

DEATH: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Douglas T. Holden

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DEATH: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF DIVINITY AND THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS
IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

DOUGLAS T. HOLDEN

ST ANDREWS, SCOTLAND

MAY, 1966



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DEATH: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF DIVINITY AND THE SEMINAR ADMINISTRATION
IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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ST. ALBANS, VERMONT

MAY, 1986



CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

Whereas the following special study and research has been composed solely by myself, and the work of which it is a record has been done by myself and has not been accepted in any previous application for a higher degree, I hereby submit this dissertation to be approved by the Faculty of Divinity and the Senatus Academicus for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Douglas T. Holden

A STATEMENT OF RESEARCH TRAINING

Douglas T. Holden, a native of Michigan, received his B. A. degree from the University of Michigan in 1958. The B. D. degree was awarded to him by Duke University in 1960. He holds a certificate for graduate work completed at the Institute of Religion in Houston, Texas.

Mr. Holden was admitted to the University of St Andrews for Research Training under Ordinance No. 61 in the autumn of 1961. Professor Edgar P. Dickie supervised and guided the research for the thesis which was submitted to the Senatus Academicus of the University of St Andrews in May, 1966.

Mr. Holden has travelled extensively in Europe and the Holy Lands. He is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church and has served churches in Florida and the Bahamas. He was appointed to the Faculty of Florida Southern College in the Department of Philosophy and Religion in 1961.

CERTIFICATE OF SATISFACTION

The work, of which the following dissertation
is a record, has been pursued in accordance
with the conditions of the Ordinance No. 61 ¹⁶ ₅₁₆
and its accompanying Regulations set forth by
the Senatus Academicus. The same conditions
of the Ordinance and Regulations have hereby
been fulfilled.



**Research Supervisor,
FACULTY OF DIVINITY**

DEATH: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

The topic of death is the most offensive subject confronting contemporary Man. Our society, like the Greeks of old, is so threatened by the inevitability of death and the failure to believe that there is anything beyond, that Man evades death through a frantic self-indulgence. Anything which might imply that Man must eventually die places an immense question mark before him which negates all his values. Man would rather die than think about death. Death is no longer seen as a portal opening to a greater life but rather as a wall for which there is "no exit." If one mentions the word "death" in polite society he is considered to be obscene. Perhaps History shall distinguish this century by defining it as a "death-denying" culture.

There is a conspiracy of silence shrouded around

concepts of death. A child's first encounter with religion may be through his attitudes toward, or his knowledge of, death. It is dismissed all too soon for a child can grasp a concept of death as readily as an adult.

Children may first pray:

If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

While the parent might be quite willing to teach this simple prayer, a death in the family will evoke an entirely different response. The child is usually not permitted to attend the funeral and is frequently told euphemistically anything with the exception that the person did in fact die. A person may go through life without ever discussing the topic of death in any depth and thus finds himself ill-equipped to face death intellectually, emotionally or spiritually. The offense of death frequently leaves the bereaved alone to work out his grief since there are so few who are willing to share with him or to talk with him meaningfully about death. The horror of death usually isolates the dying from their friends and relatives. The process of dying is "managed" in institutions by professionals in a remote and impersonal manner. The prospect of dying at home in bed surrounded by the family is indeed

highly improbable. The individual is frequently denied the privilege of being conscious at his own death. Tolstoy believed death to be the most significant event in life and it is very possible that this is a time of the greatest religious crisis and impact. The Church is often excluded from sharing with the dying when it alone can offer consolation and meaning.

Sociologists continually assert that life has changed drastically since World War II never realizing that death too has changed. During the Mediaeval period Man prayed for a lingering death so that he could be prepared to meet the Christ of Judgment. Today's Man has completely inverted these desires for he feels that death is so grim that one need not prolong the agony. The sudden unexpected death, which is usually called "untimely" or "accidental," is rapidly becoming standard. Though medical science has made great strides in pushing back the time of death, there is little that medicine can do to check the increasing number of violent deaths. Wars, bombings, prison camps and automobiles have done much to change the strategy of death. Soon the accidental or violent death will be listed in the obituaries as a death resulting from "natural causes." The suddenness of death is usually thought to

be a blessing in disguise because the deceased is removed from the reflection on and the preparation for death. In the future the increased mobility of life may in fact preclude any prediction of the advent of death for the individual. It would seem then that the wise man would be prepared to meet death at any juncture.

The study of death is as awesome as it is threatening. Since the problem of death will remain intellectually insoluble it will probably never gain the unlimited attention of philosophers and theologians. Philosophy has stepped lightly around the subject because many philosophers have dismissed it as a proper subject for their inquiries. Death has been relegated to the fields of biology to be studied as an organic process or to psychology where it is considered to be our "basic anxiety." Since death strikes the totality of Man it calls for a concerted effort of all disciplines related to Man. The interest in death per se diminished with the rise of Christian Eschatology and its promise of eternal life. With the failure of the Church to make these doctrines relevant for this age, other disciplines have opened the door to speculation and research into the quest for the meaning of death.

Death continues to raise many ethical problems

which have profound religious implications. Such problems as suicide, abortion, euthanasia, grief and basic honesty with terminal patients are pressing for answers. These questions have been dealt with basically from a legal standpoint though they are fundamentally theological in origin. Should a Christian family established on love and honesty deceive the dying one at the end? What consolation does the Church have to offer the bereaved? Does not the Church have an attitude toward the practice of euthanasia and abortion? What will happen to Christian Eschatology if the individual can be rejuvenated after being frozen? These are some of the questions which cry out for insight. The Church can begin to answer these problems only when theologians attempt to discover what is the meaning of life and death. The path is long and difficult but perhaps the most important and most necessary inquiry in our time. If the Church does not soon speak to these issues with wisdom and insight it will lose the opportunity to speak at all. Certainly the Christian Church of all the institutions should be able to face death.

With the implications of the problem of death pressing relentlessly upon the Church there is much groundwork to be done. The theologian is so often engrossed in

theological detail that he forgets people die daily. It is an answer to these practical problems that society demands of theology. The great task before the Church is to find out what it really has to say in regard to death. What is death? What does the death of Christ mean? What are the implications of the death of Christ upon the individual believer? All these questions are primary and fundamental for the completion of the Christian perspective toward death. It would seem that the Christian perspective has become more obscure over the years. What the Church saw so clearly and proclaimed so forcefully has become fuzzy and vague. Christian Theology has become so fused with Greek Philosophy that it has reared individuals who are a mixture of nine parts Greek thought to one part Christian thought. Thus the Church on any given Sunday is more likely to proclaim immortality rather than resurrection. The Church can no longer affirm a creed which gives assent to victory over death and yet find itself speechless in confronting death. The Church's silence on the issues of death has caused the majority of people since World War II to find the meaning and purpose of life and death outside the confines of its walls. The Church was not unscathed by warfare for more individuals

died for the sake of the Christian Church in this century than in all previous centuries combined. The cost of discipleship which is often extravagant today, promises that martyrdom is not simply a relic of the Early Church. Is the Church to reply that these lives were given in vain? If the Church dares to ask individuals to hold the Faith even in death, should not the Church have the courage in peaceful times to establish what it believes about death?

The topics raised here are deep and searching. No man could attempt to answer all of them. It will take the prolonged devotion of many dedicated men to reach even a tentative formulation. The task, however, is not hopeless because it is God who has given death meaning and it is He who bids us to come. Individuals come to the Church seeking answers to their problems with death. The Church must stand ready to meet them, with the realization that it was born out of death and that it is Christ who has ultimately changed the meaning of death. Thus Man should come to the Church to find the meaning of both life and death for the Christian Message speaks directly to both.

This life is shared with death; if one is realistic the whole of life must be thought out in terms of death. The fact of death alone gives true depth to the question

of the meaning of life. It is from the perspective of death that the Christian learns to live. One learns to value every moment, thought, and deed as if it were the last. One learns to trust God in death as he has in life. And if Man is not prepared to die today, certainly he will not be prepared to die tomorrow. If he is not prepared to live today, how can he expect to be prepared to live tomorrow.

In order to find where the Church stands today, one must first discern where it has stood in the past. The writings of the Church have frequently spoken to the subject of death and therefore the Church has a theology of death which is implicit in all its writings but has become repressed with time. The task is monumental but absolutely necessary. A religion which has as its theme the death of its Founder and His subsequent victory over death must inevitably address itself to the meaning of death. For it is because of Christ's meaningful death that the Church can speak to the death of all men. Any such failure to do so ultimately weakens Christianity at its strongest point. To remove, to belittle, or to deny the Christian beliefs concerning death is to disembowel the Church and the whole superstructure of the Church comes

tumbling down. The failure to speak to death realistically and unashamedly is in fact a denial of Christianity.

It was by no means conceived that this one writing could answer all the questions concerning the Christian answers or beliefs in regard to death. The theme presented here is an historical survey of representative periods and figures from the ancient Hebrew times through the Protestant Reformation which demonstrates the evolving and emerging patterns of death. No Christian perspective could be found without dealing with the fundamental concepts herein. As the title suggests, this is simply a start but nevertheless a basic start. All of Christian theology is related to the Death of Christ so it is to His Death that the Church must continually readdress itself. If the Church is bold enough to hold before the world the symbol of a crucified Saviour, could it not have the audacious spirit "to proclaim His Death till He comes."

CHAPTER ONE

THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF DEATH

THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF DEATH

One cannot come to the Christian Faith and find there a sui generis religion blooming forth in the wilderness of Israel. Certainly the thoughts, actions, and teachings of Jesus Christ came from the context of the Jewish Faith. Jesus relied on the best of the Jewish religion to demonstrate and to prove His teachings, as did all the rabbis. Often we find Him calling upon the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and pointing to the beliefs and structure of Judaism. The Christian world has become so aware of the environmental influences upon the Faith that no one could honestly assert that Christianity developed in a vacuum.

Indeed, Twentieth Century theology has been primarily concerned with influences and backgrounds of Christianity. It was believed that the primitive empirical faith of Jesus and the early Church could be found by the study of comparative religions, textual criticism, and the

life of the Jesus of history. Thus, this search became the impetus of most of the theological world and the whole of the Christian world has been stimulated by these findings and insights. This approach has been the major thrust of research and studies in recent times.

This was skillfully summarized by W. Robertson Smith when he stated:

No positive religion that has moved men has been able to start with a tabula rasa, and express itself as if religion were beginning for the first time; in form, if not in substance, the new system must be in contact all along the line with the older ideas and practices which it finds in possession. A new scheme of faith can find a hearing only by appealing to religious instincts and susceptibilities that already exist in its audience, and it cannot reach these without taking account of the traditional forms in which all religious feeling is embodied, and without speaking a language which men accustomed to these old forms can understand. Thus to comprehend a system of positive religion thoroughly, to understand its historical origin and form as well as in its abstract principles, we must know the traditional religion that preceded it.¹

Although this statement concerns the Semitic backgrounds of the Jewish Faith, one finds it equally true of the Jewish backgrounds of the Christian Faith. This is especially true when we come to the Christian theology

of death. Therefore it is easily seen why a study of the Jewish concepts of death must precede an understanding of the Christian concepts. While I believe that the detailed study of death and immortality belongs to the fields of comparative religion and anthropology, I must make a brief account of the views contained in the Old Testament and parallel writings.

The concepts of religion and personal beliefs vary as much as the wideness of the seas. But whatever might be a man's faith or his environmental background, he believes in death. The universality and inevitability of death have impressed all mankind. Thus any religious system has to account for the death of the individual and assert its beliefs concerning death. The earlier chapters of the Book of Genesis certainly attempt to make an explanation of the intrusion of this evil upon the normal order of things. Death is thus explained as the violation or the rebellion of man against the divine order. Because man asserts himself in order that he might become his own "god", the divine must punish him (Gen. 3: 17-19). The concept of death was so important to the mind of the Hebrew that it was dealt with in the very beginning of their devotional literature. The Garden of

Eden account pictures God offering the gift of life. Man makes a choice to reject the offer of God and thus chooses death. Man is therefore responsible for his own choice of death and the justice of God is restored. This must have been an early explanation of how God could be the giver of life and simultaneously allow death. Now that the forces of death have been unleashed upon the earth, the Hebrew God, Yahweh, continues to aid man. Yahweh is able to fight death by prolonging life and thus pushes back death's powers for awhile. Also, Yahweh gives an abundance of life through numerous offspring as if He is casting seed in the face of death so that its threat might be held further at bay. Yahweh must eventually give His children over to Sheol for He has no power over the dead at this point.

Before we can think in terms of what the Old Testament reveals to us concerning life, it becomes increasingly apparent that life can only be seen from the perspective of death. Conversely, we find that death can only be defined in the context of life. To come to an understanding of what death meant to the Jews, one must of necessity consider what life meant to these people.

Life for the Jew was the very majestic gift of

God, Who created, sustained, maintained, and eventually ended all life. The power of life came only from the Almighty and it must be appreciated as such. This gift of life was the summum bonum for the Hebrew and he equated it with happiness. The Hebrew was completely dependent on God for life as well as death. The loss of one's life meant to break the relationship one has with God. The Jew would find himself in violent disagreement with the Greek who maintained that life was imprisonment and one could only look forward to the day when he might be liberated from the chafing fetters of the body that tied and bound him. "The Israelite loves life; he meets it with optimism: he sees it as a gift of God. Existence at its most physical and concrete (form) shows forth the bounty of Yahweh; thus the believer does not long to escape from this world, but rather to have length of days in it; he desires, not to be lifted up above earthly chance and change into some intemporal spiritual state, but rather to enjoy all the resources the Creator offers him in His creation."² The full and lengthy life that abounds in prosperity, which he believes to be the blessing of God, is the highest achievement of a Jew. In the last scene of the Book of Job, he is restored to great prosperity

and continues to live for a hundred and forty years, dying full of days. This then was the reward of the faithful servants who lived in the Lord such as Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. Professor Robert Martin-Achard states that the Israelite prays; "to live long on the land inherited from the fathers, to have many sons at one's side to ensure the stint of the day, to see the fruit of one's toil, the abundance of one's reaping and gathering, the increase of one's flocks, and finally to share these blessings with a whole people and especially, with the City of God."³

"'Length of days' was what the Hebrew desired, for death offered no prospect, and death waited for all. 'Whom the gods love die young' is a Greek sentiment, but to the Hebrew early death was sheer tragedy. That man should 'come to his grave like a shock of corn fully ripe' (Job 5:26) seemed most fitting. For come it must to all."⁴ Perhaps the individual Greek had a higher regard for life than their poets and philosophers allowed. The concept of *σῶμα σῆμα* ---"the body, a tomb!" was probably confined to the philosophical circles of the Orphics and Platonists for it is certainly alien to Hebrew thought. The whole Hebrew concept of religion revolves around the walking with the Lord, sharing in His blessing, and

receiving prosperity and length of days. This then was the fulfilment of life with the emphasis falling on the here and now. The ultimate goal of every Jew was to maintain an abundant life without concerning himself with a future life. If he thought in terms of immortality it was in regard to the perpetuation of the family name and hence the nation Israel. This was sufficient for the early Hebrew beginnings and they did not pursue the issue further.

When one comes to the study of the Old Testament theology in regard to the concepts of death, he is met by two serious problems: 1) The comparative sparseness of the references to a life after death; and 2) the fragmentary and even self-contradictory character of what seems to be taught.⁵ In the first instance we have seen the lack of individual religion. The national interests gained prominence which gave little hope for the various individuals. In the second case we must come to a realization that the religion of Israel itself was creative and dynamic, mobile and fluctuating leaving various stratifications of believers in relation to the future life. Various beliefs and thoughts have come down to us from the Old Testament. There was no attempt to sift and

sort these striking or glaring inconsistencies because the Jewish mind did not have to reduce religion to the logical systems of the Western World. We are also further further removed from them by an entirely different concept of psychology and Weltanschauung. One also finds unequal development among the books of the Bible so we see that Genesis has a more sophisticated outlook than that of Deuteronomy. Thus if the religious development of the Jews ranging through the Old Testament from Genesis through Malachi were sketched on paper the outline would give the impression of a series of mountains and valleys. R. H. Charles further relates the problem of change by stating: "When once the great doctrine of monotheism emerged in Israel, all other beliefs, whether relating to the present life or the after-world, were destined sooner or later to be brought into unison with it, but in the case of eschatological beliefs later rather than sooner; for eschatological beliefs are universally the last of all beliefs to be influenced by the loftier conceptions of God."⁶ Later editors and redactors attempted to soften, or to modify various views, or in some cases to adjust the theology they read in the Scriptures with their own personal beliefs. This usually resulted in

the spirit of compromise, representing neither the views of the writer nor those of the redactor. "This applies emphatically to the subject. . . (of) the belief in Immortality. (Statements are made). . . in regard to this belief are inconsistent with each other; and therefore, the attempt has been made to compromise. But the compromise is by no means always satisfying, the subject appears at times very puzzling."⁷ But in spite of these difficulties the Jews confronted death and made some profound affirmations of faith in the face of death. They did not run from the task but attempted to account for it.

Life for the Israelite is brought about by the creative dynamic outgoing force of God. We see that God creates life by breathing His breath into Man. To the Jew a word was far more than a sound; a word was something which had an active independent existence, which actually did things. The spoken word to the Jew was fearfully alive. Thus the ruach or the breath of God was a dynamic, forceful, and creative power. The spoken word was one of the ways of speaking of the creative activity of God and in particular this is seen in the Creation story. At every stage of it we read: "And God said. . . and

it was accomplished." No more striking or less anthropomorphic way of describing God's sovereign power of creation could be imagined. The conception of God making things with His hands is utterly incomprehensible. Thus the Jews speak metaphorically as in saying "by the word of God were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." Death then occurs when God removes his ruach. This force comes from God and thus returns to God at the point of death. The ruach for the Hebrew originally meant "wind" or "spirit." Thus it had ascribed to it the same characteristics as wind. "Man's spirit was conceived of as composed of the same light aerial substance as the wind; . . . it could enter and leave the body at will; it is given by God, and returns to God when a man dies."⁸

In addition to the ruach the Hebrew conceived of man having a nepheesh or "soul" and used the word sometimes as representative of all of a man. This was the inner or spiritual aspect of man as opposed to the outer or fleshly part of man. It is interesting to note that its origin means "breath." The "remnants in the Old Testament of the original signification of nepheesh are interesting, for it is probable that in its original

conception nephesh, regarded as a material part of man dwelling within the body, announced its presence there by means of the breath; when a man died and his breath ceased, this was because the nephesh had left the body. Since, therefore, the life of man ceased with the exit of the soul, this latter was regarded as his breath; and one can understand why the word is frequently used in the sense of 'life'." ⁹ It was held by the Israelites as with other people that the soul could leave the body as it desired. In this manner they could explain dreams, fainting, unconsciousness and some forms of insanity. The soul seemed to be a very tricky substance which slipped in and out as it desired.

The other concept of the body that should be considered is "Basar." This is a simple word which means flesh. It is a materialistic term meaning the matter which makes up the various parts of the body. There is no distinction between the flesh of man and animals, and consequently there is no difficulty with this word. The other parts of man are blood (dam) and bones (azamoth) but since these are not directly related to this study they will only be mentioned. The Greek equivalents are psyche for nephesh; sarx for basar; and pneuma for ruach.

It is readily seen that the human organism had become rather complex for the Hebrew but since these concepts were used before the foundation of modern medicine there is much duplication and fusion of terms.

Death then is viewed as a crisis because it severs or terminates all the various elements of the individual. It strikes the totality of the individual and separates him not only from the community but also from his God. What then happens to these various parts at the death of the individual? It is apparent that the body of the individual remained where it was placed or buried. Since not all were buried in the ground but were frequently placed in caves, as in the case of Jesus, the flesh was seen in various forms of decomposition. This was not difficult for the Jew as he knew that he came from dust and would return to dust. In the process of dying the nephesh passed on into Sheol. Job speaks of God who has redeemed "my soul from going down into the pit" and brought "back his soul from the Pit" (Job 33:28-30, Is. 38:17, and Ps. 16:10, 86:13). The breath and spirit are as the wind and they return to God, as the dust returns to the earth so shall the breath return to God. These do not return with any personal connotations but

should be considered more as the conservation of matter and remain entirely devoid of personal characteristics.

The people of the ancient Near East formed their conceptions of the world from what they observed. For them the world appeared flat so they believed it to be so. Overhead was the large blue hemisphere which made up the sky and which rested on the earth. Below the seas and the earth there exists the Tehom or the "deep." At the bottom of every lake or sea there is this dark deep abyss filled with Tehom. To further complete the concept of layers there existed in the earth caverns called Sheol. According to Professor C. Ryder Smith, there exist limestone formations, containing many caves, which are deep and extensive in the areas of Greece and Palestine. With this knowledge in mind it is easily seen how the ideas of Sheol and Hades developed.¹⁰ This then is how the Jews viewed their world throughout most of the Old Testament. "Two other ideas appear for the first time in the centuries just before Christ. Both of them relate to fire. One was a belief that somewhere within the earth there is a place of fire; and the other that there are huge fires in the far East and the far West.

It is probable that the first belief arose from the phenomena of the volcano, for in these fire rushes out from 'the bowels of the earth'. . . . As to the belief in the Eastern and Western fires, it is easy to suggest its origin, for often, at sunrise and sunset, it looks as if flames from fires beyond the horizon were leaping into the sky."¹¹

In the Old Testament there are some sixty-five references to Sheol and always in the context of the dead. There is no attempt to explain it. "Like their neighbours, the Hebrews inherited the idea from pre-historic times sans explanation."¹² Here in the earthy regions the dead are gathered in a grave, or a dungeon. As we have seen, Sheol is below the earth; thus the dead have to go down into this pit. It is the lowest place where "life" exists and certainly as far as one can be removed from the heavens. ". . . The soul ceases to live when the hour of death is come and then continues in monotonous and precarious existence, either in the near neighbourhood of the tomb or the family home, or in a far-off underworld where all the perished are gathered together The soul of the departed is bound both to the grave and to Sheol."¹³ This inconsistency did not seem to disturb

then as the whole of death was shrouded in mystery.

The individual continues to exist in a gloomy darkness and misery of Sheol as a very diminished or diluted person.

Raphain is the word used most frequently to describe the dead. While the original meaning is lost its root means "to be weak" or "to be flabby, soft, limp."¹⁴

Their main activity seems to be one of sleeping; however there is an aura and a magic about them that results in utter terror for the living. However, let it be stated that "the beliefs relating to the soul and spirit, Sheol and the condition of the departed were heathen to the core. There was no blessed outlook for the Old Testament saint. Sheol was the final abode alike of the righteous and the righteous and the wicked."¹⁵

In their silent aimless existence, "God does not remember them, nor they Him; and they are therefore without hope for His truth and all that this implies; they cannot praise Him nor give thanks to Him; they are altogether profitless, for God has nothing to do with them or with the place where they are. With this contrast what is said about them in the Job and Ezekiel passages; the place where the dead are is a place of rest, where the ordinary man is in the company of kings, who retain

their rank there; there is no annoyance there; those who are prisoners are at ease; though master and servant are there, 'the small and the great,' there is no oppression. The dead are to be envied."¹⁶ Thus they are beyond the control and interest of God, but the views vary as to whether this is a good existence or not. Regardless of their beliefs on this point, it still conflicted with their theology and caused much unrest. Even if they held that God had power they knew: . . .

there is always some incompatibility between him and death; that is why the solution of the problem of death could only be found in the final triumph of life.

Since death was the limit set to human life by Yahweh, it was on him alone that the pushing back or even the complete removal of that limit depended. Before the insistence of Israel's religion on Yahweh's omnipotence, the possibility of escaping death was not excluded, but it is none the less clear that the assertion of his divine transcendence and utter distinction from the created world could leave hope for this privilege only in rare and exceptional cases.¹⁷

For one to enter into Sheol means for one to enter into a state of sleep for the Hebrew mind. There is a very close relationship of sleep to death which even carries over into our time. "He slept with his fathers" or

"he lay down with his fathers" are ancient euphemisms for the term death. At other times the Hebrews used "to be gathered unto their people" or "go to their fathers' place" words which have deep emotional significance and certainly give the concept of continuity and community.

The real difficulty with the concept of Sheol was an ethical problem. All men descended to this realm for which there was no distinction among individuals. "For them good and bad fared alike in Sheol. It seems clear that, until the rise of the Apocalyptic, this continued to be the common belief. It perhaps survived among the Sadducees even in New Testament times (Mk 12:18, Ac 23:8). The 'saints' themselves, when they cry out against the misery of Sheol, assume that all are alike there, and long, not for a different lot in Sheol, but for a return from it. The normal Old Testament belief is that there are not ethical differences in Sheol."¹⁸ Over against the moral aspect there is a more ancient tradition of social distinction. By this means all social status is perpetuated and one rests with his own class. The distinction is that all leaders group again to form the aristocracy but in the very lowest depths are the criminals, the suicides, and the uncircumcised.

