if we take them as speaking of the tomb. The pictures of the king of Babylon with maggots and worms covering him (Is 14:11) and of Pharaoh lying among the fallen warriors with their swords placed under their heads (Ez 32:27) speak not of hell but of the humiliation of the grave.”²³

We conclude that *sheol* is not the place of punishment for the ungodly or the abode of spirits, but the realm of the dead—the silent, dusty, and dark place to which God told Adam he and his descendents must go: “dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:19; KJV).

The Inhabitants of *Sheol*

Eight texts in the Old Testament refer to the inhabitants of *sheol* as *rephaim*,²⁴ a word that is usually translated as “shades.” This translation is misleading, because it gives the impression that the inhabitants of *sheol*, the realm of the dead, are ghosts or disembodied spirits. In fact, dualists capitalize on this misleading translation to argue for the existence of disembodied spirits or souls in *sheol*. For example, Robert Morey boldly affirms: “At death man becomes a *rephaim*, i.e. a ‘ghost,’ ‘shade,’ or ‘disembodied spirit’ according to Job 26:5; Ps 88:10; Prov 2:18; 9:18; 21:16; Is 14:9; 26:14, 19. Instead of describing man as passing into nonexistence, the Old Testament states that man becomes a disembodied spirit. The usage of the word *rephaim* irrefutably establishes this truth.”²⁵ Such a bold conclusion is based on gratuitous assumptions that hardly can be supported by the usage of *rephaim* in the texts cited.

The etymology of *rephaim* is uncertain. It is generally derived from the stem meaning “to sink,” “to relax,” thus meaning “weak,” “flaccid.” In a scholarly article on the derivation and meaning of *rephaim* published in the *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*, Paul Haupt writes: “The Hebrew *rephaim* denotes those who have ‘sunk’ to their unseen abode, descending into Hades as the sun goes down to a fiery death in the west; the *rephaim* are those who ‘sank,’ vanished, disappeared, passed away, departed. The best translation would be ‘the departed.’”²⁶

The translation of *rephaim* proposed by Haupt as “the departed” or “the dead” fits well with the usage of the term in the eight texts where the word occurs. Let us take a brief look at each of them. In Isaiah 14:9, we read that the descent to *sheol* by the king of Babylon caused a stir: “Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come, it rouses the shades [*rephaim*] to greet you.” Here *rephaim* could well be translated as “the departed” or “the dead,” since we are told that they are “roused” to meet the king. The implication is that they were asleep, a common euphemism for death in the Bible. Disembodied spirits do not need to be “roused” from sleep. The taunt “You have become as weak as we!” (Is 14:10) does not necessarily mean “You have become a disembodied spirit as we.” Most likely, “You are dead like us.”

This verse is commonly used to define the meaning of *rephaim* as weak “shades” because they are supposed to be only disembodied spirits. But their weakness derives from the fact that they are dead, not disembodied. In the Old Testament, the dead are weak because their soul or vitality is gone. As Johannes Pedersen concisely states, “The dead is a soul bereft of strength. Therefore the dead are called ‘the weak’—*rephaim* (Is 14:10).”²⁷

***Rephaim* and the Dead**

The connection between the dead and the *rephaim* is explicit in Isaiah 26:14, where the prophet contrasts the eternal God with earthly rulers, saying of the latter: “They are dead, they will not live; they are shades [*rephaim*], they will not arise.” The

parallelism suggests that the *rephaim* and the dead are the same. Furthermore, it says that the *rephaim* “will not arise.” The implication is that these *rephaim*, namely, wicked dead rulers, will not be resurrected to life.

The *rephaim* are mentioned again in verse 19, where the prophet speaks of the resurrection of God’s people: “Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For thy dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the shades [*rephaim*] thou wilt let it fall” (Is 26:19). John Cooper uses this text to argue that the *rephaim* are the spirits of the dead who will be reunited with their bodies at the resurrection.²⁸ Cooper writes: “Highly significant for our inquiry is the fact that the term for the deceased both in v. 14b and v. 19d is *rephaim*, the word used in Isaiah 14 and throughout the Old Testament to designate the dwellers in Sheol. So here we have an unequivocal link between the future bodily resurrection and the inhabitants of the underworld realm of the dead. On the great day of the Lord, the *rephaim* will be reunited with their bodies, reconstituted from the dust, and they will live as the Lord’s people again.”²⁹

There are three major problems with this categorical interpretation. First, it ignores that the Hebrew text is problematic as indicated by the conflicting translations. Cooper uses the NIV translation which reads: “The earth will give birth to her dead [*rephaim*].” (Incidentally, “giving birth” to the *rephaim* hardly supports the notion that these are living, conscious, disembodied spirits.) Furthermore, other translations render the verse differently. For example, the KJV reads: “The earth shall cast out the dead [*rephaim*].” The casting out of the dead from the earth hardly suggests the reunification of disembodied spirits with their resurrected bodies. The RSV reads: “On the land of the shades [*rephaim*] thou wilt let it fall.” The falling of the dew on the *rephaim* can hardly be construed to represent the spirits being reunited with their bodies.

Second, even if the verse refers to the resurrection of the *rephaim* by virtue of the parallelism with the dead who “shall arise,” there are no indications in the whole passage that the *rephaim* are disembodied spirits who will be reunited to their bodies at the resurrection. Nowhere, does the Bible speak of the resurrection as the reunification of the body with the spirit or the soul. This scenario derives from Platonic dualism, not from Biblical wholism. In the Bible, the resurrection, as brought out in chapter 7, is the restoration to life of the whole person, body and soul.

Third, the structural parallelism of the verse where the “dead,” the “dwellers of the dust,” and the *rephaim* are used as synonyms, suggests that the three are essentially the same, namely, the dead. Thus, the *rephaim* are the dead who dwell in the dust, not disembodied spirits who float in the underworld.

The same parallelism between death and *rephaim* occurs in Psalm 88:10: “Does thou work wonders for the dead? Do the shades [*rephaim*] rise up to praise thee?” Here the *rephaim* are paralleled with the dead and declared to be unable to praise God. Why? Simply because “the dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any that go down into silence” (Ps 115:17). The parallelism between death and *rephaim* occurs again in Proverbs 2:18 and 9:18. Speaking of the harlot, the wise man says: “Her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the shades [*rephaim*]” (Prov 2:18). It is evident that the house of the harlot does not lead to the world of the spirits, but to death, as indicated by the parallelism.

Lastly, Job 26:5 personifies the *rephaim*, saying that before God “The shades [*rephaim*] below tremble, the water and their inhabitants.” Here we are dealing with highly figurative language where both the living and the dead tremble before God. This is also evident from the following verse which says: “Sheol is naked before God and Abaddon [destruction] has no covering.” The purpose of all these images is simply to convey the thought that no living or dead creature can escape the omnipresence and omnipotence of God.

In the light of the foregoing analysis we can conclude with Basil Atkinson that “there is nothing in any of the occurrences that obliges us to put the meaning ‘shades’ upon the word [*rephaim*], and it seems unreasonable to force it upon it in the face of the combined and consistent testimony of the rest of Scripture.”³⁰

The Medium of Endor

The preceding discussion of *sheol* provides a fitting background for discussing the only full description to be found in the Bible of communicating with a spirit in *sheol*. In brief, this is the story. When Saul failed to receive guidance for the future from God through the channels of dreams, Urim, and the prophets (1 Sam 28:6), he sought out in desperation a woman medium at Endor, to call up for him the spirit of the deceased Samuel (1 Sam 28:7).

Disguising himself to avoid recognition, Saul came to the woman by night and asked her to bring up the deceased prophet and to elicit information for him (1 Sam 28:8). When she demurred on the ground of the royal ban against necromancy (1 Sam 28:3), Saul swore that no harm would come to her and insisted that she bring up Samuel (1 Sam 28:9-10). She obeyed and said to Saul: “I see a god [*elohim*] coming up out of the earth” (1 Sam 28:13). She described to Saul what she saw, namely, an old man “wrapped in a robe” (1 Sam 28:14).

