

The
Hope of Life After Death

What Is It?

Church of God, The Eternal
P.O. Box 775
Eugene, OR 97440-0775
www.cogeternal.org

© 1985 Church of God, The Eternal
Reprint: 2000

THE HOPE OF LIFE AFTER DEATH WHAT IS IT?

There is a sizeable minority of Christians who believe that a person is begotten only at the time of conversion but will not be "born again" until the resurrection. This "new birth" means the Christian will be changed into a spirit son of God and at that time will receive immortality and divinity.

The majority, however, disagree with this viewpoint—that man is, by virtue of this sonship, destined to become a member of the God family. Instead, their spokesmen tell us this popular delusion of man becoming God began with Satan's impossible and self-contradictory ambition to be equal with God, and that Satan lured Eve into joining his mad rebellion against the one true God by promising that she too could become a god. Furthermore, Jesus never offered godhood to anyone. He simply called his disciples to deny self and to take up the cross and follow Him. Grasping after godhood breeds pride and arrogance. It warps one's thinking in a multitude of subtle ways (*The God Makers*, by Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, pp. 28, 40, 52). There is no hint in Scripture that being a perfect man turns anyone into a god. A perfect man is a man of God—not a god (*The Cult Explosion*, by Dave Hunt, pp. 50–51). The Judeo-Christian goal is to be in heaven with God, not to be God (Decker and Hunt, p. 256).

According to Hunt, Satan presented four lies to Eve. These were: (1) Satan held out to Eve the hope that godhood was possible and there was something she could do to achieve it; (2) in his contradiction of what Eve thought God said, Satan rejected the concept of moral absolutes and a personal God; (3) Satan's statement "Thou shalt not surely die" was a denial of the reality of death; and (4) Satan implied that knowledge (enlightenment) was the key to godhood and immortality (Hunt, pp. 109–110). We will examine the Genesis account concerning Satan and Eve later.

One fact is certain, many of the doctrines regarding life after death result from misinterpretations of this Genesis account. As C. J. Ducasse says, the question of whether there is or is not life after death is seldom approached with an open mind or discussed objectively on the basis of relevant empirical or theoretical considerations. The belief regarding life after death is entirely a matter of religious dogma which has become the final authority on the subject (*A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life After Death*, by C. J. Ducasse, p. v). There is no doubt the belief regarding the final destiny of man should be placed in this category.

Perhaps Decker and Hunt's most critical opposition to the idea that man can become God is seen in their reference to a quote made by Mormon authority Milton R. Denter. Hunter says the mystery religions taught emphatically that men may become gods and Hermes declared that we must not shrink from saying that a man on earth is a mortal god

and that God in heaven is an immortal man (Decker and Hunt, p. 27). As we shall see, the Mystery Religions did not merely teach that man could become God. They all taught that man has an immortal soul which goes to either "heaven or hell"—a belief which has implications that seem to have utterly escaped Decker and Hunt.

Will the Real Pagan Please Stand up?

According to Morris Jastrow, Jr., the thought that there is a complete annihilation of consciousness at death seems to have been beyond the grasp of primitive man. Consciousness was assumed to survive after life had left the body. Both the Babylonians and Hebrews started with the concept that the dead are gathered into some subterranean cave or hollow (*Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*, by Morris Jastrow, Jr., pp. 196–197). It is unlikely that the Hebrews, especially, started out with this belief. All indications are that it resulted from their contact with heathen religions. The Apostle Paul tells us that men first knew the truth regarding God's revelation but chose to reject it in favor of futile speculations (Romans 1:19–22). At whatever time period this rejection of divine revelation occurred, speculations certainly became the current philosophy. Jastrow tells us that "primitive logic" led to the belief that the dead are weak, unable to do much of anything for themselves, lying in a state of languishing inactivity. Life itself was pictured as an active force personified in the shape of a physical body. Life force, therefore, represented a concept which was beyond the grasp of man's intellectual capability. Upon death this spirit of life survives in a consciousness that is weak and inactive or as a spirit of life that hovers about and is dangerous to those still living. The duty of the living was to show sympathy and to provide some kind of care for these helpless dead or to find ways to protect themselves from the hovering spirits. The Babylonian *aralu* corresponded to the Hebrew *sheol*. In *aralu* the dead do not praise the gods because they are in such a state that the gods can do nothing for them (Jastrow, pp. 198–200, 202–203).

The belief that some part of man continues to live after death is almost universal. This is seen in Greek writings as early as 2,000 B.C. In both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* we encounter the belief that ghostly images of those who lived existed after death. These were the "shades" of those who were consigned to the underworld—those for whom there was no ethical recompense, who experienced only a dull, cheerless existence. These were the remnants of former men who now had little power to bless or harm the living (*Ancient Beliefs in the Immortality of the Soul*, by Clifford Herschel Moore, pp. 3–4).

The notion that the spirit of a dead person is identified with a divine power of either a higher or lower order accounts for the belief that life has countless manifestations. Life in man, nature, trees, rivers, invisible spirits, etc., is regarded as different manifestations of the same thing. The systematizing of this notion brought about the hierarchical order of the higher powers—those who became gods in an organized pantheon as opposed to those who

comprised the lower powers of demons. In this systematizing the spirits of the dead occupied a station half-way between the gods of the higher order and the demons of the lower (Jastrow, pp. 201–202). So, the spirit of life in man was regarded as basically the same as life in nature. All life, therefore, was one kind and man shared this life with both nature and the gods. This was one of the main reasons kings and heroes were deified. The spirit of life in man was identical in substance with the spirit of the gods. Those who were destined to share immortality would share it with the gods by being admitted to their assembly. While this may be indeed difficult, there was hope that it was possible for some to escape the ordinary fate assigned to mortals—that of existing in some form of mere consciousness after death (Jastrow, pp. 217–220).

The Egyptians did not believe that death ended life. Rather, they believed that upon death man entered into a new, higher, eternal life. Those component parts which made physical human life possible separated at the moment of death into those which were mortal and immortal. The immortal parts, which correspond reasonably closely to the modern idea of the soul, had found their common home in the living body. At the time of death each part separately sets out to find its way to the gods. If these were successful and it was found that the deceased had been a good and upright man, the parts became one with him and entered into the company of the blessed or of the gods (*The Ancient Egyptian Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul*, by Alfred Wiedemann, p. 10).

There were six immortal components that made up the total man. One of these was the KA—the divine counterpart of the deceased, the abstract image and personality of the physical man. The KA was regarded as the shadow personality of the man which followed him about. It was independent of the man, superior to him, yet bound up with him. The KA could live without the body, but the body could not live without the KA. A man's life lasted only as long as the KA remained with him; it never left him until the moment of death. The KA was not a higher spiritual being; it required the same physical sustenance as the man but after the death of the man the KA became his personality proper. Following the death of the man the KA wandered for a long period of time before meeting him in the world to come (Wiedemann, pp. 11–24).

The second immortal component of the Egyptian man was the AB (the heart). The immortal heart corresponded to the material heart in much the same way that the KA corresponded to the whole man. The function of the AB was to testify concerning the man's former thoughts and deeds before Osiris, the judge of the dead (Wiedemann, pp. 24–29).

The third immortal part was the BA. The BA corresponds the closest to the present concept of the soul. Upon the death of the man the BA departed in flight to the gods where it resided until it united with the man (Wiedemann, pp. 31–32).

The SAHU was another component considered immortal by the Egyptians. It was the outer hull of the body, a form without content. It lived at the command of the BA. Then, there was the KHAYB—the shadow—which had a close relationship with the SAHU. Since all material forms have shadows, it was believed that man too had a shadow that existed separately from the man (Wiedemann, pp. 41–42).

Now, all this led to a question among the Egyptians. How could all the immortal components which had gone their separate ways be united to form the new man at the resurrection? (Note here the Egyptians did have some concept of a resurrection—the total soul uniting with the body to make it complete.) The answer: In addition to all the immortal components that made up man, he also possessed a sort of deathlessness which functioned for a limited time period only. This deathlessness was labeled OSIRIS. Osiris, the first divine king of Egypt who reigned in human likeness, fell prey to his brother Set and was constrained to descend to the underworld where he evermore lived and reigned as judge and king of the dead. Since Osiris's fate was the fate of all men, each man upon death was required to descend into the underworld with the hope that he would rise again. It was in this hope that the dead were called OSIRIS. Now, if the OSIRIS was judged to be a deserving man, his heart was restored to him to be set in its place again. His KA and all the remaining components were restored and the justified OSIRIS was once again a complete man and now entered into a new, everlasting life. He was admitted by the gods into their circle and from that time on was as one of them (Wiedemann, pp. 44, 54).

While there is no indication that the Egyptians taught there was a place for purification, such as hell or purgatory, it does appear their general belief was that when judgment was pronounced against a man, his heart and other immortal components were not restored. Thus, no resurrection was possible for him since the immortal components had been prevented from entering the OSIRIS. So, while the man himself did die, his soul did not. The saved could look forward to a life exactly like that which he had lived on the earth except from now on he would always be successful in what he undertook. He could transform himself at will into other animals, birds, or plants, or even into a god. In fact, it was this idea that was behind the practice of embalming the dead. Since the soul had the power to incarnate itself at will, it might choose its former body if the body were preserved. If the body were allowed to be destroyed one of the forms in which the soul might incarnate itself would no longer be present and this would limit the soul's means of transmigration (Wiedemann, pp. 55–60, 66–68).