The basic concept of Sheol did not remain constant in the minds of the Jews. Dr. Oesterley comments:

Among the Israelites this belief (the state of the dead) underwent a fundamental change because it was found to be incompatible with the belief in Jahwe; the essence of the change consisted in the teaching that they who went to Sheol could never leave it; they were tied to it for ever (ancient). This had not been held hitherto. But the official exponents of the religion of Jahwe found it not only difficult, but quite impossible, to root out the ancient traditional belief (popular) which was held by the people. For centuries, therefore, two beliefs existed in Israel regarding Sheol - - the ancient popular belief, and what came to be the official belief and doctrine. These two forms of belief are to be found over and over again in the Old Testament. Other beliefs which centred around that of Sheol, and which were expressed by various practices, were also found to be incompatible with the religion of Jahwe; but in spite of penal enactments against the perpetrators of these practices, they continued until long after the Exile.

The existence of two diametrically opposed Sheol-beliefs, a popular and an official, illustrated in a variety of ways in the Old Testament, is amply sufficient to account for inconsistent and contradictory elements regarding belief in the future life.¹⁹

The Hebrews believed that man was mortal and we learn this from Genesis if we see nothing else in it. Death could not be seen apart from the natural order of

things. Yet, when death did come upon a family it said a strong healthy "No" to the love and the holiness of God. Man was aware of his mortality and thus he became a being existing for death and ever moving toward death. Though the Hebrews may live and die, the nation Israel continues and carries with it all the immortality that the Hebrews needed at first. However, the Hebrew is not entirely severed from the land of the living by death as he has some vague contact or knowledge of what happens on earth. In the practice of consulting the dead (necromancy) as seen in I Samuel 28:3-25, Saul consults the dead Samuel through the medium, the Witch of Endor. "Now, whatever opinion may be held about this narrative, nobody will deny that it is an important illustration of the belief of the early Israelites concerning the departed. They continue to live, they remember, they foresee; they can leave whatever place it is in which they abide; and they can return to the world, in a certain sense."²⁰ Yahweh was not only the Author of individual lives but He was also known as the Finisher. "There is no doubt that, according to the Old Testament, it is for God to decide when a man is to die---that is, God is the master of the event called 'death'. It is true that men may interfere

with His will here, as Cain did when he killed Abel, but this is only the extreme example of the Old Testament doctrine that man has a realm of freedom, and that he can so use it as to interfere with the sovereign will of God ---that is, he can sin. The Hebrew believed that, just as it is for God to decide that a man shall be born, so it is for Him to decide when a man shall die---i. e. when he shall pass to Sheol."²¹

It follows logically that since Yahweh was the God of Israel and of Israel alone; His powers did not extend into Sheol. To be dead, meant to be cut off from Yahweh or no longer to exist in His sight.

The complaint, uttered in various contexts that the dead person is excluded from the praise of God takes us to the core of the concept that is dominant here. 'The earth he hath given to the children of men. The dead praise not Yahweh.' (Ps. 115:16f). After death, therefore, the godly man stands beyond the realm of life, which was infinitely precious to him and in which is maintained the cultic relation to Yahweh. Another supplicant draws the consequences still more clearly. Isa. 38:18: 'For the grave (Sheol) cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth. Yahweh's faithfulness 'emet has become meaningless for the dead. This means,

then, quite simply they are cut off from thy hand. (Ps. 88:5). It is really here that the actual sting, which death had for OT religion through the centuries, resides. Yahweh is the god of life in a quite exclusive sense. The sharp contrast to the notion of Yahweh's relation to life is equally clear. We saw above how life was not only given by Yahweh physically but its preservation was also acknowledged as being dependent on God as a result of his own decision. Thus while we saw that it was precisely life's connection with God that was absolute, here it is the absence of such a connection that is characteristic."²²

Hell thus became total and utter separation from Yahweh and consequently from all those that walk with Yahweh. Man has no meaning or no purpose as there is no past and no future, there is only the dull existence which is no existence. Thus the worst that can happen to man does indeed happen for he is absolutely alone. The primitive tribes were aware of this tremendous consequence on an individual as the worst punishment for criminals was to be banished from the community. Though this banishment was not death and looks almost insignificant from our point of view, it was for a communal society a fate worse than death itself. This was equally true for the Hebrew, who could never see his life apart from the

community of Yahweh, was now to be separated from the only two things that held any meaning for him. By very definition Sheol is as far from the heavens as it could possibly be, it is on the other end of the universe. To cry out, to pray, to move, or to think was futile for you were beyond all forms of assistance for there was no one to hear you, nor to help you, not even Yahweh Himself. You were totally alone at the dark deep abyss of nothingness.

Professor Edmond Jacob notes that "death and Sheol--- the two terms are sometimes interchangeable, a fact which proves that the stress was laid with Sheol upon its function rather than upon its location---are powers opposed to Yahweh or at least neutral in relation to his sovereignty. Since the creation narratives do not speak about the creation of Sheol, it may be supposed that in Sheol traces were seen of the original chaos---the darkness, while the watery aspect of chaos was represented by the waters of the sea."²³ Sheol did not always stand merely for a region found only after death. It was also known to be a state or a condition of living. "The Israelite does not go down to the nether world only in the hour of his death; when adversity or illness lays him low, he has already fallen into death's power. In the time of

suffering, defeat, despair, or sin, death means more than a merely potential and more or less distant threat, it enters his existence as an actuality; through one or other of these manifestations, all its destructive reality crushes the creature. The life of the sufferer, the captive, the oppressed or the guilty is passed in the shadow of death, under a negative sign; already he can mourn: 'I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel' (Ps. 31:12)."²⁴

Thus the state of Sheol does not always break in upon them only at death but continually haunts and threatens the living. "Anything that threatens life, the desert, the sea, sin, disease, chaos or darkness, is linked with death, which remains the hostile reality and which will finally be overcome. . . . the Old Testament never presents death as a liberation or as a gateway giving access to perfect felicity. Along with the Semitic peoples as a whole, Israel shares belief in the fatal and inevitable character of death which found classical expression in this passage from the Epic of Gilgamesh:

When the gods created humankind,
They made death the lot of humankind,
Life, they retained in their own hands."²⁵

Thus death comes as an assault on all of life and offers a constant danger to all that lives. "The Old Testament, then, takes a serious view of the power of death over man, it knows what it means for him to fall into its hands. Thus Sheol is seen as a reality, in some sense autonomous, which is not the work of Yahweh and which, by its dynamic, disputes the authority of the God of Israel over His creation and seeks to bring it back into primeval chaos again. Nevertheless the Old Testament rejects dualism; the destiny of the world is not to be explained as an interminable struggle between two divinities of coequal power; it is not the reflexion of that antagonism which is found in nature in the opposition of night to day or of death to life."²⁶ While the Hebrews cannot conceive of a dualism, death is viewed as a negation of all that is good and a force of evil. Death seeks to destroy God's creation and His creatures, sometimes boldly striking them down, yet in most instances waiting patiently even through lingering illness but either way death wins out.

There are two aspects of death in the Old Testament:

Firstly, death seems primarily to consist in a loss of power, a diminution of vital energy, in which case it is connected with

other conditions such as sleep, fatigue, or illness. From this point of view, which is perhaps the more primitive, it is easy to envisage a return to life; the resurrection will be a reawakening of the energies of life, 'a simple reanimation of dormant forces.' Viewed thus, it is seen as a possible, almost a natural, phenomenon.

But, secondly, death is also an absolute separation from the Living God, an apparently total breach with the world of the living, and moreover a terrible and constant threat to human existence; it intrudes upon man everywhere; life finds itself continually disturbed, reduced to inexistence, and emptied of all meaning by death; the creature then becomes the prey of Sheol, and falls into a sort of nothingness, over which Yahweh is certainly sovereign, but in which He seems, in the last resort to be disinterested.²⁷

The Hebrew took his beliefs from what he observed. When he looked about the world he realized that everything died. Thus death was natural. Man was mortal by creation and Yahweh was immortal by definition. This did not rest easy on the minds of the Hebrews.

The nature of death, too, is changed; at every instant, the eye of the believer sees it, not as a natural fact, but as a scandalous irregularity; it becomes something other than a biological phenomenon and concerns the human being in his totality, assailing him body and soul. It is not, in point of fact, in so far as he belongs,

with the plant and the beast, to the realm of creation, and is therefore a transient being, that death concerns him, but because he is a person, determined by his relationships with God and his neighbour. Death attacks man at the deepest level of his being, it sets a question-mark over against his enterprises and his sentiments alike, its reality tends to destroy the reality of his own existence; in this sense, for the Old Testament, as for the Apostle Paul, 'the wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23).

Death, the common lot of creatures, still remains a particular event for the human being; there is nothing automatic about it, but rather it presents itself as a personal and direct "No" spoken by God to the man whom He has called to life. Death bears witness to a refusal on the part of the Creator, to His withdrawal, to His absence; if, in fact, Yahweh kills, He is not really present in death, for all of Him is in life; He is the God of the living and not of the dead, and the latter know themselves to be bereft of Him (Ps. 6:5; 88:5).

But abandonment by the Living God cannot be absolute; His indifference towards those who are no more cannot be His final word; one day He will cease to suffer the existence of Sheol along with Himself. Slowly, under the pressure of manifold circumstances, the Old Covenant believers progress towards the conviction that the Living God can and will make all things new; Israel's vision of the future in store for the dead little by little grows distinct, until at last, almost at the very moment of the coming of Him,

who by His destiny was going to give them incomparable succour, it culminates in belief in the resurrection.²⁸

The contacts of the Hebrews with the religions of the Persians and Canaanites certainly had their influences on their views of eschatology. Particularly, because as I have mentioned that theology develops so slowly in regard to the "last things." In these instances the Jewish religion seemed to be lacking and it was only natural for them to learn from the more sophisticated religions. However, it is erroneous to assume that these new ideas were adapted or assimilated in toto. These extraneous influences can by no adequate means be measured. The Hebrews did not add to their faith the concept of the dying and rising god nor did they accept the concept of the resurrection. As Professor Martin-Achard so ably points out, the Hebrews knew of the concept of the resurrection long before the period of exile but had chosen to reject it. Rather this had had a negative influence upon them, and as a result they were much more sceptical and slower to finally take on this concept than if they had not been so influenced.

. . . We must state that the People of Yahweh found the concept of resurrection in Canaan; but for a long time this formed part of a realm over against which Yahweh stood in His sovereign will, so that,

with regard to the resurrection, the religion of the Canaanites played a negative part, by obliging the Israelites to make their stand against it; it had nevertheless, a sort of indirect action, in making possible a sort of purification of this belief which, in another age and within another context, received a new content. The agricultural cults thus brought the Israelites face to face with an assertion which could not take its legitimate place within the framework of the Biblical revelation until once and for all freed from its ties with nature-mysticism; for the Canaanite belief to be accepted by the servants of the Living God, the Jewish community had to discover, in the midst of its sufferings, the extent of the reach of the power, and of the righteousness, and of the goodness, of its God.²⁹

It would be wrong not to recognize the syncretism of eschatology which came first into the Hebrew faith and then eventually into the Christian faith. It is easy to be misled and to assume that because the origins look the same that the meaning is necessarily the same. Professor C. H. Moore has made an interesting observation on this point. "In many ways paganism provided an environment favorable for the spread of the religion which Jesus founded. The two were at many points irreconcilable, and the former has not always benefited the latter by its influence; but

it is a grave historical error not to recognize the areas in which the thought of the two ran parallel. Is the nobler faith the poorer because its paths were made broad by the pagan in his search after Immortality"?³⁰

Following after N. Söderblom, Professor Martin-Achard points out the essential difference between the Jewish and Persian concepts of eschatology are the result of two diverse points of view. The Hebrew thought in terms of a personal physical resurrection whereas the Persian thought in terms of a physical rebuilding of the world. "The resurrection of the dead is part of the physical re-creation of the universe. For Israel, the starting-point is faith in Yahweh, in the holy and righteous God who intervenes in history and establishes His kingship; here the resurrection is the answer to a religious and moral requirement and primarily concerns not mankind in general, but the lot of the Hasidim; thus it necessarily remains restricted, while from the Iranian point of view it is naturally universal, since it is connected with the destiny of the whole of the cosmos."³¹ This in itself is so revolutionary and distinctive that it could only find expression in a new religious tradition. The focus has shifted from the physical reconstruction of the individual

and the world to a focus on a "new life" which is a personal relation with Yahweh. N. Söderblom indicates; "There is only one capital point in which Judaism could have been influenced in any way by its contact with Mazdaism, and that is in its idea of the resurrection. But even this idea has a Jewish origin, and was developed independently, if not without having been influenced, at least without having been borrowed."³² In concluding these thoughts one might say: "Persia did not give the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead to Israel, and, through Israel, to the world, but it enabled the Chosen People to formulate its faith in the victory won for believers by its God over the powers of death."³³

Whatever other influences the faith of Israel might have undergone from the outside, it still can be maintained that the life after-death as well as the resurrection came to the Israelites as a revelation of God. This theme must come from the Nature of God as they worked it out in their theological system. God for them is always a Living God who is Creator and Sustainer of all that lives and by the believer's projection and implication He also becomes Redeemer. The growing concept of His almightiness coupled with the increasing importance of the individual

with Yahweh gave way to His lasting concern for the individual beyond this life. This is particularly true of the Hasidim, who often took a martyr's or an "untimely death" upon themselves in the name of Yahweh. They would not allow this to come to hopeless nothingness at death, for Yahweh's plans and purposes must be worked out for His people. " . . . The God of Israel's actions in the past are the guarantee of the future of the Hasidim who have died for His sake: Yahweh alone is able to force Sheol to give up its captives. He wills the deliverance of the dead to make His divinity manifest, He is, at one and the same time, the source and the end of the Old Testament hope of victory over death. The resurrection of the dead, the Old Testament's ultimate revelation regarding the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, confirms, at one and the same time, His power, His righteousness, and His mercy alike."³⁴

Through the trials and the tribulations of Israel their religion came to lose its ethnic ideals. No longer did the state remain the important element as it was cast down and torn on every side. Even the vehicles of religion had been destroyed.

At this period, man discovers his individuality in a very special way, he dissociates himself psychologically from the group, he seeks to distinguish himself from it. He means no longer to resign himself to the common lot, but to take his personal destiny upon himself; the God whom he seeks is no longer a mere national divinity, but the Lord with whom he will be able to communicate in a sort of dialogue, in fellowship with whom he will be able to fulfil his life in this world, in short, the personal God, the God with whom he will have real personal relationship. Concomitant with this emergence of individualism, the problem of death assumes an increasing importance and tends to become the great anxiety of the living. As a matter of fact . . . there is a close connexion between the discovery of human personality and the question of death, the latter does not have the same sharpness as long as the individual is more or less identified with the group, it is urgent only for the man who is aware of his personal individuality. In the same way the problem of the resurrection only actually arises in so far as the human being, becoming conscious of its personality, considers that its destiny is not automatically identical with that of its people and that its life has an intrinsic value which cannot disappear for ever in death. ³⁵

This same thought is continued to a further degree by R. H. Charles when he states: ". . . while Yahwism was destroying the belief in the false life in Sheol, it was steadily developing in the individual the consciousness

of a new life and of a new worth through immediate communion with God, as we see in the Psalms and kindred literature. Now it is from the consciousness of this new life in God and not from a moribund existence in a heathen Sheol, that the doctrine of a blessed immortality was developed in Israel. It was a new creation---the offspring of faith in God on the part of Israel's saints."³⁶ No longer are all the members of Israel God's people, but only as individuals choose to remain faithful to Him does this concept of "His people" continue. Under this every man is held responsible for his own actions and his personal destiny.

The people who continued to live in obedience to Yahweh were called the Hasidim or the "chosen ones" or the "pious ones." Their entire existence is to unite themselves wholly to the plan, purpose, and the will of God. They become so at-one with Yahweh that even the powers of Sheol cannot prevail against them. It would be wrong to assume that they are looking for some way out of their conditions or some reward for their piety but rather they desire to dwell continually in Yahweh's presence. "Out of the heart of the union with God, living in the midst of His own, broke forth the hope of the Hereafter; Hell was

overcome by the Hasidim's faith; because it created the desire to be for ever with Yahweh in the hearts of believers, the love of God showed itself to be stronger than death; the grace of the God of Israel had both the first word and the last in the destiny of His own."³⁷

Because of their obedience and tenacity for the religion of Israel the Hasidim became objects of persecution by the foreign invaders. Thousands lost their lives during the Jewish Wars and the various captivities because they would not yield. "The spiritual life of the Hasidim dooms them to be the first victims of these persecutions of their people, and also makes them the first witnesses to the new faith in the resurrection of the dead; it is in point of fact to them that this will be primarily granted, for it is they who need it most of all. A close relationship subsists between martyrdom and resurrection."³⁸ The hope of the future life and belief in the resurrection grew and became the strongest during the times of the greatest persecutions of the Jews. The assertion of the resurrection in the last analysis is gradually concluded by the throes of martyrs rather than by any foreign influences. "Thus the Old Testament believers did not arrive at the conviction that their God

would raise the dead merely through their contacts with Canaan or Iran, nor by academic deductions from some doctrine unrelated to real life; what finally effected their adherence to the new creed was the bearing of the tormented Hasidim greeting the advent of the Messianic Age in advance. Thus the truth of Ernest Renan's dictum is established: 'The martyr was the real creator of belief in another life.'³⁹ For the apostate Jew, Sheol was all that he could expect for he deserved no more. The Hasidim realized that this was not consistent with Yahweh particularly as the religion became more personal. "Could it be that the God with whom he lived in fellowship would end by abandoning him? He would shrink from the loss of God. For the chasid the evidence, examined below, suggests that there was a plaint, 'Am I to perish at last?', and a plea, 'Wilt Thou leave me to perish?', before he groped his way at last to the confident faith: 'Thou wilt not leave me in Sheol! Thou wilt not!'⁴⁰

Perhaps greater insight will come from the examination of the texts. In the songs of praises to Yahweh, that of Moses (Deut. 32) and that of Hannah (I Sam. 2), we see more attestations to the powers of Yahweh. Singing

to His power they maintain that He is all powerful even over Sheol itself. Within these songs the authors did not maintain a resurrection from the dead, they merely acknowledged the attributes of an Almighty God, who would thus have power over death.

One must realize that the Hebrew made no clear distinction between disease and death. Thus one who is very seriously ill would be considered to be in the hands of Sheol already. Under this conception resurrection can mean the restoration to normal life or a return to health. Consequently the allusions to death and the resurrection would not coincide with our present day beliefs. Seen from this perspective, for a pre-scientific people the escape of serious illness was as miraculous as evading death itself. When we read the resurrections of Elijah and Elisha (I Kings 17:17-24; II Kings 4:31-37; 13:21) we recognize that while these mainly show the power of Yahweh working through a specific servant the person restored must at some future date submit to death. They also have the element of occurring shortly after the individual has "died" and before burial. These come to us then as special cases and have nothing to do with either a general resurrection or the concept of resurrection itself.

The Psalms are thought to contain a great wealth of information and inspiration dealing with sickness, suffering, and death. No doubt some of the Psalms came from death-bed situations. Here a man was cut off from the normal routine of life and filled with pain. Usually he felt that this came to him as some form of punishment. ". . . He suddenly finds himself in the presence of death, already he sees its signs, and he takes count of the havoc that, even now, it is working in his existence; he knows that he is being attacked body and soul, all his being is threatened. His life is life no longer; for it has neither prop nor prospect, and it is passed in the shadow of death. In his trouble the faithful continually cries to God, in whom he sees his sole resource; importunately he implores for help, he pleads for healing, deliverance, pardon, and peace; in his suffering he may again pray asking to live; he wants to see the light and to dwell in the presence of Yahweh in the land of the living."⁴¹ In Psalm 88 we see the torment of a man on the brink of death as he already feels cut off not only from Yahweh but also from his friends and there is no way out.

The sick and the suffering are at grips with a malignant power which,

taking possession of them, wrests them from their people and from their God. Death, in the thought of the psalmists, is not merely the reflexion of a troubled existence, for them it is a fact and an event, since it intrudes its presence upon them and shatters the harmony and unity of their life; the deliverance that they are waiting for is a veritable liberation from its fatal power.

The Israelite knows that his life is constantly threatened, the obstacles of every sort that he encounters on his way are so many manifestations of the power of death lying in wait for him; but he also discovers that Yahweh is able to break the bonds that constrict him, to shatter the servitudes that oppress him, in a word, to make death retreat. He is, of course, at every moment, in danger of falling into the hands of Sheol, but he never ceases to set his hope in the redemptive intervention of his God. It happens that he is numbered among those who 'go down to the pit,' but he also knows the experience of salvation; thus power is exerted upon him from two directions; death seeks to make him its prey, the Living God rescues him from its bonds and changes his mourning into gladness.⁴²

There is consequently a tension established between the powers of death which stand ready at every moment to strike one down and the powers of Yahweh which sustain him and lift him up when he is cast down. The Hebrew calls upon Yahweh to save him from the pit and destruction although he is fully aware that death does have its way. Yet he asks that he might first have a full and abundant life.

We see in the translation of Enoch and Elijah (Gen. 5:21-4: II Kings 2:1-15), Yahweh drawing His faithful servants to Himself. These must be seen as special cases but they do give way to the thought that the faithful will continue to walk with Yahweh. One must be aware that perhaps too much has been read into these accounts. The significance lies in the fact that Yahweh has power over Sheol if He desires to use it.

We see in Hosea (6:1-3; 13:14) stronger conceptions of the power of Yahweh. We are also aware from this first passage that the Hebrews knew of the resurrection before the Exile. In the later text in regard to "O Death, where are your plagues" it must be that Paul read into the statement more than was present. But in context . . . "it declares that Yahweh has refused to save Ephraim, that the end of Samaria is approaching, and that, summoned by God Himself, the powers of darkness are at work against a rebellious and obstinate nation."⁴³

The vision of Ezekiel would seem to imply the restoration of the Chosen People. Many of these so called "resurrection" passages must refer to the restoration and miraculous continuation of the nation Israel in spite of all its trials and tribulations. One must be aware that

the Hebrew was much more alive to the use and the meaning of symbolism and doubtless this scene is presented as such. "The question of a general resurrection was doubtless not raised before Ezekiel 37, but emerged after this passage was written, . . . we are on the eve of the awakening of faith in the resurrection---on the eve, but no more; for this belief to become a reality in Judaism, many other influences will have to be exerted upon it."⁴⁴ The power of Yahweh as displayed in this resurrection shows forth His creating powers and his ability to reconstitute man. Out of nothing He is able to refashion and bring man back to life.

The writer of Isaiah is not primarily concerned with life after-death. His main interest is the vindication and the fulfilment of God's plans and purposes in this life. In reality the major concern of the writers of the Old Testament was with righteousness and vindication and not with eternal life. They would emphasize their relation to Yahweh in their day-to-day existence seeking only to dwell continually with Him. In Isaiah 25:8 there is testimony that Yahweh destroys death which certainly is clear that He wins out in victory over it. This was likely not a part of the original text but was added about the Third

Century B. C. In the Apocalypse of Isaiah (Is. 24-27) we find the text dealing for the first time with the resurrection rather than restoration. This is by no means a general resurrection for it is only for the select few who have remained faithful. This still remains a deep mystery to these people as it depends entirely on the nature and the purpose of Yahweh.

The Book of Daniel comes from a period, approximately 165 B. C., of great persecution for the Jews. It is Apocalyptic in form and serves to encourage and to assure the faithful that God is still the ruler. He writes that there will be a final consummation of history and a resurrection of the dead. " . . . Here we have a text that, for the first time, unequivocally proclaims the resurrection of the dead; this passage, unique in the Old Testament, marks, at one and the same time, the end of a long quest and the beginning of a new way of understanding human destiny. The declaration contained in Daniel 12:2f. was forthwith adopted by a section of Judaism. This fact indicates that men's minds were ready to receive it, for, although it meant the overturning of long existent ideas, it answered to the deep aspirations of the Chosen People."⁴⁵

By the extension of the righteousness of Yahweh when

so many had died for their faith they could not conceive of oppressor and oppressed having the same ultimate goal for this would make a mockery of their faith. The writer does little more than to touch on the theme of resurrection and because he does not expound upon it, it would appear that his readers were well aware of this concept.