From the medium’s description, Saul concluded that it was Samuel and proceeded to ask him what he should do in the face of impending defeat by the Philistines. The spirit, impersonating Samuel, first chided Saul for disquieting him when the Lord had departed from the king. Then he prophesied against Saul as from the Lord. Grimly, the spirit foretold Saul’s doom: “Tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me” (1 Sam 28:19; 1 Chron 10:13-14). Then the spirit returned to where he had come from.

Importance of the Story

Dualists find in this story one of the clearest Biblical proofs of the survival of the soul at death. John Cooper, for example, derives from this story four major conclusions about the Old Testament view of the state of the dead. He writes: “First, it is clear that there is continuity of personal identity between the living and the dead. In other words, dead Samuel is still Samuel, not someone or something else. . . . Second, although this is a highly unusual occurrence, Samuel is nonetheless a typical resident of Sheol. For he expects Saul and his sons to be joining him. . . . Third, although he implies that he was resting, it was still possible for him to ‘wake up’ and engage in a number of acts of conscious communication. . . . Fourth, Samuel is a ‘ghost’ or ‘shade,’ not a Platonic soul or Cartesian mind. . . . His corpse was buried at Ramah (1 Sam 28:3), yet he was in Sheol and appeared at Endor in bodily form.”³¹ Along the same lines, Robert Morey maintains that this story shows that “Israel did believe in a conscious afterlife. While they were forbidden to be engaged in séances, they did not believe that man was extinguished at death.”³²

These attempts to utilize the “ghostly” appearance of “Samuel” at the beck and call of a medium to prove the conscious existence of disembodied souls after death ignore five important considerations. First, it ignores the definite teaching of Scripture on the nature of man and the nature of death which we have already examined thoroughly. The Biblical wholistic view of human nature envisages the cessation of life for the whole person at death and, thus precludes the conscious existence of disembodied souls.

Second, it ignores the solemn warning against consulting “familiar spirits” (Lev 19:31; Is 8:19), a transgression that was punished by death (Lev 20:6, 27). In fact, Saul himself died because “he was unfaithful to the Lord . . . and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance, and did not seek guidance from the Lord” (1 Chron 10:13-14). The reason the death penalty was inflicted for consulting “familiar spirits” is that these were “evil spirits,” or fallen angels impersonating the dead. Such a practice would eventually lead the people to worship the devil rather than God.

God hardly could have prescribed the death penalty for communicating with the spirits of deceased loved ones if such spirits existed and if such a communication were possible. There is no moral reason for God to outlaw on the pain of death, the human desire to communicate with deceased loved ones. The problem is that such communication is impossible, because the dead are unconscious and do not communicate with the living. Any communication that occurs is not with the spirit of the dead, but with evil spirits. This is suggested also by the medium's statement, "I see a god [*elohim*] coming up out of the earth" (1 Sam 28:13). The plural word *elohim* is used in the Bible not only for the true God but also for false gods (Gen 35:2; Ex 12:12; 20:3). What the medium saw was a false god or evil spirit impersonating Samuel.

Third, such an interpretation assumes that the Lord would speak to Saul by a medium, a practice He had outlawed on the pain of death, after He had refused to communicate with Saul by legitimate means (1 Sam 28:6). A communication from Samuel, speaking as a prophet, indirectly would be a communication from God. Yet the Bible expressly states that the Lord refused to communicate with Saul (1 Sam 28:6).

Fourth, it ignores the fantastic difficulty of supposing that a spirit from the dead could appear as "an old man . . . wrapped in a robe" (1 Sam 28:14). If the spirits of the dead were disembodied souls, they obviously would not need to be wrapped around with clothes.

Fifth, it ignores the implications of the grim prediction "Tomorrow you and your son shall be with me" (1 Sam 28:19). Where was this rendezvous to take place between the king and the simulator of Samuel? Was it in *sheol*, as Cooper suggests? If that were true, it would mean that God's prophets and apostate kings share the same living quarters after death. This runs contrary to the popular belief that at death the saved go up to heaven and the unsaved down to *sheol*-hell. Furthermore, if Samuel had been in Heaven, the spirit-impersonator of Samuel would have said: "Why have you brought me down?" But he said: "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" (1 Sam 28:15). Had the location of the saved changed in the course of time from *sheol* beneath the earth to Heaven above the earth?

Reflections such as these give us reason to believe that the séance which occurred at Endor does not support in any way the notion of conscious existence for disembodied souls after death. It is evident that it was not the spirit of Samuel that communicated with Saul. Most likely, a demon impersonated the dead Samuel, as happens in many séances today.

The Scriptures reveal that Satan and his angels have the ability to change their appearance and to communicate with human beings (see Matt 4:1-11; 2 Cor 11:13,14). The story of the "ghostly" appearance of Samuel at Endor tells us very little about conscious existence after death, but it does reveal a great deal about the clever deceptions of Satan. It shows us that Satan has been very successful in promoting the lie, "You will not die," by using sophisticated means such as the impersonification of the dead by his evil spirits.

Conclusion

Our study of the Hebrew word for "the realm of the dead—*sheol*" shows that none of the texts we have examined suggests that *sheol* is the place of punishment for the ungodly (hell) or a place of conscious existence for the souls or spirits of the dead. The realm of the dead is one of unconsciousness, inactivity, and sleep that continues until the day of the resurrection.

Similarly, the word *rephaim*, which is generally translated "weak" or "shades," denotes not disembodied spirits who float in the underworld, but the dead who dwell in the dust. We have found that the dead are called "the weak—*rephaim*" (Is 14:10) because they are bereft of strength. The story of the "ghostly" appearance of Samuel at Endor

tells us very little about conscious existence after death, because what the medium saw was a false god (*elohim*—a god-1 Sam 28:13) or evil spirit impersonating Samuel, and not the soul of the prophet.

PART II THE STATE OF THE DEAD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament says very little about the state of the dead during the intermediate period between their falling asleep and their awakening on the day of the resurrection. We must agree with G. C. Berkouwer that what the New Testament tells us about the intermediate state is nothing more than a whisper.³³ The primary concern of the New Testament is with the events that mark the transition from this age to the Age to Come: the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

Our major source of information for the New Testament view of the state of the dead are the 11 references to *hades* (which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *sheol*) and 5 passages commonly cited in support of the belief in the conscious existence of the soul after death. The 5 passages are: (1) Luke 16:19-31, where we find the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus; (2) Luke 23:42-43, which reports the conversation between Jesus and the thief on the cross; (3) Philippians 1:23, where Paul speaks of his "desire to depart and be with Christ"; (4) 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, where Paul uses the imagery of the earthly/heavenly houses and of the unclothed/clothed conditions to express his desire to "be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8); and (5) Revelation 6:9-11 which mentions the souls of the martyrs under the altar crying to God to avenge their blood. We proceed to examine each of the above in the order given.

The Meaning and Nature of *Hades*

The Greek word *hades* came into Biblical use when the translators of the Septuagint chose it to render the Hebrew *sheol*. The problem is that *hades* was used in the Greek world in a vastly different way than *sheol*. While *sheol* in the Old Testament is the realm of the dead, where, as we have seen, the deceased are in an unconscious state, *hades* in Greek mythology is the underworld, where the conscious souls of the dead are divided in two major regions, one a place of torment and the other of blessedness.

Edward Fudge offers this concise description of the Greek conception of *hades*: "In Greek mythology Hades was the god of the underworld, and then the name of the nether world itself. Charon ferried the souls of the dead across the rivers Styx or Acheron into his abode, where the watchdog Cerberus guarded the gate so that none might escape. The pagan myth contained all the elements of the medieval eschatology: there was the pleasant Elysium, the gloomy and miserable Tartarus, and even the Plains of Asphodel, where ghosts could wander who were suited for neither of the above. Ruling beside the god was his queen Proserpine (or Persephone), whom he had raped from the world above."³⁴

This Greek conception of *hades* influenced Hellenistic Jews, during the intertestamental period, to adopt the belief in the immortality of the soul and the idea of a spatial separation in the underworld between the righteous and the godless. The souls of the righteous proceeded immediately after death to heavenly felicity, there to await the resurrection, while the souls of the godless went to a place of torment in *hades*.³⁵ The popular acceptance of this scenario is reflected in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus to be examined shortly.

