

" The Ultimate Hope: The Resurrection"

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The year 2002 will go down in the annals of history as a most turbulent year. September 11 set in motion a chain of events that have affected our lives in unimaginable ways. Gone are the days when America was known as a country of peace, prosperity, economic stability, and personal freedom.

During this past year millions of people in America and other countries have lost most of their savings because of the collapse of major corporations and the sharp decline of the stock market. Personal freedoms are eroding as the concern for national security gives greater power to newly established security forces to investigate the private life of people. The economy of many countries is suffering, international tensions prevail, justice, decency, respect for life, and basic moral values are flaunted in our face and our TV screens.

The year 2002 will be remembered as the year when the "War on Terrorism" has captured the daily news, causing a paralyzing fear. In America a most popular TV news channel, known as "FOX NEWS" reports on the "WAR ON TERRORISM" practically 24 hours a day. The possibility that nations like North Korea, Iran, and Iraq might supply to terrorists and/or unleash themselves weapons of mass destruction, is frightening many Western nations. It is becoming increasingly evident that America and few Allied countries cannot police the world, eradicating terrorism and the weapons of mass destruction.

Besides the man-made conflicts, we are witnessing an alarming increase of natural disasters. While I was in Australia few weeks ago I was made aware of the unprecedented drought that is wiping out their crops and cattle. The devastation in many parts of the world caused by AIDS, floods, tornadoes, drought, earthquakes and famines, tells us that live today in a troubled world where the endtime scenario predicted by Jesus is finding an unprecedented fulfillment.

Jesus said: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven . . . and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Luke 21:10, 11, 25,26).

Jesus' Endtime scenario is a fitting description of our times. But at the threshold of the new year 2003, we cannot allow the troubles and calamities we have witnessed this past year, to obscure our vision of the glorious destiny that lies ahead for us. After all we are pilgrims journeying to the Promise Land. Jesus reminds us that "when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28). May this reassuring promise sustain us during the coming year and motivate us to live "sober, upright, and godly lives" while awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

A NOTE OF THANKS

I would be amiss if I failed to thank God and the countless number of fellow believers who have encouraged me during this past year. First, I wish to thank God for granting me life, health, strength, travelling mercy, wisdom, and grace to minister to thousands of people across the USA and overseas. This has been the most intense year of my itinerant ministry, having conducted seminars practically every weekend. I want to thank God for enabling me to minister to the spiritual needs of fellow-believers in many parts of the world.

Second, I would like to express my gratitude to the thousand of Adventists who have taken time to email me messages of encouragement. Your messages, which most often I have shared with my wife, Anna, have meant a lot to us. They have helped us to be more forgiving toward those who email us "hate messages" because they do not agree with the findings of my research. Your encouraging messages motivate me to continue my ministry of biblical research and proclamation of the message God has entrusted to us.

The controversy generated my recent newsletters where I proposed to expand the prophetic role of the Antichrist by including anti-god powers such as Islam, have taught me an important lesson. It is unwise to discuss fresh prophetic interpretations in a public forum like this newsletter that reaches over 20,000 readers. While the majority welcome new research that challenges their thinking, there is a concerned minority that feel threatened by any new interpretation that differs from traditional positions.

For the sake of peace I have asked God to give me the wisdom to avoid posting in the future Bible studies that may cause controversy among some of our concerned fellow-believers. Furthermore, I have decided to suspend the study of the 1260 days time prophecy until the General Conference appoints a Commission to undertake such a project. At that time, if requested, I will resume my investigation and submit my findings to the duly appointed commission.

CHINESE TRANSLATION OF *WOMEN IN THE CHURCH*

What a surprise to receive by airmail five copies of the Chinese edition of my book *WOMEN IN THE CHURCH!* What is more surprising is that both the translation and publication of the book were sponsored by the CHINA LUTHERAN SEMINARY located in Taiwan. I am told that this is the main seminary that prepares Lutheran ministers to serve the vast continent of China.

About a year ago Armin Buchholz, Ph. D., a professor at the CHINA LUTHERAN SEMINARY, contacted me to request permission to translate and publish in Chinese *WOMEN IN THE CHURCH*. He informed me that the book would be used for the training of Chinese Lutheran seminarians. I was glad to grant him permission to translate and publish the book.

Frankly I did not anticipate to see such a beautiful Chinese edition of my book, with the title and my picture embossed in a lamination process which I have never seen before. Prof. Buchholz, who supervised the project, wrote an additional FOREWORD to the book. In his letter he says: "I recommended the reading of your book to every Christian who is concerned about Christ's church and related issues. . . I really want to thank you very much for your willingness to support us in our efforts to provide a more balanced study to our Chinese brothers and sisters by publishing your helpful book. May the Lord use this book and make it a blessing for everyone who reads it."

Our Chinese subscribers who wish to order a copy of this book, may wish to contact Prof. Armin Buchholz by email at <hsinshen@ms1.hinet.net> or by calling him directly at 03-5710023.

The Lord has already used *WOMEN IN THE CHURCH* in a providential way. Numerous seminaries, especially Baptist, have been using the book for their classes. Somebody told me that the book has played a significant role in influencing the Southern Baptist Church to reverse their decision on women ordination few years ago.

It is gratifying to see how the research of Adventist scholars can influence the thinking of the Christian community at large. It is this conviction that has motivated me through the years to write books on several of our fundamental Adventist beliefs. It is also because of this conviction that I was planning to reexamine the 1260 days prophecy—a project which I have suspended for the time being to avoid further conflicts. Over the years I have seen the impact of sound Adventist scholarship in the thinking of Christian community at large.

My heart rejoiced when I read the scholarly symposium *FROM SABBATH TO THE LORD'S DAY* produced by seven British-American scholars who worked together at Cambridge University in England. This symposium, which is largely a response to my dissertation *FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY*, is by far the most scholarly defense of Sunday observance ever published.

Though the authors take issue with my book in several places, they give credit to my research for concluding that "first-day Sabbath observance cannot easily be understood as a phenomenon of the apostolic age or of apostolic authority at all" (pp. 135-136). The statement is footnoted with a reference to my book *FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY* pp. 153-156. Several of the contributors wrote to me, saying that my research convinced them of the post-apostolic origin of Sunday worship and consequently caused them to rewrite their chapters.

My appeal to our Adventist church is to strive to be biblically correct, even if it means modifying some traditional interpretations by making them more consonant to Scripture and history. Our commitment to truth will enhance the credibility and convicting power of our message.

SABBATH SEMINAR ON RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TV

Pastor William Warcholic of the Johnston SDA Church in Rhode Island, surprised me when he called to apologize for airing without permission the video version of my Sabbath Seminar on the public cable TV channel that reaches the whole of Rhode Island. I reassured Pastor William that there was no need to ask permission, because the video and DVD recordings of my Sabbath Seminar, are intended to be used to present the Sabbath message through every possible media.

When Pastor William found me supportive of his endeavors, he hasten to ask me if I would be willing to come in person to Providence, RI, to present live my SABBATH SEMINAR live on January 3-4, 2003, that is, after the broadcasting of the last lecture. Obviously, I was delighted to accept the invitation, especially in view of the interest generated by the TV airing of the seminar.

Pastor William informed me that a man, about 35 years of age, who viewed on TV the first lecture of the Sabbath Seminar, was so impressed that called to receive Bible studies. A Bible worker has instructed him during the past few weeks. Surprisingly this man has requested to be baptized in occasion of my visit on January 4, 2003, at the Johnston SDA Church, located at 2663 Hartford Avenue, Johnston, RI 02919.

If you live within driving distance from the Johnston SDA church, you are welcomed to join us for a blessed Sabbath celebration. We expect a good attendance, since five Adventist church are participating in this rally. Our Seventh-day Baptist friends in Rhode Island, are also be invited. It might be of interest to our readers to know that Rhode Island is the birthplace of the Seventh-day Baptist Church, since their first church was established there in 1671. Several years ago they invited me to speak at their Eastern Seventh-day Baptist General Conference Session held in Rhode Island. For information about the location of the Johnston SDA church and the time of the meetings on January 3-4, 2003, feel free to call Pastor William Warcholik at (401) 559-4899.