In a further look at the Psalms (16:9-11; 49:15; 73:23-28), we find an assurance and affirmation that the relationship of love between Yahweh and His children cannot and will not be separated by death. This love has broken the threat and the fear of death. There is not to be found here the concept of resurrection though many scholars would attempt to read this in. In each case the context does not support it. "He does not dread a sudden brutal death; we must go even further; he has no fear of death at all, not because he considers that he must have everlasting life, but because of the presence of the Living God the problem of death becomes secondary; in some sense death is blotted out, it retreats. The hasid who is living by God, for God, and in God, no longer looks upon death as a threatening present reality; in the presence of the Living God it loses its importance. The believer is so attached to Yahweh, so fully taken up with Him, that his

life no longer unfolds under the sign of death, but rather in the radiance of the glory of God; in a sense, he finds himself back where Adam was before the Fall. His life is full, and he does not imagine that one day his joy may end: his blessing cannot be taken away from him, since Yahweh is keeping him safe."⁴⁶ There is no question about it, the Psalmists knew that all men must die; however, it was hoped that death for the faithful would not be the same as the death of the irreligious. They sought, hoped, and dared to believe that Yahweh's righteousness would continue beyond this life. "Wherever the Living God is accepted, death is effaced, its power is blunted, and it is rendered irrelevant; in the psalm, this truth is understood rather than expressed; the psalmist has no intention of proclaiming a universal abstract law, he is confessing a living personal experience."⁴⁷

According to the Psalmists:

All the living creatures with which the world abounds have their ordered place because God has made the world and appointed their lot there. And they continually depend for life and well-being on His constant and direct care. For the psalmist does not conceive the universe as owing its existence to the fiat of the Almighty, but then left

to go its own way. To him the same divine care which brought it into being is needed, if it is to be maintained. So all the multitudinous life with which the earth is stored depends directly on its Creator, and possesses only what it pleases Him to give (v. 27). When God opens His hands, they are satisfied with good; when He hides His face, they are troubled; when He finally decrees it, they die and return to the dust from which He alone brought them and from which He alone can preserve them (vv. 28, 29). The world became an ordered place through the divine wisdom; it continues in its seamliness because this is never withdrawn.⁴⁸

The Psalmist saw Man as one living in the ". . . presence of his God, submitting himself to the valuations for life which this implied. Life to him was rich and full and satisfying, because it was lived by standards which were not of this world. Being that, it was of ultimate value. . . . the ground of his confidence that all this cannot come to an end through the accident of death. For God will show him still what He has shown him throughout his earthly career, the path of life which, according to Prov. 3:17, is at once the path to life and the path in which alone real life can be found."⁴⁹ Since he saw death as the lot of mankind he turned back to God to ask for wisdom. "Help us, O Lord, to make the best of life. And

the best that life can give to a man who through all trusts in God is a wise heart. For the ultimate product of life, however transient and feeble it may be, is this heart of wisdom, this inner life of man. And it is within his power to win it, if he gallantly lives out his days to the end in the fear of God, accepting the divine valuations, submitting to the divinely appointed limitations, and never yielding to the temptation to let everything go. Even if it leads to nothing beyond and passes like a breath, it remains the ultimate thing."⁵⁰

Perhaps the greatest assurance of resurrection is commonly believed to be in the book of Job. This concept is still perpetuated by Handel's Messiah, often proclaimed through the reading and the preaching of the Word of God, and continues to rest on many tombstones. There probably is no portion of the Bible that presents so many difficulties in the text and the interpretation as does this. Job does not talk of seeing Yahweh after death, he believes that he will see him "on earth." He seeks his vindication in this present life and not in some obscure life to come. The important thing for Job is the vindication before death as ". . . the righteousness of the righteous and the wickedness of the wicked must be recompensed in this life."⁵¹

It may come even at the moment of his last breath but it does not matter for he will see Yahweh and will be vindicated. Job feels cut off from the circle of the pious and the communion with Yahweh; thus he prays that he shall be restored in Yahweh's sight. Job's trust is that God will in some way break through to him even if he has lost his skin and his flesh. "His misfortune is unexplained and inexplicable. The book closes with the long-expected intervention of God, but Job receives no academic answer to the question of the origin of his sufferings; he has encountered the Living God, his prayer has been heard, which is equivalent to vindication; overawed, he bows down before the mystery of God, who is infinitely beyond his understanding."⁵² We cannot come to Job as so many have done assuming that here we will find the answer to sickness, suffering, and death. It resolves no major theological problems for it ends in the fact that man is man and God is God. "In the later Old Testament the question 'Why do the righteous suffer?' is clamant, but the question 'Why do righteous men die?' is never asked. . . . 'Natural' death in old age was no more than the moment when a man ceased to live. There is no suggestion that God slew him then. As will be found later, when at last

some Jews began to cry out that death was not the fit end for a righteous man, they did not ask to escape death, but to live again after it."⁵³ The real problem behind Job is why he did not die in spite of calamity. As long as there is life in him there still remains a plan and a purpose of Yahweh. But whatever Job's problems were, they were resolved for him and he was able to find new life and peace under God. And this is all he wanted and this was all he needed. Life became new for him and death no longer threatened him as he became one with his Maker.

In these texts which we have examined, nowhere did we find that the life after-death was primary in the minds of these men. They sought to continue the communion with Yahweh under His mercy and righteousness. No one begs or prays for life after-death nor indeed even asks for it. Thus the death of an individual never is primary in the Old Testament. "In short, without acutally being aware of it, the Hasidim are battering the gates of the kingdom of the dead; without reaching the positive assertion of the immortality or resurrection of the believer, being primarily concerned with tasting or seeking the fullness of the presence of their Lord, they are preparing the way for future generations to proclaim that death is

impotent against those who are living in communion with the Living God."⁵⁴

The fulfilment of self, the growing awareness of the spiritual life and continuous revelation of the God of Love led the Hebrew religion to exciting new frontiers. These concepts pushed beyond the confines of the established faith of Israel and could only find stability in a system built around this new core of eschatological discovery. "The gradual acceptance of the idea of the soul's immortality, and of the ultimate resurrection and judgment of the reconstituted person, undoubtedly rendered the ancient Yahwism a more adequate faith for the individual; but it still contained cause for radical tensions through its retention of the doctrine of Israel's unique Election and in its failure to find a convincing theory of the origin of evil and a solution of the problem which it constituted. It was from these tensions that in process of time Christianity was, at least in part, destined to rise."⁵⁵

Footnotes

¹W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1889), p. 2.

²Robert Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, trans. John Penney Smith (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), p. 3.

³Martin-Achard, pp. 3-4.

⁴John Paterson, The Praises of Israel (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 230.

⁵Lewis A. Muirhead, The Terms Life and Death in the Old and New Testament (London: Andrew Melrose, 1908), p. 4.

⁶R. H. Charles, Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments (London: Williams and Norgate, 1921), p. 101.

⁷W. O. E. Oesterley, Immortality and the Unseen World (London: S. P. C. K., 1921), p. 5.

⁸Ibid., p. 19.

⁹Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁰C. Ryder Smith, The Bible Doctrine of The Hereafter (London: Epworth Press, 1958), pp. 3-4.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 4-5.

¹²Ibid., p. 39.

¹³Martin-Achard, p. 33.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁵Charles, p. 100.

¹⁶Oesterley, p. 67.

¹⁷Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), p. 307.

¹⁸C. Ryder Smith, p. 44.

¹⁹Oesterley, pp. 6-7.

²⁰W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion (London: S. P. C. K., 1944), p. 93.

²¹C. Ryder Smith, p. 47.

²²Rudolf Bultmann, Life and Death (Kittel's Bible Key Words; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), pp. 10-11.

²³Jacob, pp. 303-04.

²⁴Martin-Achard, p. 43.

²⁵Jacob, p. 299.

²⁶Martin-Achard, p. 45.

²⁷Ibid., p. 46.

²⁸Ibid., p. 50.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 204-05.

³⁰Clifford Herschel Moore, Pagan Ideas of Immortality During the Early Roman Empire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), p. 57.

³¹Martin-Achard, p. 192.

³²Martin-Achard, p. 192.

³³Martin-Achard, p. 194.

³⁴Ibid., p. 207.

³⁵Ibid., p. 211.

³⁶Charles, pp. 102-03.

- ³⁷ Martin-Achard, p. 218.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 219.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 221.
- ⁴⁰ C. Ryder Smith, pp. 55-56.
- ⁴¹ Martin-Achard, p. 61.
- ⁴² Ibid., p. 64.
- ⁴³ Ibid., p. 92.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 99-100.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 140.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 151-152.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 165.
- ⁴⁸ Adam C. Welch, The Psalter in Life, Worship and History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), pp. 26-7.
- ⁴⁹ Welch, pp. 116-7.
- ⁵⁰ Welch, pp. 112-3.
- ⁵¹ Charles, p. 104.
- ⁵² Martin-Achard, p. 176.
- ⁵³ C. Ryder Smith, p. 33.
- ⁵⁴ Martin-Achard, p. 181.
- ⁵⁵ S. G. F. Brandon, Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions (Manchester: University Press, 1962), p. 152.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE GREEK CONCEPT OF DEATH

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As one spans the whole panorama of Christian thought, he is forced to refer again and again to the Greeks. It seems that the Greeks not only coloured the outer fringe of Christian beliefs but were able to penetrate right to its very core. The past century of scholastic studies has been deeply concerned with comparative religion gathering untold information on all the religions of the world. While the early Greeks in these studies were dealt with extensively, this knowledge has not been applied to Christian thought to any great extent. No attempt has been made to sort these ideas and other sub-Christian dogmas from the Faith so consequently there are many faithful Christians of today following more closely along the lines of Greek mystery religions than the original Christian doctrines. This I might add is not the fault of the individual

believer but rather the error of the theologians who should lead us back to our rightful course. No better avenue of approach can be found than the doctrine of Immortality. There is a continual cry raised from Church leaders as well as from the laity to change the Apostles' Creed to read: "I believe in the Resurrection of the Soul." In all fairness we must admit that this is no surprise because this in fact has become creed of the church.

It is apparent that the Greeks had firmly planted their ideas with the Hebrews so that they were diffused into the Jewish Religion long before the Christian era. Obviously this comes as the most subtle of approaches for it enters the back door unawares. More and more the evidence repeatedly proves that the Greeks had contributed greatly to the doctrines of Hebrew thought and life. Scholars are far more willing to take the task in hand realizing afresh that the contributions are of greater intensity than was hitherto believed. The Jews themselves may have led us astray in this matter, for they have consistently held that their religion was a full and complete revelation without the slightest taint of human contamination. Christians too have been deceived by ceasing to look beyond the Hebrews for the background of their

basic dogmas. The task here then becomes one of discerning the Greek concept of death and immortality so that they might first be distilled from the beliefs of Hebrew thought and subsequently from the Christian thought. Obviously this is no easy task for the tools and the science itself, analysis and theology, were developed from the Greek schools.

Of all the tasks and obligations of religion, none is more pressing than the solution to the problem of Death. A religion which denies or suppresses death can hardly be thought to be a religion at all.

And certainly on this head the Greeks, more than any people that ever lived, must have required a consolation and a hope. Just in proportion as their life was fuller and richer than that which has been lived by any other race, just in proportion as their capacity for enjoyment, in body and soul, was keener, as their senses were finer, their intellect broader, their passions more intense, must they have felt, with peculiar emphasis, the horror of decay and death. And such, in fact, is the characteristic note of their utterances on this theme. 'Rather', says the ghost of Achilles to Odysseus in the world of shades, 'rather would I live upon the soil as the hireling of another, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than bear sway among all the dead that are no more.'¹

Perhaps death came as a greater horror to the Greeks

than to any other people. For the Greek there was little or no hope beyond as all the emphasis fell on satisfaction and pleasure in this life. Death became the most hateful prospect they could imagine. Truly the Greeks stood without hope. Indeed life had become an art for the Greek as even now all of us have wished at one time or another that we might be transmitted to those glorious days in ancient Greece. Such then was their profound and lasting impression on how to live life.

How then did the Greeks view death? Certainly, from the various primitive sources of Greek religion there has come a belief in an after-life. However, it is the nature of the after-life that scares them. They believed that the spirit does survive after death, but in such a precarious manner as to be no life at all. Man is confined to the glum shadowy existence of the under-world as a faint image of what life had formerly meant. From this vantage point no comfort nor consolation could be found, nor is there any indication that it was actually sought. Generally the Greek refrained from speculating about his future destiny past the point of death. While he was taught legends that Heroes went on to their rewards and criminals went on to tortures and torments, these problems did not

press upon him relentlessly. "He was never obsessed by that close and imminent vision of heaven and hell which overshadowed and dwarfed, for the medieval mind, the brief space of pilgrimage on earth. Rather he turned, by preference, from the thought of death back to life, and in the memory of honourable deeds in the past and the hope of fame for the future sought his compensation for the loss of youth and love. . . . There is no suggestion anywhere of a personal existence continued after death; the dead live only in their deeds; and only by memory are the survivors to be consoled."² There is no consolation for death nor in death. However consolation is found only in life, not in after-life, but in life as it had been and what it could be for those that remained behind. As Goethe surveyed the ancient Greek tombs serene, placid, and frozen --- life caught there was as life was best known and loved. Thus he said: "Here there is no knight in harness on his knees awaiting a joyful resurrection. The artist has with more or less skill presented to us only the persons themselves, and so made their existence lasting and perpetual. They fold not their hands, gaze not into heaven; they are on earth, what they were and what they are. They stand side by side, take interest in one another;

and that is what is in the stone, even though somewhat unskilfully, yet most pleasingly depicted."³

The last word for the Greek was not the fact of meeting in "a happy land, far, far away" but rather "farewell." One tomb reads:

Farewell, tomb of Melité; the best of women lies here, who loved her loving husband, Onesimus; thou wert most excellent, wherefore he longs for thee after thy death, for thou wert the best of wives. ---Farewell, thou too, dearest husband, only love my children.⁴

J. W. Mackail presents some basic Greek attitudes toward death in his book Select Epigrams From Greek Anthology:

The Dead Scholar-Callimachus

One told me of thy fate, Heraclitus, and wrung me to tears, and I remembered how often both of us let the sun sink as we talked; but thou, methinks, O friend from Halicarnassus, art ashes long and long ago; yet the nightingale-notes live, whereon Hades the ravisher of all things shall not lay his hand. XXX.

Ante Diem - Bianor

Ever insatiate Charon, why hast thou wantonly taken you Attalus? was he not thine, even if he had died old? XXXIX.⁶

The Last Word - Palladas

Thou talkest much, O man, and thou art laid in earth after a little; keep silence, and while thou yet livest, meditate on death. XLVII.

On An Unhappy Man - Author Unknown

I Dionysius of Tarsus lie here at sixty,
having never married; and I would that
my father had not. LXV.⁸

The agony of death brings Greek literature to a crest of poignant expression. The Greek laments that he has but one life to live. What finer thing might the gods do than give the righteous man another life. Near the end of life even the difficulties of old age are no longer a burden. There is here a basic tension between the awesome fear of death and the tribulations of this life. This dilemma is never fully resolved by the Greeks. "Death may be the universal fate of men (there is an old proverb 'We must all pay the debt of death'), but that is no consolation; the inevitability of death casts its shadow over every life and puts a question-mark against its whole meaning. There is more consolation in the knowledge that life itself, with all its toil and distress, is a doubtful boon, so that it may appear better never to have been born or, having been born, to die at once. Death brings peace and suicide can sometimes appear as a liberation from shame and suffering. And yet, when death comes, no one wants to die. Finally, moreover, we do not know what comes after death."⁹

The whole point and purpose of Greek religion was

a means of harmonizing man with the mysterious universe. This harmony was one of life, but not of death. The more fully the Greek gave himself to his religion the more he became one with his worldly life. Consequently, the more meaningful life became in poetry, passion, and pleasure the greater became the threat, fear, and repression of the alien thought of death. R. W. Livingstone makes the case clear when he stated: "Hellenism dispenses with the need for a diety, a future life, and a purely spiritual world. It is not essentially inconsistent with these beliefs, and they have often been found in union with it; but it can do without them. Abolish them for the Greek, and he would still live the same life as if they were there. For him the whole creation was not groaning and travailing in pain. He was waiting for no glory to be revealed He could live with satisfaction in the present, and forgo the necessity of a redemption to come. But abolish the unseen world for the Christian, and the whole meaning and value of life is altered."¹⁰

The Greeks could not rest forever on this rather superficial harmony which was to be shattered by their own critical and analytical minds. Religion had become the projection of human failures upon personified deities.

In truth their gods were made in their own image and differed only from themselves by means of their immense power. This in effect gave them subscientific answers for their problems of creation, continuation, and consummation. Thus freed, even though not very satisfactorily, from the ultimate questions, they could devote themselves wholly to the more mundane things in life. This sounds so familiar for contemporary times as it is perpetuated by those who readily dismiss ultimate things because they are too disturbing. Yet to the more discerning Greeks came the realization that this was only a temporary answer and at some point these ultimate questions would have to be settled. There was behind it no sense of completeness nor finality. It never tended to be inclusive or systematic and thus was unable to incorporate all the elements necessary for a well-rounded religion. Even for the faithful and firm believers it was only transient and unstable.

The music of his brief life closed with a discord unresolved; and even before reason had brought her criticism to bear upon his creed, its deficiency was forced upon him by his feeling.

Thus the harmony which we have indicated as the characteristic result of the Greek religion contained none of the conditions of completeness or finality. For on the one hand there

were elements which it was never able to include; and on the other, its hold even over those which it embraced was temporary and precarious. The eating of the tree of knowledge drove the Greeks from their paradise; but the vision of that Eden continues to haunt the mind of man, not in vain, if it prophesies in a type the end to which his history moves.¹¹

A more practical problem than a concern in the after-life was certainly the problem of Evil - for even now it cannot be fully explained. This is without question the greatest problem that has faced mankind for which the problem of Death is only a small portion.

In Homer the hard Philocteus complains: 'O father Zeus, thou art most cruel of all gods! Men are thy offspring, but thou hast no pity for them, making them know pain and tribulation'. And Zeus grumbles in turn: 'Upon my word, just see how mortal men always put the blame on us gods! We are ever the source of evil, so they say, when they have only their madness to thank if their miseries are worse than they ought to be'. Aeschylus offered a solution, pathos mathos, 'suffering is learning', and Plato concurred. But this explanation gave cold comfort, and to many thoughtful men the obvious injustices of this life seemed intolerable unless there was to be a squaring of accounts in some future existence.¹²

These explanations were aloof and meaningless for those who suffered. Suffering has the power to drive right

through sham and pretence resting only on the hard rock of truth. Pain could only have meaning if it was to be a part of a greater plan and purpose which could only be answered at some future stage. With this background the seeds of a future life began to take some semblance. No doubt the seeds of these roots had been sown at the very beginnings of Greek History. The Hades pictured by Homer was a corner of the universe reserved for those who had alienated themselves from the Olympian gods. The more renowned and eminent individuals proceeded at death to the Elysians fields without touching Hades at all. "This conception of Elysium and Tartarus was probably derived from the Minoan religion; it is significant that in Greek mythology Minos was not merely a king of Crete but a judge in the underworld. It certainly existed among the Etruscans, whose rock-tombs were often adorned with frescoes depicting the after-life. In some of these scenes the departed spirits caroused and held high carnival, more often they were being tormented by hideous demons."¹³

Homer suggests that in the post-mortem existence the psyche is without consciousness, however at times it could be brought to consciousness if it partook of blood. Teiresias, the blind seer, has not been assigned the normal

fate of Hades. "To him even in death Persephone has granted reason, that he alone should have understanding; but the others flit about as shadows"¹⁴ Teiresias addresses

Odysseus: "Why hast thou left the light of the sun and come hither to behold the dead and a region where there is no joy? Nay, give place from the pit and draw back thy sharp sword, that I may drink of the blood and tell thee sooth"¹⁵. . . . And death shall come to thee thyself far from the sea, a death so gentle, that shall lay thee low when thou are overcome with sleek old age, and thy people shall dwell in prosperity around thee. In this have I told thee sooth."¹⁶ Odysseus is permitted to see the shade of his mother, Anticleia, who is confined to Hades.

Odysseus cries out: "Is this but a phantom that august Persephone has sent me, that I may lament and groan the more?" Anticleia answers: ". . . This is the appointed way with mortals when one dies. For the sinews no longer hold the flesh and the bones together, but the strong might of blazing fire destroys these, as soon as the life leaves the white bones, and the spirit, like a dream, flits away, and hovers to and fro."¹⁷ The after-life is seen simply as a grim shadowy existence which seeks to encourage the individual to reap all that he can from this life.

The Jews and the Greeks had a similar view of the layout of the universe which has been discussed at some length. Out of a rather strange union of Heaven (Father) and Earth (Mother) both gods and mortals were conceived as the children of this marriage. Thus here there is a kindred relationship but a complete division in the realm of power; however the great difference was one of immortality. While one cannot say that the gods were eternal because they had a beginning, they are not subject to time, change and death.

Fair Ægeus' son, only to gods in heaven
Comes no old age, nor death of anything;
All else is turmoiled by our master Time.
(Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus)

"To be immortal, then---to escape death---is to be divine: the privilege of immortality, even more than 'difference of power,' distinguishes the gods from man. To aspire after immortality is the most dangerous of all ambitions. 'For all alike we die; but our destiny in life is unequal; and if a man lift his eyes to that which is afar off, too weak is he to reach the bronze floor of the gods' high seat."¹⁸ The concept of immortality became an essential part of Greek religion and was never usurped by some other similar doctrine. While it was maintained that the soul

of man lived on past the point of disintegration of the body - the true immortality was quite inaccessible for man. But whatever we may say about immortality among the Greeks we must always be cognizant that it is a philosophical concept rather than a religious concept. This must be foremost in our minds or we shall be unable to see the essential differences.

To the early Greeks, there was a land far to the west away across the sea where the souls of the dead went. This obviously was woven from the likening man's life to a long day's journey of the sun across the sky. A more prominent belief was that the departed souls gathered in the deep subterranean passages and caverns below the earth. No doubt this was quite substantial because geologists have informed us that caverns of this nature appear with rather amazing frequency in this area of the Mediterranean. The god who ruled over this was called -- Hades, Aidoneus, Pluto -- who ruled the underworld. This "house of Hades" was shared with his queen, Persephonē, whom he had stolen from the upper world of light. No doubt there were many other conceptions which have not been conveyed through history.

The Greeks along with most other primitive groups

did not feel that death was the end. Man's life continued even in the grave, thus various tools, implements, food, and even jewelry were placed on the grave. Perhaps of greater significance were the weapons, placed with the body and in the case of famous or wealthy citizens, horses, dogs, and young enemy warrior boys were sacrificed in what would appear an attempt to provide a small means of protection in the battles to come. The Milky Way was also considered to be the road or pathway of souls as they ascend to the heights of the celestial path. This concept is supported more on conjecture from art than from actual primary sources.

From the earliest poetry we have the writings of Homer (cir. 9th/C. B. C.), in which there are two notions of the lands of the dead. One is a land beyond the sea and to the west, the other being a subterranean domain. These ideas are often merged and fused so that they frequently appear with the characteristics of the other. Odysseus sailed off to the country of the dead by going to the west but later the story goes on to talk as if he were in the subterranean land of Hades. Another concept coming from this same period is the western land known as the Happy Islands or this paradise referred to

in the Odyssey as the Elysian plain. "'There', the poem says, 'life is easiest for the sons of man. No snow is there, nor yet great storm, nor any rain; but always Ocean sendeth forth the breeze of the shrill West to blow cool on men'. (Odyssey iv. 565-568). This island paradise, however, in Greek mythology was not a place to which the dead generally went, but a place of beauty and delight to which certain privileged heroes were transported, to live there in bliss for ever."¹⁹

There is here an interesting parallel with the Zoroastrian concept of Vara. "Yima, the paradise-king, is told by Ormazd to prepare an enclosure, a vara, and to live in it himself with a chosen host of men, animals, plants, and fires, in order to be preserved during the winters that will invade the earth."²⁰ At the end of a millennium the vara will be opened and the world will be restored with a greater fulness and prosperity than was known previously.

But as among the Hebrews the strongest and most tenacious belief was the concept of Hades. So strong and healthy was this concept that it still has been handed down to our day only decorated and touched up in spots. It has had a tremendous appeal not only to the ancients

but also has been the vehicle of various art forms which will remain immortal after Christian theology has outgrown it.