This view of *hades* as a place of torment for the wicked eventually entered into the Christian Church and influenced even Bible translators. It is noteworthy that the word *hades*, which occurs 11 times in the New Testament, is translated in the KJV 10 times as "hell"³⁶ and 1 time as "grave."³⁷ The RSV transliterates the word as "Hades." The translation of *hades* as "hell" is inaccurate and misleading, because, with the exception of Luke 16:23, the term refers to the grave or the realm of the dead, not to a place of punishment. The latter is designated as *gehenna*, a term which also occurs 11 times in the New Testament³⁸ and is rightly translated "hell," since it refers to the lake of fire, the

place of doom for the lost. *Hades*, on the other hand, is used in the New Testament as the standing equivalent of *sheol*, the realm of the dead or the grave.

Jesus and Hades

In the Gospels, Jesus refers to *hades* three times. The first use of *hades* is found in Matthew 11:23, where Jesus upbraids Capernaum, saying: “And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades” (cf. Luke 10:15). Here *hades*, like *sheol* in the Old Testament (Amos 9:2-3; Job 11:7-9), denotes the deepest place in the universe, just as the heaven is the highest. This means that Capernaum will be humiliated by being brought down to the realm of the dead, the deepest place in the universe.

The second use of *hades* in the teaching of Jesus occurs in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23). We shall return to this shortly. The third use is found in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus expresses His confidence that “the gates of Hades shall not prevail” against His church. The meaning of the phrase “the gates of Hades” is illuminated by the use of the same expression in the Old Testament and Jewish literature (3 Macc 5:51; Wis. of Sol 16:13) as a synonym for death. For example, Job asks rhetorically: “Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?” (Job 38:17; cf. Is 38:18). The underworld was pictured as enclosed with cliffs, where the dead were locked in. Thus, what Jesus meant by “the gates of Hades” is that death shall not prevail against His church, obviously because He had gained the victory over death.

Like all the dead, Jesus went to *hades*, that is, to the grave, but unlike the rest He was victorious over death. “For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let thy Holy One see corruption” (Acts 2:27; cf. 2:31). Here *hades* is the grave where Christ’s body rested for only three days and, consequently, did not “see corruption,” the decay process resulting from a prolonged interment. Because of His victory over death, *hades*—the grave is a defeated enemy. Thus, Paul exclaims: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave [*hades*] where is thy victory?” (1 Cor 15:55, KJV). Here *hades* is correctly translated “grave” in the KJV since it is in parallel with death.

Christ now holds the keys to “death and Hades” (Rev 1:18), He has power over death and the grave. This enables Him to unlock the graves and call forth the saints to everlasting life at His coming. In all these passages, *hades* is consistently associated with death, because it is the resting place of the dead, the grave. The same is true in Revelation 6:8, where the pale horse has a rider whose name “was Death, and Hades followed him.” The reason “Hades” follows “Death” is obviously because *hades*, as the grave, receives the dead.

At the end of the millennium, “Death and Hades” will give up their dead (Rev 20:13) and “then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire” (Rev 20:14). These two verses are significant. First, because they tell us that eventually *hades* will give up the dead, which indicates again that *hades* is the realm of the dead. Second, they inform us that at the End, *hades* itself will be thrown into the lake of fire. By means of this colorful imagery, the Bible reassures us that at the End, both death and the grave will be eliminated. This will be the death of death, or as Revelation puts it, “the second death.”

This brief survey of the use of *hades* in the New Testament clearly shows that its meaning and usage is consistent with that of *sheol* in the Old Testament. Both terms denote the grave or the realm of the dead and not the place of punishment of the ungodly.³⁹

The Rich Man and Lazarus

The word *hades* also occurs in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, but with a different meaning. While in the 10 references we have just examined *hades* refers to the

grave or the realm of the dead, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus it denotes the place of punishment for the ungodly (Luke 16:23). The reason for this exceptional use will be explained shortly. Obviously, dualists make great use of this parable to support the notion of the conscious existence of disembodied souls during the intermediate state (Luke 16:19-31). Because of the importance attached to this parable, we need to examine it closely.

First, let us look at the main points of the story. Lazarus and the rich man both die. Their situations in life are now reversed after their death. For when Lazarus died, he “was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22), whereas the rich man was taken to *hades* where he was tormented by scorching flames (Luke 16:23). Although a great gulf separated them, the rich man could see Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom. So he pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus on two errands: first, to “send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool his tongue” (Luke 16:24) and second, to send Lazarus to warn his family members to repent lest they experience the same punishment. Abraham denied both requests for two reasons. The first, because there was a great chasm that made it impossible for Lazarus to cross over to help him (Luke 16:26); the second, because if his family members did “not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead” (Luke 16:31).

Before looking at the parable, we need to remember that contrary to an allegory like *Pilgrim’s Progress*, where every details counts, the details of a parable do not necessarily have any significance in themselves, except as “props” for the story. A parable is designed to teach a fundamental truth, and the details do not have a literal meaning, unless the context indicates otherwise. Out of this principle another grows, namely, only the fundamental teaching of a parable, confirmed by the general tenor of Scripture, may be legitimately used for defining doctrine.

Unfortunately, these two fundamental principles are ignored by those who wish to use the details of a parable to support their views. For example, Robert Peterson draws a lesson from each of the major characters of the parable. “First, like Lazarus, those whom God helps will be borne after their death into God’s presence. . . . Second, like the rich man, the unrepentant will experience irreversible judgment. The wicked survive death too, only to endure ‘torment’ and ‘agony.’ . . . Third, through Scripture, God reveals himself and his will so that none who neglect it can legitimately protest their subsequent fate.”⁴⁰

Peterson’s attempt to draw three lessons from the parable ignores the fact that the main lesson of the parable is given in the final punch line: “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead” (Luke 16:31). This is the main lesson of the parable, namely, nothing or no one can supersede the convicting power of the revelation that God has given us in His Word. To interpret Lazarus and the rich man as representative of what will happen to the saved and the unsaved immediately after death means to milk the parable for lessons foreign to its original intent.

The Problems of a Literal Interpretation

Those who interpret the parable as a literal representation of the state of the saved and unsaved after death are faced with insurmountable problems. If the narrative is an actual description of the intermediate state, then it must be true in fact and consistent in detail. But if the parable is figurative, then only the moral truth to be conveyed need concern us. A literal interpretation of the narrative breaks down under the weight of its own absurdities and contradictions, as becomes apparent under scrutiny.

Contenders for literalism suppose that the rich man and Lazarus were disembodied spirits, destitute of bodies. Yet the rich man is described as having “eyes” that see and a “tongue” that speaks, as well as seeking relief from the “finger” of Lazarus—all real body parts. They are portrayed as existing physically, despite the fact that the rich man’s body was duly buried in the grave. Was his body carried away into *hades* together with his soul by mistake?

A gulf separates Lazarus in Heaven (Abraham's bosom) from the rich man in *hades*. The gulf is too wide for anyone to cross and yet narrow enough to permit them to converse. Taken literally, this means that Heaven and Hell are within geographical speaking and seeing distance from each other so that saints and sinners eternally can see and communicate with one another. Ponder for a moment the case of parents in Heaven seeing their children agonizing in *hades* for all eternity. Would not such a sight destroy the very joy and peace of Heaven? It is unthinkable that the saved will see and converse with their unsaved loved ones for all eternity across a dividing gulf.

Conflict With Biblical Truths

A literal interpretation of the parable contradicts some fundamental Biblical truths. If the narrative is literal, then Lazarus received his reward and the rich man his punishment, immediately after death and before the judgment day. But the Bible clearly teaches that the rewards and punishments, as well as the separation between the saved and the unsaved will take place on the day of Christ's coming: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, . . . and before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another" (Matt 25:31-32). "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay everyone for what he has done" (Rev 22:12). Paul expected to receive "the crown of righteousness" on the day of Christ's appearing (2 Tim 4:8).

A literal interpretation of the parable also contradicts the uniform testimony of the Old and New Testaments that the dead, both righteous and ungodly, lie silent and unconscious in death until the resurrection day (Eccl 9:5-6; Job 14:12-15, 20, 21; Ps 6:5; 115:17). A literal interpretation also contradicts the consistent use of *hades* in the New Testament to denote the grave or the realm of the dead, not a place of punishment. We have found that in 10 of its 11 occurrences, *hades* is explicitly connected with death and the grave. The exceptional use of *hades* in this parable as a fiery place of torment (Luke 16:24) derives, as we shall shortly see, not from Scripture, but from current Jewish beliefs influenced by Greek mythology.