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 January 2003
- 2) Information on how your church can invite me next year to present the popular PowerPoint Seminars on the SABBATH, SECOND ADVENT, and CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE.
- 3) A special offer on my books, audio cassettes, videos, DVDs, and CD-Roms
- 4) Information on how your church can purchase one of the best LCD VIDEO PROJECTOR on the market (HITACHI 370, 2200 lumens) at a substantially reduced price through an Adventist dealer in Dallas, Texas.

“THE ULTIMATE HOPE: THE RESURRECTION”
Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

The inspiration for this newsletter came from the invitation I received to teach our Sabbath School Lesson for December 21-27, 2003. The lesson is entitled “Ultimate Things,” and deals primarily with the ultimate hope of the resurrection. For many years I have enjoyed teaching the Sabbath School Class located in the balcony of Pioneer Memorial Church at Andrews University. When the SS teacher learned that I was going to be home on the Sabbath of December 27, 2002, he extended me the invitation to teach the lesson.

I gladly accepted the invitation because the lesson focuses on the ultimate hope of the resurrection. This topic is of great interest to me because I have written a book on *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* I look forward to share the highlights of this research with my Sabbath School class this coming Sabbath. If you live in the Berrien Springs area, you are welcomed to join us for the discussion of this most timely topic. If you cannot join in the class, please join us in reading this Bible study.

WIDESPREAD DECEPTION OF CONSCIOUS LIFE AFTER DEATH

What inspired me to write the book *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is the widespread belief in conscious existence after death. This deception is taking today America by storm. Ellen White predicted this development a century ago, saying: “Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions” (*Great Controversy*, p. 588).

The fulfillment of this prediction is self-evident today. According to a recent Gallup Poll, 71 per cent of Americans believe in conscious afterlife. The widespread acceptance of this belief can be attributed to several factors, such as the polished image of mediums and psychics, the sophisticated “scientific” research into near-death experiences, and the popular New Age channeling with the alleged spirits of the past. The latter is successfully promoted by people like actress Shirley Maclaine. The outcome is that the vast majority of people have come to believe Satan’s lie that no matter what they do, they “shall not die” (Gen 3:4) but become like gods by living for ever.

This widespread deception is of major concern to Bible believing Christians because it has fostered a host of heresies. For example, spiritualism, the communication with the spirits of the dead, the praying for the dead in purgatory, eternal hellfire, the intercession of the saints, the worship of Mary, indulgences, the mortification of the body to save the soul, the ethereal view of heaven where glorified souls spend eternity in everlasting adoration, are but a few of the many popular heresies that stem from the unbiblical belief in the immortality of the soul. I plan to examine these heresies in my forthcoming book *POPULAR HERESIES*.

To meet the challenge of the belief in the immortality of the soul, I devote a full year to a painstaking investigation of the Biblical teaching on human nature and destiny. My goal in writing *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* has been not only to unmask with compelling Biblical reasoning the oldest and widespread deception of innate immortality, but also to challenge Christians of all persuasions to recover the Biblical wholistic view of human nature and destiny.

The Bible teaches that the body and soul, the flesh and spirit, are not detachable components that come apart at death. Instead they are an indissoluble unity, created, redeemed, and ultimately restored by God. The book will help you to understand how the Biblical wholistic view of human nature, affects our wholistic understanding of this present life and the realistic vision of the world to come.

Favorable Reviews

About 100 seminary professors and 50 religious magazines (including *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*) have requested review copies of the book. You can read a sampling of their comments received at the end of this newsletter. Some students from FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY contacted me because because their Professor of Theology, Ray Anderson, Ph. D., highly recommended the book to the class.

This is what Prof. Anderson had to say about the book: "*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a ground-breaking work based on solid biblical exegesis, calling into question the traditional belief in the immortality of the human soul and the doctrine of unending eternal torment for the wicked. I want all of my students to be aware of this timely study." Prof. Anderson invited me to serve as an external examiner for a doctoral dissertation dealing with the biblical view of human nature.

On a similar vein, Prof. Clark Pinnock, a highly respected theologian who recently served as President of the Evangelical Theological Society, wrote a most complimentary foreword to the book, praising it as a "decisive study" which is "much needed to combat the persistent but mistaken opinion that the soul is an immortal substance."

Pinnock represents the increasing number of leading evangelical scholars, like John R. W. Stott, who are abandoning the classical, dualistic view of human nature which sees the body as mortal, belonging to the lower world of nature, and the soul as immortal, belonging to the spiritual realm and surviving the death of the body. Instead, they are accepting the Biblical (Adventist) wholistic view of human nature in which the whole person, body and soul, experiences death and resurrection.

A Unique Window of Opportunity

The recent massive attacks by leading scholars against the popular heresy of the immortality of the soul, affords our Adventist church a unique window of opportunity to proclaim more fully the Biblical wholistic view of human nature and of conditional immortality. It is unfortunate that our church has not capitalized on this opportunity by publishing studies that challenge the widespread deception of conscious life after death. There is an urgent need for both scholarly and popular publications designed to expose the many facets of this widespread deception.

You will find that *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* offers a powerful study to help our Adventist church to meet what Ellen White rightly calls one of the greatest deceptions of our times. This newsletter is largely excerpted from chapter 7 of *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* If this Bible study opens your mind to the deeper understanding of the biblical concept of the resurrection of the body, feel free to order your copy of this timely book. Your Sabbath School class can join together and order a case of 30 copies of this timely book for personal study or for sharing with your local ministers. Your special offer for a case of 30 copies is only \$7.00 per copy, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$20.00. To place an order, feel free to call us at (269) 471-2915.

HUMAN ASCENSION VERSUS DIVINE DESCENT

Salvation in the Bible is the result of *divine descent*, not of *human ascension*. While in pagan religions, salvation was often conceived of as a *human ascension* toward God, in Biblical faith, salvation is realized through a *divine descent* toward mankind. In other words, the Christian hope rests not on an inherent capacity of disembodied souls to *go up* to God but on God's revelation of His willingness to *come down* to our planet to restore our world to its original perfection. In some ways, the Bible is the *Advent Story*, the story of God who *came down* to create, to redeem, and ultimately to restore the human and subhuman creation. Christ's glorious return represents the consummation of the Christian Hope.

The belief in immediate transit of individual souls after death to a state of perfect blessedness (*heaven*), or to a state of continuous punishment (*hell*), or to an intermediate state of purification (*purgatory*) has greatly weakened the expectation of Christ's Coming. It is not difficult to see how such a belief can obscure and eclipse the expectation of the Second Advent.

If at death the soul of the believer immediately goes up to heaven to meet the Lord and enjoys perfect blessedness and communion with God, there hardly can be any real sense of expectation for the Coming of the Lord to resurrect the sleeping saints. At best, the Parousia may be regarded as an intensification of heavenly bliss for the saved and hellish pain for the unsaved, by granting a material body to disembodied souls already in their final destinies.

Meeting Christ at Death

In his book *Christ Among Us*, a best-seller presentation of the Catholic faith, Anthony Wilhelm devotes no chapter to the Second Advent. Why? Simply because he expounds the Catholic faith according to which the souls of the saved already meet Christ at death. He writes: "It is Christ whom we encounter after death face to face, in the clearest, most intimate way possible. He whom we have been reaching for in our prayers, whom we have dimly encountered in the sacraments, is now before us in the overwhelming fullness of His light and love and power."¹

What this means is that for the believer, the climactic moment is death and not the Second Advent. Wilhelm states this point unequivocally: "Death is the climactic experience of our life. It is more than just a moment of time; it is an experience. We awaken to full consciousness and full freedom, and encounter God himself. All our life has been lived for just this."²

This doctrine openly contradicts the teaching of the Bible according to which the Christian hope finds its fulfillment in meeting Christ at His glorious coming and not at death. Death is never presented in the Bible as "the climactic experience of our life." It is not surprising that for Catholics and many Protestants the Second Advent is no longer really necessary, because they believe in meeting Christ at death as disembodied souls. Oscar Cullmann finds an example of this development in the "decision of the Congregation of the Holy Office [July 29, 1944], according to which faith in the visible return of Christ no longer is regarded as obligatory (it can 'not be taught as certain')."³

Besides being foreign to the Scripture, this teaching encourages Christians to strive for individual and immediate blessedness after death and, consequently, pushes into the background the hope for a universal, cosmic, and corporate redemption to be realized at and through the Coming of the Lord. The ultimate result of this belief, as noted by Abraham Kuyper, is that "by far the majority of Christians do not think much beyond their own death."⁴

The primary concern of those who believe in the survival of their souls after death is to reach paradise immediately, though in a disembodied, psychical form. This concern barely leaves any time or interest for the Coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the body.