There were the rivers which flowed through it, already mentioned in the later stratum of the Odyssey which makes Odysseus go actually to the house of Hades---the Styx, the river of Hatred, to which a peculiar horror clung; the Acheron, which name the Greeks understood to mean 'River of Pain' (achos), but which may be simply a Phoenician word *acheron*, meaning 'western'; the Pyriphlegethon which means 'flaming with fire'; and the Cocytus, the River of Wailing. Later on a River Lōthē (Forgetfulness) was spoken of as well. Then there was the ferryman of the dead, Charon, who took them across the boundary river in his punt of dismal blue. His name perhaps means 'having eyes that shine'. In Virgil he has the figure of an old man of horrible squalor with eyes set in flame. In Greece Charos, a corruption of Charon, has become the popular personification of Death."²¹

Hades was not conceived with any moral function in mind. Regardless of a man's life on earth---he would have to descend. Yet even Odysseus notes some significant moral distinctions for he "sees the notable sinners being punished in the house of Hades---Tantalus standing in a river and tormented with eternal thirst while the water always recedes from his mouth when he stoops towards it, Sisyphus

perpetually trying to roll to the hill-top the great stone that always rolls down before the top is reached. These bits of the Odyssey are believed by modern scholars to be later insertions in the poem. Anyway, there is no note of a general recompense in the other world according to works: it is only a few sinners of exceptional wickedness who are spoken of as undergoing torment."²² It is of equal interest that these earliest references to Hades also lack social distinction. However, with the rise of the mystery cults only the initiated would have a happier lot than others after death. This cannot be considered as moral nor even social as the only qualification was participation in the necessary rites regardless of beliefs, morals, or social standing. The only exclusion was to individuals who had committed murder.

With the rise of the Orphic movement came the belief in the judgment of deeds and the separation of souls which were ^{was} added about the sixth century B. C. This form of belief was introduced by one named Orpheus.

Certain sacred books came into circulation which were attributed to the legendary singer Orpheus: they purported to give much more detailed information about the other world and they laid down certain rules of conduct, including chastity and vegetarianism, which secured for those who

followed them a happy lot after death. The particular form of punishment which the Orphic books mostly spoke of as inflicted upon those who died unpurified was to be submerged in swamp and mud. But the Orphics also believed that after a certain period in the other world souls became again incarnate. An evil soul was thus punished in two ways---by discomfort in hell during the interval between his death and his new incarnation, and secondly, by his being again incarnate instead of escaping from the grievous wheel of earthly existence.

The influence of Orphism can be traced in several of the writers of the sixth and fifth centuries B. C.---in philosophers such as Pythagoras and Empedocles, in poets such as Pindar and AEschylus. Later on, through Pythagoreanism, a pronounced Orphic element passed into the philosophy of Plato. Only Orphism was of different kinds; and while Plato embodied some Orphic ideas, he makes one of his characters speak with great contempt of the popular Orphic charlatans who professed by means of certain ritual performances to make men safe from being plunged in the mud after death and secure them an immortality of feasting.²³

Pindar states that all actions of men are to be judged after this life and the wicked then will receive their due punishment. The righteous shall have the fate of dwelling in perpetual sunlight. Reincarnation is brought to the front as those who led three successive unblemished lives shall receive this reward. Thus the happy dead shall be received

in the Happy Island in nocturnal light in eternal spring.

At the juncture of death the "Psyche" which all through life was an indistinguishable part of the body now at last is separated from the body and will thus glide off to the shadowy and the feeble realms of Hades. No doubt this was thought to be the very "breath" of man because the dying often gasp. Also it is readily seen that the mouth would seem the only logical place of escape. Thus when freed from this prison it becomes an "image" (εἰδωλον). As Odysseus passes the borders of Hades he sees floating by "the images of those who have toiled" upon earth. "According to the Homeric view, human beings exist twice over: once as an outward and visible shape, and again as an invisible "image" which only gains its freedom in death. This, and nothing else, is the Psyche."²⁴

Attitudes toward death are usually made manifest in the funeral rituals. Homer gives an account of the funeral of Patroklos in the Iliad.

In the evening of the day upon which Hektor has been slain, Achilles with his Myrmidons sings the funeral dirge to his dead friend: they go three times in procession round the body, Achilles laying his 'murderous hands' on the breast of Patroklos and calling upon him with the words: 'Hail, Patroklos

mine, even in Aides' dwelling-place; what I vowed to thee before is now performed; Hektor lies slain and is the prey of dogs, and twelve noble Trojan youths will I slay at thy funeral pyre.' After they have laid aside their arms he makes ready the funeral feast for his companions---bulls, sheep, goats, and pigs are killed, 'and all around, in beakers-full, the blood flowed round the corpse.' During the night the soul of Patroklos appears to Achilles demanding immediate burial. In the morning the host of the Myrmaidons marches out in arms, bearing the body in their midst. The warriors lay locks of their hair, cut off for the purpose, upon the body, and last of all Achilles places his own hair in the hand of his friend---it was once pledged by his father to Spercheios the River-god, but Patroklos must now take it with him, since return to his home is denied to Achilles. The funeral pyre is got ready, many sheep and oxen slaughtered. The corpse is wrapped in their fat, while their carcasses are placed beside it; jars of oil and honey are set round the body. Next, four horses are killed, two dogs taken prisoner for this purpose by Achilles. All these are burnt together with the corpse, and Achilles spends the whole night pouring out dark wine upon the earth, calling the while upon the psyche of Patroklos. Only when morning comes is the fire extinguished with wine; the bones of Patroklos are collected and laid in a golden casket and entombed within a mound.

Here we have a picture of the funeral of a chieftain which, in the solemnity and ceremoniousness of its elaborate detail, is in striking conflict with the normal Homeric conception of the nothingness of the soul after its separation from the body.²⁵

The dramatic implication would seem to be that the "soul" was more alive and vital than what is usually maintained. Following the funeral of a hero there came a marvelous series of games. The only possible connexion here with the dead is probably some tie with the worship of the dead. Rohde made the point that this aspect of the funeral is not something new but rather a "vestige" of the past. Another aspect of the same thing is seen in the funeral feast in which the whole host of individuals who were involved with the deceased were gathered together in this feast. The point of this was the belief that where they met the soul would come and share with them.

A full and complete departure from the body could only be made by the burning of the body. Though the Greeks often referred to the body directly departing for Hades this is not the true conviction for in truth the soul hovers in the intermediate realm between the living and the dead until at last it reached its final goal after the burning of the body.

The psyche of Patroklos appearing by night to Achilles declares this; it prays for immediate burial in order that it may pass through the door of Hades. . . . This soul meets his friend, nevertheless, later on, at the entrance of the Shadow-world, not

yet deprived of its senses like the rest of the dwellers in that House of Darkness; not until the destruction of its physical counterpart is complete can it enter into the rest of Hades. Only through fire are the souls of the dead 'appeased' (Il. 7,410). So long, then, as the psyche retains any vestige of 'earthliness' it possesses some feeling still, some awareness of what is going on among the living.

But once the body is destroyed by fire, then is the psyche relegated to Hades; no return to this earth is permitted to it, and not a breath of this world can penetrate to it there. It cannot even return in thought. Indeed, it no longer thinks at all, and knows nothing more of the world beyond. The living also forget one so completely cut off from themselves (Il. 22, 389). What, then, should tempt them, during the rest of their lives here, to try to hold communication with the dead by means of a cult?²⁶

During the time of Homer cremation seemed to be the only permissible type of disposal. The origin is now lost to us but it would seem that it comes from a nomadic group, particularly the Asiatic Greeks. It became so deeply entrenched that no other form was ever considered. "In Homer not only the Greeks before Troy and Elpenor, far away from home, are burnt when they die; Eetion, too, in his own home is given a funeral pyre by Achilles (Il. 6, 418). Hektor's body is burnt in the middle of Troy and the Trojans themselves in their own native land burn their dead (Il.7).

The box or urn that holds the cremated bones of the dead is buried in a mound; the ashes of Patroklos, Achilles, Antilochos, and Aias rest on foreign soil (Od. 3, 109ff.; 24, 76ff.)."²⁷ The Greeks were at first ignorant of the purifying effect and thus this could not be a part of their beliefs. In the last analysis cremation was carried out for the benefit of the dead so that their souls could make a quick and speedy return to the depths.

What was the connexion of fire with future punishment?

Although fire holds an important place in Persian thought, it was too sacred an element to the Persians to be employed in this infernal connection, as Söderblom pointed out years ago. Another Iranian authority J. H. Moulton, after noting that the Swedish scholar's results are almost entirely unfavourable to the doctrine of Persian elements in Judaism, goes on to say that Söderblom 'notes how unlike anything in Judaism is the Avestan hell, a place of cold and stench and poison, not of fire--which was, of course too sacred an element to be applied thus: on the other hand, the under-ground Hades, divided into two parts, for pious souls and sinners, is essentially Greek.' Enoch's conception of retributive fire, as mentioned above, appears to connect with Greek pictures of the underworld. Now, there is evidence that the earliest Greek conception was of a purifying fire and that later the emphasis came to be placed on punishment rather than purgation. In this connection it may be

recalled that in Virgil's Aeneid, book 6, souls in the hereafter are cleansed by water, wind and fire:

Nor death itself can wholly wash their strains,
but long contracted filth e'en in the soul
remains;
The relics of inveterate vice they wear,
And spots of sin obscene in every face appear.

For this are various penances enjoined,
And some are hung to bleach upon the wind,
Some plunged in waters, others purged in fires.
Till all the drags are drained and all
the rust expires.

It is clear that this goes back to Orphism. In fact one form of Orphic initiation represents this threefold purgation, and on a drinking-glass of imperial times an illustration of the rite may be seen. The intention was that those who passed through this threefold purification on earth would be spared the corresponding purgations in the beyond. In the course of time these postmortem processes came to be regarded as punishments and this is particularly true of the fire. 'It was only natural that all these things were later conceived only as torments and penalties. The fire now a fire of torment (Dieterich)'.²⁸

One also sees in Jane Harrison's Prolegomena the concept that eternal punishment comes from Orphism. "The notion of punishment, and especially eternal punishment, cannot be fairly charged to the account of Homer and the Olympian religion he represents. This religion was too easy-going, too essentially aristocratic to provide an eternity even of torture for the religious figures it degraded and

despised. Enough for it if they were carelessly banished to their own proper kingdom, the underworld. It is, alas, to the Orphics, not to the Achaeans, that religion owes the dark disgrace of a doctrine of eternal punishment. The Orphics were concerned, as has fully been seen, with two things, immortality and purification; the two notions to them were inseparable, but by an easy descent the pains that were for purification became for vengeance. The germ of such a doctrine is already in the line."²⁹

The writings of Homer set the foundations of the underworld and it became rather difficult if not impossible to remove or change these conceptions. But the theme of Odysseus' Journey to the under-world had become an extremely popular one and before long it was being used by many various authors. Enlarging and expanding upon this theme could not be helped and consequently the conceptions of Hades began to change. The matter of accepted mythology over against the writer's own poetic licence, which certainly varied with the author, had become the warp and woof of the fabric so that to remove it would in effect destroy it. However a well known and well accepted poem could easily become accepted as part of the myth tradition. In any case the general picture of Hades was so dull and gloomy that

anyone with even the slightest amount of artistic ability could find here great latitude to test his own creative skill.

Much that may have been the invention of poets for the filling up or furnishing of the desert region so stamped itself upon the general mind that it almost seemed the natural growth of authentic popular belief. Everyone was familiar with the guardian of the gate of Plouton, the malignant hound of Hades who admits everyone but lets no one out again. He is the same creature, long known from the adventure of Herakles, which is already named Kerberos by Hesiod. Like the gate and the gate-keeper, the waters that divide Erebus from the world of the living are already known to Homer. Now they have a Ferryman added to them, the churlish old man Charon, who, like a second Kerberos, safely transports everyone across the water, but lets no one return. The Minyas is the first to mention him; that he became a real figure of popular belief (as he is still in Greece to this day, though with altered significance) is shown by pictures on the Attic vases that were put into the graves with the dead. These represent the soul as it stands upon the sedgy bank and meets the ferryman who will carry it over to the other side whence no man returns. The custom of burying the dead with a small coin fixed between the teeth was also explained as provision for the passage-money that would have to be paid to Charon.³⁰

The souls that passed by the dangers and difficulties reached the other side to await their fate. Those that

had been wise enough to take upon themselves the initiation, passed into a peaceful existence. As many individuals took out the assuredness of these rights, Hades was beginning to become the grand assemblage of these happy souls. Plato adds to the description of Hades three judges who would appear to be his own invention. This, like many other details, was added to mythology as a portion of popular beliefs.

Those who have taken a false oath, parricides, violators of the laws of hospitality are made by Aristophanes (in the Frogs) to 'lie in the mud'---a form of penalty originally anticipated for the uninitiated in some Orphic private mysteries, but now transferred by him to those guilty of moral misdemeanours. The inconsistency with the promises made in the mysteries themselves involved in such conceptions may have been the less observed just because the idea of a future system of compensation in accordance with the requirements of morality was never seriously or fully developed, but remained merely a matter of vague suggestion. In circumstances of real need that ideal never satisfied anyone in Greece. Men expected to see the retributive power of the gods visibly active upon earth; those in whom experience weakened this belief would not have derived such comfort from the idea of compensation hereafter. 31

However, in fact, the future life had little meaning or bearing over the lives of the individuals. The major group

where these ideas were upheld would be within the mystics and the rather ignorant and unfortunate masses. The later Greeks could make great fun of the lands beyond such as Oknos plaiting rope which is gnawed by his she-ass as fast as he can plait it. Then too there are men and women who are forced to pour water from broken pitchers into bottomless jars as a never-ending task for their failure to participate in the rights of initiation.

What had they to do with pictures of an underworld of purgatory and torment in expiation of all imaginary types and degrees of sin, as in Dante's ghastly Hell? It is true that even such dark fancies of the Christian Hell are in part derived from Greek sources. But it was only the misguided fancy of particular isolated sects that could call forth such pictures as these, and recommend itself to a philosophic speculation which in its worst excesses violently contradicted all the most fundamental principles of Greek culture. The people and the religion of Greece, the mysteries which her cities organized and deemed holy, may be freely acquitted of all such aberrations.³²

Because writers could speak in such terms of humour it would certainly indicate that it had little theological significance.

From the South of Italy and from Sicily came the mystery religion of the Orphics, named for their patron

saint Orpheus. Their belief in immortality stems from a myth of Dionysus, the child of Zeus, torn to pieces and devoured by the Titans. The story was told that they had eaten the body of the infant and Zeus out of rage struck them with a thunder bolt. And from their ashes came mankind. Thus Man contains a dual nature, one of good (Dionysiac) and one of evil (Titanic). The Titans were evil but they contained divine flesh, hence those (Mankind) created from two distinctive natures contained two natures also. The flesh embodied the evil aspects and thus disintegrated, but the soul was made of divine substance which gave rise to immortality. "The myth reflects the consciousness of the divided self; its framers must have known the sense of sin as surely as they found the promise of regeneration in the resurrection or rebirth of their divinity."³³

The Orphics maintained that there was no imposed barrier between man and the gods and hence everyone had the opportunity to become immortal. They took in the belief of transmigration in which the soul is of divine nature and wanders through earthly bodies until it finally shakes off its flesh. However, one of their great difficulties was the failure to develop the full consequences

of their theology. The only real requirement was atonement through the process of initiation but it had little influence on the rest of life. The whole emphasis was upon purifying the flesh in order to prepare it for reunion with the divine. The essence of the Orphic teachings included these three important factors; the body was thought to be a prison or tomb for the soul (*σωμα σῆμα*), the teaching of transmigration and the means to show how man could be delivered from bodily life and the circle of rebirth by finding his divinity. We have already seen how man has obtained two natures. The meaning of religion lay in the process by which one rids himself of the evil nature and retains only the good. Though man had become a wanderer from the gods, by means of the purification rites he now could obtain "true" salvation. "It is a great mistake to associate Greek eschatology only with the doctrine of immortality of the soul. The Greeks had a lot to say about punishment in the underworld, and it was the Orphics who were their teachers."³⁴

One of the Orphic plates found in Southern Italy reads like this: "You will find in the realms of Hades on the left hand a spring. And by it a white cypress standing. Do not go near this spring. But you will find

another, running with cool water from the lake of Memory. There are guardians before it. You must say, 'I am a child of earth and the starry heaven; I come from a heavenly race. You yourselves know this. I am perishing with thirst; but give me quickly the cool water which runs from the lake of memory.' And they will give you to drink of the divine spring. . ."³⁵ This has obviously broken through the rebirth cycle. While it is held that the future life is to be spent in the underworld the eventual goal of their later thinkers was to ascend to the heavenly heights.

Even later we find in the writings of Pindar (5th /C B. C.) that Hades has become merely an intermediate state. "For them the sun shines in his strength in the world beneath, while here it is night; and in fields of crimson roses before their city the incense-tree gives shade and golden fruits hang heavy. . . On the other side the sluggish rivers of gloomy night vomit forth their illimitable darkness."³⁶ The believer could look in this life toward the Islands of the Blest.

Certainly no examination of Greek thought would be complete without a reflection on Plato's ideas and especially on the Phaedo which is the magnum opus of the doctrine of immortality.

Plato-- perhaps the greatest mind we know among ancient writers, the thinker whose ideas did so much to shape all subsequent thought among the Greeks and Romans, indeed to shape thought in the Christian Church, too, up to our own day---believed passionately in the immortality of the individual soul. He believed also passionately that, according as men chose good or evil, their lot would be happy or unhappy after death. But he knew that, for him, all pictures of the future life, beyond those fundamental convictions, were just guessing. When he put forward myths with descriptions of the other world, he made it quite clear that he did not mean them to be a statement of fact. The different myths do not in their details agree with each other. Plato meant his myths simply to embody in an imaginative way so that his convictions might be realised, without his committing himself to a statement that they actually would be realised precisely in that way.³⁷

The Phaedo describes the death of Socrates, philosopher, and beloved teacher of Plato. Socrates more than any other man revolutionized the entire Weltanschauung of man's thought. From a total and complete interest in the world about them, Socrates challenged all men to an examination of their inner selves. Men had tended to judge the inner life by using the world as their norm or standard. Now Socrates asked that they might judge the outer world by their innermost selves. This was then the strongest

move toward the belief in immortality. Socrates, and Plato following his teacher, believed God to be a spirit whose qualities they came to seek within in order to describe His supreme existence. And within the individual they could find the qualities that made life meaningful. God was the great logic ($\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$) who patterns all things, but is himself beyond change. Matter and spirit are in constant conflict because they represent two different orders. The soul or reason ($\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$) was a portion of the divine. The body thus is a part of the material world which is corrupt, material, and transitory. Plato's logical system deduced from this knowledge of the universe that the soul must be both pre-existent and transmigratory. Though a Westerner may sneer at such concepts, one should be aware that it has been a great religious tradition. "Ere now," Empedocles is reported to have said, 'I, too, have been a boy, a girl, a bush, a bird and a scaly fish in the sea.' Pythagoras cherished a similar belief, if we may trust the satire of Xenophanes:-

'Once he was moved to pity,--so men say,--
 Seeing a dog rough handled by the way,
 Forbear thy hand; housed in yon cur doth lie
 A friend of mine; I knew him by his cry.' ³⁸

Plato saw his task as one of defending this doctrine and the

Phaedo is a means to that end. God is all in all and is the totality of pure truth, pure goodness, and pure wisdom--- only in relating to Him completely can one be freed from the fetters of the earth and thus find his meaning in life.

"Such, then, in briefest statement, is the doctrine of immortality as it is conceived by the great thinker who, outside of the prophets and psalmists of Israel, has exercised the most powerful influence upon Christian thought."³⁹

But truth does not come without preparation. And though we must admit that Socrates was one of the greatest thinkers, we must also realize that there were others lighting the way of spiritual awakening.

Xenophanes had spoken of 'one God greatest among gods and men, resembling mortals neither in form nor in thought, evermore abiding in the same place, moving not at all, without toil, ruling all things by the purpose of his mind.' Heraclitus had conceived of a divine essence which he described now as fire, but again as Logos, or Word, the unity in which all opposites are reconciled. Anaxagoras had explained creation as due to the activity of reason, 'the subtlest and purest of all things.' Protagoras had uttered his famous saying, 'Man is the measure of all things.' By these and similar speculations the way had been prepared for the last great step taken by Socrates and his greater disciple Plato.⁴⁰

But what became more important was the continuity of living.

Those who had lived the good life would be pleased and those who had forgotten the higher things would not be able to slip away unnoticed. The hopes of the individual seemed to be raised as Antigone hoped that when she reached Hades:

My father's love will greet me, yea and thine,
 My mother, ---and thy welcome, brother dear.
 Since when ye died I with mine own hands laid
 And dressed your limbs and poured upon your
 graves
 Libations.⁴¹

Oscar Cullmann in the Ingersoll Lecture of 1955 stated that in "Plato's impressive description of the death of Socrates, in the Phaedo, occurs perhaps the highest and most sublime doctrine ever presented on immortality of the soul."⁴² Plato likens our earthly bodies to a coat which wears away while the owner continues to exist. This body is one that chafes and binds the soul, which was created for higher things but now is contained in an inferior existence upon the earth. "The body is frankly declared to be the enemy of the soul; the philosopher is the man who realizes that it is so, and who determines to anticipate the final deliverance of death by having as little to do with the body as possible. It is the old gospel of the soma sema raised to the rank of a philosophical doctrine and about to be defended in the court of reason."⁴³

Man, however, can prepare for the eternal and lasting qualities by turning his total mind to philosophy and by disciplining his body to conform to his mind. Thus Socrates could look upon death as the great liberator which was to loosen his soul for higher things when the hemlock juice flung open the door of his imprisoned self. Plato argues that a harp may be destroyed, a composition continues and may be reproduced on another instrument at another time, giving it a permanent and lasting quality. If Plato had realized that an emitted sound never really ends but moves off to infinity and could be called back at any point if one had the right equipment, he would no doubt have used this argument. Perhaps Socrates' doctrine of Immortality would have faded fast from the realms of thought along with his unfamiliar thoughts, except for one reason. Because Socrates was a great teacher he lived his message and by this means proved his point with his life, he added a depth and quality to death that had not been seen before. Since that historic event many individuals have taken courage from his example. "Plato shows us how Socrates goes to his death in complete peace and composure. The death of Socrates is a beautiful death. Nothing is seen here of death's terror. Socrates cannot

fear death, since indeed it sets him free from the body. Whoever fears death proves that he loves the world of the body, that he is thoroughly entangled in the world of sense. Death is the soul's great friend. So he teaches; and so, in wonderful harmony with his teaching, he dies--- this man who embodied the Greek world in its noblest form."⁴⁴

This is one of the few deaths that has attracted the entire world. Socrates sets his house in order, gathers his disciples about, and then proceeds to philosophize on life and death. This added a new dimension to death,--a man dying in dignity with a calm serenity which has stirred the world.

The basic purpose of Phaedo, as Professor Hackforth points out, is not so much a task of proving immortality

though much of it is devoted to arguments for that thesis; it is not to pay a tribute of admiration to a beloved friend and master, though that tribute is undoubtedly paid; it is not to expound or propagate a metaphysical doctrine, though the doctrine of Forms (Ideas) bulks large; it is, I would say, to extend and deepen, through the mouth of a consciously Platonised Socrates, the essential teaching of Socrates himself, namely that man's supreme concern is the 'tendance of his soul', or (in more modern language) the furthering of his insight into moral and spiritual values and the application of that insight in all his conduct. That is, for Socrates and Plato alike, the way of philosophy, and only by following that way can man attain

real well-being or happiness: only in the philosophic life can the soul's desire be satisfied and the aim of the true self be fulfilled.⁴⁵

It might be added that certainly through this work Plato has not only added to Socrates' immortality, but also to his own. Yet this has remained one of the lasting monuments to a teacher and philosopher by a devoted pupil. There is still another aspect of this writing as Plato uses this means for interjecting his own thoughts which go far beyond his teacher's in regard to moral doctrine, the concept of immortality, and the dislike of the flesh. And what could be a more effective means than changing the teachings of a man by writing his last will and testament for him? Plato drives hard for the purification of the flesh requiring that the totality of life should be a 'training for death.' Yet the whole account is a defense of the teaching of Socrates which Professor Hackforth ably calls "Socrates' philosophical autobiography." Through this dialogue a new religion is born. A religion based on Philosophy as a way of life which leads to the salvation of the soul.

Socrates states that all of life is to be made a preparation for dying - but philosophy is the only sure

release from this difficult penalty of the gods. "Now if that is true, it would surely be absurd to devote the energy of a lifetime to that one end, and then, when it had come, to complain of that for which they had all the time been so energetically training."⁴⁶ When pressed in regard to the meaning of death itself he replies, "And by death do we not mean simply the departure of soul from body? Being dead consists, does it not, in the body having been parted from the soul and come to be by itself, and in the soul having been parted from the body, and being by itself. Can death possibly be anything other than that?"⁴⁷ Or further he says:

Hence, to repeat what I said at the outset, it would be ridiculous that a man should spend his life in a way that brought him as near as possible to being dead, and then complain of death when it came.