Current Jewish Concepts

Fortunately for our investigation, we have Jewish writings that illuminate the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Especially revealing is the "Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades," written by Josephus, the famous Jewish historian who lived during New Testament times (died about A. D. 100). His discourse parallels very closely the narrative of the rich man and Lazarus. In it Josephus explains that "Hades is a subterranean region where the light of this world does not shine. . . . This region is allowed as a place of custody for souls, in which angels are appointed as guardians to them, who distribute to them *temporary punishments*, agreeable to every one's behavior and manners."⁴¹

Josephus points out, however, that *hades* is divided into two regions. One is "the region of light" where the souls of the righteous dead are brought by angels to the "place we call *The Bosom of Abraham*."⁴² The second region is in "perpetual darkness," and the souls of the ungodly are dragged by force "by the angels allotted for punishment."⁴³ These angels drag the ungodly "into the neighborhood of hell itself," so that they can see and feel the heat of the flames.⁴⁴ But they are not thrown into hell itself until after the final judgment. "A *chaos* deep and large is fixed between them; insomuch that a just man that hath compassion upon them, cannot be admitted, nor can one that is unjust, if he were bold enough to attempt it, pass over it."⁴⁵

The striking similarities between Josephus' description of *hades* and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus are self-evident. In both accounts we have the two regions that separate the righteous from the ungodly, the bosom of Abraham as the abode of the righteous, a great gulf that cannot be crossed, and the inhabitants of one region who can see those of the other region.

Josephus' description of *hades* is not unique. Similar descriptions can be found in other Jewish literature.⁴⁶ What this means is that Jesus capitalized on the popular understanding of the condition of the dead in *hades*, not to endorse such views, but to drive home the importance of heeding in this present life the teachings of Moses and the prophets because this determines bliss or misery in the world to come.

Jesus' Use of Current Beliefs

At this juncture, it may be proper to ask, "Why did Jesus tell a parable based on current beliefs that do not accurately represent truth as set forth elsewhere in the Scripture and in His own teachings?" The answer is that Jesus met people on their own ground, capitalizing on what was familiar to them to teach them vital truths. Many of His hearers had come to believe in a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection, though such a belief is foreign to Scripture. This erroneous belief was adopted during the intertestamental period as part of the process of Hellenization of Judaism and had become a part of Judaism by the time of Jesus.

In this parable, Jesus made use of a popular belief, not to endorse it, but to impress upon the minds of His hearers an important spiritual lesson. It should be noted that even in the preceding parable of the Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1-12), Jesus uses a story that does not accurately represent Biblical truth. Nowhere, does the Bible endorse the practice of a dishonest administrator who reduces to half the outstanding debts of creditors in order to get some personal benefits from such creditors. The lesson of the parable is to "make friends for yourselves" (Luke 16:9), not to teach dishonest business practices.

John Cooper acknowledges that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus "does not necessarily tell us what Jesus or Luke believed about the afterlife, nor does it provide a firm basis for a doctrine of the intermediate state. For it is possible that Jesus simply uses popular images in order to make his ethical point. He may not have been endorsing those images. He may not have believed them himself because he knew them to be false."⁴⁷

Cooper then asks the question: "What does this passage tell us about the intermediate state?" He flatly and honestly replies: "The answer may be, 'Nothing.' The dualist case cannot lean on this text as a main support."⁴⁸ The reason he gives is that it is most difficult to draw conclusions from the imagery of the parable. For example, Cooper asks: "Will we be bodily beings [in the intermediate state]? Will the blessed and the damned be able to see each other?"⁴⁹

Jesus and the Thief on the Cross.

The brief conversation between Jesus and the penitent thief on the cross next to Him (Luke 23:42-43) is used by dualists as a major proof for the conscious existence of the faithful dead in paradise before the resurrection. Thus, it is important to take a close look to the words spoken by Jesus to the penitent thief.

Unlike the other criminal and most of the crowd, the penitent thief did believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He said: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Jesus answered him, "Truly I say to you today you shall be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). A major problem in the interpretation of this text is caused by the location of the comma, which in most translations, is placed before "today." Thus, most readers and commentators assume that Jesus said: "Today you shall be with me in paradise" Such reading is interpreted to mean that "on that very day"⁵⁰ the thief went to paradise with Christ.

The original Greek text, however, has no punctuation and, translated literally, reads: "Truly to you I say today with me you will be in paradise." The adverb "today-*semeron*" stands between the verb "I say-*lego*" and "you will be-*ese*." This means that grammatically the adverb "today" can apply to either of the two verbs. If it

qualifies the first verb, then Jesus said: “Truly I say to you today, you shall be with me in paradise.”

Translators have placed the comma before the adverb “today,” not for grammatical reasons, but for the theological conviction that the dead receive their reward at death. One would wish that translators would limit themselves to translating the text and leave the task of interpretation to the reader.

The question we are facing is: Did Jesus mean to say, “Truly, I say to you today. . .” or “Today you shall be with me in paradise”? Those who maintain that Jesus meant the latter appeal to the fact that the adverb “today” does not occur elsewhere with the frequently used phrase “Truly, I say to you.” This is a valid observation, but the reason for this exceptional attachment of the adverb “today” to the phrase “Truly, I say to you” could very well be the immediate context. The thief asked Jesus to remember him in the *future* when He would establish His messianic kingdom. But Jesus responded by remembering the penitent thief *immediately*, “today,” and by reassuring him that he would be with Him in paradise. This interpretation is supported by three major considerations: (1) the New Testament meaning of paradise; (2) the time when the saved will enter upon their reward in paradise, and (3) the time when Jesus Himself returned to Paradise.

What Is Paradise?

The word “paradise—*paradeisos*” occurs only three times in the New Testament—twice in addition to this use in Luke 23:43. In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul relates an ecstatic experience of being “caught up into paradise,” which he locates in “the third heaven” (2 Cor 12:2). It is evident that for Paul, paradise is in heaven. In Revelation 2:7, the Lord gives this promise: “To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” Here paradise is associated with the tree of life, which, according to Revelation 22:2, will be found in the New Jerusalem: “On either side of the river [there is] the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.” All of this suggests that paradise is the eternal habitation of the redeemed in the restored “Garden of Eden.”

Therefore, when Jesus assured the penitent thief of a place with Him in “paradise,” He was referring to the “many mansions” in His “Father’s house” and to the time when He would “come to receive unto Himself His own (John 14:1-3). Throughout His ministry, Jesus taught that the redeemed would enter into His Father’s Kingdom at His coming: “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34; 16:27). Paul taught the same truth. At Christ’s second coming, the sleeping saints will be resurrected and the living saints translated, and all “shall be caught up together . . . in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17). It is at that time, following the resurrection of the righteous, that the thief will be with Jesus in Paradise.

When Did Jesus Return to Paradise?

Those who interpret Christ’s statement to the thief as meaning that on that very day the thief went to paradise to be with Christ, assume that both Jesus and the thief ascended to heaven immediately after their death. But such a conclusion can hardly be supported by Scripture.

The Scriptures expressly teach that on the day of His crucifixion, Christ went into the grave—*hades*. At Pentecost, Peter proclaimed that in accordance to David’s prophecy (Ps 16:10), Christ “was not abandoned in Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption,” but was raised up by God (Acts 2:31-32). *Hades*, as we have seen, is associated consistently in the New Testament with the grave or the realm of the dead. The only exception is Luke 16:23, where *hades* denotes a place of torment, not paradise. Such meaning derives from popular Jewish conceptions influenced by Greek mythology, not from Scripture. What this means is that Christ could hardly have told the thief that on that very day he would be with Him in paradise, when He knew that on that day He would be resting in the grave.

Those who would argue that only Christ's body went into the grave while His soul ascended to heaven ignore what Jesus said to Mary on the day of His resurrection: "Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17). It is evident that Jesus was not in Heaven during the three days of his burial. He was resting in the grave, waiting for His Father to call Him back to life. Thus, the thief could hardly have gone to be with Jesus in Paradise immediately after his death when Jesus Himself did not ascend to the Father until some time after His resurrection. To appreciate more fully the meaning of being "with Christ in paradise," let us look at Paul's use of the phrase "being with Christ."