The doctrine of reincarnation was widespread and Herodotus, Plato, and other Greek writers said it was first believed by the Egyptians. Herodotus said the Egyptians were the first to teach that the human soul was immortal and that at death the soul enters into some other living thing which was just then in the process of being born (Ducasse, p. 216).

While what is called Christianity today did reject reincarnation as an answer to what happens to man after death, the reader should have little difficulty recognizing that a number of the concepts covered in the preceding paragraphs are an integral part of the Christian religion. There can be no doubt of the legacy paganism bequeathed to Christianity. We should be aware of this contribution as we proceed.

The Legacy of Paganism

The essence of the Babylonian teaching regarding the fate of the living is that the quest for immortality is essentially a useless endeavor. A man's fate is determined by the gods. At their pleasure they grant the spirit of life and at their displeasure it is removed. Man, therefore, must not think too much about death and the various speculations concerning his fate. He should concentrate on this world, not the next. On the whole, though, the Babylonians were not satisfied with this rather hopeless outlook (Jastrow, pp. 211–214).

By the time of the pyramids Osiris had attained preeminence. His worship carried with it the doctrine of immortality and it was associated with his name (Wiedemann, p. viii). The reader who is familiar with classical literature is aware that Osiris was the Egyptian name for Nimrod, the first archrebel who turned the post-Flood world against God. As Wiedemann tells us, Osiris fell prey to the devices of the wicked one (Typhon [Seth]) and was slain (Wiedemann, p. ix). The reader who wishes more detail should see *The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop, pp. 55–56. Wiedemann adds that in the myth, Osiris did not die. He passed into the world to come and reigned over the dead as "The Good Being." Furthermore, in Egypt, the Osirian faith and dogma were the precursors to Christianity. In fact, when Christianity first came to Egypt, the Egyptian could recognize his old beliefs in many a Christian theme (Wiedemann, pp. ix–xi).

The Greek religion, like the Babylonian, accepted the idea that there was a hierarchy of spiritual powers. The Greeks also had two classes of deities—gods for the living gathered at Mount Olympus and gods housed in the lower world (Jastrow, p. 203). The cult of the Olympians was involved in the worship of beings. Ethics consisted of maintaining one's place in the order—not to trespass against one's neighbor, human or divine. Sin was defined as the failure to recognize the bounds which had been set for each individual. There was no concept of inner disobedience to the will of God, and there was no need for any inner absolution from God (*History of Greek Philosophy*, by B. A. G. Fuller, p. 73). The ancient Greek was scarcely conscious of a soul; neither was he aware of such concepts as "moral" or "ethical." His religious experience was essentially accomplished by his association with "Nature." The doctrine of immortality played a comparatively small part in the worship of the Olympians, a fact which is clearly seen in the writings of Homer and the other poets of the sixth and seventh centuries B.C. In Homer's writings, the souls of the

dead went to the dark house of Hades beneath the surface of the earth. But these souls were shadowy and witless images which had no substance or intelligence, without red blood and real existence, deprived of all that makes life worth living. In Homer, there was little written about future rewards and punishments as both the good and bad went to Hades. What this suggests is that orthodox Greek thought, as a whole, up until the time of Socrates did not concern itself with the idea of immortality. It is apparent that by the time of Socrates the masses were desiring relief from all the injustices and imperfections of life and religion became the means by which man could find this relief—this escape from life's present sorrows and infirmities. Religion became the vehicle to find a cure for evil and at the same time to explain its existence (Fuller, pp. 27–28, 40–42, 47).

Two religious movements took shape which organized into revolts against the imperfections of life, and the mortality of man with its attendant limitations. These movements set forth the hope of escape and peace for some sort of life beyond this present human existence. These religious movements were the Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries (Fuller, p. 47). So, by about the seventh century B.C. Greek thought concerning immortality began to change. Philosophy and rationalism began to integrate with mysticism, and the result was Orphism. Orphism is important to the subject of immortality because of the nature of its ritual. During these orgiastic rites the participant was "taken out"—that is, the soul seemed for the time to be freed from the hampering physical body enabling it to become one with the "very god." Thus, the worshipper could call himself by the divine name of Bacchus. Behind this worship was the belief in the dual nature of man—that man is composed of a body and a soul, one part mortal, the other immortal. The whole concept of dualism was supported by the myth that man had sprung from the ashes of the Titans who had been destroyed by the thunderbolts of Zeus because of their crime against the youthful Dionysus (Bacchus). Since in their material state these ashes contained a divine spark, man too possessed an element of divinity—a divine soul and a wicked mortal body. The goal of the Orphite religion was to purify the soul from its material defilement and to bring about a purity that could lead to an enjoyable life. Because this was such a difficult task many rounds of life and death might be necessary before this purification could be completed (Moore, pp. 7–9).

The doctrine of reincarnation was chosen to explain the misery that was so obvious in the world. Behind this doctrine was the notion that immortality should be applied to the past as well as the future; with this the explanation of the existence of evil now became clear. Not only would man live after death in order to reap what he is now sowing, but his past lives are responsible for his evils in this present life. In the Greek religion the tendency developed to place the ideas of immortality and reincarnation in the forefront. So, the redemptive religion of the Greeks began with the desire to be free from evil and mortality (Fuller, pp. 46–47). The ideas of immortality and reincarnation, so absent in the worship of the Olympians, were seized upon by the various mystery cults such as those of Demeter, Persephone, and Dionysus (Fuller, p. 74). The chief philosophic trend by 300 B.C. was religious in nature and concerned itself with the security of the soul (Moore, p. 51).

The Orphics believed there was no earthly cure for sin. This was because the soul, separated and estranged from God, was corrupted by its heritage of evil from the Titans. The mind's eye had lost its vision of the divine and it was this hereditary trait—the curse of the Titans—which must be expunged. Since the soul was tainted as the result of the supernatural, it must be cleansed by means of the supernatural. The birthright must once more be attained by reunion with the divine, but this would take discipline and time—the duration of which could not be safely determined since it involved an indefinite process of transmigration and reincarnation during which the soul was born again and again. Only when the soul had broken from the vicious circle of transmigration and reincarnation could it be united with Dionysus. It would then hear the words that confirmed its redemption, "Happy and Blessed One, Thou shalt be God instead of mortal" (Fuller, pp. 62–64).

The reader should be aware that in Orphism "godhood" was a result of "immortality" gained by means of seemingly endless cycles of reincarnation. This is a vivid contrast to the true Bible teaching regarding man's destiny. But, much like what is taught by Christianity today, Orphics believed that the purification of the soul took place in Hades where its lot was determined by what had taken place before death. In Hades, those souls which were righteous spent their time beneath the rays of the sun but those that were wicked spent their time in the chill of Tartarus (Moore, p. 9). Unlike Christianity, though, Orphics taught that after a thousand years of either joy or sorrow, depending on location, the soul passed from the abode of the dead and was born again into another mortal body or possibly some form other than human. Thus, in cycles of time the changing soul of man passed into various creatures. The cycle of the soul was from earth to Hades and back to earth again. The sojourn on earth or in Hades constituted a season of trial, punishment, and purification. Both the earth and Hades rejected the most wicked, who according to the philosopher Empedocles became wandering spirits, doomed to wander thirty thousand seasons far from the blessed. It is not clear what the Greeks believed concerning the ultimate fate of the wicked, and Empedocles' viewpoint may indicate it was the doom of eternal rounds of existence or endless punishment in Hades. Those souls which were eventually purified were accounted worthy to leave earth and Hades to live in freedom with the gods (Moore, pp. 9–11). The reader should have little difficulty in recognizing the similarity between the teaching of the Orphics and what is generally believed by what is called Christianity today. What we see here are all the trappings of the doctrines of heaven, hell, and purgatory, as well as the occult concept of reincarnation.

To the Orphic, the way of salvation was obvious. Redemption was to be found by overcoming the differences between God and man, by regaining that identity with God—the lost birthright (Fuller, p. 55). From all appearances, the Orphics and Pythagoreans were the first to conceive of the idea of the dualistic nature of man, composed of a body which is the temporary dwelling place of the soul (Moore, pp. 49–50). In the Orphic Mysteries both the body and the personality were discarded in the redemptive process as the soul was merged in union with God (Fuller, p. 56). In Homer's writings, the heroes, like the Egyptians,

regarded this world as the most desirable abode. But the Orphics looked beyond the present to a future life where real happiness could be realized. These Orphic ideas became prevalent among the Pythagoreans and spread throughout all of Greece. But, at best, the Orphic concept of the immortality of the soul was based on intuition only. It simply was an emotional belief (Moore, pp. 11–12).

Orphic tablets found in Italy and Crete give the following account of the triumphant soul joyfully addressing the gods: "I am come from the pure . . . For I boast myself to be of your race . . . I have escaped from the sorrowful weary round, I have entered with eager feet the ring desired. I have passed to the bosom of the mistress queen of the lower world." As noted a few paragraphs above, the answer comes as follows: "O happy and blessed one, thou shalt be god instead of mortal" (Moore, p. 11). So, apparently the Orphics and Pythagoreans were the first among the Greeks to view life after death as a retributive state in which rewards and punishments were meted out according to one's deeds in the physical life; and by the sixth century B.C., the idea of a mere consciousness after death had been superseded by the belief that rewards and punishments were very much a result of man's deeds done in the flesh (Moore, pp. 27–28).