Then it is true, Simmias, that the real philosophers train for dying, and to be dead is for them less terrible than for all other men. Look at it like this: if their continual quarrel with the body, their desire to have the soul by itself, were to result in fear and complaint when that is achieved, how unreasonable it would be! How unreasonable not to be glad to go to a place where they may hope to get what they have longed for all their lives, to wit intelligence, and to be rid of the presence of their old enemy! Why, there have been not a few persons ready and

willing to descend into Hades in quest of a lost wife or son or darling, led by the hope of beholding and rejoining their loved ones in another world: shall then he who truly loves not any human object, but intelligence, and has conceived this same lively hope that in that other world, and there alone, he will attain it in full measure, shall he, I say, complain when death comes? Shall he not rather depart in gladness? We must needs think so, if he is in truth, dear Simmias, a philosopher; for he will be very sure that only in that world can he attain to intelligence in purity, and that being so would it not, I repeat, be utterly unreasonable for such a man to fear death?

Then if you see a man about to die complaining, is not that good evidence that he is not really a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, but what we may call a lover of the body? And probably he will be a lover of riches too, or of honours, or maybe of both.⁴⁸

The first argument for immortality that Socrates puts forth is one of opposites. Basically as light is the opposite of darkness - life is the opposite of death for they come into existence from the absence of each other. In other words you might say that they have no meaning apart from the other. If all things died and continued to remain dead there would no longer be life but universal death.

It is quite apparent to anyone that the body certainly is made to outlast the event of death. One need only to

look to Egyptian preservation of bodies or find some ancient bones to be reminded that there is continuation after death. If these material and earthly elements can continue in existence, would not the higher spiritual order continue even longer? "Socrates" then moves on to bring in moral distinctions. The souls of men which have prepared themselves for death will be better off than those who have placed no attention on the higher things. Their fate will be one of endless incarnations perhaps in the form of very lowly animals. Thus emerges his thoughts on transmigration.

Yes, my friend; and we must think of that element as a ponderous, heavy, earthy and visible substance; and the soul that carries it is weighed down and dragged back into the visible world; you know the stories about souls which, in their dread of the invisible that is called Hades, roam about tombs and burying-places, in the neighbourhood of which, it is alleged, ghostly phantoms of souls have actually been seen---just the sort of wraiths that souls like that would produce, souls which are not pure when they are released but still retain some of that visible substance, which is just why they can be seen.

.....
 It may indeed, Cebes, and it is certainly not the souls of the righteous, but those of the wicked that are compelled to wander about such places, as the penalty for bad nurture in the past. And they must continue to wander until they are once more chained up in a body, by reason of the desires of

that bodily attendant which is ever at their side; and naturally they will be chained to the type of character that they have trained themselves to exhibit in their lifetime.

.
I mean, for example, that those who have trained themselves in gluttony, unchastity and drunkenness, instead of carefully avoiding them, will naturally join the company of donkeys or some such creatures, will they not?

.
Whereas those who have set more value upon injuring and plundering and tyrannising over their fellows will join the wolves and hawks and kites. Or should we give such souls as these some other destination?

.
But the society of gods none shall join who has not sought wisdom and departed wholly pure; only the lover of knowledge may go thither. And that is the reason, dear friends, why true philosophers abstain from the desires of the body, standing firm and never surrendering to them; they are not troubled about poverty and loss of estate like the common lover of riches; nor yet is the abstinence due to fear of the dishonour and disgrace that attach to an evil life, the fear felt by the lovers of power and position.

No, that would be unworthy of them, Socrates, remarked Cebes.

'Most certainly it would', he replied.

'And that of course, Cebes, is why one who is concerned about his own soul, instead of spending his life getting his body into good shape, says good-bye to all that sort of thing; and while the rest follow a road which leads them they know not whither, he takes another one: holding that he must never act against philosophy and that deliverance and purification which philosophy achieves, he proceeds in the direction whither philosophy points him.'⁴⁹

For Plato the greatest evil comes from man failing to fix his mind on the truths of philosophy and placing his interest and attention on the bodily things of life. A part of this "sin" is not to be able to separate the essential realities from those which are unessential.

It is this, that no man's soul can feel intense pleasure or pain in anything without also at the same time believing that the chief object of these his emotions is transparently clear and utterly real, though in fact it is not; this is especially the case with visible objects, as you may agree.

Well, when that happens, isn't the soul more than ever fast bound by the body?

Every pleasure and every pain drives as it were a rivet into the soul, pinning it down to the body and so assimilating it thereto that it believes everything to be real which the body declares so to be. Indeed it seems to be an inevitable result of sharing the body's beliefs and joys that the soul should adopt its habits and upbringing, and so be destined never to reach Hades in a pure condition, but always to depart with much taint of the body, and therefore to fall back again soon into another body, like a seed replanted in new soil; a fate which denies it all converse with that which is divine and pure and single of form.

So that, Cebes, is the reason why genuine philosophers are orderly and brave; it is not for the reasons which weigh with the multitude, or do you think it is?

No: the soul of a philosopher will reflect as we have said, and will

not suppose that, while it is the task of philosophy to secure its release, it should thwart that task by surrendering itself to pleasures and pains, and so relapse into its old imprisonment, like Penelope at the interminable task of undoing her web; rather will it abate the storm of desire by taking reason as its guide and constant companion, by contemplating the utter certainty of divine reality and finding sustenance therein. After this manner the soul deems that all its earthly life should be lived, and that when that is ended it will pass into the presence of a kindred being like unto itself, quit of all human evils. Surely if that be the manner of its sustenance, my friends, we need not be alarmed about its having to fear that on its release from the body it may be dissipated, blown to pieces by the winds, vanishing into thin air and existing no longer anywhere. 50

Death is made both graphic and dignified by the analogy of the dying swan.

And I fancy you must think me a poorer sort of prophet than the swans; for they, when they realise that they have to die, sing more, and sing more sweetly than they have ever sung before, rejoicing at the prospect of going into the presence of that god whose servants they are, though indeed human beings, because of their own fear of dying, malign them, making out that their departing song is a painful lament for death; they fail to reflect that no bird sings when it is hungry or cold or feels any sort of pain, not even the nightingale itself, nor the swallow nor the hoopoe; of course the story is that these birds sing a lament because of their pain,

but I don't believe that is true either of them or of the swans: what I think is that belonging as they do to Apollo, they are prophetic creatures who foresee the blessings in store for them in Hades, and therefore sing with greater delight on that last day than ever before. And as for me, I count myself a fellow-servant of the swans, dedicated to the same god, and favoured by my master with prophetic power equal to theirs; nor am I more sorrowful than they in departing this life. No; so far as that goes, you should say what you will and ask what you will, so long as the prison authorities of Athens permit you.⁵¹

Perhaps the most difficult, incomprehensible, and illogical arguments are purposed as the exclusion of opposites. It would seem that Plato would have had a difficult time placing his name to these arguments. In fairness to Plato the case for immortality should be seen as Professor Patterson states the problem:

For no man argues on behalf of the doctrine of immortality as a lawyer argues in court on behalf of an inheritance which, unless his argument be judged conclusive, will not fall to his client. It is evident to everybody that if we are immortal, the fact that we are immortal will be a fact whether or not it is believed to be so, and whether or not the belief can be shown to be true; and that if we are not immortal, no argument can make us so. We raise and discuss the question, not because our future destiny, but because our present happiness, will be affected by our conclusion. In this respect Plato

was not different from anyone else. He argued, as we argue, because, as he says, 'the hope is great,' and because he realized, at least in great measure, how tremendous is the practical importance of a positive conclusion.⁵²

In effect Plato argues for the doctrine of Immortality by stating that opposites abstain from their opposite. Further he continues to support this by giving numerous examples such as ice and water, leading of course to the opposites of life and death, one being mutually exclusive of the other. The soul being life itself is deathless. It is formed before this life (pre-existence) and continues past this life (reincarnation and immortality) and consequently is untouched by death. The only truth in this entire argument with regard to the soul is the observation that life is the opposite of death, and even this should be qualified for death and life are continuous and usually a harmonious process depending on one another. It is rather a question of which process has the upper-hand that determines the state of a body. But the great difficulty in logic is the analogy that snow and heat have any relation to the spiritual life or even any likeness to one another. Like all things in the spiritual realm proof can never be found, thus Plato's "logic" can endure endlessly. However, now it has lost all appeal for people have out grown such

wisdom.

Plato points out that if people began to believe that there was no moral distinction in a future life or indeed that there was no further existence, life would completely change man's out-look.

For if death were the end of all things, it would be a heaven-sent boon for the wicked, when they die, to be at one stroke released both from the body and, with the death of the soul, from their own wickedness; but now that we have found the soul to be immortal, there can be no other escape from evil, no other salvation for it save by becoming as good and intelligent as possible; seeing that the soul brings nothing with it to Hades except what nurture and upbringing have made of it: and that, we are told, avails much for weal or for woe from the very first moment of its departure to that other world.

Now this is the story: when a man has breathed his last, the spirit to whom each was allotted in life proceeds to conduct him to a certain place, and all they that are there gathered must abide their judgement and thereafter journey to Hades in company with that guide whose office it is to bring them from this world unto that other. There that befalls them which must befall; and having there abided for the due span of time they are brought back hither by another guide; and so they continue for many long circuits of time.⁵³

In other words Plato asserts that immortality breeds morality as disbelief in immortality breeds immorality. We are as

mere mortal beings seeing through a glass darkly but finally the realities and truths will be revealed to us. Perhaps the metaphor of a fishbowl might be more fitting;

he would see the sun and the stars through the water, and believe the sea to be the sky; slow of movement and feeble, he would never have reached the top of the sea, never have emerged with his head above the water to get a sight of this our earthly region, and to behold how much purer and fairer it is than the world where he and his fellows dwell, a region of which he had never heard from any that had seen it.

That, as I said, is a precise analogy to our own case. We live in one of the earth's hollows, and imagine ourselves to be living on its surface; and we call the air the heaven, taking it to be the heaven through which the stars move. But in fact it is the same thing as before: we are so feeble and slow of movement that we cannot get out of our hollow and reach the confines of the air; of course if one of us could get to the top of it or acquire wings and fly aloft, then just as a fish which gets its head above water in the everyday world can see its sights, he would behold the sights of the world above; and if he were one who could endure to contemplate them, he would realise that there was the real heaven, the genuine daylight, the actual earth. The earth that we know, the stones and eaten away, as are rocks in the sea by salt water; nothing of any value can grow in the sea, little or nothing can fully develop in it; where there is anything solid, it is all eroded rocks and sand and a vast extent of slime and mud; it is utterly unworthy to be compared with the beauty to be found in our hollow. But far and away more

excellent still than that is the beauty of that world above. Indeed, if it is a good thing to end with a story, it will not be out of place, Simmias, to hear what things are like on that upper earth beneath the heavens.⁵⁴

Here life is as it should be pure and beautiful.

Moreover this difference in colour is matched by a like difference in the trees and flowers and fruits that grow in that upper earth; and again its mountains contain stones which are correspondingly smoother, more transparent, and more beautiful in hue; it is fragments of them that constitute the bits of stone which we cherish, cornelians, jaspers, emeralds and so forth; there every single stone is a jewel, and a fairer jewel than those we know. And the reason for that is that the stones there are pure, not eaten away nor ruined, as ours are, by the mildew and brine produced by the sediment which has collected in our hollow, and is the source of ugliness in stones and soil, and of sickness in animals and plants.

With all these precious stones is the real earth adorned, and with gold also and silver and all other precious metals; for they are plainly visible, abundant, massive, and spread all over the earth; happy therefore are they whose eyes dwell upon that spectacle.

Now besides many other creatures that live there there are men, of whom some dwell inland and others at the edge of the air, just as we dwell at the edge of the sea, others again in islands near the mainland which are surrounded by air. In short, the needs which for us are met by the waters of sea are there met by the air, while in place of our air they have the aither. The climate

that he has been in training for death and even the slightest quiver will show through the failure of his estimate of life. It becomes drama at its best, the scene has been set most of his life and there could be no turning back. The compassion and the pathos build up in a crescendo as even the guard looks to Socrates with admiration and devotion. With a memory of the gods the poison is taken as the emotions of friends break down - Socrates admonishes them. As death inches upon him, he calls very nonchalantly, "'Crito, we owe a cock to Asklepios; pray do not forget to pay the debt.' He, Socrates, awaits a beautiful and long awaited friend which will take him to peace and harmony. Only those who love the body and earthly possessions are afraid of Death. Here then is a witness and testimony of the death of Socrates --- 'this man who embodied the Greek world in its noblest form.'"⁵⁷

One must be continually aware that the ideas presented here are of philosophical and intellectual content rather than creeds or affirmations of faith. They come from an inner look at the individual and are certainly valid and remarkable. But it must be seen that their nature and task is vastly different from that of theology and hence they cannot be equated.

they enjoy keeps them free from sickness and allows them to live much longer than we do, while their superiority in vision, hearing, intelligence and other faculties is proportionate to the greater purity of air as compared with water, and of aether as compared with air. Moreover they have sacred groves and temples for the gods, which the gods do verily inhabit; by omen and oracle and vision and suchlike they have direct communion with the divine beings; sun and moon and stars they behold as they really are, and with all other such bliss are they blessed.⁵⁵

Mankind is divided into five groups. Those who have lived "indifferently well" were sent off for Acheron where they shall be purged and can make atonement and find also rewards for their deeds. Yet others whose sins are great and for whom there is no cure nor hope are confined to Tartarus for ever.

Others there be whose sins are accounted curable, yet heinous: such as have been moved by anger to lay violent hands upon father or mother, yet have lived thereafter a life of repentance; or such as have slaughtered a man in some similar condition; all these must be cast into Tartarus, but after abiding there for the space of a year the surging waters throw the parricides and matricides out by way of Pyriphlegethon, and the others by way of Cocytus. And when they have been swept along to a point near the Acherusian Lake, then do they cry aloud and call to those whom they have slain or despitefully used, begging and beseeching them that they would

suffer them to come forth into the lake and give them hearing. If they can prevail, they do come forth, and find an end to their trouble; but if not, they are swept back into Tartarus, and thence into the rivers again; nor can they ever have respite from their woes until they prevail upon those whom they have injured; for such is the penalty appointed by their judges.

But lastly there are those that are deemed to have made notable progress on the road to righteous living; and these are they that are freed and delivered from the prison-houses of this interior of the earth, and come to make their habitation in the pure region above ground. And those of their number who have attained full purity through philosophy live for evermore without any bodies at all, and attain to habitations even fairer than those others; but the nature of these it would not be easy to reveal, even were time enough now left me.⁵⁶

Then the Phaedo is concluded by the death scene of Socrates. Obviously this is the highest statement and development of the doctrine of Immortality. The Orphic beliefs are developed to their highest and finest point by Plato. This is the apex of dignified dying which almost glosses over the fact that it borders on suicide. Socrates has recapitulated all his philosophical thought and cogently, calmly, and righteously defended himself. The whole tone is one deliberately made to underplay death, in effect to cheat it from its power of fear; the whole point being

It is with little doubt that scholars can maintain that Plato's pictures of the future life were sheer imagery and certainly he was not deluded by this. These descriptions of the after-life are presented by Plato himself as meaning that they were not to be taken literally, though he used his imagery to display his fundamental convictions and the truth must be seen in that manner. Plato did believe like the Pythagoreans, who "thought that the punishment or the reward came to a soul in two ways---the pain or the delight which awaited a soul in the other world immediately it passed out of the body, and the new incarnation which would be allotted to it in this world after a certain period in the other one. Probably reincarnation was just one of the things which Plato did not mean to assert positively: it was part of his imaginative guessing: but he did mean to assert positively that the soul was immortal and that, in some way or other, a man would reap the fruit of his doings after death."⁵⁸

Through Plato's writings one can discern a continual upward movement of the souls of the righteous. They spend various periods in the lower realms but soon move on to the islands of the blessed. Though the evil still journey to the lower depths, the righteous in his later

writings dismiss the under-world altogether and move into the high heavens. At this point the Stoics enter the eschatology and continue to promote it in much the same as Plato has presented it.

It is easily seen that Platonic philosophy presented a system of anthropology which the Christian Church used without hesitation. Plato's concepts of man were well developed and helped to put down much of the earlier and more primitive concepts, though it must be realized at once that Plato's concepts did not permeate the thinking of the masses. A. E. Taylor believes that Plato's insistence on the "quality of immortality" had wider appeal than the Hebrew doctrine of resurrection.⁵⁹ A man could begin to reach salvation by being "turned about", that is giving oneself over to that which is truth, goodness and beauty. It was by this means that a man was to truly become righteous and thereby obtain "salvation." "But Plato is weak just where the Israelite is strong. His 'immortality' of the parted soul, in which the body has no share, is, after all, dangerously like a doctrine of the survival of half a personality. And we also miss in him an adequate sense of the direct dependence of the hope of eternal life on the moral character of God."⁶⁰ The soul is that part

of man which is similar to the gods and he who is willing to become more like the gods is brought through this earthly struggle. The position of God is rather precarious if one proceeds with the belief that the soul is inherently immortal. This dilemma remains quite obscure in the writings of Plato. "And the consequence is that with all Plato's sincere belief in God's judgment of men according to their works, he leaves it to be supposed that the righteous man, in the end, wins the crown by his own unaided effort. God has so ordered the world that if he lives rightly he will achieve salvation, but there is no grace, no 'free gift' of God to enable him to do so."⁶¹ God stands out of the realm of intervening in the affairs of men and as such remains simply as a spectator. "It was left for Christianity to integrate in one conception the thoughts of the newer and higher quality of the 'immortal' life, and those of God as its only source and guarantee, and of the preservation of the whole man, not merely of a favoured element in him 'unto everlasting life.'"⁶²

What can be said in conclusion as to the contributions of Greek thought on contemporary Christianity? The influence is basically in regard to immortality and eschat-

ology. There are of course those who in actual belief are Stoics but their number is negligible. The following things may be said: 1) the important things (realities) in life are a part of the spiritual realm; 2) there is a moral plan and function behind the entire universe which extends beyond this earthly existence; 3) that the individual must seek deliverance through purification and abstinence; 4) that each human being has a soul which must come into harmony with the divine principles to receive any satisfaction in this world or in the world to come.

But the impact of the Greeks has not been lost in the Christian tradition and frequently has been promoted as the orthodox faith. To remove these contributions would certainly involve the rethinking of all Christian theology particularly in the area of eschatology, but is there really any alternative if we are unwilling to settle for complete Christianity?

It is interesting to see how much of the Greek tradition was carried on in the ideas of mediaeval Christianity about the world beyond death. In Dante all the three notions---the great hollow underground, the island-paradise beyond the sea to the west, and the ascent of souls to the starry sky---are there side by side. But they are

distributed among three different classes of souls. The hollow underground is the hell to which those go who are excluded for ever from salvation (and even in the details of Dante's Hell there are elements which come by continuous tradition from the Greeks); the island far away over the western sea, with the earthly paradise on its summit, is the mountain of Purgatory; and the heavenly Paradise, beyond the sphere of the stars, is the abode of just men made perfect. Probably Dante did not understand these descriptions literally. He just uses the old mythological imagery as a set of consecrated symbols for the inconceivable mode of existence which awaits man after bodily death.⁶³

But wherever we place the blame, Greek eschatology and immortality have come to take their rest in the Christian Faith.

Footnotes

¹G. Lowes Dickinson, The Greek View of Life (London: Methuen & Company, 1949), pp. 33-34.

²Dickinson, p. 36.

³Dickinson, p. 38.

⁴Dickinson, p. 39.

⁵J. W. Mackail, Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), p. 75.

⁶Ibid., p. 149.

⁷Ibid., p. 168.

⁸Ibid., p. 64.

⁹Rudolf Bultmann, Life and Death (Kittel's Bible Key Words; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), p. 28.

¹⁰R. W. Livingstone, The Greek Genius and Its Meaning to Us (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), p. 123.

¹¹Dickinson, p. 68.

¹²M. Cary and T. J. Haarhoff, Life and Thought in the Greek and Roman World (London: Methuen & Company, 1942), p. 333.

¹³Cary, p. 333.

¹⁴Homer, The Odyssey, trans. A. T. Murray (Loeb Classical Library; London: William Heinemann, 1946), X, 494-5, Vol. I, p. 381

¹⁵Ibid., Od., XI, 94-6, Vol. I, p. 393.

¹⁶Ibid., Od., XI, 134-7, Vol. I, pp. 395-7.

¹⁷Ibid., Od., XI, 210-22, Vol. I, pp. 401-3.

- ¹⁸ Sir James Marchant (ed.), Immortality (London: G. P. Putnam's, 1924), pp. 16-17.
- ¹⁹ Edwyn Bevan, et al. The Future Life (London: Martin Hopkinson Ltd., 1933), p. 25.
- ²⁰ James Hastings (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), Vol. I, p. 207.
- ²¹ Bevan, p. 26.
- ²² Bevan, pp. 26-27.
- ²³ Bevan, pp. 27-28.
- ²⁴ Erwin Rohde, Psyche, trans. W. B. Hillis (London: Kegan Paul, 1925), p. 6.
- ²⁵ Rohde, pp. 12-13.
- ²⁶ Rohde, p. 19.
- ²⁷ Rohde, p. 20.
- ²⁸ T. Francis Glasson, Greek Influence in Jewish Eschatology (London: S. P. C. K., 1961), pp. 23-24.
- ²⁹ Jane Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), pp. 611-12.
- ³⁰ Rohde, p. 237.
- ³¹ Rohde, p. 240.
- ³² Rohde, p. 242.
- ³³ Marchant, p. 25.
- ³⁴ Glasson, pp. 26-27.
- ³⁵ Glasson, p. 34.
- ³⁶ Glasson, p. 35.

- ³⁷ Bevan, pp. 31-32.
- ³⁸ William Adams Brown, The Christian Hope (London: Duckworth, 1912), p. 39.
- ³⁹ Brown, p. 40.
- ⁴⁰ Brown, pp. 40-41.
- ⁴¹ Brown, p. 43.
- ⁴² Oscar Cullmann, Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? (London: Epworth Press, 1959), p. 19.
- ⁴³ Robert Leet Patterson, Plato on Immortality (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965), pp. 20-1.
- ⁴⁴ Cullmann, pp. 20-21.
- ⁴⁵ Plato, Phaedo, trans. R. Hackforth (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1952), p. 3.
- ⁴⁶ Plato, Phaedo, 64 (Hackforth, p. 41).
- ⁴⁷ Plato, Phaedo, 64C (Hackforth, p. 44). Please note that only Socrates' dialogue appears in the following quotations.
- ⁴⁸ Plato, Phaedo, 67E-68C (Hackforth, pp. 53-54).
- ⁴⁹ Plato, Phaedo, 81D-82D (Hackforth, pp. 89-90).
- ⁵⁰ Plato, Phaedo, 83C-84B (Hackforth, pp. 93-94).
- ⁵¹ Plato, Phaedo, 85 (Hackforth, p. 95).
- ⁵² Patterson, p. 12.
- ⁵³ Plato, Phaedo, 107C-D (Hackforth, pp. 167-68).
- ⁵⁴ Plato, Phaedo, 109D-110B (Hackforth, pp. 170-71).
- ⁵⁵ Plato, Phaedo, 110D-111C (Hackforth, pp. 176-77).
- ⁵⁶ Plato, Phaedo, 114-114C (Hackforth, pp. 183-84).

⁵⁷Cullmann, p. 21.

⁵⁸Bevan, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁹A. E. Taylor, The Christian Hope of Immortality,
(London: Centenary Press, 1946), p. 12.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 12.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 13.

⁶²Ibid., p. 13.

⁶³Bevan, pp. 35-36.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE INTER-TESTAMENTAL CONCEPT OF DEATH

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In a recent study by Principal D. S. Russell the following observation is made; "In many ways the apocalyptic literature serves as a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and this is perhaps nowhere more clearly shown than in its belief concerning the life beyond death. Much of the teaching of the New Testament in this respect is inexplicable simply in terms of the Old Testament background, but it can be seen in its true light within the setting of apocalyptic thought. Of particular significance is its teaching concerning the resurrection from the dead."¹ While one can believe there is a great deal of truth in this statement; I cannot but take issue with the metaphor of a "bridge." The more one reflects on this, the more one is certain that it is

a poor choice. Far better, yet not totally correct, would be an illustration of a trickling stream becoming a raging river by the time it reaches the Apostolic Church. If we follow this we would have to say that the Inter-testamental shores are the longest and the most influential. Here alone can we account for various new elements being added, older ideas being washed away, and others washed free of foreign silt. The one constant element of the stream is a sustained belief in the Nature and the Love of God. However, one is not sure of all the influences that have brought about these changes, yet he is certain that in the New Testament the substance, colouring, and depth are radically different from those of the Old Testament. From the spark of hope in a future life given in the Old Testament there developed a complete doctrine of a future life and a belief in the resurrection from the dead in the Apocrypha.