Immortality or Resurrection?

The individualistic hope for immediate immortality overrides the Biblical corporate hope for an ultimate restoration of this creation and its creatures (Rom 8:19-23; 1 Cor 15:24-28). When the only future that really counts is individual survival after death, the anguish of mankind can have only a peripheral interest, and the value of God's redemption for this whole world is largely ignored.

The concept of the disembodied survival of the soul after death is rooted in Greek philosophy. For the Greeks the resurrection of the body was unthinkable, because the body, being matter, was of lower value than the soul and was not worthy of survival. In Biblical thought, however, the body is not a tomb for the soul, but a temple for God's Spirit and, thus, is worthy of creation and resurrection.

"From the Greek concept of death," writes Oscar Cullmann, "one could come only to the doctrine of the 'immortality of the soul.' Resurrection faith, on the contrary, is only possible on Biblical grounds, where . . . death and continued life after death do not constitute an organic natural process; rather, mighty powers stand here in conflict. When in the Bible life comes out of death, a miracle is necessary. . . . The resurrection hope presupposes the faith in creation. Because God is the creator also of the body, therefore, in the Bible 'resurrection,' in opposition to Hellenism, must be the resurrection of the body."⁵

To believe in the immortality of the soul means to believe that at least part of oneself is immortal in the sense of being incapable of passing out of existence. Such a belief encourages confidence in oneself and in the possibility of one's soul going up to the Lord. On the other hand, to believe in the resurrection of the body means to believe not in ourselves or in our disembodied souls going to the Lord, but rather in Christ, who will come to raise the dead and transform the living. The Parousia stresses a final consummation realized by a movement of Christ's *coming down* to mankind rather than individual souls *going up* to Him.

The Christian Hope is not "a pie in the sky when you die" but a real meeting upon this earth between embodied believers and the embodied Christ on the glorious day of His Parousia. Out of that real meeting will come a transformation affecting humanity and nature. The dualistic view of human nature obscures and erases this great expectation by teaching, instead, that the soul meets Christ in the beatitude of paradise immediately after death. The only safeguard against this popular, deceptive teaching is through a clear understanding of the Biblical teaching on human nature and destiny.

Gathering of the Redeemed

On repeated occasions during His ministry, Christ announced that the primary purpose of His Return would be to gather all His redeemed children to Himself (Matt 24:31; 25:32-34), so that, as Jesus said, "where I am you may be also" (John 14:3). The fact that Christ cares so much for our company as to desire to return should make our hearts leap with joy at the thought of being with Him. Christ's Return is so intimately connected with the gathering of the redeemed that Paul can speak in one breath of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him" (2 Thess 2:1, NIV).

It is impossible to imagine what a grand gathering it will be, when the redeemed of all the ages will be assembled together around the Savior. As Christ sent forth His followers to witness "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8), so He will send forth His angels to "gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven" (Mark 13:27). No believer will be left out. At the visit of a Head of State, only a few persons can be part of the welcoming party. At the coming of Christ, every believer who ever lived, whether young or old, educated or uneducated, rich or poor, black or white will participate in the grand Advent celebration.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BELIEVERS

The universal gathering of all believers will be made possible at Christ's Return by two major events: the resurrection of the sleeping saints and the transformation of the living saints. The latter is generally known as "translation." Such usage is not quite correct, since both the sleeping and the living saints will be translated, that is, transferred from this earth to heaven. Nevertheless, we use the term "translation" according to the accepted theological usage, as designating the transformation of the living saints.

The resurrection and translation of all the believers are clearly placed in the Scripture at the time of Christ's Return, sometimes called "the last day" (John 6:39-40, 44, 54). Paul explains that "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor 15:22-23; cf. Phil 3:20-21; 1 Thess 4:16).

Paul clearly explains that both the resurrection of all the sleeping saints and the translation of all living believers will take place at the same time in conjunction with Christ's Coming: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; 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 4:16-17).

One Resurrection. Some dispensationalists interpret the phrase "the dead in Christ will rise *first*" as meaning that *first* there will be a resurrection of New Testament believers who will be raptured away secretly before the final seven-year Tribulation and *then*, after the Tribulation, there will be a resurrection of the Old Testament believers, of the tribulation saints, and of the unbelievers.⁶

This interpretation clearly misinterprets the Pauline passage. Even a cursory reading of this passage reveals that Paul is not contrasting the resurrection of Old Testament believers with that of New Testament believers, but rather the resurrection of the dead in Christ with the rapture of living believers. "First" simply means here that the sleeping saints are raised first, that is, before the living saints are caught up to be with the Lord.

The same sequence is suggested by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:52: "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed." Paul's concern in both passages is to reassure his readers that believers who are alive at the time of Christ's Return will have no advantage over those believers who are asleep. The reason is that transformed, living believers "shall be caught up together with them [resurrected saints] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess 4:17). In other words, all believers will be present at the grand Advent gathering, both the resurrected saints of all ages and the transformed living saints.

THE RESURRECTION OF UNBELIEVERS

What about the unbelievers? Will they also be resurrected, and, if so, when? Paul in his epistles makes no reference to the resurrection of the unbelievers, though he is quoted in Acts 24:15 as saying that "there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust." The reason for Paul's silence is simply that the resurrection of unbelievers was not an issue he needed to address in his correspondence. However, the Bible is not silent on this point. The most explicit Old Testament reference to the resurrection of both believers and unbelievers is found in Daniel 12:2: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

In the New Testament, the resurrection of both believers and unbelievers is presupposed in some of the Kingdom parables which speak of a final general separation of the evildoers from the righteous (Matt 13:41-43, 49-50; 25:31-46). The most explicit statement is found in the Gospel of John, where Jesus says: "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:28-29, NIV).

All three cited texts (Acts 24:15; Dan 12:2; John 5:28-29) seem to suggest that the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous will take place contemporaneously. However, Revelation 20 suggests that there will be two separate resurrections. The resurrection of the believers occurs first, at the victorious Second Coming of Christ, and

results in life: “Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev 20:6). The second resurrection, that of the unbelievers, takes place at the end of the millennium and results in condemnation and the second death: “If any one’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. . . .This is the second death” (Rev 20:14-15).⁷

Fact More Important Than Phases

To a critical modern reader, an open contradiction appears between those passages which speak of one general resurrection of believers and unbelievers and the reference in Revelation to two resurrections, separated by one thousand years. This apparent contradiction did not disturb Bible writers, because for them the *reality* of the resurrection was more important than its *modality*. This is why most of the references to the resurrection mention its *fact* rather than its *phases*.

The same principle applies to the final judgment, where most of the Biblical references emphasize its reality and finality rather than its phases. Yet there are Biblical passages which implicitly suggest a Pre-Advent and a Post-Advent phase of the final judgment.

In light of these facts, the Seventh-day Adventist Church accepts as real the distinction found in Revelation 20 between the resurrection of believers at the beginning of the millennium and that of unbelievers at the end of the millennium. A word of caution is in order here because the distinction between the two resurrections rests solely on this one passage of the Bible. One isolated passage hardly provides a solid Biblical basis for constructing a strong doctrine. Adventists recognize the silence of Scripture regarding the nature of the resurrection of the wicked and their mode of existence before their final destruction. Thus, there is no virtue in speculating regarding what is not revealed in Scripture.

Two Distinct Resurrections.

The belief in two distinct resurrections, as held by Seventh-day Adventists, is a rather unique brand of premillennialism. Adventists believe that the resurrection of *all* the righteous dead and the translation of *all* the righteous living takes place contemporaneously at the beginning of the millennium when Christ returns personally, visibly, and gloriously. The wicked living at that time will be destroyed, while those wicked who are dead will remain in their graves until the second resurrection at the end of the millennium.

During the millennium the redeemed will be in heaven, while Satan will be isolated on this earth which remains depopulated. At the close of the millennium, the wicked dead will be resurrected. This event will enable Satan to make one final attempt to gain control of this world as the redeemed descend to this earth. God, however, will execute His judgment upon the wicked by destroying them forever (second death—Rev 20:13-15). Afterwards, God will re-create this earth, and the redeemed will dwell on it securely forever.