The Eleusinian Mysteries, which came on the scene in the seventh century B.C. and continued until the end of the fourth century A.D., took the idea of life after death for granted. Those who had been initiated into the rites of Demeter were assured a happy life in the hereafter; but the uninitiated were doomed to the house of Hades (Moore, pp. 12–13). In brief, the Eleusinian Mysteries offered the believer the hope of escape and salvation in heaven the same as the Christian and Muslim religions of today. The only differences were in details of dress, custom, and landscape (Fuller, p. 52). While the Orphic religion was not the state religion of Greece, it nevertheless had a considerable influence on philosophy. It was paramount in Pythagoreanism and both Socrates and Plato drew upon the Orphics and Pythagoreans for their concepts of the immortality of the soul. This same influence cropped up again in Neoplatonism and came into its own again during the first centuries of the Christian church (Fuller, p. 59).

In the Orient there was a much closer connection between philosophy and religion. There was a much greater awareness of the concept of evil than there was in Greece, and consequently the nature and origin of evil was the central theme of philosophical speculation. Two separate theories developed in order to explain the phenomenon of evil. These were dualism and emanation. Dualism was a Persian innovation, while emanation was Indian. While emanation does play a minor role in Persian speculation (inasmuch as emanation was a consequence of evil and not the cause) in the Indian system emanation was the very cause of evil. Dualism assumed the existence of two equal powers in conflict, both aided by subordinate beings of a similar nature. Emanation was predicated upon the concept that one original existence of the highest and most abstract purity had become progressively evil as a result of degenerating into a lower and less perfect state of being (*The Gnostic*

Heresies of the First and Second Centuries, by Henry Longueville Mansel, D.D., edited by J.B. Lightfoot, D.D., pp. 24–25).

Basically, dualism asserts there are two original and independent powers of good and evil, light and darkness, which coexisted from the beginning in eternal conflict. The struggle between them was to last 6,000 years. This concept is similar to the Mosaic account of the Creation and "Fall" and indicates that the Persian system had been modified as a result of intercourse between Persians and Jews following the Babylonian captivity. It is admitted that the Persian religious system is no older than the third century A.D. Also, the similarity between some of the legends and traditions of Persia and India suggest a common origin of their religious beliefs. The differences between the two indicate changes which took place at a later period. In the Persian system the cause of evil is spiritual; in the Indian it is material. In the Persian system evil is a reality; in the Indian system evil is merely an illusion. The primary aim of the Indian religion is to free man from his contamination of matter, even if it means total annihilation (Mansel, pp. 27–29).

The received religion of Persia is called Zoroastrianism, supposedly having been originated by the mystic Zoroaster. But, it is difficult to state dogmatically when Zoroaster lived. Some maintain it was much earlier than the reign of Darius Hystaspis (Mansel, p. 25). It is believed a Zoroaster lived at least a thousand years before the time of Christ (*A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, by William Rounseville Alger, p. 174). Other sources indicate the first Zoroaster was none other than Nimrod, and if this is true the intermingled systems of dualism and emanation most likely had their origin with him. One fact is certain: the dogmas of the Persians were not derived from the Old Testament, nor were they known by the Jews before the Babylonian captivity. What resulted as a consequence of the mingling of Jewish and Persian thought was Pharisaism. Anyone familiar with Persian theology will see the obvious resemblance between many of the doctrines of the Pharisees and popular Christianity. Early ecclesiastical history shows that Persian dogmas exerted an enormous influence on Christianity (Alger, pp. 174, 172, 175).

According to Josephus, the Saducees openly denied the existence of any disembodied souls and held that man utterly perished in the grave. The Pharisees, on the other hand, taught that those who observed the law of Moses and the traditions of the elders would live again by means of transmigration. Those who did not were doomed to confinement beneath, where they were destined to remain forever (Alger, pp. 162–163). An examination of the statements by Josephus (*Ant.*, Book XVIII, Chapter 1 and *Wars of the Jews*, Book II, Chapter 8) shows that the Pharisees believed those who lived virtuously also descended beneath the surface of the earth but had the power to revive and live again. The Pharisees also believed in reincarnation, as they held that all souls were incorruptible but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies.

According to another Rabbinical teaching, those who are circumcised shall not descend into hell. For those who did go to hell, their children could help them out by good deeds, prayers, and offerings (Alger, p. 169). On the other hand, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls was very much a part of the Kabbala [Cabala], and its origin antedated the Christian era. Jerome said the doctrine was propounded among early Christians as an esoteric and traditional doctrine entrusted to a select few. Origen went so far as to say that it was the only explanation for some Scriptural passages, for example, the struggle of Jacob and Esau in the womb of their mother (Ducasse, p. 215).

The Persians, Hindus, Greeks, and Egyptians all had popular representations of the underworld of the dead. The Jews, who had intercourse with these nations, may have adopted (most likely did) these ideas from them. Like the Egyptians, the "ancient Jews" believed that the spirits of the dead continued as a nerveless, shadowy being in the somber vaults of the underworld and, also like the Egyptians, they divided the underworld into Paradise and Gehenna (Alger, pp. 167, 147). These ideas were, no doubt, picked up by the Jews during their long sojourn in Egypt and probably were not eradicated by the Mosaic revelation.

According to *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, article "Immortality of the Soul," the belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical and theological speculation and is accordingly nowhere expressly taught in the Holy Scripture. The belief in a continuous life of the soul was regarded as antagonistic to the belief of YHVH. Eternal life is ascribed exclusively to God and to celestial beings. It was from Persian ideas that the belief in the resurrection received the added notion that the disembodied soul has a continuous existence. The Jews came to believe in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul principally through the philosophy of Plato. During the medieval period, the Jewish philosophers, without exception, recognized the dogmatic character of the belief in the resurrection while on the other hand insisting on the axiomatic or "self-evident" character of belief in the immortality of the soul. The "proof" given by these medieval philosophers was the intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature of the soul. Cabalists explained the soul as a light from heaven and immortality as its return to the celestial world of pure light. It was the influence of Moses Mendelssohn that led progressive and Reform Judaism to emphasize the doctrine of the immortality of the soul instead of the resurrection.

It would not be wrong to state that the influence of Plato in both ethics and religion has been so profound that it still affects the thinking of men today. What has been little realized by most, though, is that Plato started out with the premise that the soul was distinct from the physical body and was, therefore, preexistent and independent of the man. This dualism regarding the nature of man parallels Plato's doctrine of ideas and phenomena—the notion that behind the apparent world made up of objects there is a real world of forms and ideas that can be comprehended by reason only. What Plato really did in his philosophical

reasonings was to start with a religious supposition and then to develop it into a teaching (Moore, pp. 28–29).

But Plato was by no means alone in this approach. Empedocles believed that whatever was created could never perish and nothing ever really finds an end in death (*A Short History of Greek Philosophy*, by John Marshall, p. 62). Empedocles taught that man was a fallen god who could return to his former godlike existence if he were purged by sufficient penance. The idea that man was a member of the cosmic family of gods and genii was commonly believed by the majority of classical philosophers (Alger, pp.191, 195). Thales, according to what Aristotle said, thought the whole universe was full of gods and that everything had a soul which was linked with all the souls of the universe. Heraclitus referred to the death of the soul as the renewal of life (Marshall, pp. 6, 19).

Socrates thought that the true philosopher should engage in nothing else but the "practice" of dying—the "rehearsal" of being dead. According to him, the soul in this life is prevented from perceiving the true nature of things and from grasping truth. It is enslaved by the desire and weaknesses of the body. In order for man to know anything, his soul must gain freedom from the dominion of the body. It is by this means that he can truly comprehend realities. Those who love knowledge will strive to dissociate themselves from and not communicate with the body. Then it will be possible to know the truth here on the earth and to be able to fully grasp it when the soul has been freed from its corporeal home. The "practice" of dying, then, was to keep the soul pure from the body during this physical life (Moore, pp. 16–17).

In the Socratic discourses one of the reasons given for the belief in the immortality of the soul was the doctrine of opposites. This doctrine was commonly used in Greek speculation regarding physical questions. Since we observe opposites everywhere about us—greater and smaller, better and worse, stronger and weaker, just and unjust—this principle must apply to life and death. The dead come from the living and the living from the dead. Since dying is changing from life, we must believe that "becoming alive" is actually "becoming the opposite of dying." Therefore, life comes from death. What really took place in the Socratic discourses was that Socrates found support for his argument in the ancient tale that when men die they go to Hades, then after a time return to the earth. This was nothing more than the Orphic doctrine of rebirths which had long been current in Greece even among the masses. Socrates' argument was based on the supposition that the soul survives the changes that occur with the physical body. In brief, Socrates took a myth and dressed it up with rationalization (Moore, pp. 17–18). While there were other arguments advanced by Socrates, both Socrates and Plato, in the final analysis, held to the belief in the immortality of the soul on the basis of faith, which they supported with persuasive reasoning (Moore, p. 25). In Plato's hands this "ancient tale" (myth, to be exact) was elevated into a powerful ethical argument and the old intuitive (emotional, to be exact) hope was fortified by appealing arguments (Moore, p. 50).

The doctrines of the Greek philosophers did not die with them. They were promulgated by those who followed in their steps. Marshall believes that in Thales, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Parmenides, and Empedocles we have an apostolic succession of great men, great thinkers, and great poets (Marshall, p. 68). Obviously, Marshall is not alone in this viewpoint. It is a fact that the teaching of "Christianity" views the Incarnation and Redemption as the lever used to loosen the soul from the hold of the body and the bonds of nature and to impel it to its supernatural and spiritual destiny. The interest and comfort of Christianity, among other things, centers about the soul (Fuller, pp. 25–26).