It would be indeed wrong to believe that the apocalyptic writers had developed an eschatology in full bloom. As the Old Testament writers groped for truths, the apocalyptic writers came to even greater truths. Yet, not every writer saw these beliefs to the same degree nor with the same measure of faith. The reader is pre-

sented with many differing views and internal inconsistencies. But must we demand of each writer a logical, cogent, systematic doctrine of eschatology? In reality this is what we expect, yet how many scholars of today assert that they have answered such deep questions. Here men are wrestling with the inscrutable mysteries of God and thus attempt to describe the indescribable and they fall short. If however, we approach these writers as submitting statements of faith, then all are right (in a sense) and the more glaring difficulties are thus made easier for the followers to comprehend the rich inheritance of their writings. "Out of this often confusing pattern emerges the sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life, be it in an earthly Messianic Kingdom or in the glorious heaven beyond. Beneath the strange and fanciful imagery in which the picture is frequently described there lies the deep religious conviction that man is made for eternal fellowship with the living God."²

The concept of death along with all other Hebrew beliefs developed from its tribal simplicity to the deep and profound religious dogmas it attained. Less and less the Hebrew based his life on the reconciliation and

retribution of Yahweh in this life and looked more and more to the life to come. Life no longer seemed to be lived for its pure intrinsic and aesthetic values, but became the means or the way to a fuller manifestation of a life with Yahweh. In times of great persecution and distress the Hebrew could press on and endure untold hardship in the face of the oppressor as he realized that vindication came not in the present life but in the life to come. This projection of Yahweh's righteousness was in the last analysis the very thing that ultimately "saved" the faith of Israel and was to enable it to lay the foundations of the religious beliefs of over half the people of today's world. The success or failure of any religious system ultimately hinges on the systematic presentation of its eschatology. In so far as the eschatology is convincing, whether it is logical or not, it is able to grow and increase to the point where it becomes self-perpetuating. This would account for the increase of the Christian Faith over against the background of the Hebrew faith. Further, this explains the regression of Christianity because theologians have held the eschatology is almost two thousand years behind the faith. Not only are Christians guilty of this lag but

it is also true of the Hebrew Faith as Dr. Charles states: "The eschatology of the nation is always the last part of its religion to experience the transforming power of new ideas and new facts. The eschatology of Israel was at times six hundred years behind its theology."³

The roots of Christian eschatology lay deeply entrenched in the Inter-testamental period. Investigation is halted by the fact that even though this is the most fertile period of eschatology in the Western world it is simultaneously the most unproductive in regard to primary sources. Any thorough analysis must examine the component parts realizing the dogmas preceding and following this period. By tracing threads of evidence and conjecture, scholars can reproduce some semblance of the events and beliefs of this age.

In the Inter-testamental period the whole tenor of religion was altered. The effects of changing from a theocratic nationalism to an intensely personal monotheism have been noted previously. The responsibility of religion now rested on the individual rather than on a highly complex system. Death no longer was feared as a threat of "non-being" and total dissolution. Rather death was feared because it was held that it was no longer the end. Thus

they feared their personal fate might be even worse than falling into nothingness. One not only had to live his life out under Yahweh but now he was held responsible for all his actions. The centre of living falls from the "here and now" to the "life to come." This inversion of goals made this life a means to an end. Life was feared rather than enjoyed. What we have here is the carry-over of the moralism from the prophetic period. This moral system has turned sour over the years. Since this period the whole Christian Faith has become overly anxious about the future life so as to make this life in many cases sheer misery. Eternal reward usurped the position of inner peace and continual assurance. No doubt this is why Jesus spent so much time in His teachings dealing with concepts of reward over against the real demands upon His disciples.

To come to an understanding of the development of the beliefs in regard to death and the then current beliefs of eschatology, there will be an examination of the Apocrypha and parallel historical sources. In the apocalyptic literature of this time the concept of the Kingdom of God is most central and most prominent in the beliefs. Because of its centrality the Kingdom of God

took on all shades of meaning with tints of political, social, religious, and philosophical concerns. R. H. Charles states that there were two major beliefs concerning the future life:

. . . The hope of the individual, which gave birth in due course to the belief in an individual immortality, and the hope of the nation, which developed ultimately into the expectation of the Messianic kingdom. In this kingdom, as originally conceived, only the righteous . . . should share. For several centuries these two hopes pursued, side by side, their own lines of development, and it was not till the third century B. C., at earliest (?) that they were seen to be complementary sides of one and the same religious truth, a truth that subserves and does justice to the essential claims of both. Thus when the doctrine of the blessed immortality of the faithful is combined with that of the Messianic kingdom, the separate eschatologies of the individual and of the nation issue in their synthesis. Not only should the surviving righteous participate in the Messianic kingdom, but the righteous dead of Israel should rise to share therein. Thus the righteous individual and the righteous nation should be blessed together.⁴

Dr. Charles then incorporates this passage from Isaiah (26:19):

"Thy dead men (Israel) shall arise
And the inhabitants of the dust shall awake
and shout for joy"⁵

This is a portion of the "Isaiah Apocalypse" (Isa. 24-27) which is unrelated to its present context. The writing itself represents transitional material which was probably written between the writings of the prophets and the apocalyptic writings. These later writings were added between the fifth and third centuries B. C.

The highest theology that the Hebrews reached comes from this apocalyptic age. Yet it seems tragic that this was stamped out and even banned during the first hundred years of the growth of the Christian Faith. However, many of these concepts were caught up into Christendom and were preserved continually. To a few men known as the Hasidim were entrusted the great religious truths to be preserved, promoted, and professed, so that the entire world might share them. "The apocalyptic writers simply took these writings (the Old Testament) as a starting point, and developed a series of eschatological systems by means of which the heathen survivals in the Old Testament are displaced and comparatively consistent and spiritual views of the future are developed. It is impossible on the present occasion to trace even the chief phases of this development."⁶ Through these writers there developed very significant changes. The realization was reached that

the Messianic kingdom would not come upon the earth as the Old Testament had taught. The earth became an unsuitable place for the Kingdom and thus begins a great separation between what is considered the earthly and the heavenly. An interim period of a thousand years, named the millennium, was to occur at the end of the earth before the Kingdom was to come in power in the heavens. The dead must rest through this period to await their reward or punishment. However the Old Testament pointed out that judgment and resurrection would issue forth the Messianic kingdom. The Old Testament maintained a resuscitation of life basically the same as their former life but now lived out under the reign of the Messiah on earth. The apocalyptic writers maintained that only the pious would at once be raised to heaven in a spiritual form.

When the Apocrypha was written the Hebrews had embraced Greek thoughts and conceptions. Thus the thinking of the Hellenistic age appears in many aspects of the Hebrew Doctrine of the Future Life. Assimilated with this was the Greek concept of the Rule of God which maintained that God ruled all of History past, present, and future.

The belief that God has ruled throughout the history of the past, and especially throughout the past history

of Israel, appears in the Apocrypha as well as in the Old Testament. For instance, it underlies the whole Book of Baruch. But there is nothing added to the doctrine. Under the belief that the Lord rules the present, the Apocrypha emphasizes two particular points. First, in a period when, for His own purposes, God is leaving His people under alien rule, the belief takes the form: "In spite of our seemingly helpless plight, He is saving us now." In one way or another this belief lies behind every book in the Apocrypha. (An) . . . instance of the belief that God is God of History now is that in some of the Books of the Apocrypha God saves individuals---whose life, of course, is part of history. It has already been shown that in the period after the Exile individualism came to its zenith in Israel. Correspondingly, God saves righteous individuals - - - Tobit and Tobias, the Three Holy Children and Susanna - - - and even gives Daniel a dinner (Bel 33-42). Further, He can save them wherever they are---e.g. Tobit in Assyria, Sarah in Ecbatana, and Tobias on his journey from one to the other. Every fictitious story in the Apocrypha presupposes that the Lord is master of history now.'

In regard to the future, the Hebrews believed in the "Day of the Lord" in which God would step in and do something about the apostate earthly conditions. For in that "Day" the Hebrews would be vindicated and the Gentiles dealt with. Here God intervenes in History and wins out in victory. The Hebrews disputed the timing of this

"Day" as do so many Christians today. Yet this did not take from it the sincerity and the reality of their belief (Jth 16:17). In the Apocrypha "the Day" is seen as Judgment. "In the Apocrypha, as in the Old Testament, a quiet death, after a long and prosperous life, is the proper end of the righteous (e. g. To 14:11-15, Jth 16:23). Premature death, especially when it is sudden and violent, on the other hand, is a disaster. Sometimes it is punishment for sin, whether the sinner is killed 'by the hand of God' (e. g. 2 Mac 9:5) or by an agent of His (e. g. Sus 60-62, I Mac 2:24f). At other times it is murder. Sirach has a long passage of praise because God has saved him from this (51:1-12)."⁸ Basically the Apocrypha adopts the then existing and inherited Hebrew concepts. There is a strong warning that the corpse of a dead man ought to be buried. There is an incident where Tobit risks his own life that he may bury a Jew (Tobit 2:17ff; c. f. 2:3ff). He goes on to instruct Tobias saying: "My child, when I die, bury me" (4:3ff; c. f. 14:10-13).

When the Hebrews translated the Old Testament and the Apocrypha to Greek they named Sheol as Hades. This was correct because the Greeks believed that man descended into the deep recesses of the earth called Hades during

the event of death. From the Old Testament there was a changing concept of the nature of Sheol. First it was considered to be a place of rest and peace. But with the growth and the increasing influence of the Hasidim, Sheol became a place of torment and utter misery for all its inhabitants. This, needless to say, could not be thought to be consistent with the belief in the righteousness of Yahweh. The Old Testament writers worked about this point until they reached the conclusion that the righteous would rise from the dead to inherit the earth on that "Day." This is also found to be true of the Apocrypha. "But in the Apocrypha a new idea was added---that the old account of Sheol or Hades was too good for the wicked but not good enough for the righteous. This means that their fates differed immediately after death."⁹ A whole study could be made of the various things Sheol has meant to believers but basically it meant two things. "First, it is a place where social and not moral distinctions prevail; and secondly, though an abode of misery and wretchedness, it is not like Gehenna---a place of torment by fire. Now in the course of apocalyptic literature these views are abandoned. From 180 B. C. onward Sheol is generally conceived as a place of moral distinctions, and shortly

after 100 B. C. Sheol is described for the first time as an abode of fire, as in the New Testament."¹⁰ Dr. T. Francis Glasson offers some insight as to the origin of the use of fire in eschatology. "Now, there is evidence that the earliest Greek conception was of a purifying fire and that later the emphasis came to be placed on punishment rather than purgation. . . . It is clear that this goes back to Orphism. In fact one form of Orphic initiation represents this threefold purgation, and on a drinking-glass of imperial times an illustration of the rite may be seen. The intention was that those who passed through this threefold purification on earth would be spared the corresponding purgations in the beyond. In the course of time these post-mortem processes came to be regarded as punishments and this is particularly true of the fire. 'It was only natural that all these things were later conceived only as torments and penalties. The fire was now a fire of torment.' (Dieterich)."¹¹

In the Book of Sirach, C. Ryder Smith notes that the text that reads; "the punishment of the ungodly man is fire and the worm" (Sirach 7:17) is a Greek innovation. "It should be noted that we now have two thirds of Sirach in the original Hebrew. In this verse, 7:17, the Hebrew

has no reference to fire; the word 'worm' does not take us beyond Old Testament conceptions. This is not the only instance where the Greek translation, made by the writer's grandson, shows an advance in doctrine on the original. What is stated in the present work concerning the book of Sirach is true of the Greek translation (made about 130 B. C.); it does not necessarily apply to the original Hebrew."¹² Sirach continues likening Hades to the constantly burning debris heap outside of Old Jerusalem.

With the coming of the Book of Wisdom it is seen that the author makes it clear that there is a great distinction between the righteous and the wicked at the instant of death (Wis. 1:12-5:23). The other point which the author maintains is that there will be a last day which is to be a day of decision. There is an abrupt change of thought from the immediate state of men to a day of visitation (Wis. 4:15).

Turning to the Second Book of Maccabees one finds an extremely important source of eschatology. Perhaps one of the most interesting passages for this study appears in Chapter 12:39-45. This is an account of a costly sacrifice offered by Judas Maccabaeus.

Apparently there were two accounts of its nature. On one (which is

suggested in a parenthesis) it was a 'pious' thank-offering for the Jews who had 'fallen' in Judas's campaigns and were now 'asleep'; on the other it was a 'sin-offering' and 'propitiation' (exilasmus) for secret apostates who had been killed in battle. Under the second account their comrades believed that they had perished because of their secret sin, and prayed that 'the sin that had taken place might be wholly wiped away' - -i.e. the sin-offering was made that these sinners might escape the consequences of their sin---not in Hades but at the Resurrection, for Judas was 'taking thought for a resurrection', the comment being added: 'For if he were not expecting that they that had fallen would rise again, it were superfluous and idle to pray for the dead.' It is perhaps not by accident that the second account would suit the Pharisees, who believed in a resurrection, while the first, in which it is a thank-offering, would suit the Sadducees, who rejected the belief.¹³

It would seem that these two concepts were tailored to fit both the needs and the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The most significant passage on the resurrection examined yet occurs in the account of the Mother and her Seven Sons (II Mac. 7). Here we have a case of seven sons forced to eat swine against the teachings of Moses or to die for their beliefs. Yet the sons and the mother believed that God would raise them up to life once more. Here stands the belief and affirmation of the

resurrection in all its splendor and in the face of death itself.

The Second son says the 'King of the world shall raise us up (anistanai) unto everlasting (aionios) reliving (anabiosis) of life (zoe)' (verse 9); the Fourth adds that for such a one as Epiphanes 'there shall be no resurrection (anastasis) unto life' (verse 14); the Youngest speaks of 'a short pain (that brings) everflowing life' (verse 36); the Mother expects that 'the Creator' will give their 'pneuma and zoe back' to her sons and that she herself will 'in the mercy of God recover' them (verses 23,29)---that is, there is to be re-union in the Resurrection. The word 'torture' or 'torment', basanos, and its verb, describe their present sufferings (verses 8, 13; cf. 1:28). Epiphanes is to be 'tormented' in this life as he has 'tormented' others (7:17; cf. 9:5f). Nothing is said of his plight in Hades. It is assumed that Hades is misery. It is only in Second Maccabees that LXX uses anastasis to mean 'resurrection' (7:14, 12:43). The Third Son expects that he will 'receive back' his tongue and hands even though they are cut off---i.e. He expects a resurrection of the present body.¹⁴

The Kingdom of God showed forth an increasing tension as between a completely spiritualized view and a totally secular view. Various authors writing with particular biases present different aspects of these beliefs. Basically, as Dr. J. H. Leckie has pointed out, there are four main

concepts:

The Jewish literature thus contains four different answers to the question created by the faith in immortal life. The first of these is to think of the Kingdom as an earthly paradise, and to suppose that the departed will receive at the resurrection such a body as shall enable them to share in mundane joys. The second is to spiritualise the Kingdom in a somewhat indefinite way; and to say that those who are alive at its coming will have their physical frames changed into a spiritual likeness, while the righteous dead will be endowed with a body after the same fashion so that all may be heirs together of the City of God. The third is to transfer the scene of the Kingdom to heaven, and to think of the quick and the dead as translated thither at the last day---absent from the body but present with the Lord. The fourth is to keep the idea of the Kingdom separate from that of personal immortality; and to conceive the former as a terrestrial state in which the departed can have no portion, inasmuch as they already possess a better life than any earthly empire can bestow. These four solutions of the problem are, however, confused and intermingled in many of the books; individual thinkers seem sometimes to hold one of them and sometimes another; and the apocalyptic writers, as a rule, express no clear view as to the relation of the Kingdom to the unseen world.¹⁵

Judgment lacked an intensely personal encounter.

When the writers portrayed this through their writings they presented it as an action en masse. Thus no indi-

vidual's sins nor righteousness stood out. No doubt this is a carry over of national henotheism and they had not tailored the last things to meet their personal religion on earth. It delved into the morals of the whole disregarding those of the individual.

There are no portraits of separate faces in the visions of the great Assize. Apocalypse painted its pictures in broad outline and with a big brush, and it thought of men as being judged in the mass---not by their private record, but as members of parties and nations. It always stood for the great truth that the world moves on to a moral end.

Thus, Resurrection and Judgment belonged to the hope of the Kingdom of God. The pictures of them which we find in the Jewish books are part of the pageantry, the pomp and circumstance, of the coming of the Messianic State; but the ideas themselves are logical consequences of the belief that history is to culminate in a golden Age of retribution and reward.¹⁶

In order to fill the gaps and to remove the inconsistencies and the more obvious irregularities the scholars were led to make some modifications. Out of these changes there developed a doctrine of Hades. Since the Judgment was moved to the end of this earthly existence, the souls of the dead had to have some realm of existence inasmuch as they no longer remained with their bodies. Thus they were assigned to an assemblage known as Hades and the

predecessor of Purgatory. It was noted that life in Sheol was a very diminished and weak existence. This basic concept is promoted in the Book of Sirach. The belief in Sheol did not end with the affirmation of immortality for it was deeply entrenched. Sheol was believed by many to fulfil this intermediate stage. The underworld is described in the Book of Enoch as being divided into two parts, one for the righteous and one for the wicked. Again these divisions are further divided so that even Hades has become extremely spiritualized and moral. Prayers of intercession became a stressed part of the devotional life of believers for there was no limit to the efficacy of prayer on behalf of the living or the dead. This book expressed the concept that the office of the Archangel Gabriel is one of intercession. In the Book of Adam and Eve the prayers of intercession have changed the ultimate destiny of Adam so that upon the "Last Day" he will participate in the Resurrection. Previously mentioned was the account of Judas in Second Maccabees who called for prayer and sacrifice on behalf of the souls of his men who had died in sin. Because of the esteem and prominence that Judas held it is quite apparent that this act was not distasteful to the vast

majority. Thus it can be assumed that this had become a prevalent custom in this period. So prayers for the dead reaching out in hopes of life beyond the grave had become a popular custom.

. . . . We may admit that the teaching of the two great Rabbinic schools which at that time dominated the Synagogues would have been friendly to such a practice of devotion. Clearly, men who taught that the period of future punishment would, in some cases, be limited, and who believed intensely in the value of intercession, could have had no objection, in theory, to petitions being offered for souls in Purgatory.

This is all that we can say with any assurance on this subject; but it is enough to forbid the dogmatic assertion that the possibility of salvation beyond the grave was unanimously rejected by the Jews of the New Testament times, or that they were at one in definitely denying that prayers availed for the dead.¹⁷

No complete understanding of pre-Christian backgrounds could be present without entering the Gehenna fires which cannot be quenched in our time. Dr. Leckie points out that the fiery torments of Gehenna are used to set it off over against the Kingdom of God. "It had really no connection with any deliberate theological opinion about the ultimate destiny of mankind. And all later endeavours to identify it with the dogma of Everlasting Evil

have been unsuccessful and unfortunate---unfitted to endure a rational analysis, and harmful in their effects on religious thought and life.¹⁸ There was room for all Gentile nations to receive the Hebrew faith and share in its blessing. Conversely those who did not accept and take part in this faith were to experience destruction and disaster untold. Perhaps this then is the projection of the Deuteronomic historical concept of "curses and blessings" extended to the future life.

The realistic symbol of eternal fire and damnation was seen in the valley of Hinnom just outside of Jerusalem where perpetual fires were burnt not only to rid the city of its debris but also to cremate the slain, the outcasts along with all animal carcasses. Isaiah describes this as a place where "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched" (Isa. 66:24). A very personal religion must also have a personal eschatology, so all sorts of weird and strange imagery were conjured up to describe present and future life. Actually the Hebrews had gathered ancient imagery to express their new theological concepts: thus there resulted some gross inconsistencies.

When the scene of punishment was extended beyond this earth no emancipation

was achieved from the barbarous forms of thought which had been derived from the horrors of war and Oriental tyranny. Rather did these become greatly exaggerated. Imagination became free to riot in visions of the torments of the future state. No one could check its excesses and say: 'I have been in the lower regions, and these visions are not true.' Hence there appeared in Jewish teaching about Gehenna ingenious descriptions of complicated horrors, which the apocalyptic prophets embellished with materials drawn from the folklore of the peoples, and especially from Persian sources. Not only general conceptions, but also definite symbols like the 'outer darkness,' 'the eternal fire,' and so on, were borrowed from the Zoroastrian Scriptures. Not that the Jewish artists stood greatly in need of resorting to foreign teachers for help in the production of pictures fully adequate to the requirements of their theme. They showed a wealth of original genius in depicting the manifold tortures and sorrows of Gehenna.¹⁹

Obviously many individuals allowed themselves to be carried away by their own fears and frustrations borrowing from the Zoroastrians such things as "outer darkness" and "the eternal fire." It was not hard for these concepts to take root and flourish, for basically all groups have accepted them. Dr. Leckie concludes that "the idea of aeonian punishment is older than the belief in personal

immortality And whether men spoke of aeonian punishment as a thing of the present or of the future, they meant by it nothing theological. The flames of Gehenna filled the background of the picture which had for its foreground the City of God."²⁰

The Hebrew scholars and religious leaders began to develop doctrines of the ultimate destinies of man. A straightforward systematic approach was circumvented by the burden of ancient and over-worn symbolism and language of a former age. "There can be no doubt, of course, that in the time of our Lord, which was a period of great mental activity, men were beginning to suggest theories of ultimate destiny. But the expression of such theories was always hindered and confused when the Gehenna symbolism was employed. Thus the Rabbis of the schools of Hillel and Shammai would have been able to make their meaning much clearer had they not felt obliged to use the cumbrous and grotesque language of tradition. It was unfortunate that, when they wished to say that the period of future punishment would be limited, they had to speak of sinners going down into the Gehenna flame and 'moaning and coming up again.' Also, they did themselves injustice when they expressed the idea of annihilation by asserting that

souls would be 'burned up' and 'their ashes scattered under the feet of the righteous.' And these are but examples of the truth that the old figurative language was unfitted to become the instrument of speculative thought."²¹

God's everlasting concern stretched out from beyond the bounds of this earthly existence. His tender care and ever searching love was mindful of man even though he may have had to reach to the depths of Sheol.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
 Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
 If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there!
 Ps. 139:7-8.

"This was the primary conviction needed to transform belief in a future existence into the glorious hope of immortality. Sheol could no longer retain its gloom when it was illuminated with the light of the Divine presence. Life there could not be a meaningless existence when it was realized that the fellowship with God which had enriched life here was continued there in even fuller measure."²²

Further this concept is expressed in Ps 73:23-25.

Nevertheless I am continually with thee;
 Thou hast holden my right hand.
 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
 And afterward receive me to glory.
 Whom have I in heaven but thee?
 And there is none upon earth that I desire
 beside thee.

Death no longer cuts the believer off from everything; even though he may no longer possess a body he still can rise to the highest spiritual heights.

Heaven basically is the realm of God. Only in a few incidents in the Old Testament was it referred to in regard to the deceased (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:2). This is also to be the home of the righteous that have dwelt with God. As a place of dwelling for the departed spirits, Paradise is not mentioned at all in the Old Testament but it occurs with increasing frequency in the Inter-testamental period and in the early Christian writings. This word probably came to the Hebrew from Median or Persian origins. It meant an enclosed area containing trees and bushes and would be very similar to the English words of garden, park, and orchard. "In the Old Testament 'paradis' is never used of the abode of the departed spirits of the righteous, but it has this application in numerous passages of the apocalyptic literature, and especially in the Books of Adam and Eve, where care is necessary to distinguish between the earthly paradise (garden of Eden) and the heavenly. As denoting the heavenly abode of the righteous, "paradise" is found a few times in the New Testament (Lk. 23:43; II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7)."²³

An interesting parallel with the concept of "paradise" is the Zoroastrian concept of "vara." "Yima, the paradise-king, is told by Ormazd to prepare an enclosure, a vara, and to live in it himself with a chosen host of men, animals, plants, and fires, in order to be preserved during the winters that will invade the earth. . . . When in Hushetar's millennium the enclosure made by Yima is opened, mankind and animals will issue from it and arrange the world again, and there will be a time of fulness and prosperity New beings thus come back miraculously for the restoration of the world."²⁴ The opening of the vara will usher forth a new prosperity. Eventually men will neither hunger nor thirst. The weak will be made strong and peace will reign continually. Thus the concepts of vara is seen as a vehicle of salvation such as the Hebrew concept of the Ark or the Christian concept of "paradise."