When compared with other views, the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation is less confusing and more consistent with Scripture. There are not three or four resurrections, as held by some dispensationalists, but only two: one for the righteous and one for the unrighteous. This means that all the redeemed are resurrected and rewarded at the same time, and similarly, all the wicked are resurrected and punished at the same time.¹¹ There is no confusion as to who lives on earth and who is in heaven during the millennium. There is no division between a millennial Jewish kingdom on this earth and a Christian kingdom in heaven. There is only one Kingdom of God consisting of believers of all ages.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

What kind of body will believers receive at the resurrection or translation? Will the resurrected body be reattached to the souls of those who have died? Will it be a physical or a spiritual body? Will it be similar to or radically different from the present one? How will our personal identity be preserved? Will my father be 83 years old and my mother 85? Before we attempt to answer these questions about the nature of the resurrection body, we must mention briefly the two main objections that have been raised against the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. These stem, on one hand, from philosophical dualism and, on the other hand, from “scientific” materialism.

Objections to the Resurrection of the Body

Greek philosophical dualism viewed material existence as evil and, thus, to be done away with. Salvation was seen as the liberation of the soul from the prison-house of the body. Apparently this dualistic view of human nature influenced some Corinthian Christians to reject the belief in the resurrection of the body. This is indicated by Paul’s question: “How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor 15:12).

“We can only surmise,” writes Anthony Hoekema, “that this was done under the influence of Greek thought, which taught the immortality of the soul but denied the resurrection of the body. Paul replies to this error by indicating that if one believes in the resurrection of Christ, one cannot very well deny the resurrection of believers.”⁸

Philosophical dualism has greatly influenced Christian thought. In early Christianity, the Gnostics denied the resurrection of the body because, as J. N. D. Kelly puts it, “Matter being intrinsically evil, the flesh could not participate in salvation, which must therefore be the prerogative of the soul; and so, if the resurrection is a fact, it must be an exclusively spiritual one, consisting in the illumination of the mind by the truth.”⁹

In our time, dualism has led many Christians to reject the notion of the physical resurrection of the body because it would perpetrate the present material existence which is viewed as evil. Thus, many believe that at the resurrection the redeemed will receive nonphysical, spiritual bodies.

The fallacy of this view is that it is based on the false dualistic assumption that matter is evil and must be destroyed. This view is clearly discredited by Scriptural passages which teach that matter, including the human body, is God’s good creation (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). The Psalmist declares: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139:13-14, NIV). The resurrection body is called “spiritual” by Paul, not because of its supposed non-physical nature, but because it is ruled by the Holy Spirit.

“Scientific” materialism views matter as the only ultimate reality. Since we live in a material body which is viewed as the product of chance rather than of choice, when we die it is the end. Those Christians who are influenced by this view reject any notion of the resurrection of the body. They believe that the only immortality is the influence we have exerted on others and the hereditary characteristics we have transmitted to our posterity.

This view negates not only the teaching of the Bible but also the basic longing of the human heart. In our age of subatomic science, it is not incredible to believe that the same God who brought our world into existence still continues to control its infinitesimal particles. To believe in the resurrection of the body means to believe that God is still in control of all things, including our total being.

The Fact of the Resurrection

The Christian belief in the resurrection of the body did not arise from philosophical speculations or wishful thinking like the notion of the immortality of the soul. It arose from the conviction that such an event had actually already taken place with the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Since the Son of Man is the representative of *all* mankind, what happened to Him is a clue to what is going to happen to every believer. Because Christ rose bodily from the grave, we have every reason to believe that we, too, shall rise in a similar fashion.

Jesus is rightly called “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18) because, as George Eldon Ladd expresses it, “he stands, at the head of a new order of existence—resurrection life.”¹ The fact of Christ’s resurrection has made the believers’ resurrection a certainty because Christ has proved His victory over death. The eschatological character of Jesus’ resurrection is evident in Paul’s statement that His resurrection was “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20).

The expression “first fruits” has little meaning for today’s urban dwellers. In Bible times it had a rich meaning because it referred to the first produce of the harvest, which was offered in sacrifice to God to express gratitude for granting a new harvest. Thus, the first fruits which were brought to the Temple were seen not as mere hope of a new harvest but as its actual beginning. Christ’s resurrection, then, is “the first fruits” in the sense that it has made the resurrection of believers not a mere possibility, but a certainty.

1 Corinthians 15 offers the fullest treatment of the resurrection of the body to be found anywhere in the Bible. Here Paul emphatically explains how much our resurrection depends upon that of Christ. “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Cor 15:14, 17-18). This is an astonishing statement. To deny Christ’s resurrection means to destroy our faith in God and in His promise to raise us at Christ’s return. The reason for this is simple. It is through His resurrection that Christ proved to have vanquished death for all his followers.

Characteristics of the Resurrection Body

What kind of body will Christ give at His return to the sleeping and living saints? We are rather fortunate to have Paul’s discussion of this very question which had been raised by the Corinthians: “But some one will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’ You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body” (1 Cor 15:35-38).

By means of analogy of the seed, Paul explains the continuity and discontinuity that exist between our present physical body and the future resurrection/translation body. The continuity is established by the connection between the seed and the new plant that sprouts out of it. The discontinuity is seen in the difference between the seed that is sown and the new plant that comes from it. What Paul is saying here is that as God gives a body to each kind of seed that is sown, so He will give a body to each person who is buried. The fact that deceased bodies are buried like the seed in the ground may have suggested to Paul the analogy of the seed.

Paul develops further the analogy of sowing and reaping to give the nearest thing to a description of the resurrection body to be found in the Bible: “So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:42-44).

Four Contrasts

In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Paul explains the difference between our present body and the resurrection body by means of four contrasts. These contrasts are equally applicable to the bodies of the living saints who will be transformed and translated at Christ's return without seeing death. First, our present bodies are *perishable (phthora)*—subject to sickness and death—but our resurrection bodies will be *imperishable (aphtharsia)*—no longer liable to sickness and death. Second, our present bodies experience the *dishonor* of being lowered into a grave, but our resurrection bodies will experience the *glory* of an inner and outward transformation.

Third, our present bodies are *weak*, as they easily become tired and exhausted, but our resurrection bodies will be full of *power*, with boundless energy to accomplish all our goals. Fourth, our present bodies are *physical (soma psychikon)*, but our resurrection bodies will be *spiritual (soma pneumatikon)*. This last contrast has led many to believe that our resurrection/translation bodies will be “spiritual” in the sense that they will be devoid of the present physical substance. “Spiritual” is understood as the opposite of physical. Thus the resurrection/translation bodies allegedly consist of a nonphysical, nonmaterial substance, whatever that may be.

A “Spiritual” Resurrected Body

Did Paul believe, and does the Bible teach, that at the Second Advent living and dead believers will receive nonmaterial and nonphysical bodies, totally devoid of physical substance? This is indeed the view of some scholars. They define “spiritual body—*soma pneumatikon*” as meaning “composed of spirit,” as though “spirit were some ethereal, heavenly substance.”¹¹ According to this view, “spirit” would be the substance and “body” would be the form of the resurrection body.

In his book *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament*, Murray Harris defines the spiritual body as follows: “The spiritual body is the organ of the resurrected person’s communication with the heavenly world. It is a somatic form fully responsive to the Christian’s perfected spirit and perfectly adapted to its heavenly environment.”¹²

Harris’ definition of the “spiritual body” as an organ suitable for a “heavenly environment” is largely based on the popular assumption that the redeemed will spend eternity in heaven and not on this earth. Since heaven is supposed to be a “spiritual” place, the redeemed must be fitted with a “spiritual body” suitable for the spiritual environment of heaven.

This popular belief rests on the assumption that God will condemn this earth to eternal desolation and create, instead, a new “heavenly” world for the habitation of the saints. Such an assumption raises serious questions about the wisdom of God in creating this planet to sustain human and subhuman life, only to discover later that it is not the ideal place for the eternal habitation of the redeemed. To remedy the problem, God eventually would create a “heavenly planet” and equip the resurrected saints with a “spiritual bodies” suitable for such a heavenly environment. Such a vision is inspired by Greek dualism rather than by Biblical realism.

It must be admitted that Paul’s language in this passage, if not examined in the larger context of his writings, can lead a reader to a nonmaterial view of the resurrection body. Such a view is discredited first of all by the comparison which Paul himself makes between Christ’s resurrection and that of the believer (Col 1:18; 1 Cor 15:20).