"To Depart and Be With Christ."

In writing to the Philippians, Paul says: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account" (Phil 1:22-23). Dualists consider this text one of the strongest proofs that at death the soul of the saved immediately goes into the presence of Christ. For example, Robert Morey states: "This is the clearest passage in the New Testament which speaks of the believer going to be with Christ in heaven after death. This context deals with Paul's desire to depart this earthly life for a heavenly life with Christ. There is no mention or allusion to the resurrection in this passage."⁵¹

The fundamental problem with this interpretation is the failure to recognize that Paul's statement, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ" is a relational and not an anthropological statement. By this I mean, it is a statement of the relation that exists and continues between the believer and Christ through death, not a statement of the "state" of the body and soul between death and the resurrection.

Helmut Thielicke correctly points out that the New Testament is not concerned about a 'state' which exists between death and resurrection, but for a relation that exists between the believer and Christ through death. This relationship of being with Christ is not interrupted by death because the believer who sleeps in Christ has no awareness of the passing of time. As Thielicke puts it, "The removal of a sense of time means for those who are awakened that the long night of death is reduced to a mathematical point, and they are thus summoned out of completed life."⁵²

The attempts to extract from Paul's statement support for the belief in the transit of the soul to heaven at death are unwarranted because, as Ray Anderson rightly observes, "Paul did not think the question of the status of the person *between* death and resurrection was a question that needed to be considered."⁵³ The reason is that for Paul those who "die in Christ" are "sleeping in Christ" (1 Cor 15:18; 1 Thess 4:14). Their relation with Christ is one of immediacy, because they have no awareness of the passing of time between their death and resurrection. They experience what may be called "eternal time." But for those who go on living on earth-bound temporal time there is an interval between death and resurrection. The problem is that we cannot synchronize the clock of eternal time with that of our temporal time. It is the attempt to do this that has led to unfortunate speculations and controversies over the so-called intermediate state.

By expressing his desire "to depart and be with Christ," Paul was not giving a doctrinal exposition of what happens at death. He is simply expressing his longing to see an end to his troubled existence and to be with Christ. Throughout the centuries, earnest Christians have expressed the same longing, without necessarily expecting to be ushered into Christ's presence at the moment of their death. Paul's statement must be interpreted on the basis of his clear teachings regarding the time when believers will be united with Christ.

With Christ at His Coming

Paul addresses this question in his letter to the Thessalonians where he explains that both the sleeping and living believers will be united with Christ, not at death, but at

His coming. "The dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:17).⁵⁴ The "so" (*houtos*) refers to the manner or way in which believers will be with Christ, namely, *not by dying*, but by being resurrected or translated at His coming. Basil Atkinson notes that the word "so" in Greek *houtos* "means 'in this way.' Its place here at the beginning of the sentence makes it emphatic, so that the meaning of the sentence becomes: 'And this is the way that we shall be for ever with the Lord,' implying that there is no other way and leading us to conclude that we shall not be with the Lord till the day of the resurrection."⁵⁵

It should be noted that in describing the union with Christ which believers will experience at His coming, Paul never speaks of disembodied souls being reunited with resurrected bodies. Rather, he speaks of "the dead in Christ" being risen (1 Thess 4:16). Obviously, what is risen at Christ's coming is not just dead bodies but dead people. It is the whole person who will be resurrected and reunited with Christ. Note that the living saints will meet Christ at the same time "together with" the resurrected saints (1 Thess 4:17). Sleeping and living saints meet Christ "together" at His coming, not at death.

The total absence of any Pauline allusion to an alleged reunion of the body with the soul at the time of the resurrection constitutes, in my view, the most formidable challenge to the notion of the conscious survival of the soul. If Paul knew anything about this, he would surely have alluded to it, especially in his detailed discussion of what will happen to sleeping and living believers at Christ's coming (1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:42-58). The fact that Paul never alluded to the conscious survival of the soul and its reattachment to the body at the resurrection clearly shows that such a notion was totally foreign to him and to Scripture as a whole.

G. C. Berkouwer correctly observes that "New Testament believers are not oriented towards their 'private bliss' so that they forget the coming Kingdom, but they do indeed await being 'with Christ,' for in Him they acquired a new future."⁵⁶ The eschatological hope of being with Christ is not an individualistic hope realized at death by disembodied souls, but a corporate hope realized at Christ's coming through the resurrection, or translation, of the whole person and of all the believers.

Paul's desire "'to depart and be with Christ' does not reflect a wish for an intimate 'entre nous [*between us* experience]' in heaven, because the phrase is integrally related to cosmic redemption at the end of time."⁵⁷ The cosmic, corporate dimension of the "with Christ" experience is clearly evident in the same epistle to the Philippians, where Paul speaks repeatedly of the consummation of the Christian hope on the day of Christ's coming. He reassures the Philippians that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ's coming" (Phil 1:6). The completion and consummation of redemption takes place not by going to be with Christ at death, but by meeting with Christ on the glorious day of His coming.

It is Paul's prayer that the Philippians "may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ" (Phil 1:10). On that day, Christ "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Phil 3:21). It is this change from mortality to immortality that makes it possible for believers to be with Christ. This is why in the same epistle Paul tells that he was "straining forward" toward that day because he knew that he would receive "the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:13-14), not at death, but at the glorious day of Christ's coming.

"At Home With the Lord"

In 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, Paul expresses again the hope of being with Christ by using several striking metaphors. This passage is rightly regarded as the "crux interpretum," primarily because the figurative language is cryptic and open to different interpretations. Unfortunately, many interpreters are eager to derive from this passage, as from Philippians 1:22-23, precise anthropological, chronological, or cosmological definitions of life after death. Such concerns, however, are far removed from Paul, who is using the

poetic language of faith to express his hopes and fears regarding the present and future life, rather than the logical language of science to explain the afterlife. All of this should put the interpreter on guard against reading into the passage what Paul never intended to express.

The passage opens with the preposition “for–*gar*,” thus indicating that Paul picks up from chapter 4:16-18, where he contrasts the temporal, mortal nature of the present life which is “wasting away” (2 Cor 4:16) with the eternal, glorious nature of the future life, whose “eternal weight of glory [is] beyond all comparison” (2 Cor 4:17). Paul continues in chapter 5 developing the contrast between temporality and eternity by using the imagery of two dwelling places representative of these characteristics.

“For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared for us this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee” (2 Cor 5:1-5).

In this first section of the passage, Paul uses two sets of contrasting metaphors. First, he contrasts “the earthly tent,” which is subject to destruction, with the “building from God, a house not made with hands,” which is “eternal in the heavens.” Then Paul highlights this contrast by differentiating between the state of being clothed with the heavenly dwelling and that of being found naked.

The second section, verses 6 to 10, is more straightforward and contrasts being in the body and therefore away from the Lord, with being away from the body and at home with the Lord. The key statement occurs in verse 8 where Paul says: “We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

The enormous variety of interpretations of this passage can be grouped into three main views, each the direct result of some presuppositions. The history of interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 clearly shows how much exegesis and interpretation are influenced by presuppositions. We briefly state and evaluate each of the three main views which may be called: (1) the intermediate state, (2) the resurrection of the body after death, and (3) the resurrection of the body at Christ’s coming.

The Intermediate State

Most past and present scholars maintain that in this passage Paul describes the existence of the believer in heaven with Christ during the intermediate state between death and resurrection.⁵⁸ Briefly stated, this interpretation runs as follows: The tent and the present clothing are the earthly existence. Being unclothed represents dying and the resulting state of nakedness signifies the disembodied existence of the soul during the intermediate state. The building we have in heaven represents, for some, the body that will be reattached to the soul at the resurrection, while for others, it is the soul itself that dwells in heaven.