In the Book of Ecclesiasticus there is a further statement of the Old Testament's concept of death. While death itself is sometimes considered to be a punishment there is no mention of punishment after death. Death does not come however as the great terminus of life. In this book one finds that death approaches as a "rest"

(22:2;cf.28:21; 38:23). There is much to be learned from the Book of Enoch in regard to eschatology. The author takes on a detailed visit of Sheol. The position of Sheol has moved from the underworld to the far West which coincides with the thoughts of the Babylonians, Egyptians, and the Greeks with the latter having the most influence. In Chapter twenty-two there is the first statement of a general resurrection of both good and evil. Here there is no longer a social distinction but a moral distinction. A form of judgment has already taken place in Sheol. Men now enter into a sample of their ultimate fate immediately upon entering in upon Sheol. Sheol is divided into three basic sections (four are mentioned - the fourth being light in contrast to the three dark ones and is probably a later addition). Here are gathered all the souls of men until the great day of judgment. The divisions come about in this manner: 1) the dwelling place for the spirits of the righteous; 2) the area for those who have died without suffering due to retribution; 3) sinners who have met with retribution in this life. The third group remains behind in Sheol at the "last day" while the second group are raised to be sent to Gehenna. Only the righteous can be said to enjoy a real resurrection.

These rise with their bodies and are transplanted to the holy place, the temple of the Lord. They eat of the tree of life, and shall live long on a purified earth, where they shall know no sorrow, plague, or torment (25:4ff; cf. 10:7,17,20).

First Enoch shows that the re-establishment of Jerusalem has fallen away to the belief that God will establish a new spiritual Jerusalem. Many Gentiles are converted and the righteous are brought back to share in the Kingdom. The Messiah dwells among them and their life is to continue indefinitely. "It is to be observed that in this picture of the future life, the earthly Jerusalem is no longer regarded as a fitting abode of God amongst men. It must be displaced by the heavenly Jerusalem as a spiritual centre of the Messianic kingdom which is co-extensive with the world (90:28; cf. 2(4) Esdras 7:26; 13:36; 2 Baruch 32:2ff.; Rev. 21:2,10)."²⁵ The seeds of the resurrection life grow directly out of the earthly righteousness of the individuals. The Book of Jubilees sees Sheol as a place of condemnation and doom for it no longer is thought to be a gathering place of all departed souls. The writer believes that the Messianic kingdom had already begun.

Since the righteous cannot enter Sheol, as this is now the place of doom we see that they are immediately resurrected, though not bodily (Jub. 33:31cf., I Enoch 91:10; 92:3). Thus the righteous rise to an intermediate state, paradise in this case, or to heaven.

In the First Book of Enoch history is divided into a ten week period (generally believed that each week stood for a thousand years). Basically the first seven weeks last from Creation to the advent of the Messianic kingdom. At the tenth week there will be eternal judgment. The old heavens will thus pass away ringing down the new heavens which will last without end. The righteous then will be raised (spiritually, without their bodies) into the portals of Heaven and the host of angels. The wicked shall suffer for their sins and be cast into a fiery furnace (98:3) from which there is no escape. Following this, "the scene of the kingdom is not the present earth, but a new heaven and a new earth (or possibly, this earth purified and refashioned)(45:4,5). In this work also we have a novel conception of the Messiah. He is regarded as a supernatural being, and as not of human descent. He is called 'the Christ', 'the Righteous One', 'the Elect One', and 'the Son of Man'. He is closely associated with the

destinies of both the righteous and the wicked. He is the judge of the world, and the champion and the eternal ruler of the righteous."²⁶

In Second Maccabees one of the major themes is resurrection and the future life. Hades is the place where both the wicked and the righteous arrive at the event of death. Here the wicked find their doom and the righteous find this to be only a stage of their existence. The account of the seven brothers would indicate that there will be a bodily resurrection (7:2; 7:23; 14:46). "At death, it is said, the soul is received by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (13:17; 5:37; 18:23), and 'men dying for God live unto God, as live Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the patriarchs' (16:25). These expressions suggest that the phrase 'Abraham's bosom' was a current one; but whereas in the Gospels it seems to stand for an intermediate abode (cf. Luke 16:22), here it relates to heaven itself (cf. 17:5, 18), for it is said that the mother of the brethren loved religion, which saveth unto eternal life (15:2), and is set in heaven with her sons (17:5)."²⁷

Second Enoch sees the pre-existence of souls. Since souls were created before the foundation of the earth this

ultimately has a bearing on their destiny. A bodily resurrection could not obviously fit into this scheme but he conceives of a spiritual body. Interestingly enough Hades was located on the north side of the third heaven. The features are certainly mixed images of "fire, frost and ice, thirst and shivering."²⁸ By special favor Abraham has been saved from death. In regard to judgment we find this account: "Three judgments are described. First there is a judgment by Abel the son of Adam, who sits upon a throne to judge all creation. The righteousnesses and the sins of souls are recorded by two angels. Another angel holds a balance in which the souls of men are weighed; and yet another tests the souls with fire (chs. 12 & 13). When one soul was weighed, it was found that its sins and righteousnesses were equally balanced. It was therefore set in the midst; it was given neither to the testers nor placed with the saved (ch. 12). Through the efficacy of the prayer of Michael and Abraham it was later carried up into Paradise (ch. 14)."²⁹

The best single account of the Hebrew Doctrine of the Resurrection and Immortality comes from Professor Louis Finkelstein in his work entitled The Pharisees. The greatest conflict that arose in the Inter-testamental

period was one over resurrection. On this point the Sadducees and the Pharisees drew sharp and fierce lines. Even Jesus was dragged into this heated controversy. Professor Finkelstein reveals that this was not a mere religious wrangle but rather a class and social conflict which divided these two leading groups of Hebrews. As a wandering and persecuted group, the Jews had little to look forward to or hope for in the trials and the tribulations of this life. Thus, the Jew began to look with ever increasing expectation for the realm beyond the grave. The learned Jews began to see immortality as an abstraction in rhetoric or philosophy, but for the common Jew, who did not think in these terms, this had little or no significance. The individual Jew would stop short of nothing less than a physical, bodily resurrection for this was the only thing meaningful for him. Less than this would have been no existence at all. However, in agreement with Professor Martin-Achard, Professor Finkelstein points that it was "inertia" that slowed down the acceptance of the resurrection.

e/ It was this aspect [(humility, piousness, and meekness)] of the Jewish doctrine of the resurrection---its democracy---which gives it more than theological importance; and which indeed prepared the way for its spread throughout the world. Egyptian immortality was

to be attained through power. The Pharaoh, the princes and the nobility not only possessed this world, but by costly burial arrangements they could ensure their return from death itself. Such a perpetuation of the wrongs of the mundane world would have aroused little enthusiasm in Jerusalem's market place; and, indeed, it is altogether probable that the resistance to it explains in large part the failure of the earlier Israelite and Judaite teachers to recognize the larger spiritual potentialities of the reaching of the resurrection. Only when the doctrine was presented as one of salvation for the righteous, be they rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, noble or plebeian, did the masses of Jerusalem become converted to it."³⁰

For the Jews of the Sadduceean group flourished in this life and thus shared in all its pleasures and joys and saw little reason why they or anyone else should ask for anything more or to look forward to a future life. "It is not among those who have enjoyed the triumphs of this world that we should look for preoccupation with the consolations of the next. It is an almost universal feature of religious history that the longing for another and better life to come was confined, in its strongest forms, to those who had been the victims of life as it is here. This was not less true among the Jews than among others."³¹

A further difference that arose between the wealthy

and the working classes of Jerusalem was the concept of individual and personal religion. The wealthy clans were basking in the glories of a great patriarchal system and had a great sense of continuity and even immortality with the past. The glories of Shekinah's golden rays were far beyond their furthest concern. In contrast, the working class had their genealogies crossed and fused with a result of loss of family identity or personal social significance. With an ever increasing heterogeneous group with no specific role or function moving at large and cutting themselves off from the great Jewish traditions, they tended to break down the strong family ties of the Jewish system. Thus there is a dissatisfied group independent and left largely to fend for itself. Further, one can conjecture that the religious systems and traditions of the past were up-held and supported by the wealthy, as is true of all highly organized religious groups who have lost their purpose. Thus a disruptive and rootless society was adrift in Jerusalem. The individual became the moral unit and he alone was responsible for his actions before Yahweh in this world and in Judgment to come. As an individual, the Jew had to stand before his Maker and face up to the reward or punishment

that he might receive.

Thus to this group came an ever increasing religious and significant belief in the resurrection. "The doctrine of the resurrection offered a full solution to the difficulty and was altogether in the spirit of the individualism which prompted it. The individual is not an indistinguishable part of the community; he is an immortal being, for whom, if he has merited it, there waits another and happier life when God shall say the word."³²

Out of the milieu of the common market-place where Persians and Egyptians freely intermingled thoughts and beliefs, came a concern for the growth of individuality in religion and the moral order of things. This then was the agar of a fine and stable resurrectionist culture. Also the light of the Holiness of Yahweh chased the shadows from the dim recesses of Sheol.

This movement, needless to say, outgrew the limits and confines of its parents and added to its forces individuals from other backgrounds and beliefs.

Foremost among these opponents of the doctrine of the resurrection was Ben Sira (ca. 200 B.C.E.), himself a scion of aristocracy, who had, like many others in different ages, chosen

to associate himself with the suppressed classes rather than with his own peers. He became a scholar and teacher, opposed to the Hellenism of his day, and generally sympathetic to the Hasideans. But as frequently occurs with patrician leaders of plebeian groups, he could not altogether enter into the soul of the oppressed whom he wished to lead. He sympathized with them, and like his great master, the High Priest Simeon the Righteous, gave wider currency to some of their pronouncements. But in fundamental matters his early breeding, with its ingrained bias, inevitably asserted itself. The teaching of the resurrection must have been particularly repugnant to him. The prophets, most of the psalmists, the writers of the main body of Job, had denied it; yet it was making its way into Judaism. The plebeian acceptance of the doctrine seemed to him as assimilationist as the Hellenistic pastimes and affectations of the aristocrats."³³

A significant leadership in growth of the resurrection doctrine was played by an unsuspecting group, namely the list of the religious persecutors beginning with Antiochus Epiphanes.

The assimilationist movement among the the Jews was too slow for him; in his efforts to hasten the consummation, he actually became the unconscious and unwilling instrument of their salvation. The listless and passive opposition to Hellenism, which had been initiated by Simeon the Righteous, Antigonus of Socho, Ben Sira and others, would in all

probability have failed to catch up with the natural influence of environment; it was suddenly stimulated into furious zeal. Jewish piety had, up to this point, been contemptuously ignored by the conqueror; it now became punishable with death. The bodies of the 'criminals' remained unburied; synagogues were burned. The scrolls of the Law were desecrated and destroyed. Thousands of Jews, forbidden to practice their ancient customs and observances, fled to the paleolithic caves which abound in the land. The rage of the tyrant sought them out even there.

As they were faced with extinction and did not dare to anticipate the incredible victory which ultimately came, the vague and incipient suspicion of the Hasideans that their kingdom was not of this world, crystallized into rigid belief. It was now clear to them that all must perish before better times would come. The doctrine of the resurrection which had been held by a few eccentrics and progressives spread to ever wider circles. The writer of the Book of Daniel asserted it proudly and assured the dying martyrs that they would be called back to life eternal, while their oppressors also would be revived, but for everlasting derision and contempt.³⁴

In order to further understand the growth of the doctrine of Resurrection one has to examine the Maccabean Revolt. The oppressed Jews under Antiochus had more than they could endure. The Jews were quite tolerant to their persecutors or invaders except when the intruders infringed

upon their sacred beliefs. The Revolt was started when Antiochus forced the Jews to make idolatrous sacrifices. At this point Mattathias raised a sword of rebellion and slew the Jew making the sacrifice as well as the Syrian officer. This touched off the Maccabean Revolt in which the Hasmoneans rose in full revolt and brought about a very bloody war which was not put down until the Syrian power in Judea was destroyed. Many Hasideans fled the city only to be met by Syrian soldiers in the desert. Since it was the Sabbath day they would not fight. As this moral was deemed impractical, those who held with the Hasideans fled to the hills and were open to attack by other Jews who exposed them on every side. "But, filled with the conviction of individual resurrection and regarding this world as nothing more than a prelude to a greater and finer life, they faced their executioners calmly and perhaps even cheerfully. The Hasmoneans who, under pressure of necessity, were prepared to make a radical alteration in the interpretation of the Sabbath law, were men of a different stamp. They were warriors and diplomats, planning victory in this world, instead of dreaming of compensation in the next."³⁵

Yet, after victory the forces of the Hasidean and

the Hasmonean priests could not be reconciled and gradually these became the two major parties of Israel according to Professor Finkelstein. "The divergence was the same; it expressed itself in new names. The Sadducees who rallied about the Hasmonean House vehemently denied the resurrection, while the Pharisees, drawn essentially from among the descendants of the earlier plebeians, as vehemently continued to affirm it. The victory lay with the Pharisees. By their faith in the life beyond death they won adherents throughout the Jewish world. The Jews of the diaspora were almost altogether Pharisaic; and in Palestine the Sadducees were reduced to a few noble families."³⁶

The Pharisees opened the way for the doctrine of salvation as they gradually won converts to their beliefs. Yet, though the Sadducees had to stand off and reject the belief in resurrection, they could not help being impressed at the piety and the martyrdom of their brothers. ". . . The Pharisaic devotion to the new belief became more passionate, so that the Mishna regards it as a cardinal teaching of Judaism and condemns the dissenter to loss of future life."³⁷ To maintain and perpetuate the belief "the Pharisees would not permit anyone denying it to recite

public prayers in their synagogues, and to make certain of correct belief, they inserted at the beginning of their main service an avowal of it.

'Thou art mighty, feeding the quick, quickening the dead. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who dost quicken the dead.'

"With the passing of years, the Pharisees, now more sophisticated, accepted the Greek philosophic doctrine of immortal souls, which renders belief in bodily resurrection superfluous and unnecessary. Yet such had been the struggle for the teaching of resurrection that it could no longer be forgotten. They continued to profess the older faith in a renewed world peopled with the revived dead, and at the same time denied that man can truly be said to die. The logical contradiction involved remained a puzzling and disturbing factor in rabbinic theology, and also in Christianity which is---in this respect---derived from it."³⁸ Professor T. W. Manson describes the Pharisees as ones who believed that God had a purpose behind history. The Pharisees developed a belief in angels and demons. Most important was their concept of the future life. "The Pharisees believe in a future life where men are rewarded or punished according to their behaviour in this. . . . In Josephus this doctrine becomes---again for

the benefit of Gentile readers---the immortality of the soul and its reincarnation in another body. But behind the sophisticated terminology the Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection is plain enough."³⁹

Not all our knowledge comes down from Biblical and Apocryphal sources. Some information comes to our attention through the secular chronicles of Josephus and Philo. Josephus maintains that the Pharisees believed the soul to be imperishable. He states that there is a spark of the divine that inhabits the soul. Josephus by-passes the doctrine of Resurrection but states that the wicked are bound for eternal punishment, however he sees the righteous as having the opportunity of reincarnation.

Many discredit it altogether on the ground that this historian deliberately omitted, as a rule, to mention such elements in his own faith and that of the Pharisees generally as might be displeasing to pagan readers. They also think that he must have been wrong in representing his countrymen as believing in reincarnation. It is more likely, however, that Josephus was guilty of nothing worse than merely attributing to the whole of the sect to which he belonged opinions which in fact were held only by a few of them. There is nothing incredible in the idea that some at least of the Pharisees held the doctrine of the reincarnation of souls or that this was the view of Josephus, since that

doctrine was not, after all, very far removed from the common Jewish notion of resurrection to a bodily life on earth. We may conclude, also, that the historian held liberal and indefinite views about the future state from his extremely sympathetic account of the Essenes, who denied the resurrection, and taught that souls at death escaped from the body, as from a prison, and returned to that state of liberty in which they had existed before they became incarnate. In any case, the statement of this writer shows that a man could believe himself an orthodox Pharisee and yet feel at liberty to speculate freely on the subject of future destiny.⁴⁰

Perhaps Josephus was in agreement with the Essenes who believed in a pre-existing soul that was given liberty at the point of death. It is apparent that one could associate himself with the Pharisees and yet maintain a variety of views concerning the final destiny.

Also from this period we have Philo Judaeus (B. C. 20 - A. D. 50) from the Alexandrian school. He is perhaps the best representative of the Hellenistic thought that influenced the New Testament writings. Philo is caught in the tension of two streams, one being his Jewish Faith and the other being his Hellenistic teachings. Because he has not completely resolved or integrated these systems, he is trapped in many inconsistencies and is consequently

very difficult to follow. Philo held that death was the end of bodily existence of both good and wicked alike. Life for Philo has meaning only in so far as one comes and partakes of the Logos.

Hence, unspiritual men, being out of fellowship with the Logos, are dead while they live; 'the unholy in real truth are dead.' They have surrendered all relation to reality, and have become the subjects of an alien power, the power of the lower, material, fleeting world. How then could Philo suppose that such as these would be able to maintain themselves in being, when those things which had become their real nature should have passed away at death?

Further, Philo denies the everlasting duration of sin, which, he says, has no place among immortal things. Also he teaches that it is only the higher part of the soul that is in communion with the Logos---draws from it continual vitality, and through it achieves unending existence. And the inference from this is plain. If only the higher reason be immortal, and if it have fallen into a state of death by neglect of fellowship with the divine Word, in the case of unspiritual men, then it follows that there is nothing in these unhappy beings that is capable of eternal life. . . . Philo . . . believed, not that everlasting life was possessed by all men, but only that 'it was unattainable by all.'⁴¹

By the time of Jesus there is a real sense of dissatisfaction with the ultimate destiny of man.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CONCEPT OF DEATH IN THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS

On the whole, it appears that the academic, theological type of mind in the time of Jesus was no longer satisfied with the vague assertion of the general overthrow of the unrighteous which was the apocalyptic gospel, and was beginning to move towards a speculative doctrine of future destiny. It was not content with the prospect of the immediate triumph of the elect, and was seeking to attain some conception of the ultimate fate of mankind. Its ideas were still confused and uncertain, but we find in them the same elements of doctrine as appeared more clearly in the words of Akiba and other Rabbis of the second century, some of whom taught the annihilation and some the final pardon of the lost. To Hillel and his school we owe the beginnings, at least, of those free and bold thoughts about the Last Things which have generally characterised the Jewish theology throughout the ages. In any case, there can be no doubt that all the Rabbis of New Testament time believed that Gehenna was a state from which release was possible. They did not hold that every one who entered it had met his final doom. Some of them hoped that most of those who went down into the place of bondage would finally come up again. The Gehenna of the thoughtful Jew of those days is, therefore, not to be identified with the Hell of later Christian theology. If it was Hell, it was also Purgatory. There was no inscription over its gates---'All hope abandon, ye who enter here.'⁴²

Death came for the Jew at that juncture when the "soul" or life force left the body. "To lie unburied,

without the customary funerary rites, or to be cast out of the tomb, was an aggravation of death; to bury those who were thus neglected or cast out was a deed of charity and of piety. The tomb was the abode of the dead. There the body reposed, and it was doubtless believed that the ghost also inhabited the tomb, an attenuated material double of the body, ordinarily invisible, but sometimes seen in dreams or as an apparition in waking states; the conscious wraith of the man that had been."⁴³

It is very difficult to discern the influence of the Greeks upon the Hebrews.

Whether Greek ideas of the immortality of the soul and retribution after death---popular or philosophical---were widely entertained, or not, in a centre of Hellenic culture like Alexandria in the first century before the Christian era, it is certain that the development of conceptions of the hereafter in authentic Judaism went its own way unaffected by the alien influence. The premises were totally different; on the one side the dualism of soul and body, on the other the unity of man, soul and body. To the one the final liberation of the soul from the body, its prison-house or sepulchre, was the very meaning and worth of immortality; to the other the reunion of soul and body to live again in the completeness of man's nature. What to Philo would have seemed the greatest imaginable evil was to the Pharisees the highest conceivable good.

The resurrection of the body, or, in their own phrase, the revivification of the dead, thus became the cardinal doctrine of Judaism.⁴⁴

With the growth in the belief of Judgment and a time lapse between the event of death and Judgment the question continually arose in regard to the place or position of souls in the interim period. Enoch in his travels sees the angel Raphael presiding over the souls of men. On the other hand Enoch sees also the other aspects of the after-life. ". . . In another part of the earth, a deep valley with burning fire, into which he sees the kings and the mighty cast, and the enormously heavy chains that are being forged for the hosts of Azazel when they are hurled down into the abyss in the day of the last judgment (54:1-6; 55:3-4; 56:1-4). Then there is revealed to him the last outbreak of the heathen powers, who are now the Parthians and the Medes, and their catastrophe (56:5-8); and finally the return of the dispersion (c.57)."⁴⁵

Enoch comes to us probably through the hands of several writers expressing various current views. However it can certainly be assumed that revivification of the righteous dead occurs so frequently and in so many forms that it must have been a belief of its time.

Spiritual transformation had its roots in First Enoch. "Thus the idea of a spiritual transformation was familiar to the Pharisees before the time of the writers of Second Baruch. It is evident, therefore, that St. Paul's teaching in I Cor. 15:35-50 was not entirely novel; it is rather a development and a more spiritual expression of ideas that were already current in Judaism."⁴⁶

In I Enoch 20:7 the archangel Gabriel is set over "Paradise, the Serpents, and the Cherubim." This is the only proper reference to Paradise in this century though allusions to it appear in many other passages. Paradise (60:8) becomes the place where Enoch was taken up, which is the place where the elect and the righteous dwell. "The reference to 'all the elect who dwell in the Garden of life' (61:12) shows that in this century, for the first time, Paradise is conceived to be the intermediate abode of all the righteous and elect. In the previous century only two men---namely, Enoch and Elijah---were held to have been admitted to Paradise immediately upon leaving this world (I Enoch 87:3,4; 89:52)."⁴⁷ A century later in Second Enoch we find that paradise lies between "corruptibility and incorruptibility." The righteous come here to live in bliss through eternal life. "In the

Testament of Abraham also Paradise appears to be viewed as the final abode of the righteous. Those that pass through the narrow gate which leads to life, it is said, enter into Paradise (ch. 11). A soul is said to have been saved by righteous prayer and carried up into Paradise (ch. 14). Angels escorted the soul of Abraham into heaven, and set it to adore God the Father. God bade them to uplift Abraham into Paradise, 'where are the tabernacles of my righteous ones, and the abodes of my holy ones, Isaac and Jacob, in his bosom, where there is no toil, neither grief nor mourning, but peace and exultation and life everlasting' (Ch. 22)."⁴⁸ After the resurrection, people shall be drawn to Paradise and God will dwell among them and will be in their midst. Finally at the conclusion of the Inter-testamental period the form and function of Paradise came so close to that of Heaven that the two were inter-mingled and hopelessly entwined, that they have come down to our day as such. Thus throughout the History of the Christian Church the two have become synonymous.

The term Gehenna became a synonym for the terms of "valley", "abyss", "fire", and "place of punishment."⁴⁹ In the first twenty-six chapters "several passages speak

of an abyss of fire and torment into which the fallen angels will be cast on the day of the great judgement (cf. 10:5, 13). Although this is not definitely named Gehenna or Hell, it should be kept in mind as one of the conceptions which probably moulded the later conception of Hell (cf. 2Pet. 2:4; Jude vs. 6; Rev. 20:10, 14, 15; Mt. 25:41). It is possibly the same abyss of fire to which reference is made in 18:2 (cf. 19:1f.). A fuller description of this place is given in 21:7ff. Enoch saw 'a great fire there which burnt and blazed', and was informed that this was the prison of the angels where they should be imprisoned for ever (cf. 90:24).⁵⁰ Also in this book we find that Sheol has taken on some of the same characteristics as Gehenna. In due course the characteristics of Gehenna were absorbed by Hell.

Thus, in this century, Sheol has become Hell; it is regarded as the place of final eternal punishment, and as the place where souls are slain, though not annihilated, for they still cry and make lamentation (108:3). In the previous century, as we have seen, the view is expressed that the souls of the wicked had to be raised out of Sheol in order that they might be slain (cf. 22:11-13). Now for the first time Sheol becomes the abode of fire. In the second century B. C. the prevailing view was that Gehenna was to be the final

abode of Jewish apostates, whose sufferings were to be an ever-present spectacle to the righteous. Now it is said to be specially designed for the kings and the mighty, and after a time it will for ever vanish from the sight of the righteous (cf. 53:2,5). This change of view is probably due to the fact that in the Parables, after the judgement, there is supposed to be a new heaven and a new earth in which there is no room for Gehenna.