If Christ is the “first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20), then resurrected believers will have bodies similar to that of Christ. The comparison cannot be pressed too far in view of the fact that at His resurrection Christ resumed also those divine qualities which He had temporarily laid aside during His Incarnation (Phil 2:7). Yet the fact remains that Christ’s resurrection body was certainly physical, since He was touched (John 20:17, 27), and He ate food (Luke 24:38-43).

Spirit Led

More telling is Paul’s use of the same two words (physical-*psychikos*/spiritual-*pneumatikos*) in the same epistle: “The *unspiritual* [physical-*psychikos*] man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The *spiritual* [*pneumatikos*] man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one” (1 Cor 2:14-15).

It is obvious that the spiritual man in this passage is not a nonphysical person. Rather, it is someone who is guided by the Holy Spirit, in contradistinction from someone who is guided by natural impulses. Similarly, the present physical body described in 1 Corinthians 15:44 is one which is subject to the law of sin and death, while the future resurrection body is one which will be directed by the Holy Spirit. The resurrection body is called “spiritual” because it is ruled not by carnal impulses but by the Holy Spirit. This is not an anthropological dualism between “physical-*psyche*” and “spiritual-*pneuma*,” but a moral distinction between a life led by the Holy Spirit and one controlled by sinful desires.

Anthony Hoekema clearly brings out this point: “Spiritual (*pneumatikos*) here does not mean nonphysical. Rather, it means someone who is guided by the Holy Spirit, at least in principle, in distinction from someone who is guided only by his natural impulses. In a similar fashion, the natural body described in 1 Corinthians 15:44 is one which is part of this present, sin-cursed existence; but the spiritual body of the resurrection is one which will be totally, not just partially, dominated and directed by the Holy Spirit.”¹³

This insight helps us also to understand Paul’s statement a few verses later: “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Cor 15:50). It is evident here Paul is not saying that the resurrection body will be nonphysical, because, writing to the Romans, he says: “But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you” (Rom 8:9).

By the phrase “not in the flesh” Paul obviously did not mean that Christians who were led by the Holy Spirit already had discarded their physical bodies. Rather, he means that already in the present life they were guided by spiritual and not worldly values (Rom 8:4-8). If Paul could speak of Christians as not being “in the flesh,” already in the present life, his reference to the absence of “flesh and blood” in the Kingdom of God cannot mean the absence of physical bodies. It simply means the absence of the natural, carnal limitations and sinful inclinations of the present life because the redeemed will be led fully by the Spirit.

Physical Body Is Not Evil

If God at the Second Advent were to change our present physical bodies into bodies consisting of nonphysical and nonmaterial substance, then, as Anthony A. Hoekema perceptively points out, “the devil would have won a great victory since God would then have been compelled to change human beings with physical bodies such as he had created into creatures of a different sort, without physical bodies (like the angels). Then it would indeed seem that matter had become intrinsically evil so that it had to be banished. And then, in a sense, the Greek philosophers would have been proved right. But matter is not evil; it is part of God’s good creation.”¹⁴

In the creation story, God seven times expresses His satisfaction over the perfection of His material creation by saying "it was good" (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Then on the seventh day He rested to celebrate the completion of His perfect creation (Gen 2:1-3). To celebrate the good news of His perfect creation, complete redemption, and final restoration of this world, God gave the Sabbath to the human family (Ex 20:11; Deut 5:15; Luke 4:16-21; 13:10-13; Heb 4:9). As a Seventh-day Sabbathkeeper who celebrates these marvelous glad tidings on and through the Sabbath, I find it impossible to conceive that ultimately God will change the structure and composition of the human body.

If the resurrection/translation body were to be radically different from the original creation body, then God would be admitting that His original design of the human body had some flaws; it was not really perfect, after all. He would be admitting that His original model of male and female physical beings did not adequately reflect "his [God's] own image" (Gen 1:27). To remedy the problem, God would then be compelled to create a new type of human beings, presumably "unisex," so they would not get into trouble anymore. This reasoning is absurd, to say the least, for anyone who believes in the omniscience and immutability of God. Changing models and structures is normal for human beings who learn by mistakes, but it would be abnormal and inconsistent for a God who knows the end from the beginning.

Like Angels

Some retort, Did not Jesus say that "in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Matt 22:30)? Does this passage not indicate that at the resurrection all gender distinctions will be abolished and our bodies will no longer be physical? This conclusion cannot be drawn legitimately from Jesus' statement. Here He refers to the angels, not in order to teach the nonphysical nature of the resurrection body or the absence of gender differences in the new world, but simply to explain that the procreational function of marriage will no longer exist, since there will be no need to bring new children into the world.

The reason why the six brothers of the hypothetical situation created by the Sadducees married in succession their brother's widow was to "raise up children for [their] brother" (Matt 22:24). It seems legitimate to assume that in His reply, Jesus refers to the angels to explain that in the new world marriage for the purpose of procreation will no longer exist. It is obvious that if no new children are brought into this world, marrying or giving daughters in marriage is no longer possible.

The termination of the human reproductive capacity could be seen as a change in God's original design of the physiological human structure. This is not necessarily true. The Scripture suggests that God had already contemplated such a change in His original plan, when He said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and *fill the earth*" (Gen 1:28). By this statement, presumably God meant that the process of reproduction and multiplication of human beings would have continued *until the earth was filled* with an adequate number of people for this planet to support.

In a perfect world, without the presence of death, the optimum balance between people and land would have been reached much sooner than after the entrance of sin and death. It is feasible to assume that the resurrected and translated saints constitute the fulfillment of God's original plan for the "filling of the earth" since they represent the optimum number of inhabitants this renewed earth can support adequately. In that case, God will carry out His original plan to terminate the human reproductive cycle in order to prevent the disruption of the ecological balance of this planet once it is restored to its original perfection.

This conclusion is also supported by the references to *names* "written before the foundation of the world in the book of life" (Rev 13:8; cf. 17:8, 21:27; Dan 12:1; Phil 4:3). Such names suggest an original divine plan for an optimum number of righteous people to inhabit this earth. It also suggests that once this optimum number has been reached,

Christ will come to gather the righteous, as well as to cleanse and restore this earth to its original perfection. In the new earth, God will terminate the human reproductive cycle since the earth will already be filled by an ideal number of people. The termination of the procreative function of marriage does not necessitate the termination of the relational function of marriage.

Permanence of Relationships

Nowhere does the Scripture suggest that the angels are “unisex” beings who are unable to enter into some type of relationship comparable to the one to be found in marriage. It is noteworthy that God has revealed Himself as a triune Being, consisting of three Persons who are so intimately united that we worship Them as one God. If the Godhead lives in a most intimate, eternal fellowship among the three Persons, there is no reason to believe that God will ultimately abolish the intimate marital relationship He Himself established at creation.

Genesis 1:27 suggests that the image of God is found not in the male gender per se, but in the fact that “male and female he created them.” If God’s image was reflected at creation in the combined characteristics of the maleness and femaleness of the first human couple, we have reason to believe that such a combination will be preserved by God at His ultimate recreation.

Simply put, if God declared the gender distinctions of maleness and femaleness “very good” at the beginning, there is no reason to believe that God would find them to be “very bad” at the end. Creation is presented in Scripture as a prototype of the final recreation. The goal of God’s redemption is not the destruction of His first creation but its restoration to its original perfection. This is why the Scripture speaks of the resurrection of the body rather than of the creation of new beings.

The doctrine of first things (etiology) must illuminate the doctrine of last things (eschatology). Surprisingly, many people wrongly assume that there is no correlation between creation and ultimate restoration. The Biblical vision of the original perfect creation provides the basis for envisioning the ultimate restoration of this earth. It is unfortunate that dualists have been so conditioned by the notion that this material world, including our physical body, is evil, that they are seeking for an eternal home *up in heaven* and not *down on this planet earth*.