Robert Morey defends the latter view, saying: “Where in Scripture are we told that our resurrection body is already created and waiting in heaven for us? The only rational answer is that Paul is speaking of the soul’s dwelling in heaven.”⁵⁹ On the basis of these verses, Morey argues that “The place of dwelling [of the soul] while [the person is] alive is on earth, while the place of dwelling after death is in heaven.”⁶⁰

Three major problems exist with the intermediate-state interpretation of this passage. First of all, it ignores that the contrast between the heavenly building and the earthly tent is *spatial* and *not temporal*. By this we mean that Paul is contrasting the heavenly mode of existence with the earthly mode of existence. He is not discussing the disembodied state of the soul between death and resurrection. Now, if the apostle had

expected to be with Christ at death in his disembodied soul, would he not have alluded to it in this context? Would he not have said, "For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed . . ." we shall be with our souls in the presence of God in heaven. But, in all of his writings, Paul never alludes to the survival and existence of the soul in the presence of Christ. Why? Simply because such a notion was foreign to Paul and to Scripture.

Second, if the state of nakedness is the disembodied existence of the soul in the presence of Christ during the intermediate state, why does Paul shrink back at the thought of being "found naked" (2 Cor 5:3)? After all, this would have fulfilled his earnest desire to be "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). The fact is the notion of nakedness as the state of the soul stripped from the body is found in the writings of Plato and Philo,⁶¹ but not in Paul's writings.

Third, if the heavenly building is "the soul's dwelling in heaven," then believers must have two souls, one on earth and the other in heaven because Paul says that "we have a building from God." The present tense indicates a present possession. How can the believer's soul be in heaven with Christ and on earth with the body at the same time?

A Resurrection Body After Death

A number of scholars argue that the heavenly building is the resurrected body, which believers receive immediately at death.⁶² Allegedly, Paul teaches that life in the earthly body, which is represented by the "earthly tent" (2 Cor 5:1, 4), is followed immediately by the acquisition of the resurrection body, represented by "the building from God, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1). Thus, Paul is supposed to reject altogether an intermediate disembodied condition of "being naked" or "unclothed" (2 Cor 5:3-4). This view rests on the premise that during the interval between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul had some close brushes with death that caused him to give up his earlier hope of surviving the Parousia and came to believe, instead, that believers receive their resurrection bodies at the moment of their death.⁶³

A fundamental problem with this interpretation is the assumption that Paul in later years abandoned the hope of the resurrection at the Parousia in favor of an immediate resurrection at death. If that were true, Christians would face the dilemma of not knowing which Paul to believe: the earlier or the later Paul? Fortunately, such a dilemma does not exist because Paul never changed his view on the time of the resurrection. This is indicated by the immediate context of the passage under consideration, which specifically mentions the resurrection at the Parousia: "Knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us into his presence" (2 Cor 4:16). Paul could hardly have stated it more clearly that Christ will raise us and bring us into His presence at His coming and not at death.

If Paul had modified his views of the resurrection time since he wrote 1 Corinthians 15, it is doubtful whether he would have said, "we know" (2 Cor 5:1), which implies a known teaching. Furthermore, even in his later writings, Paul explicitly links the resurrection with the glorious return of Christ (Rom 8:22-25; Phil 3:20-21). It is hard to believe that Paul would have altered his eschatology twice.

Resurrection Body at the Parousia

In recent years, a number of scholars have defended the view that the heavenly building is the "spiritual body" given to believers at the time of Christ's coming.⁶⁴ There are, indeed, elements in this passage which support this view. For example, the idea of putting on the heavenly dwelling (2 Cor 5:2) and the statement that when we are further clothed, the mortal will be swallowed up with life (2 Cor 5:4). These statements are strikingly similar to the imagery found in 1 Corinthians 15:53, where Paul discusses the change that believers will experience at Christ's coming: "For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality."

The proponents of this view rightly protest against an eschatology of heaven which focuses on the individual bliss experienced immediately after death. Their strongest argument is that “if Paul expected to receive the spiritual body at once [at death] then a resurrection at the Last Day would no longer be necessary.”⁶⁵

To state it simply, the proponents of this view interpret Paul’s metaphors as follows: While living on this earth we are clothed with the “earthly tent” of our mortal body. At death we are “unclothed” when our bodies are “destroyed” in the grave. At Christ’s coming, we will “put on the heavenly dwelling” by exchanging our mortal bodies for the glorious immortal bodies.

Overall, we lean toward this interpretation. Yet there is a major weakness in all three interpretations, namely, they interpret the passage by focusing primarily on the body, whether it be the “spiritual body” given to individual believers at death, or to all the believers together at Christ’s coming. But Paul here is not trying to define the state of the body before death, at death, or at Christ’s coming, but two different modes of existence.

Heavenly and Earthly Modes of Existence

After rereading the passage countless times, I sense that Paul’s primary concern is not to define the state of the body before and after death, but rather to contrast two modes of existence. One is the heavenly mode of existence which is represented by the “building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor 5:1). The other is the earthly mode of existence which is typified by “the earthly tent” which is “destroyed” at death.

The meaning of the imagery of “putting on” or “being clothed” with “our heavenly dwelling” may have more to do with accepting Christ’s provision of salvation than with “the spiritual body” given to believers at the Parousia. We find support for this conclusion in the figurative use of “heavenly dwelling” with reference to God and of “being clothed” with reference to the believer’s acceptance of Christ.

Paul’s assurance that “we have a building from God” (2 Cor 5:1) reminds us of such verses as “God is our refuge and strength” (Ps 46:1), or “Lord, Thou hast been our *dwelling place*” (Ps 90:1).⁶⁶ Christ referred to Himself as a temple in a way that is strikingly similar to Paul’s imagery of the heavenly dwelling “not made with hands.” He is reported to have said: “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands” (Mark 14:58). If Paul was thinking along these lines, then *the heavenly dwelling place is Christ Himself and the gift of eternal life He provides to believers.*

How, then, does a believer put on “the heavenly dwelling”? A look at Paul’s use of the metaphor of clothing may provide an answer. “As many as were baptized into Christ were clothed with Christ” (Gal 3:27). In this text, the clothing is associated with the acceptance of Christ at baptism. Paul also says: “This perishable being must be clothed with the imperishable, and what is mortal must be clothed with immortality” (1 Cor 15:53, NEB). Here the clothing represents the reception of immortality at Christ’s coming. These two references suggest that the “clothing” can refer to the new life in Christ, which is accepted at baptism, renewed every day, and consummated at the Parousia, when the final clothing will take place by means of the change from mortality to immortality.

In the light of the above interpretation, to “be found naked” or “unclothed” (2 Cor 5:3-4) may stand in contrast with being clothed with Christ and His Spirit. Most likely “naked” for Paul stands not for the soul stripped from the body, but for guilt and sin which results in death. When Adam sinned, he discovered that he was “naked” (Gen 3:10). Ezekiel allegorically describes how God clothed Israel with rich garments but then exposed her nakedness because of her disobedience (Ez 16:8-14). One may also think of the man without “the wedding garment” at the marriage feast (Matt 22:11). It is possible, then, that being “naked” for Paul meant to be in a mortal, sinful condition, bereft of Christ’s righteousness.

Paul clarifies what he meant by being “unclothed” or “naked” versus being “clothed” when he says: “So that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor 5:4). This statement is interpreted in the light of 1 Corinthians 15:53 to mean that our mortal bodies will be changed into spiritual bodies. But is Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:53 primarily concerned with the body as such? A careful reading of 1 Corinthians 15 suggests that Paul addresses the question of the body parenthetically, merely to answer the question, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body?” (1 Cor 15:35). After showing the continuity between the present and the future body, Paul moves to the larger question of the transformation that human nature as a whole will experience at Christ’s coming: “For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:53).

The same holds true of 2 Corinthians 5. Paul is not concerned with the state of the body or the soul as such before or after death. Incidentally, he never speaks of the soul nor of the “spiritual body” in 1 Corinthians 5. Instead, Paul’s concern is to show the contrast between the earthly mode of existence, represented by “earthly tent,” and the heavenly mode of existence, represented by the “heavenly dwelling. The former is “mortal” and the latter is immortal (“swallowed up by life;” 2 Cor 5:4). The former is experienced “at home in the body” and “away from the Lord” (2 Cor 5:6). The latter is experienced “away from the body” and “at home with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8).