Of the many philosophies advanced to explain the nature of man, those based on Platonism and Pythagoreanism contain the hope of immortality for the human soul. The "last" great system along these lines was Neoplatonism, the summary and climax of eight centuries of Greek speculation. Its chief expounder was Plotinus. In his view, some men are endowed with what it takes to rise above this world into the clear light of the world above. The soul's aim is to attain likeness to God. Thus, the contemplative life—man's highest activity which concerns itself with intelligence alone—makes man divine (Moore, pp. 42–47). The reader should realize that the influence of Neoplatonism, and particularly that of Plotinus, was apparent in the early Christian theologians.

Another Neoplatonist, probably as influential as Plotinus in influencing Christian doctrine in the matter of the immortality of soul, was Philo. Philo was a Platonic Alexandrian Jew who rejected the idea of a resurrection of the body and held to the "natural" immortality of the soul. In addition, he believed in different localities for the disembodied souls of the righteous and of the wicked and that death is merely the separation of the soul from the body. Philo also believed that man was originally made a mortal body and an immortal soul, that the soul was preexistent and had a limited ability to transmigrate (Alger, pp. 160–162). Later Gnostic teaching was merely a more extravagant approach to what Philo and later Platonists had managed to disseminate with comparative restraint (Moore, p. 81).

The principle sources of Gnosticism were Platonism, Persian dualism, and Indian philosophy which had been modified somewhat by Platonism (Mansel, p. 32). The peculiarity of Gnosticism was the fact that it drew its material from the most varied existing traditions, attached itself to these, and then took on a new character and new significance. Gnostic doctrines were, in fact, compositions and compilations from mythological or religious ideas, including Greek, Jewish, Iranian, and Christian. Gnosticism can also be labeled as parasitic, prospering on the soil of "host religions." It had no tradition of its own but freely borrowed from others; its mythology was consciously created from alien material (*Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, by Kurt Rudolph, translated by Robert M. Wilson, pp. 54–55).

Both Gnosticism and Indian philosophy have several beliefs in common. They both hold to the doctrine of the emanation of the world from one absolute existence and then its final reabsorption into that existence. They both hold to the doctrine of inherent evil and the unreality of matter. And, they both hold to the doctrine of the antagonism between spirit and matter with the goal of religion to free the soul from the contamination of matter and raise it for its final absorption back into the absolute. The Gnostic systems, like those of the Orient, advocated, though not as extravagantly, the antagonism between spirit and matter; the deliverance of the spirit by means of asceticism; the contrast between ignorance and knowledge—with ignorance being the source of illusion and misery, and the acquisition of knowledge the sole means of gaining deliverance and repose (Mansel, pp. 29–30).

Near the beginning of the second century A.D., the "infant" church is seen holding conflicting ideas regarding the soul's future state—conflicting ideas brought on by attempting to reconcile Jewish and Greek philosophic ideas. Greek dualism concerning the nature of man, which viewed the flesh as material and evil and the soul as spiritual, prevented many converts from accepting any doctrine of a post mundane existence of body. Platonic ideas, which viewed the soul as indestructible, could not be reconciled to the Jewish-Christian idea that if the soul were immortal there was no purpose for the mission, suffering, and death of Christ. It took the genius of Augustine to bring an end to the confusion. Augustine clarified "Christian doctrine" by adopting a modified form of Neoplatonism. Augustine's philosophic system was largely responsible for determining the thinking within the church on the question of immortality, and this influence continued until the latter part of the nineteenth century (Moore, pp. 70–72).

Like many of the "church fathers," Augustine was not alone in this Platonic tendency. Origen, for example, believed there was no future state of sensuous joys or sufferings, nor was there any resurrection of the dead which required the Second Coming of Christ. Rather, he thought that at physical death the pure and righteous souls would enter directly into Paradise, while the wicked would begin suffering their punishment immediately. Both the righteous and the wicked would be provided with bodies. The righteous would ascend to become pure intelligence as they were before they fell from heaven into sin. Ultimately, all would be purified and restored through Christ. As Moore notes, Origen was a universalist and the real source of his views on salvability is to be found in Plato (Moore, pp. 89–90).

The Apologist Theophilus, on the other hand, was of the opinion that man was capable either of immortality or death but that if he would regard the teaching of God and incline toward immortality he would receive the reward of eternal life and himself become God (Moore, p. 74). Irenaeus took the view that man, as a created being, is not naturally immortal but is granted immortality through God's union with the mortal flesh. Thus, life becomes a gift of God's grace (Moore, p. 77). But, even Tertullian's arguments against Gnostic ideas show the influence of the dualistic view which was inherent in all Greek thought as a result of the teaching of Plato. So, regardless of the efforts of the church fathers, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul would not die (Moore, p. 76).

Augustine, a Platonist, held steadfastly to the idea that the soul is a spirit. His arguments are beyond all doubt Platonic in character. Yet, in his old age some of these arguments failed to satisfy him and as much as he relied on Plato and Plotinus he reverted to the early tradition of the church. Augustine rejected the Platonic and Orphic notion of reincarnation, but believed that the soul separates from the body at death and continues for a period of time without an ethereal body (Moore, pp. 117, 122–123, 126).

The most influential man after Augustine was Thomas Aquinas. He established Aristotelianism as the chief foundation of Christian philosophy, but his ideas also reflected those of later Platonism which were reconciled into his system. Thomas' work is particularly seen in Dante's use of his philosophy and theology in the *Divina Commedia* (Moore, pp. 149–150).

Thomas' view regarding the soul was very similar to Augustine's. In his writings Thomas held that those souls which have a share in the Godhead are in heaven and those that do not were in a contrary place. He believed souls which were spiritually enlightened had luminous bodies and those that were not were in dark places. Thomas often referred to Augustine when discussing immortality and wrote that "the time which lies between man's death and the final resurrection holds the souls in secret receptacles according as each one is worthy of rest or of suffering." He added, "Therefore, they will be neither in hell nor in heaven until the judgment" (*Summa Theologica*, by Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on the Resurrection*, I,Q LXIX, art.1 & 2).

Thomas believed that each individual soul is judged at once upon separation from its terrestrial body. Those who are too defiled to be cleansed and fitted for final happiness begin their endless punishment at once. The righteous go immediately to their reward in Paradise. The vast majority, however, are afflicted with sins from which they must be purified before they can enter bliss. These souls remain in purgatory until their sins have been burned away with fire. At the second and final judgment each soul will receive back its body, for both the body and soul are necessary for the complete man. But the body, which is now incorruptible, will be composed of flesh and bones. Since the damned also have incorruptible bodies they will forever suffer everburning fire (Moore, pp. 147–148).

Thomas wrote that sometimes venial sin, which needs to be cleansed, is an obstacle to receiving the reward and the result is that sometimes the reward is delayed. As soon as the soul is set free from the body it either goes to hell or heaven, unless it is held back by some debt, in which case its journey is delayed until the soul is first cleansed. Abodes for souls vary according to their state. Souls are detained in purgatory from receiving their reward because of the sins they have committed. Furthermore, souls will suffer punishment from a corporeal fire since the Lord said in Matthew 25:41 there was a fire reserved for the devil and his angels, who are incorporeal like the soul (Aquinas, *Treatise on the Resurrection*, I, Q LXIX, art. 2; I, Q LXIX, art. 7; I,Q LXIX, art. 3).

The influence of both Augustine and Thomas Aquinas is summarized by Moore when he points out that both Catholicism and Protestantism absorbed Platonism in one form or another, although modern Protestants demonstrate more plainly the influence of modern philosophic speculation (Moore, pp. 153–156). As Moore states, ". . . Christianity was the debtor to both Jew and Gentile" (Moore, p. 60).

What Pagan Christianity Believes

A brief look at what modern Christians believe on the matter of immortality and the soul should be beneficial at this point. Not all are in agreement by any means. There is one view, labeled a modern one, which regards the human soul as a separate development of creation which is closely connected with the doctrine of "conditional immortality." In the sixteenth century the Socinians held to the view that man is not naturally immortal. Right now there is presently a large number of thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic who have come to accept the conditional point of view (Moore, p. 157, 165).

As far as the Old Testament is concerned there are at least three positions taken in Christian circles regarding the doctrine of a future life. A large majority maintain that retributive immortality is clearly taught. Others maintain that the Old Testament says nothing whatsoever about a future life. But, according to Alger, the most judicious, trustworthy critics maintain an intermediate position—that there is a separate existence of the spirit which does not experience rewards or punishments but survives in a common silence and gloom of the underworld (Alger, p. 144).

Decker and Hunt, in *The God Makers*, follow the fundamentalist line and accept the notion that death is separation from God. According to them, the spirits of the dead are either in heaven or in hell. But their arguments against Mormon doctrine are based on ancient pagan myth. They chide the Mormons for teaching that there is no death but accept the notion that death is merely a continuation of life, although separated from God (Decker and Hunt, pp. 63, 69, 78). What they mean to say is that they disagree with the Mormon doctrine only in the matter of where the soul goes after death. Hunt says in *The Cult Explosion* that at death the souls and spirits of unbelievers go to hell to await the final judgment, when those in the grip of death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire. Then, unbelievably he says that the Resurrection is the heart of Christianity (Hunt, p. 181)! In describing the Resurrection Hunt says the souls and spirits of believers who die go to be with Christ. He brings them with Him at the time of the Resurrection to be united with their bodies which are raised up incorruptible, never to die again (Hunt, p. 180). The reader will no doubt remember that the rabbis were the ones who integrated Plato's notion of the immortal soul into the Bible Truth of the Resurrection.