The Meaning of the Resurrection of the Body

What does “the resurrection of the body” mean? Biblical writers knew as well as we do that it could not possibly mean the rehabilitation of our present physical bodies. First, because many bodies are sick or deformed, and second, because at death they decompose and return to dust: “When thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust” (Ps 104:29; cf. Eccl 3:20; Gen 3:19). In spite of this Biblical witness, many Christians have believed through the centuries in the resurrection of the very same particles composing the dead body. This belief is expressed in the earliest forms of the Apostles’ Creed which states: “I believe in . . . the resurrection of the flesh,” rather than “of the body.”¹⁵

Tertullian (c. 160-c. 225), who is regarded as the Father of Latin Christianity, argues at great length in his treatise *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* that God will resurrect the very “flesh which has been consigned to the ground.” He appeals to Jesus’ words, “the very hairs of our head are all numbered,” to prove that they will all be restored at the resurrection. “If they were to be lost,” Tertullian reasons, “where would be the use of having taken such a numeral care of them?”¹⁶

Body Means Person

This misunderstanding of the meaning of “the resurrection of the body” could have been avoided by recognizing the simple truth that for Biblical writers, the term “body” is simply a synonym for “person.” For example, when Paul writes, “We wait for adoption as

sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23), he simply means the redemption of our total being. This meaning is evident later in the same epistle where Paul makes the appeal “to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). Here the presenting of our “bodies” to God is explicitly defined as the rendering of our “spiritual worship” through our total being.

When Paul speaks of the resurrection of the body, he is clearly thinking of the whole person. As Michael Perry rightly points out, “In Paul’s usage, ‘body’ is not ‘something external’ to a man himself, something he *has*. It is what he *is*. Indeed, *soma* (the Greek word for ‘body’) is the nearest equivalent to our word ‘personality’.”¹⁷ In view of this fact, to believe in the resurrection/translation of the body means to believe that my human self, the human being that “I” am, will be restored to life again. It means that I will not be someone different from whom I am now. I will be exclusively *myself*. In short, it means that God has committed Himself to preserving my individuality, personality, and character.

It is important to note that in this whole chapter Paul speaks about the resurrection of persons. There is no reference to the reattachment of resurrected bodies to spiritual souls. In fact, the “soul–*psyche*” is never mentioned. If the resurrection involved the reattachment of the body to the soul, would it not be very strange for Paul to fail to mention it altogether in his discussion of the nature of the resurrection? After all, such a concept is fundamental for understanding what happens to the body and soul at the resurrection. The absence of any reference to the soul clearly indicates that Paul believed in the resurrection of the whole person, body and soul.

It should be mentioned that in 1 Corinthians 15:44 Paul did use the adjective *psychikon*, which derives from the noun *psyche* [soul] and is generally translated as “natural” or “physical.” But he used it to describe the “physical body–*soma psychikon*” which is buried, not the spiritual soul that allegedly survives the death of the body. This goes to show that for Paul the “soulish–*psychikon*” aspect of the human body is buried at death and awaits the resurrection. In order to take the resurrection seriously, we must also take death seriously. Karl Barth stated a profound truth when he said: “The man who does not know what death is does not know either what resurrection is.”¹⁸

The Identity of the Resurrected Persons

Central to the Biblical promise of the resurrection is that the resurrected persons will be the same individuals as those who existed previously on earth. God is not going to resurrect an indefinite group of look-a-like people, but the very same people who died. This raises the question: How can we account for the preservation of the personal identity between this life and the life to come? What guarantees the continuity of the personal identity of a person from this life to the next?

Dualists claim that they have absolutely no difficulty in guaranteeing the continuity of personal identity, because “the very same person who dies continues without interruption to exist [as a disembodied soul] with Christ until the resurrection body is received.”¹⁹ The nature of the resurrected bodies may be different because each body will be radically transformed, but the personal identity endures, because the soul, which embodies the essential characteristics of each person, survives the death of the body and eventually is reunited to the resurrected body.

Dualists claim that a “fatal flaw” of the wholistic view of human nature is that it cannot guarantee the continuity of personal identity. They say that the wholistic view “cannot show that resurrected persons are the very same persons who lived on earth rather than being mere copies; it cannot preserve the principle of personal identity.”²⁰ This criticism is based on the assumption that since the wholistic view does not allow for any continuity of body or soul between death and resurrection, the resurrected bodies must be “different persons no matter how much they might look or think alike.”²¹

This criticism of the wholistic view is flawed for two major reasons. First, nowhere does the Bible suggest that the personal identity of an individual is preserved after death by the survival of the soul. We have found that in the Bible the “soul” is not an immaterial or rational component of human nature that survives the death of the body. Rather, the soul is the whole physical and spiritual life that is subject to the law of sin and death. Second, the survival of personal identity is not dependent upon the continuity of physical or spiritual substances, but on God’s preservation of the character or personality of each individual.

The Bible reassures us of the preservation of our identity through the suggestive imagery of our “names written in the book of life” (Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12). A name in the Bible stands for character or personality, as indicated by the various names used to portray the character of God. This suggests that God preserves an accurate picture of the character of each person who ever lived on this planet. The record of each life is all inclusive, because Jesus said: “On the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt 12:36-37).

The challenge of our Christian life is to “grow in grace and knowledge” (2 Pet 3:18) in order to develop a character fit for eternity. It is the character or personality that we have developed in this life that God preserves in His memory and will reunite to the resurrected body. This explains the importance of developing a Christian character in this present life, because this will be our personal identity in the world to come. Developing a godly character is the work of a lifetime. It requires the daily surrender of self to the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us that “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Rom 5:3-4).

Each believer develops his or her own unique character as a result of the temptations, struggles, defeats, disappointments, victories, and growth in grace each one experiences. This means that the possibility of “multiple replication” of people at the resurrection, all looking, acting, and thinking alike, is inconceivable. There are no two Christian characters that are the same. Each one of us has a unique character or personality that God preserves and will unite to the resurrected body.

Charles Hartshorne maintains that at death human beings “live on in the complete and infallible memory of God. . . . Death cannot be the destruction, or even the fading of the book of one’s life; it can only mean the fixing of its concluding page. Death writes: ‘The End’ upon the last page, but nothing further happens to the book, by way of either addition or subtraction.”²²

Some Practical Implications

The practical implications of the belief in the resurrection/translation of the whole person are not difficult to see. The fact that at His coming Christ will resurrect believers, restoring to each their distinct personality and character, teaches us, as aptly stated by Ellen G. White, that “the characters formed in this life will determine the future destiny.”²³ This means also, as the same author emphasizes, that “now is the time for all to cultivate the powers that God has given [us], that [we] may form characters for usefulness here and for a higher life hereafter.”²⁴

To believe in the resurrection/translation of the body means also to treat our human body with respect because what we do to it and with it will determine our resurrection identity. The model of the seed and the fruit used by Paul suggests that there is a degree of continuity between our present body and the resurrection body. This continuity condemns the exaggerated asceticism of those who despise their bodies as something earthly to be discarded once they reach the heavenly Canaan. It also condemns the libertinism of those who believe that they can indulge their bodies to the limit, since what happens to their bodies does not affect their souls.

To believe in the resurrection/translation of the body means to believe that we will be able to recognize our loved ones. We shall recognize our resurrected and translated loved ones, though not necessarily because they will look exactly the same as when we last saw them. I was known to my grandmother as the little boy who visited her at her farmhouse. I am known to my wife as the bald man she married 41 years ago with plenty of wavy hair. I am known to my grandchildren as the grandpa who tells stories from the World War II.

At the time of the resurrection/translation, we will recognize our loved ones, not because they will look as young or as old as when we last saw them, but because their unique individuality and personality is providentially preserved and resurrected with a brand-new body by God. When we meet elementary or high-school classmates after 20 or 30 years, most often we have difficulty in recognizing them because their external appearance has changed over the years. Yet, as we talk together, we soon realize that their unique personalities really have not changed. They are still the Mary, the John, or the Bob we knew many years before.

The same principle applies to the recognition of our resurrected loved ones. We shall recognize them in spite of the noticeable improvements in their physical appearance, because God will resurrect their unique individuality and personality. Summing up, we can say that the belief in the resurrection of the body challenges us to take seriously our total being with its mental, physical, and spiritual components, because we are “a temple of the Holy Spirit . . . which [we] have from God” (1 Cor 6:19) and which God will miraculously resurrect at Christ’s return.