The failure to recognize that Paul is speaking about two different modes of existence and not about the state of the body or soul after death, has led to unnecessary, misguided speculations about the afterlife. A good example is Robert Peterson’s statement: “Paul confirms Jesus’ teaching when he contrasts being ‘at home in the body’ and ‘away from the Lord’ with being ‘away from the body and at home with the Lord’ (2 Cor 5:6, 8). He presupposes that human nature is composed of material and immaterial aspects.”⁶⁷

This interpretation is gratuitous, because neither Jesus or Paul are concerned with defining human nature ontologically, that is, in terms of its material or immaterial components. Instead, their concern is to define human nature ethically and relationally, in terms of disobedience and obedience, sin and righteousness, mortality and immortality. This is Paul’s concern in 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, where he speaks of the earthly and heavenly modes of existence in relationship to God, and not of the material or immaterial composition of human nature before and after death.

The Souls Under the Altar

The last passage we examine is Revelation 6:9-11, which reads: “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?’ Then they each were given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.”

This passage is often cited to support the notion that the “souls” of the saints exist after death in heaven as disembodied, conscious spirits. For example, Robert Morey emphatically states: “The souls are the disembodied spirits of the martyrs who cry out to God for vengeance on their enemies. . . . This passage has always proven a great difficulty to those who deny that believers ascend to heaven at death. But John’s language is clear that these souls were conscious and active in heaven.”⁶⁸

This interpretation ignores that apocalyptic pictures are not meant to be photographs of actual realities, but symbolic representations of almost unimaginable spiritual realities. John was not given a view of what heaven is actually like. It is evident that there are no white, red, black, and pale horses in heaven with warlike riders. Christ

does not appear in heaven in the form of a lamb with a bleeding knife wound (Rev 5:6). Likewise, there are no “souls” of martyrs in heaven squeezed at the base of an altar. The whole scene is simply a symbolic representation designed to reassure those facing martyrdom and death that ultimately they would be vindicated by God. Such a reassurance would be particularly heartening for those who, like John, were facing terrible persecution for refusing to participate in the emperor’s cult.

The use of the word “souls–*psychas*” in this passage is unique for the New Testament, because it is never used to refer to humans in the intermediate state. The reason for its use here is suggested by the unnatural death of the martyrs whose blood was shed for the cause of Christ. In the Old Testament sacrificial system, the blood of animals was poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offerings (Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30). The blood contained the soul (Lev 17:11) of the innocent victim that was offered as an atoning sacrifice to God on behalf of penitent sinners. Thus, the souls of the martyrs are seen under the altar to signify that symbolically they had been sacrificed upon the altar and their blood has been poured at the base. In chapter 2 we noted that in the Old Testament the soul is in the blood. In this instance, the souls of the martyrs are under the altar because their blood had been symbolically poured at the base of the altar.

The language of sacrificial death is used elsewhere in the New Testament to denote martyrdom. Facing death, Paul wrote: “For I am already on the point of being sacrificed” (2 Tim 4:6). The apostle also says that he was glad “to be poured out as a libation” for Christ (Phil 2:17). Thus, Christian martyrs were viewed as sacrifices offered to God. Their blood shed on earth was poured symbolically at the heavenly altar. Thus their souls are seen under the altar because that is where symbolically the blood of the martyrs flowed.

No Representation of Intermediate State

The symbolic representation of the martyrs as sacrifices offered at the heavenly altar can hardly be used to argue for their conscious disembodied existence in heaven. George Eldon Ladd, a respected evangelical scholar, rightly states: “The fact that John saw the souls of the martyrs *under the altar* has nothing to do with the state of the dead or their situation in the intermediate state; it is merely a vivid way of picturing the fact that they had been martyred in the name of God.”⁶⁹

Some interpret the “white robe” given to the martyrs as representing the intermediate body given to them at death.⁷⁰ But in Revelation, the “white robe” represents not the intermediate body, but the purity and victory of the redeemed through Christ’s sacrifice. The redeemed who come out of the great tribulation “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14). “The church at Laodicea is counseled to buy gold, white robes, and eyesalve (Rev 3:18), a strange suggestion if white robes are glorified bodies.”⁷¹ The “souls” being clothed with white robes most likely represent God’s recognition of their purity and victory through “the blood of the Lamb” in spite of their ignominious deaths.

The souls of the martyrs are seen as *resting* beneath the altar, not because they are in a disembodied state, but because they are awaiting the completion of redemption (“until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete” Rev 6:11) and their resurrection at Christ’s coming. John describes this event later on, saying: “I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. . . . This is the first resurrection” (Rev 20:4).

This description of the martyrs as “beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God” is very much like that of Revelation 6:9. The only difference is that in chapter 6 the deceased martyrs are told to rest, while in chapter 20 they are brought to life. It is evident that if the martyrs are brought to life at the beginning of the millennium in

conjunction with Christ's coming, they can hardly be living in heaven in a disembodied state while resting in the grave.

To sum up, the function of the vision of the martyrs under the heavenly altar is not to inform us on the intermediate state of the dead, but to reassure believers, especially the martyrs who in John's time and later centuries gave their lives for the cause of Christ, that God ultimately would vindicate them.

Conclusion

Our study of the state of the dead during the interim period between death and resurrection has shown that both the Old and New Testaments consistently teach that death represents the cessation of life for the whole person. Thus, the state of the dead is one of unconsciousness, inactivity, and sleep that will continue until the day of the resurrection.

Our analysis of the usage of the word *sheol* in the Old Testament and of *hades* in the New Testament has shown that both terms denote the grave or the realm of the dead and not the place of punishment for the ungodly. There is no bliss or punishment immediately after death, but an unconscious rest until resurrection morning.

The notion of *hades* as the place of torment for the wicked derives from Greek mythology, not Scripture. In mythology *hades* was the underworld where the conscious souls of the dead are divided in two major regions, one a place of torment and the other of blessedness. This Greek conception of *hades* influenced some Jews during the intertestamental period to adopt the belief that immediately after death the souls of the righteous proceed to heavenly felicity, while the souls of the godless go to a place of torment in *hades*. This popular scenario is reflected in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

The popular view of *hades* as a place of torment for the wicked crept into the Christian Church and eventually even influenced Bible translators. In the KJV, for example, *hades* is translated "hell" instead of "grave" in 10 of the 11 occurrences of the term. This inaccurate translation has misled many uninformed Christians into believing that at death the souls of the wicked are thrown into hellfire, where they await the resurrection of their bodies which will only serve to intensify their agony in hell.

Our study of all the relevant Biblical passages has shown that the notion of the intermediate state in which the souls of the saved enjoy the bliss of Paradise, while those of the unsaved suffer the torments of hell derives not from Scripture, but from Greek dualism. It is most unfortunate that during much of its history, Christianity by and large has been influenced by the Greek dualistic view of human nature, according to which the body is mortal and the soul immortal. The acceptance of this deadly heresy has conditioned the interpretation of Scripture and given rise to a host of other heresies such as Purgatory, eternal torment in hell, prayer for the dead, intercession of the saints, indulgences, and ethereal view of paradise.

It is encouraging to know that today many scholars of all religious persuasions are launching a massive attack against the traditional dualistic view of human nature and some of its related heresies. We can only hope that these endeavors will contribute to recovering the Biblical wholistic view of human nature and destiny, and thus dispel the spiritual darkness perpetrated by centuries of superstitious beliefs.