To be "born again," Hunt says, means to accept Christ's death as one's very own, to give up life as one would have lived it, and in that act share Christ's resurrection which imparts a new spiritual life. Those religions which teach otherwise, that is, which do not go along with the mainstream doctrines of Christianity, are regarded as cults. According to Hunt cults reject all or most of the distinctive "Biblical" doctrines upon which Christianity is founded (Hunt, pp. 170, 127). It would no doubt be shocking to Hunt to realize what the real basis is for the doctrines upon which "Christianity" is founded.

What Is the Bible Teaching?

With the above information in mind it is now appropriate to examine the Bible record. Does the Bible support the various notions found so prevalently in pagan thought? Since the fundamental question in the matter of life and its purpose involves the nature of man, what does the Bible say concerning man?

What Is Man?

The Bible tells us man is a created being, made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27). He was formed from the dust of the ground and his composition is that of flesh (Genesis 2:7; 6:3; 1 Corinthians 15:39). Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh *is* flesh . . ." (John 3:6). Man is spoken of as clothed in flesh (Job 10:11; 2 Corinthians 5:1–4), and as though to emphasize this fleshly composition the Bible points out that man's consciousness and awareness are in his flesh (Isaiah 49:26; Ezekiel 20:48; 21:5; Zechariah 2:13).

Man's life span is of a limited duration (Job 7:1; 14:1). His best state is spoken of as altogether vanity (Psalm 39:5), his days like the grass and flower of the field (Psalm 103:15; 1 Peter 1:24), even like a shadow (Psalm 144:4). He ages and goes the way of all flesh (Ecclesiastes 12:1–5). That all men eventually die can be seen from Genesis 25:8; Numbers 16:29; Job 14:10; 24:22–24; Psalm 49:10–14; 89:48; Ecclesiastes 2:16; Isaiah 51:12, and Hebrews 9:27. Upon death man becomes a carcass (Isaiah 66:24; Jeremiah 9:22; 33:5). Often the cause of death may be the result of a fatal blow of some kind or an accident (Exodus 21:12; Numbers 35:11).

Whatever the cause, it is inevitable that all men die. Perhaps this is the reason the Bible compares man to a worm (Job 25:5). One thing is certain according to the Scriptures: God is not man (Numbers 23:19, 1 Samuel 15:29; Job 9:32) and man is decidedly not God! (Job 10:9; 33:12; Psalm 9:20; Ecclesiastes 3:18)

Man Is Mortal

The Hebrew word *enosh*, which is translated "mortal" in the *Authorized Version*, is the same word translated many more times as "men." The connection between the two is obvious. Men are mortal, subject to death, as opposed to God who is immortal. Men are turned again to dust (Psalm 90:3). They are described as "of the earth" (Psalm 10:18) and are reminded that they are but men (Psalm 9:20). Perhaps the most significant use of *enosh* in the Old Testament is found in Daniel 7:13—a reference to Christ. Christ is spoken of as ". . . the Son of man . . ." in this text, a clear reference to his incarnation as a mortal, human being—subject to death.

In the New Testament the Greek word *thneetos* is translated "mortal." In every case it demonstrates the mortality of man. In Romans 6:12 man's body is characterized as mortal. In Romans 8:11 man's body must be quickened in order to live in a lasting sense. 1 Corinthians 15:53–54 states that this mortal must put on immortality. 2 Corinthians 4:11 tells us flesh is mortal, and 2 Corinthians 5:4 says mortality must be swallowed up in immortality. Clearly, then, from both the Old and New Testaments man is a mortal being, subject to death.

Does Man Have an Immortal Soul?

This leads to the question: Does the Bible teach that man has an immortal soul, as is commonly taught by "orthodox Christianity" today?

An examination of Genesis 2:7 shows that when the Lord God gave Adam the breath of life, the man became a living soul. In brief, Adam did not have a soul—Adam *was* a soul. We will examine the Hebrew word *nepshesh*, translated "soul", shortly. Texts which demonstrate that man is a soul include Jeremiah 38:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:45.

There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that the soul is immortal. This concept, which originated as a pagan myth and was an attempt to explain the nature of man, crystalized in dualism—the notion that man is comprised of an evil material body and a divine immortal soul. This idea is contrary to the Bible teaching and is purely pagan in origin. The Bible shows souls are subject to death. They die. The reader is invited to simply read the following texts in order to see the Bible teaching: Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25, 1 Kings 17:21; Psalm 22:29; 33:19; 78:50; 116:8; 119:175; Isaiah 53:12; Ezekiel 18:4, 20; James 5:20, and Revelation 16:3. In fact, the Bible emphasizes this in Jesus' statement, ". . . fear him which is able to destroy *both* soul and body in hell [Gehenna] . . ." (Matthew 10:28).

Upon death man returns to dust again. He goes back to the ground from whence he was taken (Genesis 3:19; Job 34:15; Ecclesiastes 3:18–20). This is why the Bible states that souls need deliverance from death (Psalm 22:20; 56:13; 116:8). The truth is this: Man does not have a soul; he *is* a soul. The life of the flesh is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11; Genesis 9:4; Deuteronomy 12:23; Ezekiel 18:13) and souls have blood within them (Jeremiah 2:34). The loss of that life-sustaining blood brings quick death to the soul (Isaiah 53:12).

The Hebrew word *nephesh* is generally translated "soul" in the *Authorized Version*. After giving the various ways *nephesh* is used in the Bible, the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, says this:

Here too belongs Leviticus 17:11, one of the most decidedly theological and distinctively meaningful passages where the word *nephesh* is of major significance, and one which certainly defines the term as meaning life "for the life (*nephesh*) of the flesh (*basar*) is in the blood." Here it is the vitality, the passionate existence of an individual which is denoted . . . A total of 755 occurrences of the noun *nephesh* have been counted in the Old Testament, and of these it is rendered in the Greek translation (LXX) some 600 times by the psyche. . . . Of the 144 times it is used in the Psalms, over 100 of them have the first person suffix, "my soul." Thus in its most synthetic use *nephesh* stands for the entire person. In Genesis 2:7 "man became a living creature" [*nephesh*]*—*the substantive must not be taken in the metaphysical, theological sense in which we tend to use the term "soul" today. . . . In other words, man is here being associated with the other creatures as sharing in the passionate experience of life and is not being defined as distinct from them.

What the above quote means is that there is no Biblical justification for the idea that the soul is distinct from man or that it is immortal. While the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* is forced to acknowledge that the literal usage of *nephesh* does not support the notion of dualism, it does go on to suggest there are other Hebrew words which imply man is more than a physical being, which simply demonstrates how difficult it is for even scholars, like the Hellenists, to shake preconceived ideas.

The reader may recall how the early pagans believed that after death man continued in some form of conscious existence likened to a "shade." What does the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* say about this concept? It tells us the Hebrew *rephaim*, generally translated "dead," or "deceased" in the *Authorized Version*, is of Ugaritic origin and refers to the dead inhabitants of the netherworld. In all of its eight occurrences in the Old Testament it appears exclusively in poetic passages. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* tells us:

It is clear that this ancient quasi-mythical term was used merely to satisfy the requirements of Hebrew poetic structure and in no way indicates any specific connotation to the root *repa'im* other than as a synonym for "the dead" and the "place of the dead". . . Really, as the term refers to dead persons, the translation "dead ones" would fit very well in all cases.

We might add here that neither does the Bible support the concept that righteous souls go to heaven. Note John 3:13; Acts 2:29, 34, and 1 Corinthians 15:47. If souls do not reside in any conscious state in the netherworld and if they do not go to heaven, what then is death, according to the Bible?

Orthodox Christianity accepts neither the dictionary nor Bible definition for death. Death according to both the dictionary and the Bible means cessation of life. Orthodox Christianity views death as separation from God only. But what does the Bible really say? All texts which explain the state of the dead clearly demonstrate that death is the cessation of life and the utter loss of consciousness. Notice the following:

For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? (Psalm 6:5.)

The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down to silence (Psalm 115:17).

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish (Psalm 146:3–4).

. . . Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead (John 11:11–14).

Some orthodox Christians may derisively refer to those who believe the above texts as "soul sleepers," but when orthodox beliefs are stripped of their preconceived ideas of pagan dualism it is imminently clear that death in the Bible means exactly what the Scriptures say—cessation of life and the loss of consciousness!

Man Must Be Changed From Flesh to Spirit

Satan did not lie when he said, ". . . Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2:4). Man yearns to preserve his life (Psalm 34:12). He realizes the

uncertainty of this present physical existence (Ecclesiastes 7:15; 9:12; 10:14). The human experience is essentially a time of difficulty and trouble (Job 5:7; 14:1). One fact is absolutely certain, according to the Bible: flesh and blood cannot enter into the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). The present change taking place in the life of the man called of God is occurring within (2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16), because salvation at the present time is a promise only (1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11).