ENDNOTES

1. Anthony J. Wilhelm, *Christ among Us. A Modern Presentation of the Catholic Faith* (New York, 1985), p. 417.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 416.
3. Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 147.
4. Cited by G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids, 1972), p. 34. The same view is expressed by Russell Foster Aldwincinckle, *Death in the Secular City* (London, 1972), p. 82.
5. Oscar Cullman (note 3), p. 234.
6. See, for example, J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, 1980), pp. 402-411.
7. Seventh-day Adventists believe that at the Second Advent there will also be a "special resurrection" of certain wicked persons who have fiercely opposed the work of God. This belief rests primarily on Revelation 1:7 which says that even those "who pierced him [Christ]" will witness His glorious Coming (cf. Dan 12:2).
8. Anthony A. Hoekema (note 10), p. 247.
9. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York, 1960), p. 467.
10. George Eldon Ladd, *The Last Things* (Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 79.
11. See, for example, W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York, 1955), pp. 183, 308; R. Kabisch, *Die Eschatologie des Paulus* (Göttingen, 1893), pp. 113, 188, 206, 269; R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London, 1952), Vol. 1, p. 198.
12. Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal. Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (London, 1986), p. 121.
13. Anthony A. Hoekema (note 10), p. 250.
14. *Ibid.*
15. A comparative table listing the various versions of the Apostles' Creed is found in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 181.
16. Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, Chapter 35, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, 1973), vol. 3, p. 571.
17. Michael Perry, *The Resurrection of Man* (Oxford, 1975), p. 119.
18. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York, 1959), p. 154.
19. John W. Cooper, "The Identity of the Resurrected Persons: Fatal Flaw of Monistic Anthropology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 23, no. 1 (April 1988), p. 26.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
22. Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (Lasalle, Illinois, 1962), pp. 177-178.
23. Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, 1954), p. 229.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

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 January 2003. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet our subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars.

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WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO COME TO YOUR CHURCH TO PRESENT MY POPULAR SEMINARS ON THE SABBATH, SECOND ADVENT, AND CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE?

If your church has been thinking of inviting me to present one of my popular PowerPoint Seminars on the SABBATH, SECOND ADVENT or CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE, feel free to contact me at this time by email at <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net> or by phone at (616) 471-2915. The seminar usually consists of three presentations, given on Friday evening, Sabbath morning, and Sabbath afternoon. Currently I am setting up my 2003 calendar of speaking engagements, and I will be glad to reserve a special weekend for a rally in your district.

This past year I have spent over 1000 hours to organize all my seminar lectures with PowerPoint slides. The response has been overwhelming. Every weekend capacity crowds attend the seminars which are designed to enrich the understanding and experience of our message. Feel free to contact me for a date and further information.

IS YOUR CHURCH LOOKING FOR A GOOD VIDEO PROJECTOR AT A SPECIAL PRICE?

If your church is looking for a good LCD video projection at a reasonable price, I would be glad to put you in contact with an Adventist dealer in Texas, who is able to offer your church a new HITACHI CP-S370W video projectors with 2200 lumens at a special price of US\$2700.00, instead of the suggested factory retail price is over \$6,000.00.

I bought one of this projectors myself, after I discovered that it outperformed my new IN-FOCUS projector, which I purchased few months ago. I made this discovery in Gentry, Arkansas, where I was invited to speak. Tim Rosenburg, the church pastor, showed me the HITACHI projector that their church had just bought. In fact they bought four of them, for the youth, elementary school, and academy. We set up both projectors side by side and to my surprise I found that the HITACHI provided a much brighter and sharper picture. Pastor Tim Rosenburg placed me in contact with the Adventist dealer in Texas who buys these projectors from HITACHI for our churches.

If your church is planning to buy a video projector, I would be glad to place you in contact with our Texan brother. Just email to me your name and phone number and I will pass it on to him. He will contact you directly and you can made all the necessary arrangements with him.

I am extremely happy with this new HITACHI projector that I use every weekend. The image is bright and clear, even when some lights are on. It is small, weighs only about 56 pounds and I can put both the projector and the lap top computer in my brief catalogue briefcase, with space left over for my Bible and two books. If your church is looking for a good video project at a reasonable price, you will be very happy this one.

SPECIAL OFFER ON THE NEWLY RECORDED SABBATH SEMINAR

The many messages of appreciation for the newly SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR, have led me to extend the special offer until January 31, 2003. The seminar was recorded last March 15-17, 2002, at the First Fort Worth SDA Church in Texas by the TEXAS MEDIA CENTER. We spent a lot of time and efforts preparing this new recording where I use about 100 PowerPoint slides for each presentation. The response has been very gratifying. Church leaders in different parts of the world are expressing appreciation for the blessings of these timely Sabbath messages. Your personal effort to share them with your congregation is much appreciated.

The new SABBATH SEMINAR consists of a total of 8 one-hour lectures covering the following topics: the gripping story of my search for the Sabbath at a Vatican University in Rome; the discoveries I made in Vatican libraries on how the change came about from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity; practical principles on how to keep the Sabbath to experience Christ's rest and peace in our lives; an update report on the most recent Sabbath/Sunday developments; and a sacred concert with two outstanding tenors entitled THE SABBATH IN SONGS. The concert was recorded in a television studio in South Bend, Indiana.

This new SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR is now available in THREE FORMATS:

- 8 AUDIO cassettes,
- 4 VIDEO tapes,
- 3 DVD disks.

Each of them come in a nice plastic album with an artistically designed jacket. Your special CHRISTMAS OFFER until January 31, 2002, are as follows:

- 1) **SABBATH SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO CASSETTES** at the special offer of only \$30.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. The 8 audio cassettes come in a nice album with an artistically designed color jacket.
- 2) **SABBATH SEMINAR IN 4 VIDEO TAPES** at the special offer of only \$50.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$120.00. The price is the same for both the American and the overseas PAL system. Specify which system you need. The 4 video tapes come in a nice album with an artistically designed color jacket.
- 3) **SABBATH SEMINAR IN DVD DISKS** at the special offer of only \$60.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$120.00. The DVD disks are compatible with all TV systems overseas. No conversion is necessary. The 3 DVD disks come in a nice triple Jewel case with an artistically designed color jacket.

The easiest way to order the new AUDIO cassettes, VIDEO tapes, or DVD disks, is with your credit card. You can order by calling us at (616) 471-2915 or by emailing us your credit card number, expiration date, and your address. If you prefer to pay by check, mail your check to: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

AN INCREDIBLE CHRISTMAS OFFER ON ALL MY PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDINGS

Until January 31,2003, you can order all my books and recordings at special offer of \$250.00, instead of the regular price of \$825.00.

THIS IS THE LIST OF ALL THE ITEMS INCLUDED IN THIS SPECIAL PACKAGE

1. All the 16 BOOKS: regularly retails for \$305.00
2. SABBATH SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO cassettes placed in an artistically designed album: regularly it retails for \$60.00
3. ADVENT SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO cassettes placed in an artistically designed album: : regularly it retails for \$60.00
4. CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE SEMINAR IN 8 AUDIO cassettes placed in an artistically designed album: regularly it retails for \$60.00
5. SABBATH SEMINAR IN 4 VIDEO cassettes or 3 DVD disks: regularly they retail for \$120.00 and \$140.00 respectively. Both of them come in an artistically designed album. You need to choose either the VIDEO or the DVD for the package.
6. TWO CDS: one with all my BOOKS and ARTICLES and the one with all my SEMINARS. The two CDs retail for \$100.00 each.

Your special offer for the complete list of all my books, cassettes, videos or DVDs, and CDs, is ONLY \$280.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$825.00.

You can order this SPECIAL PACKAGE by calling us at (616) 471-2915 or by emailing us your credit card number, expiration date, and your address. If you prefer to pay by check, mail your check to: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

COMMENTS ON DR. BACCHIOCCHI'S IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a much needed book in order to combat the persistent but mistaken opinion that the soul is an immortal substance. I thank the author for this decisive study."

Clark H. Pinnock, Ph. D., Professor of Theology,
McMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a powerful presentation of the Biblical wholistic view of human nature and destiny. The book is convincing, comprehensive, and consistently Biblical."

Jacques Doukhan, D. H. L., Th. D., Professor of Hebrew & OT ,
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* goes directly to the jugular. This detailed study shows that what we are as human beings impacts on our destiny. the study concludes that we are dependent mortal creatures, that death is real and that the divine intervention of resurrection provides our only hope for survival beyond death. One need not agree with every detail in this book, but every well-informed Bible student or teacher does need to read it with an open Bible and an open mind."

Edward William Fudge, Ph. D., Author of
THE FIRE THAT CONSUMES

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a must reading for scholars, educated professionals, and lay people interested in the question of human nature and destiny. I found it most rewarding and timely."