ENDNOTES

1. See Table 2.1 Religious Belief, Europe and the USA, in Tony Walter, *The Eclipse of Eternity* (London, 1996), p. 32.
2. "Heaven and Hell: Who Will Go Where and Why?" *Christianity Today* (May 27, 1991), p. 29.
3. Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago, 1949), pp. 170-207.
4. See Desmond Alexander, "The Old Testament View of Life After Death," *Themelios* 11, 2 (1986), p. 44.
5. Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis, 1984), p. 72.
6. *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. J. Meeter (Trenton, New Jersey, 1970), p. 339, 345.
7. George Eldon Ladd, "Death," *The New Bible Dictionary*, eds. F. F. Bruce and others, (Grand Rapids, 1962), p. 380.
8. J. G. S. S. Thomson, "Death and the State of the Soul after Death," in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (New York, 1962), p. 271.
9. Robert A. Morey (note 5), p. 73.
10. William G. T. Shedd, *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment* (New York 1886), p. 23. See also, Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1953), p. 685; Jon E. Braun, *Whatever Happened to Hell?* (Nashville, 1979), pp. 130-142.
11. John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, 1989), p. 61.
12. Theodore H. Gaster, "Abode of the Dead," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, 1962), p. 788.
13. Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its life and Culture* (Atlanta, 1991), Vol. 1, p. 462.
14. Ralph Walter Doermann, "Sheol in the Old Testament," (Ph. D., dissertation, Duke University, 1961), p. 191.
15. Theodore H. Gaster (note 12), p. 787.
16. Ralph Walter Doermann (note 14), p. 37.
17. See also Ps 30:3; Prov 1:12; Is 14:15; 38:18; Ez 31:16.
18. In Numbers 16:33 it is used of the rebels who "perished in Sheol."
19. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 96.
20. Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London, 1974), p. 103.
21. N. H. Snaith, "Life after Death," *Interpretation* 1 (1947), p. 322.
22. Robert A. Morey (note 5), p. 79.
23. Robert A. Peterson, *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment* (Phillipsburgh, New Jersey, 1995), p. 28.
24. Job 26:5; Ps 88:10; Prov 2:18; 9:18; 21:16; Is 14:9; 26:14, 19.
25. Robert A. Morey (note 5), p. 78.
26. Paul Haupt, "Assyrian *Rabu*, 'To Sink'—Hebrew *rapha*," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* 33 (1916-1917), p. 48.
27. Johannes Pedersen (note 13), p. 180.
28. John W. Cooper (note 11), pp. 71-72.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Basil F. C. Atkinson, *Life and Immortality: An Examination of the Nature and Meaning of Life and Death as They Are Revealed in the Scriptures* (Taunton, England, n.d.), pp. 41-42.
31. John W. Cooper (note 11), pp. 65-66.
32. Robert A. Morey (note 5), p. 49.
33. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids, 1972), p. 63. Anthony A. Hoekema points out that the English translation of the sentence found on page 63 of *The Return of Christ* does not accurately reproduce the Dutch word *fluistering* (whispering), by rendering it as "proclamation:" "Who would pretend to be able to add anything to the proclamation of the New Testament?" (Anthony A. Hoekema [note 19], p. 94).
34. Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes. A Biblical and Historical Study of the Final Punishment* (Houston, 1989), p. 205.
35. For an informative discussion of the adoption of the Greek conception of *hades* during the intertestamental period, see Joachim Jeremias, "Hades," *Theological*

- Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, 1974), Vol. 1, pp. 147-148.
36. Matt 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; Rev 1:18, 6:8; 20:13; 20:14.
 37. 1 Cor 15:55.
 38. Matt 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12: 5; Jam 3:6.
 39. Karel Hanhart essentially reaches the same conclusion in her doctoral dissertation presented at the University of Amsterdam. She wrote: "We conclude that these passages do not shed any definite light on our problem [of the intermediate state]. In the sense of power of death, deepest realm, place for utter humiliation and judgment, the term Hades does not go beyond the Old Testament meaning of Sheol" (Karel Hanhart, "The Intermediate State in the New Testament," [Doctoral dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1966], p. 35).
 40. Robert A. Peterson (note 23), p. 67.
 41. Josephus, *Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades*, in *Josephus Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, 1974), p. 637.
 42. Ibid.
 43. Ibid.
 44. Ibid.
 45. Ibid.
 46. For a brief survey of the intertestamental Jewish literature on the condition of the dead in *hades*, see Karel Hanhart (note 39), pp. 18-31.
 47. John W. Cooper (note 11), p. 139.
 48. Ibid.
 49. Ibid.
 50. Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, 1983), p. 611.
 51. Robert A. Morey (note 5), pp. 211-212.
 52. Helmut Thielicke, *Living with Death*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, 1983), p. 177.
 53. Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human* (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 117.
 54. Emphasis supplied.
 55. Basil F. C. Atkinson (note 30), p. 67.
 56. G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, 1962), p. 265.
 57. Karel Hanhart (note 39), p. 184.
 58. See, for example, G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids, 1972), pp. 55-59; John Calvin, *Second Epistle of Paul, the Apostle to the Corinthians*, *ad loc.*; R. V. G.; R. v. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, *ad loc.*; for an extensive bibliography see Karel Hanhart (note 39), pp. 150-155.
 59. Robert A. Morey (note 5), p. 210.
 60. Ibid.
 61. See C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (New York, 1954), pp. 191-195; Philo speaks of man's longing for the state of the naked soul in *Legum Allegoriae* 2, 57, 59.
 62. For an impressive list of scholars who hold such a view, see Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (London, 1986), p. 255 n. 2.
 63. See, F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, 1977), p. 310.
 64. See for example, James Denney, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York, 1903), *ad loc.*; Floyd V. Filson, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York, 1952), Vol. 10, *ad loc.*; Philip E. Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, 1976), *ad loc.*; Basil F. C. Atkinson (note 30), pp. 64-65; *The Seventh-day Adventist Commentary* (Washington, D C, 1957), Vol. 6, pp.861-863.
 65. Karel Hanhart (note 39), p. 156.
 66. Emphasis supplied.
 67. Robert A. Peterson (note 23), p. 185.
 68. Robert A. Morey (note 5), p. 214.
 69. George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 103.

70. For example, Anthony A. Hoekema writes: "The white robes and the resting suggest that they are enjoying a provisional kind of blessedness which looks forward to the final resurrection" (note 19, p. 235). See also Murray J. Harris, (note 62), p. 138; G. B. A. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York, 1966), p. 86; R. H. Preston and A. T. Hanson, *The Revelation of Saint John the Divine* (London, 1949), p. 81.
71. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, 1977), p. 160.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the month of November and December 2003. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars. Thank you for informing your friends about the time and place of the seminars.

DECEMBER 30 TO NOVEMBER 3: SWEDEN

Location: On Friday evening October 30, I will speak at the Ekebyholm SDA Church. On Sabbath morning and afternoon at the Stockholm Central SDA church. On Sunday afternoon, November 2, at 2:00 p. m. at the Helsingborg SDA Church. In the evening of the same day at 7:00 p. m. at the Nicolai gymnasium in Helsingborg. On Monday at 3:00 p. m and 7:00 p. m. at Halmstad.

For detailed information about the address of each location, call Pastor Lars-Gustaf Larsson at 46 33 10 37 73 or 46 33 12 91 02.

NOVEMBER 6-8: NORWAY

Location: On Thursday, November 6, I will speak at the Norwegian Tyrifjord school. On Friday and Saturday, November 7-8, I will speak a rally of several local churches to be held at the Moss SDA Church, located at Helgeradgt 55, 1515 Moss, Norway.

For detailed information, call Pastor Odd-Henrick Olsen at 69 25 82 68.

NOVEMBER 14-15: MONTREAL: WESTMONT SDA CHURCH

Location: 571 Victoria Avenue, Montreal, QC H3Y 2R7, Quebec. This will be a major rally that will bring together both the English and French speaking churches.

For information, call Pastor Emile Maxi at 450 926 8639 or 450 651 5222

NOVEMBER 21-23: SINGAPORE: MARANATHA SDA CHURCH

Location: 730 Dunman Road, Singapore 439237

For information call Eddie Ko at 63 46 47 97 or 96 92 80 42

DECEMBER 5-6: FREDERICK SDA CHURCH, MD

Location: 6437 Jefferson Pike, Frederick, MD 21703.

For information call Pastor John appell at 301-662-5254 or 301-662-5254.

DECEMBER 12-13: BROCKTON PORTUGUESE SDA CHURCH

Location: 65 West Elm Street, Brockton, MA 02403

For information call Pastor Marcos Costa at 508-238-5826 or 508-345-5052

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HITACHI saw the light and they decided to authorize me to offer their projectors to our Adventist institutions directly through one of their major North America Distribution Center. The special price is over 65% discount on the factory suggested retail price. You can read below the list of their projectors together with the special price. This means that your church can purchase any of the dozen models of HITACHI projectors ranging from 1200 to 4500 lumens at an incredible low price.

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CP-X385W	XGA	2200 Lumens	7 lbs	\$7,995	\$2700.00
CP-X430W	XGA	2500 Lumens	9.9 lbs	\$8,995	\$3200.00
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