This Change Achieved Through Christ

If man must be changed from flesh to spirit in order to enter into the Kingdom of God, then man is not yet saved. In his natural state he is opposed to God and His ways (Romans 8:7). The Bible does not paint a pretty picture regarding man's nature. It says man is so abominable that he drinks iniquity like water; that man is vain, and in his best state he is altogether vanity (Job 15:14–16; 11:11; Psalm 39:5). Man cannot comprehend spiritual things by his own ability and intellect (1 Corinthians 2:11). In this state of spiritual depravity all men have been left to their own devices. The consequence? All have sinned and until called of God and brought to repentance are under the death penalty of God (1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:23; 5:12; James 1:14). All men are subject to death for all eternity because, according to the Bible, sinners die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

Christ came to save mankind. He came to give Himself as the ransom—the sacrifice which alone could pay the death penalty for all men (1 Peter 1:18–20). Jesus Christ was the sacrificial Lamb of God (John 1:29; Romans 3:25; 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14, 20; Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:7).

But man must have help in this task to be changed from a carnal to a spiritual orientation. This help is given in the form of the Holy Spirit. Man is able to receive the Spirit of God (Genesis 41:38; Numbers 27:18). But God gives this Spirit to those only who obey Him (Acts 5:32). Those who have the Spirit of God are the true children of God, the overcomers who are to be changed from flesh to spirit and to be with Christ in His Kingdom (Romans 8:9, 14; 2 Corinthians 5:16–17; Ephesians 4:22–24; Colossians 3:10; 1 John 5:11–12; Revelation 2:26–27; 3:21; 5:10).

When Does This Change Occur?

This change from flesh to spirit occurs at the resurrection (Job 14:12–15; Psalm 49:15; Isaiah 26:19; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 35, 51–54). The Bible makes it plain that the only hope of life after death is by means of the resurrection from the dead. Man does not have

an immortal soul. He *is* a soul and that soul or physical life is subject to death. Once man dies the only hope of life again is by means of the resurrection. As Christ was, the saints will be resurrected into some spirit form (1 Corinthians 15:22–23; Luke 24:39). The account in Luke indicates that the spirit body with which Christ was resurrected had some kind of a material form, but Revelation 1:13–16 demonstrates He was not limited to this form. If the saints are to be like Him (1 John 3:1–2) they too will not be limited to a particular material form, but their manifestations, like His, will certainly include this.

What Is Man's Destiny?

Anyone who has read much orthodox literature on the subject of the "new birth" will quickly learn how certain texts are passed over or ignored altogether.

The Bible emphasizes God's concern and interest in man. Notice Deuteronomy 4:32; Job 7:17; Psalm 8:4–6; 144:3; Isaiah 45:12, and Hebrews 2:6–8. Why? Jesus tells us in John 10:34, a text seldom mentioned by orthodox writers. When He was accused by the Jews of making Himself God, His reply was based on the authority of their own Scriptures. He said, ". . . Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods?" Jesus quoted Psalm 82. An examination of this passage makes the following obvious.

When Jesus was accused of making Himself God, His reply was that the Scriptures gave Him the authority for such a statement because "all men are gods"—though not yet. Psalm 82 demonstrates they are potential gods only, who are very much capable of losing this potentiality. They are wicked. They are admonished not to continue on their path of judging unjustly, of accepting the persons of the wicked. Rather they should defend the poor and fatherless. They should do justice to the afflicted and needy. They should deliver the poor and needy and rid them out of the hand of the wicked. But what is the reaction of these wicked potential gods? "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course." They are now told, ". . . ye are gods." Because they refuse to listen they will not realize their potentiality but will perish like men who deserve to die. It is God alone who is truly qualified to rule the nations.

Psalm 82 proves that man is not immortal, and that he is not now, at this present time, a god. This is a potentiality that can be realized only if he conforms to the will and plan of God. Jesus was God in the flesh, so the accusation by the Jews against Him was false. But He did show that the plan of God indeed did include the fact that man can become God. But this can be realized only by overcoming and qualifying for the resurrection of the dead at the return of Jesus Christ!

Orthodox Arguments

One of the peculiarities of gnosticism was its attaching itself to varied traditions, then setting these traditions in a new frame which in turn gave them a new significance. Gnostic writings are often a compilation of mythical and religious ideas which included those of Greece, Judea, Iran, as well as Christian ideas. Gnosis is the result of Hellenistic syncretism—the mingling of Greek and Oriental traditions (*Gnosis*, by Kurt Rudolph, translation edited by Robert McLachlan Wilson, p. 54). Gnosis followed the Church like a shadow and the Church could not overcome it. The oldest theological systems were those of the Christian Gnostics. Gnosticism can be called the first religious philosophy in Christianity (Rudolph, pp. 368–369).

Lest the reader take the last few sentences above at face value, it should be called to his attention that the first "Christian systems," apart from the New Testament record, are those of the "Apostolic Fathers." Church historians admit that the writings of the Apostolic Fathers represent a change from the original revelation. In brief, the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, as well as "orthodox Christianity," which developed from this time period on, represent apostasy.

All the Gnostic systems had one thing in common when applied to Christianity—they viewed the Old and New Testaments as revelations from two different Gods. Also, they considered the ministry of Christ to be of a higher level than that of the God of the Old Testament, which they regarded as the Demiurge, a sort of inferior God. To them Judaism was a religion that was antagonistic to Christianity and must be destroyed. In general, all Gnostic systems agreed in the existence of eternal matter, which was the cause of all the depravity and evil in the world. This led to the belief that Christ could not have been incarnated as a fleshly man because a Divine Being could not take on a body composed of evil matter (Mansel, pp. 44–45, 57–58). Two of the outstanding heresies associated with gnosticism were an antagonism toward the Law of God as revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures, with the corresponding belief that Christ had come to do away with the Law; and, the doctrine of Docetism—that Christ was an immaterial phantom and not a literal flesh-and-blood physical being.

Because Paul's view regarding the nature of man—the contrast between the flesh and spirit, that to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace—could be seized upon and utilized to support Gnostic thought, an alliance was made between Paul's view and those of the Greco-Roman world. It is upon this association that much of the history of Christian thought depends (Moore, p. 66). In brief, what is called Christianity today is a syncretism of what the Bible teaches and what pagans taught. It is no exaggeration to say that what is called Christianity today reflects a change from the original revelation.

This is, no doubt, the influence behind much of what is said by orthodox Christians regarding God's purpose for man. Decker and Hunt, for example, tell us the Bible does not instruct us to become perfect but rather to be perfect, a state that the Christian can possess immediately without any possible future consideration. This perfection does not come about by developing an innate potential capability but by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Decker and Hunt add, when God tells us to become perfect He is not demanding that we become God, but rather to have a "perfect heart"—the attitude that strives to be all that God wants us to be and to be willing to admit we cannot earn eternal life (Decker and Hunt, pp. 53–54). An examination of Matthew 5:48 indicates otherwise. It is true, *esesthe*—translated "be" in the *Authorized Version*—does not mean "become." But the word "therefore" (Greek *oun*) should be translated "then," "accordingly," "consequently," or "these being so." Jesus tells His disciples what God is really like and therefore what Christian conduct and attitude toward others should be. The Christian should love his enemies. He should bless those that curse him, do good to those that hate him, pray for those who spitefully use and persecute him. He must do more than love those who love him, or salute those who salute him. When he can do all these things he will be "accordingly," "consequently," or "then" perfect like his Father who is in heaven. It is obvious this perfection, which entails supramundane conduct and attitude, is beyond the capability of all who profess Christianity today. What, then, was the intent of Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:43–48? He was demonstrating what should be the goal of the Christian in his conduct and behavior towards others. Decidedly, Jesus was not showing what automatically happens to one who is "born again." The truth of the matter is that this kind of behavior and attitude requires many years of overcoming and self-mastery. It therefore should be the goal of all who would be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect.

Orthodox theology decidedly shows its Gnostic antagonism against the Law of God. The force behind this antagonism is that by virtue of his "immortal soul," man is already immortal. To them the Law of God is an unnecessary burden, an outmoded reflection of the Demiurge—that wicked God of the Old Testament. Samples of orthodox reasoning in this regard can be found in the idea that the Bible teaches no one ever kept all the commandments and that a man is justified without the deeds of the Law (Decker and Hunt, p.136).

For one thing, the statement that a man is justified without the deeds of the law is incorrect. This expression by Paul, in Romans 3:28, should read, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith [apart from, or separately from] the deeds of the law." This quote simply demonstrates that while one is justified by faith the law is not excluded. If one is not required to keep the Law of God, why did Paul say, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:13)? And why did James say:

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar: Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect . . . Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only" (James 2:17–22, 24).

To repeat, while orthodox theologians would be hard pressed to admit it, orthodox antagonism against the Law of God is predicated on the pagan myth that man has an immortal soul and is not required to obey God in order to attain salvation, and that the Law of God is a reflection of the evil God of the Old Testament and not of Jesus—the God of the New Testament who came to emancipate man from the Law. Orthodox theologians would no doubt find it hard to accept the fact that the God of the Old Testament, who said He changes not (Malachi 3:6), was Jesus Christ, the God of the New Testament (1 Corinthians 10:1–4)!

The "divinity of the self" idea—that man already possesses an immortal soul—had its origin in the myth that man sprang from the ashes of the Titans. It is seen time and time again in orthodox writings—statements to the effect that upon the moment "we open our heart to Christ" we receive the witness of the Holy Spirit and know we have eternal life. Accordingly, the soul and spirit of every true Christian, upon death, goes immediately to heaven (Decker and Hunt, p.182). If to you this sounds like a rerun of Plato, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas, you would be quite right. Yet Jesus said, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven. . . ." (John 3:13). Hunt's attempt to explain how the witch of Endor called up Samuel's spirit in 1 Samuel 28 is that this incident was an exceptional case since the dead are either in heaven or hell and have no contact with the living. What Hunt fails to realize is that the witch of Endor called up a demon who masqueraded as Samuel.