John T. Baldwin, Ph. D., Professor of Theology,
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a groundbreaking work based on solid biblical exegesis, calling into question the traditional belief in the immortality of the human soul and the doctrine of unending eternal torment for the wicked. I want all of my students to be aware of this timely study."

Ray S. Anderson, Ph. D., Professor of Theology and Ministry
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

"I praise God for the clear, persuasive, powerful and Biblical sound treatment of the subject of human nature and destiny found in *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* It is the best book I have seen. I will use this book with every interested person with whom I study God's Word. I am eager to write a recommendation to the local conference presidents and ministerial secretaries within the Pacific Union, urging them to give this book as a gift to every pastor."

Lloyd Wyman, Ministerial Director
PACIFIC UNION CONFERENCE OF SDA

"Few have pursued so rigorously the potential implications of the Biblical holistic understanding of human nature for such matters as the state of the dead and the final state of unbelievers, as Dr. Bacchiocchi has done. The strength of *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* lies in his relentless pursuit of the meaning of the biblical text. Those who consider themselves biblicists cannot simply dismiss his findings out of hand."

William W. Klein, Ph. D., Professor of New Testament
DENVER SEMINARY

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is an admirably clear survey of the Biblical holistic view of human nature that incorporates both body and soul in one unified self. It is based upon sound scholarship. I especially recommend it for students, pastors, and church leaders."

Alan G. Padgett, Ph. D., President of Christian Theological Research Fellowship,
Professor of Theology and Philosophy of Science,
AZUSA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

"IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION? is thorough treatment of the subject and reflects accurate scholarship. The book is much needed today in view of all the misinformation that is sincerely but mistakenly published and preached on this important subject."

Elder Ralph Robertson, Ministerial Secretary,
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE OF SDA

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a most helpful work showing clearly that the notion of an immortal soul it is no part of biblical Christianity and must not be allowed to overshadow the true doctrine of resurrection."

Robert Davis Hughes, III, Ph.D., Professor of Systematic Theology
UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a must reading for every Christian who wants to know the Biblical truth about human destiny. The book deserves to have a significant impact on contemporary Christianity as the Reformers had in their day. It overthrows the Greek view of natural immortality with a penetrating Biblical analysis."

Norman R. Gulley, Ph. D., Professor of Systematic Theology,
SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* provides a fresh, challenging, and thorough review of biblical teaching on human nature and destiny. It is clear, readable, and provocative, and deserves to be widely read."

Colin Brown, Ph. D., Professor of Systematic Theology
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Rector of St. Mark Episcopal Church

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a landmark research that systematically leads the reader through the Bible evidence and arrives at the beautiful concept of Biblical wholism which restores and defends Gods character and shows indeed, that even in judgment, God is love!" (Elder Dick Hansen requested 150 copies to donate to each pastor of the Oregaon Conference).

Dick E. Hanson, Director Church Ministries
OREGON CONFERENCE OF SDA

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* provides a careful, honest, and courageous study of biblical anthropology and its implications for our understanding of the Christian life, the after-life, and the end times."

Pierre Gilbert, Ph.D., Academic Dean
Mennonite Biblical Seminary

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* presents irrefutable arguments for the Biblical wholistic view of human nature and destiny. The book should convince every seeker of truth. We all are enlightened by it."

Warren S. Ashworth, D. Min., Professor of Religion,
PACIFIC UNION COLLEGE

"One of the greatest errors a Bible student can make is to accept uncritically a doctrinal teaching simply because that is what one has always heard. IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION? forces us to examine the biblical texts and to hear what the Scriptures say. Even those of us who may disagree are grateful for his clarion call to let the Word alone speak on the subject of personal eschatology."

Hershael W. York, Ph. D., Professor of Christian Preaching
SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a careful and clear Biblical study of a difficult subject. It will greatly help people to properly evaluate many modern claims regarding death, life after death, and the paranormal."

Benjamin D. Schoun, D. Min., Associate Dean,
SDA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

"Although it does not persuade me to abandon my belief in personal existence in the intermediate state, *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is deeply biblical, thoroughly researched, clearly argued, and engaging to read. There is no better case for monistic anthropology, soul-sleep, and annihilationism."

John Cooper, Ph. D., Professor of Philosophical Theology
CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Author of *BODY, SOUL, AND LIFE EVERLASTING*

"For years I alerted my students to the real need for a Biblical study on human nature, the state of the dead, and human destiny. Happily, Dr. Bacchiocchi's *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* meets such a need. Its message is absolutely essential."

S. Douglas Waterhouse, Ph. D., Professor Emeritus of Old Testament,
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

"The approach of *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is not hurried and the result is a marshalling of texts and logic that makes it difficult to hold an opposing view. . . . Because of its detailed approach, it brings a great deal of clarity"

William Richardson, Ph. D., Chair, Department of Religion,
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* explores a core Biblical truth that spawns many questions. This book will add weight to the studies of a growing company of Bible-believing scholars. You will gain new insights"

George W. Reid, Ph. D., Director,
BIBLICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* presents the strongest evidence for a wholistic view of human nature, and removes the basis for the belief in the survival of the soul . . . Keep extra copies on hand to give away to give away as you study . . ."

Doug Kilcher, D. Min., Chair, Christian Ministry Department,
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

"If ever there was a book for Bereans, *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is probably it. Study it against Scripture and test the genuineness of your commitment to truth."

Lael O. Caesar, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Religion,
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is destined to become a classic in its field. The book is a must reading in the light of recent debate over the nature and destiny of man, and especially, the current evangelical debate over the nature of hell."

Woodrow W. Whidden, Ph. D., Professor of Historical Theology,
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

"What Oscar Cullmann began in 1958 with his brief but significant study, Samuele Bacchiocchi has completed. *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a clear, persuasive and thoroughly documented demonstration that much popular Christian thinking about the nature and destiny of human persons has departed from its Biblical foundations. Not only does the author recover those foundations, but shows their implications for our understanding of a host of related issues in Christian belief and life. Readers will not in every case agree with the implications drawn, but that will not in any way diminish the significant contribution of this outstanding piece of biblical research and interpretation.

Manfred T. Brauch, Ph. D., James Maxwell Professor of Biblical Theology,
EASTER BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

"One of the greatest errors a Bible student can make is to accept uncritically a doctrinal teaching simply because that is what one has always heard. *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* forces us to examine the biblical texts and to

hear what the Scriptures say. Even those of us who may disagree are grateful for his clarion call to let the Word alone speak on the subject of personal eschatology."

Hershael W. York, Ph. D., Professor of Christian Preaching
SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* provides a Biblical basis for a holistic understanding of the stewardship of our bodies through its critique of the historic misinterpretations of the relationship of body and soul. While one may not agree with some of Dr. Bacchiocchi's positions and conclusions, everyone reading this book stands to gain a greater appreciation for the 'goodness' of our physical creation. Dr. Bacchiocchi's interpretation of the Hebrew concept of 'nephesh' is especially helpful for anyone interested in stewardship studies."

R. Scott Rodin, Ph. D., President and Professor of Systematic Theology
THE EASTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

"Dr. Bacchiocchi has presented in *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* a very well developed presentation in responding to some popular but bad theology, i.e. that man is immortality wrapped in mortality. He rightly points out how the immortality theme in some theologies of the day is untrue to scripture, untrue to the history of Church teachings and most certainly makes untrue the meaning of our Redeeming Saviour and the Resurrection. The Resurrection is seen as the magnificent gift of our gracious God and not as something which is inherent in this body/soul. While certainly in a work of this sort there are going to be some differences in understanding of the many aspects considered, the heart of this work is most assuredly upholding the wonder of God's love for us in the re-creation of our being to be fashioned like His glorious Being, the Resurrection through God's grace in Jesus Christ. *IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is an outstanding contribution to the Christian faith."

A. Richard Smith, Ph. D., Professor of Theology
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

"*IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION?* is a very significant work that offers the opportunity of dialogue on scriptural ground. It is refreshing to find a study of the unity or dichotomy of human nature based on the study of Scripture alone. The author basic argument is very persuasive although many will choose to disagree with some of the implications drawn from his conclusion of wholism. I have read it with deep interest. I find the approach very stimulating."

Clayton K. Harrop, Ph. D., Senior Professor of New Testament
GOLDEN GATE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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