William Alger was aware, at least, that dead "souls" do not go anywhere. He recognized that the translation of Enoch, which is often used to support the idea that the righteous go to heaven, simply means that Enoch, who feared God and kept His commandments, lived 365 years and then died. Whether he died suddenly or disappeared nobody really knows (Alger, p.145).

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man is another example of how a story can be seized upon and made to say what it does not. The account, given in Luke 16, is a parable—a short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or religious principle. What the parable shows is the truth of the resurrection and the judgment that coincides with it.

"Abraham's bosom" is an expression used to illustrate one's entering into an intimate relationship with Abraham (Galatians 3:29). Since Abraham will be in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 8:11), those who are in his bosom will share this reward with him. The phrase "was carried" in Luke 16:22 is in the aorist in the Greek. This is a verb tense which shows fact without any time relationship. A better translation would be "is carried away." It is an assumption, based on the preconceived idea that souls go to heaven immediately upon the death of the righteous, to teach that Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom (generally interpreted to mean heaven by orthodox theologians) immediately when he died. He, like all saints, will go to Abraham's bosom at the resurrection (Matthew 24:31). Hell, in verse 23, is *hades* and simply means the grave. The rich man is resurrected to see what is coming upon him in the final judgment (Revelation 20:14; Matthew 13:49). The gulf between Lazarus and Abraham (Luke 16:26) is immortality (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:50; Revelation 20:6; Romans 2:7), which is given at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:51–54).

Decker and Hunt are correct when they say the theory of man's inherent goodness and infinite potential for good as a "god-in-embryo" hardly fits the rampant lust, jealousy, hatred, murder, rape, disease, hunger, war, and other sorrows and crimes that blight this planet earth (Decker and Hunt, p. 261). The Bible does not teach that man is full of inherent goodness. On the contrary, the Bible paints quite an ugly picture of human nature. But this is exactly what Psalm 82 tells us. The warning there is that if these wicked potential gods do not change their mad course they will never realize their potential. But this potential is not contained within them. It comes only through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and by man yielding to his Creator in order to form the kind of character that can handle the responsibility of eventually being God. Orthodox theologians are quick to point out that pagans taught that man could become a god, but they utterly fail to mention that the fundamental and far more prevalent teaching among the pagans was the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and its associated ideas of heaven and hell. To be consistent in their arguments Orthodox theologians must be willing to admit that the fundamental teaching of orthodox Christianity today—the doctrine of the immortality of the soul—is of pagan origin and has no Biblical authority. On the other hand, the teaching that man's potential is to become eventually a member of the God-family is indeed Biblical.

Satan's deception of Eve in Genesis 3 is given by orthodox theologians as "proof" that Satan is the author of the teaching that man can become God. Hunt's arguments are a good case in point. Hunt tells us that when Satan persuaded Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, he promised, ". . . in the day ye eat thereof . . . ye shall be as gods. . . ." (Genesis 3:5). Hunt goes on to describe the four lies that Satan told Eve. As stated on page one of this article, these are: (1) Satan held out the hope to Eve that godhood was possible for her and that there was something she could do to achieve it; (2) in his contradiction of what Eve thought God had said, Satan rejected the concept of moral absolutes and a personal God; (3) Satan's statement "ye shall not surely die" was a denial of the reality of death; and (4) Satan implied that knowledge (enlightenment) was the key to godhood and immortality (Hunt, pp. 59, 109–110).

An examination of the Genesis 3 account does not corroborate Hunt's conclusions. Neither did Satan tell Eve that she could become a god as Decker and Hunt say in *The God Makers*, page 78. Satan told Eve ". . . ye shall be *as* gods, knowing good and evil." He did not say Eve would be a god; he simply said she would be as God, able to know good and evil. Satan told Eve she could have this ability without being God. It is this very lie that is believed to this day. This is why the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is the fundamental doctrine of pagan Christianity. This belief fosters the notion that while man is already immortal he can never really be God. The best he can hope for is some immortal superhuman status. It is the denial of the real purpose God has for man that has led professing Christianity to believe that salvation is merely the restoration of man to the status he held before "the Fall." This is the first lie Satan told Eve, and deceived professing Christians have believed it to this very day.

Yes, indeed, Satan did reject moral absolutes and the concept of a personal God. But has not professing Christianity been deceived into doing the same? Why do millions of Christians reject the Law of God as outmoded, belonging to another span of time, inappropriate for them? How real is God to most professing Christians today? Look at the vast majority who call themselves Christian. How important is God in their lives and in the decisions they make? When Satan deceived Eve into believing there were no moral absolutes and that God was not really personal in her life, her children followed suit. Those who really adhere to the Law of God (the Ten Commandments) and base their daily lives on the will of God are the decided minority of Christians today.

When Satan told Eve ". . . Ye shall not surely die," he did deny the reality of death. But has not professing Christianity done the same? The doctrine of the immortality of the soul—the cardinal doctrine of pagan Christianity—is based on this Satanic lie, that death does not mean cessation of life but rather separation from God. This pagan teaching, going back to the very beginning of the post-Flood period, holds that man's immortal soul continues to live in a state of consciousness after death. If evil, the soul is separated from God and must spend eternity in hell. Otherwise, the righteous soul goes to heaven. This third lie of Satan is the popular belief today.

Hunt's last idea that Satan taught enlightenment as the key to godhood and immortality is a corollary to his first argument—that Eve was told godhood was a possibility. But Satan did not tell Eve that godhood was a possibility. He simply told her she could be *as* God, knowing good and evil. Hunt is correct in concluding that enlightenment was suggested as the key to immortality. He is incorrect, however, in applying this to godhood because Satan did not tell Eve she could be God. His lie to her was that she could enjoy the attributes of God (supreme enlightenment and immortality) without being God. It is this lie that is believed by the vast majority of professing Christians today. The search for "enlightenment" as a basis for immortality is a deception that has involved most of the pagan world and is at the heart and core of all Gnostic thought, even today.

In Hunt's work, *The Cult Explosion*, an attempt is made to explain John 10:34–35 (pp. 101–102). Decker and Hunt's argument that there is only one true God and beside Him all gods are pretenders who are grasping at godhood—a goal that can never be reached (Decker and Hunt, p. 61)—flies in the face of Biblical evidence. Hunt's explanation is that when Jesus told the Jews "ye are gods" He was merely telling them what Satan had told Eve: that she would not be God, but rather a "god,"—that is, a pretender to godhood who, like Satan, grasped after something he could not have. As a result of this rebellion mankind has suffered the consequences to this day. So while there are many "gods"—pretenders—there is only one true God.

Hunt's error, along with most orthodox theologians, is the failure to recognize man's ultimate potential and goal, as Jesus explained in John 3 and 10. Also, in Hunt's attempt to disprove the pagan notion that man is *already* God, as erroneously expressed in the various Eastern religions and the occult, the emphasis is entirely on disproving this error without taking time to analyze the opposite side of the coin. The Bible reveals that man is not God, and unless he masters his nature he will never become God. He has the potential to be God, but this is a tenuous potential and may never be realized, as Psalm 82 reveals. What Eastern religions and the occult attempt to accomplish is godhood without conforming to the will of God. In brief, they are attempting to shortcut God's plan and purpose while in a state of disobedience and rebellion against His holy and righteous law (Romans 8:6–7; 7:12).

In John 3:16 Jesus was revealed as the "only begotten" Son of God. This was true at that point in time. But later many others were begotten of God (1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 John 5:1, 18)—that is, they had received the Holy Spirit. The idea that John 3:16 "proves" there is only one God/man, Jesus Christ, comes from a failure to recognize man's true potential. Add to this a tendency to read a meaning into the Scriptures for the purpose of disproving the pagan/occult notion that man is already God. The simple truth is that man is a potential God only. John 3:16 demonstrates that Jesus was the first begotten Son of God, the first of many brethren to follow (Romans 8:29).

One text generally avoided or at best briefly mentioned by orthodox writers is John 3:1–8. One author, attempting to explain these verses, says that when one becomes a Christian he has two natures—flesh and spirit—at the same time. So, when one becomes a Christian he is "born again" and receives a new nature from God. This "new birth" brings about an added nature, the divine nature. This new nature in the physical man cannot sin and is immortal, eternal, and glorious (*Armstrongism's 300 Errors Exposed*, by S.E. Anderson, pp. 112, 114–115). Noticeably lacking in this explanation is any comment on John 3:6–8. Jesus differentiated between the flesh and the spirit in the matter of the new birth. He said that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. He then went on to explain the difference between the two. In describing the spiritual birth He said it is as the wind—invisible to the eye though one can observe its results. So is it with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Jesus was not using a parable or

making a play on words. He said one who is born of the Spirit, as distinct from one begotten of the Spirit, is invisible. Here is the clear and concise meaning of being born of the Spirit. One who is born of the Spirit will be able to manifest himself at will and in different forms, as Jesus did after His resurrection (Luke 24:13–31, 36–37; John 20:14–16). Jesus was not describing some "spiritual experience," nor was He talking about two natures. He was explaining to Nicodemus the truth about literal birth of the Spirit, not about the experience of conversion. No explanation attempting to spiritualize away these candid words can suffice.

The Mormon doctrine that there is presently a vast number of gods is not, as Hunt correctly says, substantiated Scripturally. But the Bible definitely does show there are two Gods in the Godhead. These are God the Father and Jesus Christ. Hunt attempts to show that *elohim*, which is generally regarded as the plural form of *eloah*, could not mean more than one. This is due to the failure to recognize that *elohim* signifies a family name which is translated "God" in the English language (see *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. I, pp. 41–45). There is one God-family but it is comprised of more than one member. This is why Genesis 1:26 states, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness. . . ." This is why ". . . the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24). Here, even the name YHVH is revealed as a family name like *elohim*. Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father as He had not been made known in the Old Testament period (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22). The God of the Old Testament was the One who became Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1–4). The only explanation Hunt could devise in order to justify why the plural *elohim* is used when referring to God is that it must be a reference to the Trinity, which he regards as three different persons, yet as one God. Hunt would be shocked to know that the doctrine of the Trinity is as much pagan as the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and heaven and hell. The interested reader should refer to *The Two Babylons*, pages 16–19, for the historical proof regarding the origin of the Trinity. Hunt makes much ado over the fact that pagan occult religions believe in a plurality of gods and for this reason must be wrong. But he fails to mention that these same pagan occult religions generally believe in the immortality of the soul and a place where souls are detained or confined, depending on the extent of sin committed by the person who possessed the soul. To be consistent Hunt must be willing to acknowledge that the truth or falsehood of a doctrine is not determined by who believes it but by whether or not it is substantiated in the Bible.

The text in Isaiah 43:10, which has been quoted to "prove" man can never be God by arguing that ". . . before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" turns out to be simply an interpretation. Adam Clarke in his commentary says:

This is a most difficult place. Was there a time when God was not? No! Yet he says, before me. Will there be a time when God will not exist? Yet he says, after me. Are not all these words to be referred to his creation? Before me, no

god created anything, nor was there anything preexistent but myself. And after me, i.e., after my creation, such as now exists, there shall be no other class of beings formed. This mode of interpretation frees the passage from all embarrassment, and the context perfectly agrees with it.

Since the Greek word *gennao* is the word from which "born" and "begotten" are translated, we could surely expect to find an argument intended to confuse its usage. And sure enough we do. Paul Benware in his book, *Ambassadors of Armstrongism*, pages 134–135, says there are a number of Greek words besides *gennao* which speak of birth. But, an examination of these words clearly reveals that it is *gennao* alone which has relevancy to the subject of spiritual birth. As noted, *gennao* means both "born" and "begotten" in the New Testament. We find it rendered "born" 39 out of 97 times (*Authorized Version*). It is rendered "begotten" 48 times. In 10 other texts it is rendered in variant ways. So, it is not rendered "born" the "vast majority of times" as Benware states. Also, as seen in Benware's book and in most orthodox writings, the Scriptures used to support the argument "once saved, always saved" are in the aorist or present indicative tense. The aorist tense is unusual in that we have no comparable English equivalent. The aorist tense in the Greek expresses fact without any time relationship. So, even though it is often translated as the past tense in the *Authorized Version*, it does not necessarily indicate a completed act. The present indicative is used at times to illustrate the future, for example, ". . . After three days I will rise again [Greek 'I rise,' present indicative]" (Matthew 27:63). It, too, does not denote a completed action. So, many "proofs" given to support the idea "once saved, always saved" are not proofs at all simply because the Greek verbs do not necessarily indicate a completed action.

Paul's comment in 2 Corinthians 5:6–8 is often quoted to "prove" the soul goes to heaven immediately after death. Paul wrote:

Therefore we are always confident, Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

Benware, referring to the above text (pp.119–120), says Paul states that at the time he dies and leaves this sphere of existence, he enters at once into the presence of the Lord. According to Benware, this passage does not suggest an intermediate state of unconsciousness. It teaches that at the moment of death the believer enters into a state of close fellowship with the Lord. Benware's approach is a typical example of how a text is seized upon and a meaning read into it in order to substantiate a preconceived idea.

In 2 Corinthians 5:1 Paul refers to the human body as "our earthly house." Then, ". . . to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" is to possess the new spiritual body (vs. 2). To be found naked (vs. 3) means to be unclothed—the failure to receive that spiritual body. This meaning is made clear in verse four. Then in verse six Paul says that as long as we are in this physical body we are not present with the Lord—that is, we do not have the needed spiritual body in order to be in God's presence (1 John 3:2; Colossians 3:3–4; Revelation 22:4; Job 19:26). But, we have confidence in God's promise, Paul says in verse five, because we have the earnest of the Spirit. And while we may desire to have our promised spiritual body now and to be with the Lord (vs. 8), whether we can be with Him depends upon whether or not and when He accepts us. When are the righteous accepted—receive salvation? At the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50–54)! The argument that the tenses of the infinitives in verse eight and the parallelism between verses eight and six indicate that being "present with the Lord" occurs the moment one dies proves nothing. This is because the parallelism could just as well be indicating the preference of state and not the time element. Also, the infinitives in verse eight are in the aorist, which means verse eight is simply stating a fact without any time reference.

Revelation 5:3 and 6:9–11 are sometimes referred to in order to substantiate the concept that souls go to heaven. In Revelation 5:3 the word "man" should be translated "one." Thus, the text should read, "And no one in heaven, nor in earth, either under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." Under Revelation 6:9–11, *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* quotes Alford:

The representation here, in which they are seen under the altar, is simply symbolical, carrying out the likening of them to victims slain on the altar. Even as the blood of these victims was poured under the altar, and the life was in the blood, so their souls are represented as under the symbolical altar in Heaven crying for vengeance, as blood is often said to do.

The reader should bear in mind that *psyche* is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *nephesh*. Both here and in Revelation 20:4 *psyche* is used, and denotes animal life only. Recall that the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* stated that *nephesh* has no connotation beyond that of animal life.

One other text which bears an explanation is 1 Thessalonians 5:23. ". . . I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." To understand this text we should be reminded that man is a flesh-and-blood physical being. He does not have a soul; he *is* a soul. This soul or life is dependent upon food, water, and the air he breathes. It lasts for a limited duration only. What man does with his life and his body and mind in this present physical domain will determine his eternity (2 Corinthians 5:10). Paul says it is his desire that the entire spirit, soul and body of the saints be kept blameless until Christ returns. "Spirit" is the Greek *pneuma* and

generally refers to the mind, which exemplifies one's attitude, frame of mind, or mental relationship with God. "Soul" is the Greek *psyche*, which generally refers to the physical life. "Body" is the Greek *soma* and refers to the literal flesh and blood. A man is a living being. A living being is comprised of a mind, a body, and life. If any of these three are seriously injured or destroyed, the life is terminated or unable to function properly. A living being with an impaired mind is essentially functionless. A living being cannot exist if the body is destroyed nor can it function properly if the body is seriously incapacitated. Neither can a being exist without life. It was, therefore, Paul's desire that the saints be kept blameless in body, mind, as well as life, until the return of Jesus Christ. Paul specifically refers to the return of Christ. When do the saints receive their reward? At the return of Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:18)! This text is simply stating that it is necessary for the overcomer to have command of all his faculties, as well as his life, in order to live in the manner commensurate for gaining eternal life, which life will be given at the resurrection.

The Old Testament does state that flesh has a spirit (Numbers 16:22; 27:16). The spirit in man is mentioned in several places (Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; Ecclesiastes 3:21; 12:7; Zechariah 12:1; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; 1 Corinthians 2:11; Hebrews 12:23). But is this spirit an immortal soul? Aside from its existence in man, it is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly (Proverbs 20:21). It is formed (molded) within man by God Himself (Zechariah 12:1). It imparts intellect or an awareness of thoughts, not just the thoughts themselves (1 Corinthians 2:11). It is the spirit of just men made perfect (Hebrews 12:23). And it goes back to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The word "spirit" in these texts, which is translated from the Hebrew word *ruach*, and the Greek word *pneuma*, is not completely defined by "breath" or "air," a primary meaning of both. Nor is it well-defined by "mind," another important meaning for both. Neither the breath nor the mind go back to God who gave it.

Since the Bible does not substantiate the doctrine of an immortal soul, and since *ruach* and *pneuma* are never translated "soul," "the spirit in man" is not some immortal component that retains consciousness after the death of man. But what is it? The most that can be said from the Scriptures, is that it is the means by which God preserves the record of man's character. It can be likened to a sort of blueprint or tape recording of man's spiritual essence which is filed away by God until the resurrection.

As this article closes, the reader should be reminded of the historical record. Since the doctrine of the resurrection was too fundamental to Christianity to be repudiated, it had to be evaded or neutralized. This was initiated by the Jewish philosophers who had adopted Platonism. They taught that the immortal soul was reunited with the body at the resurrection. This was picked up by Augustine and refined by Thomas Aquinas. While Paul was a Pharisee who affirmed Christ's bodily resurrection and taught the resurrection as the

hope of life after death, his view did not wholly determine the main lines of Christian thought (Moore, p. 68). The truth of the matter is this: Orthodox Christianity's doctrine regarding immortality has its roots in paganism. It is small wonder many worshippers of Oriental religions and the occult see little difference between what they teach and what orthodox Christianity believes.

© 1985 Church of God, The Eternal
Reprint: 2000