A further difference is that whereas Gehenna had always been viewed as a place of corporal as well as spiritual punishment, in the passages indicated above (91-104) it is a place of spiritual punishment only.⁵¹

However, there was an ever increasing belief that the assignment of souls to Gehenna for beliefs and mistakes in this life was inconsistent with both the mercy and the justice of God. These ideas were preserved and promoted in the liturgy of the Jews. Thus prayers for the dead became the normal custom of the devout without being a bit strange.

Heaven is usually thought to be a geographical concept and is used as such and in reference to heavenly bodies. Very seldom is the term "Heaven" used for an abode of spiritual bodies. "From a number of passages we learn that heaven was conceived to be a vast sphere or series of spheres, located above the earth. It rests upon pillars (Enoch 18:2f.) and has gates (9:2) and portals

out of which the stars of heaven proceed (33:1ff.). It is subdivided into chambers or treasuries (11:1). From the height of heaven the archangels look down upon the doings of men (11:1). A brilliant description is given of a very 'large house built of crystals' (14:15f.), in which is set a lofty throne upon which God 'the Great Glory' sits (14:18f.; cf. Is. 6 and Dan 7:9ff)."⁵²

Eschatology throughout the Old Testament took its clue from the nature of Yahweh; for as long as Yahweh was a local or national god, His powers were limited. But as the beliefs of Yahweh developed and matured so did the Eschatology. The centre of belief shifted from the concern of the nation as a unit to the individual as a unit.

"The eternal life, the life in God, cannot admit of death as its goal, and to the apprehension of this truth Israel's saints rose through first realising that life to be the one supreme fact of the present, before the necessities of their spiritual experience forced them to postulate its continuance in the future. Thus in fact they reasoned:

he that hath God hath eternal life."⁵³ Religion can become personal only when its eschatology is made personal.

"Jewish eschatology is the ultimate step in the individualizing of religion, as the messianic age is the cul-

mination of the national conception. Every man is finally judged individually, and saved or damned by his own deeds. Therein lies its religious significance. Besides this it offered a solution of a tormenting problem, how to reconcile the facts of human experience, in which both the good and the bad often fare far otherwise than, as everybody sees, they deserve, with belief in divine providence; and above all how to harmonize these facts with the retributive justice of God which is so emphatically enunciated in the Scriptures. When once the sphere of retribution was extended beyond this brief life to an endless hereafter, theodicy need no longer harass faith."⁵⁴

The individualizing of religion in the Hebrew tradition was essentially the result of the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Job. The writings of Jeremiah are "to be explained from the new relation which God would establish in the coming days between Himself and the individual Israelite, which would supersede the old relation which had existed between Himself and the nation as a whole (Jer. 31:31-34). Heretofore the individual was related to Yahwè only as a member of the nation, and as such shared, whatever his nature and character in national judgments, and thus had no individual worth. The

nation was the religious unit. Henceforth the individual would step into the place of the nation in its relation to Yahwè, and the individual would henceforth constitute the religious unit!⁵⁵ The old covenant has been surpassed by the new, inward covenant. "Under this new covenant man's spiritual incapacities for obedience to God's law would be removed; for God would write His law in their hearts, and so beget a willing obedience. Jeremiah has arrived at this conclusion from his own experience, his own relation to the law. . . . His life is fed through constant communion with God. If then God so entered into communion with him, He will likewise in the coming time redeem the nation by writing His law in their hearts (Jer. 31:31-34) Thus through Jeremiah the foundation of a true individualism was laid, and the law of individual retribution proclaimed. The further development of these ideas led inevitably to the conception of a blessed life beyond the grave."⁵⁶

Previously, the Jews maintained that the soul was a part of the family or the corporate nation. Ezekiel finds expression in writing (Ezek. 18:4) where he points out that every soul is owned by God. "Righteousness raises him above the sweep of the dooms that befall the sinful

individual or the sinful nation. And since this righteousness is open to his own achievement, he possesses moral freedom, and his destiny is the shaping of his own will (18:30-32). Hence there is a strictly individual retribution: judgment is daily executed by God, and finds concrete expression in man's outward lot."⁵⁷

As the result of Exile there are

three matters of great importance, and the effect brought about through them in the whole conception of God can easily be realized:---A new relationship to God, in which each individual was able to recognize that he had a personal part; a new belief concerning God, as One, not of a nation, but of the whole world; a new conception regarding the worship of God, namely, a spiritual form asserting its superiority over a materialistic form.

It needs but few words to show that when a real, intimate, and personal relationship between God and the individual is established and experienced, the conviction must soon become overpowering in man that this relationship cannot be severed by the death of the body; or, in other words, that God's interest in His highest created beings cannot be restricted to this world. Then, again, the immensely widened conception of God, which recognized Him as the God of the whole world, and not merely of one corner of it, how this must have affected the ideas hitherto held regarding His personality and nature! A truer conception of the divine nature must inevitably, even if indirectly, have led to the conviction that this world

was a sphere all too small for the exercise of His power and righteousness and benevolence. And finally, the giving place of materialistic to more spiritual forms of worship would of necessity bring with it more spiritual ideas of the Object of that worship; and it stands to reason that the more spiritual the conception of God the clearer the apprehension of the truth that His relationship is with the spirits of men; and this as a matter of course reacts upon the belief regarding the relationship of God with the spirits of men in the world of the Hereafter.⁵⁸

The Book of Job calls into serious question the strict individual retribution which is mete out in the day to day existence. The person of Job and his retribution represent a glaring inconsistency. "The emphasis laid on man's individual worth, with his consequent claims upon a righteous God, and the denial that these claims meet with any satisfaction at the hands of the God of the wrongful present, lead naturally to the conclusion that at some future time all these wrongs will be righted by the God of faith. And this thought is not wholly absent from Job."⁵⁹ If Job could simply have a vision of God, justice would be accomplished.

The great period of development of Jewish eschatology came about the First Century B. C.

A great gulf divides as a whole the

eschatology of the century from that of the past. Thus the hope of an eternal Messianic kingdom on the present earth, which had been taught by the Old Testament prophets and cherished by every individual Israelite, is now at last absolutely abandoned. The earth, as it is, has now come to be regarded as wholly unfit for the manifestation of this kingdom. Thus the dualism which had begun to affect the forecasts of religious thinkers in the preceding century has in this century succeeded in leaving their entire expectations. As a consequence of this breach between the things of earth and the things of heaven, the writers of this century are forced to advance to new conceptions touching the kingdom. Hence some boldly declare (Eth. En. 91-104) or else imply (Pss. Sol. 1-16) that the Messianic kingdom is only of temporary duration, and that the goal of the risen righteous is not this transitory kingdom but heaven itself. From this abandonment of the hope of an eternal Messianic kingdom it follows further that not only the resurrection but also the final judgment must be adjourned to its close.

In the thoughts of these writers the belief in a personal immortality has thus dissociated itself from the doctrine of the Messianic kingdom. Thus the synthesis of the two eschatologies achieved two centuries earlier. . . is anew resolved into its elements, never again, save once. . ., to be spiritually fused together within the sphere of Judaism. Their true and final synthesis became the task and achievement of Christianity.⁶⁰

Certainly at this period there are the influences of other religions, especially in Jewish Eschatology.

The eschatology of Judaism has an unmistakable affinity to that of the Zoroastrian religion in the separation of the souls of righteous and wicked at death, and their happy or miserable lot between death and the resurrection, and in the doctrine of a general resurrection and the last judgment with its issues. The resemblances are so striking that many scholars are convinced that his whole system of ideas was appropriated by the Jews from the Zoroastrians, as well as that of Jewish angelology and demonology were developed under Babylonian and Persian influence.

Borrowings in religion, however, at least in the field of ideas, are usually in the nature of the appropriation of things in the possession of another which the borrower recognizes in all good faith as belonging to himself, ideas which, when once they become known to him, are seen to be the necessary implications or complements of his own.

In the present case the primitive conception of a revivification of the dead, as it emerges in Daniel or in Isaiah 26, appears to be indigenous; there is nothing like it in Zoroastrianism. This notion may have prepared the way for a wider extension of the idea of resurrection; but the Persian scheme must have been most strongly commended by the fact that it seemed to be the logical culmination of conceptions of retribution which were deeply rooted in Judaism itself. ⁶¹

The Greeks approached immortality from the anthropological concept that within man there was an immortal soul held in a mortal body. The Jew believed that there was

nothing in man that was itself immortal, but that it was a gift. "The souls of the departed, deprived of their bodies, were at best only 'truncated personalities' who must await the resurrection for their fullest expression. As writers in the Hebrew tradition the apocalyptists believed that personality could not be expressed ultimately in terms of soul (or spirit) apart from body. The Greek doctrine of immortality, though it may well have influenced their thinking concerning the after-life, could not in the end be accepted. It was utterly foreign to their Hebrew mentality. . . . Not the immortality of the soul but the union of soul and body in resurrection, that alone could ultimately express the survival of men's personalities in the life beyond."⁶²

The differences in these two lines of thought had their repercussions in the doctrine of the Resurrection. ". . . Two views arose as to the nature of the resurrection. Whilst some taught, as the writers of Eth. En. 91-104 and Pss. Sol., that there would be no resurrection of the body at all but only of the spirit, others, as the writer of the Similitudes, said that there would be a resurrection of the body, but that this body would consist of garments of glory and of light (Eth. En. 62:15-16), and that the

risen righteous would be of an angelic nature (51:4).

Thus we find that the doctrine of the resurrection which was current amongst the cultured Pharisees in the century immediately preceding the Christian era was of a truly spiritual nature."⁶³

At the close of the Inter-testamental period one finds that the belief in the future life is the logical conclusion of the belief in a god, whose nature is always Holy Love.

The full conviction that God's interest in man is not restricted to this world, but that in the world to come His solicitude and care are no whit less than here---that was the truth grasped at last by one or two of Israel's devoutest thinkers; this made the hope of Immortality something different from what it had ever been before. . . . God's presence in the land of the Hereafter; that was what was wanted to make the hope of Immortality something quite different. No more could Sheol be thought of as the enclosed city, dark and silent and dust-laden; no more could men in the land of the Hereafter be thought of as lifeless Shades, without hope and memory, without the knowledge of God, and without capacity for praising and serving Him. The presence of God is there too; it is not dark, but light.

It is the quiet definiteness, the calm firmness of conviction, such as appears nowhere else in the Old Testament quite in the same way, that is so striking here: 'And afterward Thou wilt take me to glory.' Moreover, the passage is specially

instructive because the thought-development shows itself in two directions. First, regarding the doctrine of God: the apprehension of God is fuller, for it is realized that His power holds sway in the world to come; that His love for man is equally as great in the Hereafter as here on earth; and that His righteousness and justice are vindicated, for the apparent inconsistencies of life are rectified in the world to come. Then, regarding the future life and hope of Immortality, the passage witnesses to the conviction that it is glorious, and that in the land of the Hereafter God is man's portion for ever.⁶⁴

In the Old Testament and in the Apocrypha

there is no uniform or sure faith in an afterlife that is meaningful, but here are these reachings out after such a faith. What is of most importance, in these glimpses we do not have the thought that man is too great to die, or that life is too rich to come to a final end in the grave. We have the thought of life with God, and deriving from his fellowship. There is here something more satisfying than philosophy can offer, and something more deeply religious in inspiration and character. It is God who offers life that is worthy to be called life, both here and in the beyond, and he offers life because he offers Himself. It is because the abiding God is the source of that life that the life itself is abiding. Such a thought is closely akin to what we find in some passages in the New Testament. Jesus said 'I have come that they may have life, and

may have it abundantly, and again he claimed that he himself is the life. It is therefore by giving himself that he gives life, and the life endures because its source endures. . . . The life that is mediated through Christ is the life of God, and in both Testaments God is the only source of man's true life, whether here or hereafter. While there are only a few passages in the Old Testament which carry that thought to the hereafter, it is important to observe that they are in harmony with the fundamental principles set forth in the Bible in relation to this life, and are but an extension of those principles."⁶⁵

Footnotes

¹D. S. Russell, Between the Testaments (London: S C M, 1960), p. 143.

²Ibid., pp. 150-51.

³R. H. Charles, Between the Old and New Testaments (London: Williams and Norgate, 1921), p. 128.

⁴Ibid., pp. 112-13.

⁵Ibid., p. 118.

⁶Ibid., p. 119.

⁷C. Ryder Smith, The Bible Doctrine of the Hereafter (London: Epworth Press, 1958), pp. 80-81.

⁸Ibid., p. 86.

⁹Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁰Charles, p. 121.

¹¹T. Francis Glasson, Greek Influence in Jewish Eschatology (London: S. P. C. K., 1961), pp. 23-4.

¹²Smith, p. 91.

¹³Smith, p. 109.

¹⁴Smith, p. 110.

¹⁵J. H. Leckie, The World to Come and Final Destiny (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), pp. 30-31.

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¹⁷Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 103.

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- ²⁰Ibid., p. 105.
- ²¹Leckie, pp. 105-6.
- ²²Edward Langton, Good and Evil Spirits (London: S. P. C. K., 1942), p. 197.
- ²³Ibid., p. 204.
- ²⁴James Hastings (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), Vol. I, p. 207.
- ²⁵Langton, p. 214.
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- ²⁷Ibid., p. 221.
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- ³⁰Louis Finkelstein, The Pharisees (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946), Vol. I, p. 147-48.
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- ³⁵Ibid., p. 157.
- ³⁶Ibid., pp. 157-58.
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- ⁴⁴Ibid., p. 295.
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- ⁶⁰ Charles, Doctrine of a Future Life, pp. 200-01.
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CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONCEPT OF DEATH IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

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The inevitable question of death showed its ugly head in the early Church. The concept of death was no longer a logical extension of the love and the power of God, but rather a result of the stress of Christ's teachings and Christ's Resurrection. For the Resurrection of Christ gave substance for profound speculation, which must have provoked discussions and ramifications far beyond those promoted by the Jewish rabbis. Eschatology in a real sense had been uprooted and replanted from a point completely out of History into the very centre of men's lives and activities. The Resurrection for the Jew would come during "the Day" in the distant future, but now it presented itself before their eyes. The kingdom of God, the Resurrection, and Judgment became focused in the

humdrum of daily existence. Man could no longer put these questions aside in the manner that he had formerly done because they drew near with terrifying intimacy. Surely, the "Last things" had now been placed first for in a real sense the world had been turned upside-down.

It was sincerely and hopefully felt that this same Jesus, who had somehow returned from the very jaws of death, would come again in the immediate future and draw these faithful individuals to Himself. Thus every day was lived out under the breath of awaiting anxiety and hopeful longing. However, in a much more practical way, the hard reality of death continued to take the lives of the faithful and thus the Church had to address itself to this very pressing question which challenged the meaning, purpose and nature of Christ's Resurrection. The meaning of the Resurrection had to be dealt with not only for those outside the Church, who used the Resurrection for the aperture to attack, but especially for the believers who had made the Resurrection the core and crux of their conviction. Outwardly the death of the Christian had no manifestation or appearance which differed from the death of any other individual. Again and again the question came back as to what in fact was happening to the Christians

who had died.

The concept of death in the New Testament times came in a much more "natural" way than it was to be received by succeeding generations of Western civilization. By "natural", the implication is made that death was very common and frequently occurred early in life. Thus, the whole aspect of death must be seen from the "naturalness" that remains behind every death. Also, one must bear in mind that the whole attitude toward death is reflected by one's beliefs in the nature of death and the aftermath of death. No doubt this is one of the distinctive factors in the study of comparative religions.

In the time of Jesus, mortality rates were high and life expectancy was low. Even Jews, who were able to avoid numerous diseases, were subject to the cruelties of their foreign conquerors. The untimely and the unexpected death was always a present threat. Certainly as a greater menace to life and as a more frequent visitor than we can realize, death came to take a more active part in thought, liturgy, social customs, and generally in the whole gamut of life. There is here no sense of evasion or suppression but death was dealt with in a straightforward manner without hedging or obscuring the fact.

Of all the admirable factors in the Hebrew faith that one might hold up, perhaps the finest is the fact that death was confronted as a reality to be met. But beyond the horrible, grim realities, they began to see fulfilment, ~~beyond.~~ This came as a result of dealing with death squarely and not by denying it nor by belittling it. This honesty in seeking led the Hebrews to their most profound thoughts of God such as Job, Genesis, the Psalmists, and the Prophets revealed. This came not as a claim nor as a demand upon God but rather as a further insight into His nature. Here then was laid the foundation for Jesus' teachings concerning death and ultimately the understanding of His Death and Resurrection.

It was not an uncommon sight to see children playing funerals in much the same manner as our young people may play their games. Yet, society was not offended by this nor were the children thwarted in such activities. Jesus compares this generation to a group of children playing and yelling to one another:

"We piped to you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn." (Mt. 11:17,
Lk. 7:32).

And if the children were uninhibited about death so too

were the adults. In the records of Jesus' ministry there are numerous statements about death as well as many questions regarding death coming from those who sought Him out. Obviously death was on their minds and they spoke openly about it and hence were not rebuked. The mere frankness of their speech indicates a much more healthy attitude toward death than we exhibit in our culture.

The Gospel of Matthew begins by telling of Jesus' narrow escape from death as a babe (Mt. 2:7-23). No doubt this ability to seek out and destroy children reflected not only the nature of the Roman Empire but suggested also that life could be counted as nothing. It is under this reign of terror that Jesus had to work out His life and ministry. It is interesting to see that the writer presents this in an objective manner which would be indicative that these killings were rather common or that the bold story should stand for itself. Jesus' nature and destiny from the earliest sources connote the imminence of death. His travels, teachings, and healings were permeated with the shadow of death hanging large and longingly over all. It was not until Herod's death that Jesus' family felt safe enough to return to Nazareth.

The life of the individual in these times was very

unstable and insecure. The innocent had as much to fear as the criminal. John the Baptist was shamefully killed by Herod the Tetrarch because of some woman's whims. This story brings home a convincing reminder of the frailty and transience of life. Always this must be born in mind when we look at the Gospels.

Again and again there are accounts of violent deaths in the teachings of Jesus. There is the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mt. 21:39) and the parable of the marriage of the king's son in which the wedding guests display their hate for the king by killing his messengers (Mt. 22:6). These stories would gain accurate significance only if the facts were true. No doubt these were only a few examples which Jesus could draw from in order to reveal the stark brutality of the times. "In both parables a good deal of the point is lost if the situation described is wholly unreal; and it is indeed symptomatic of the time that Jesus could naturally refer to such brutal and unprovoked attacks. Again, in his stern words to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus makes it clear that violence and murder are in fact only too likely (Mt 23:34); he laments over Jerusalem 'killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you' (Mt 23:37). His disciples are warned of the

coming tribulation and persecution in which some of them will be killed (Mt 24:9, Lk 21:16)."¹ Death for Jesus' disciples might full well be the very cost of discipleship.

Violent death was always thought to be doled out to men for their wickedness. The thought behind the story contained in Luke 13:1-5 is that men shall die in the same manner in which they have lived. It is the same problem Job wrestled with so many centuries before as he sought to find the sins for his punishment. He would have to conclude that the wicked often prosper and frequently die in both peace and affluence. The basic theme behind these stories and the parable of the unfruitful fig tree which immediately follows (Luke 13:6-9) is the clear and urgent call to repentance. There is no indication that these violent deaths had anything to do with their moral status. While numerous theories may be given as to why these questions were proposed, it can only safely be assumed that they sought what was God's will in these contemporary examples. They were asking the same questions that Job raised or the disciples when they saw the man who was blind from birth (John 9:1f). Jesus does not attempt to expound a philosophy of evil. He merely corrects the error of their thinking that these tragedies were related to

wickedness and moves on to a call for repentance that they might not perish.

Wherever one may begin on a system of eschatology he must interpret the Kingdom of God and its meaning for Jesus. It is true that the Jews awaited a Messianic kingdom to come in glory and in power on earth. This idea would not be put down, yet there continued a growing awareness that earthly imperfections made the earth an unsuitable place for the Kingdom. The Jewish answer to these two concepts resolved itself for the time being by maintaining that the Kingdom would come on earth for a temporary period and then would be fulfilled and consummated fully and finally in Heaven. Here also is found the break-down of national hopes of salvation for the Kingdom would not be synonymous with the nation Israel but would rather be built by the remanent few who had been faithful. Thus, the Jewish religion turned from one of nationalism to one of individualism. The individual from the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel became the most important factor in religion and hence, rightly or wrongly, it has carried on through contemporary Christianity.

R. H. Charles maintains that within the teachings of Jesus there was the true synthesis of the two concepts

of the Kingdom of God.

By the Founder of Christianity, however, the synthesis of the two hopes was established in a universal form finally and for ever. The true Messianic kingdom begins on earth, and will be consummated in heaven; it is not temporary, but eternal; it is not limited to one people, but embraces the righteous of all nations and of all times. It forms a divine society in which the position and significance of each member is determined by his endowments, and his blessedness conditioned by the blessedness of the whole. Thus religious individualism becomes an impossibility.

At all periods of the history of Israel there existed side by side in its religion incongruous and inconsistent elements. Thus in every period we have, on the one side, the doctrine of God ever advancing in depth and fulness; on the other, we have eschatological and other survivals which, however justifiable in earlier stages, are in unmistakable antagonism with the theistic beliefs of their time. The eschatology of a nation is always the last part of their religion to experience the transforming power of new ideas and new facts.²

One cannot assume that even Jesus could have lifted and changed all the incompatible irregularities and unharmonious elements in the Jewish religion. And even had He done so, these factors would have crept in again by those who handed down his teachings to us. Jesus stood in basic agreement with the theology of the Old Testament and essentially

He did not attempt to change it. His task was one of reformation, that is of taking the people of Israel back to the truths of God. It is quite apparent that the majority of the Jews were so far removed from the Scriptures that they could no longer uphold what they once vowed to live by, so they came to violent disagreements with Jesus. Further insights into their religion no doubt would have driven them only further away. Thus much of the Old Testament teaching comes over in toto to the religion of the New Testament.

It is with these facts in mind that we face the issues of New Testament eschatology.

In the first place, we shall not be surprised if the eschatology of the latter should, to some extent, present similar incongruous phenomena as the Old Testament and subsequent Jewish literature. And, in the next, we shall be prepared to deal honestly with any such inconsistencies. So far, therefore, from attempting, as in the past, to explain them away or to bring them into harmony with doctrines that in reality make their acceptance impossible, we shall frankly acknowledge their existence, and assign to them their full historical value. That their existence, however, in the New Testament Canon can give them no claim on the acceptance with the Christian Fundamental doctrines of God and Christ; for such discordance condemns them as survivals of an earlier and lower stage of religious belief.

In Christianity there is a survival of alien Judaistic elements, just as in the Hebrew religion there were for centuries large survivals of Semitic heathenism. As an instance of such survivals we may adduce the generally accepted doctrine of Hades, which is truly Judaistic. Just as the Hebrew view of Sheol, which was partially moral, so this in turn must yield to the fully moralised and Christian conception of Hades as a place not of mechanical fixity of character, but of moral movement and progress in the direction either of light or darkness. The doctrine of eternal damnation also is a Judaistic survival of a still more grossly immoral character.

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Furthermore, from the history of eschatological thought in the past we shall likewise be prepared to find not only isolated religious survivals of that past in the New Testament, but also the co-existence within it of various stages of development. The New Testament writers have assimilated in various degrees, according to their spiritual intuition, the fundamental teaching of Christ, and in various degrees, applied this to the body of eschatological doctrine which they had brought with them from Judaism. That some ideas morally irreconcilable should exist in the same writer is easily conceivable.³

Christ was the first member of the new community of Christians to face death. While it is easy for scholars to point out that His death was unique it was not necessarily maintained by the early Christians that their death should

be in any way different. No doubt there was much confusion at this point because there was no full or complete understanding. Though the Pharisees had taught resurrection, the appearances of Jesus made innovations on this old concept. Long before the doctrines of the Church took shape the death of confessing Christians challenged the faith of those left behind. Stephen and James were among the very first to die. What was to be their outcome? They accepted that in some vague sense they were with the Lord, yet how were they to really know their status or their condition?

In addition there was the problem of an ever growing number who had heard the Christian Gospel preached to them but made no effort to respond. Perhaps an even more serious case were those who began to believe and follow but had not turned back. This is dramatically and terrifyingly presented in the account of Ananias and Sapphira who were unworthy disciples. They, according to C. Ryder Smith, "would pass into a different state - - - not, however, because they had sinned, but because they refused to be saved from sin."⁴ What then was the consequence of not fulfilling the faith you proclaimed? No doubt this covered a wide range of people who had been challenged by the

Christian Message but turned their backs on it. These were to be found in the same state as all sinners according to the contemporary Jewish thought.

Then of course there were many living in "the far corners of the earth", who had not been encountered by the disciples, not to mention the God-fearing and the ungodly who had lived and died before the Christ Event. These people were dealt with in the completely moral way which had evolved at the time of the New Testament. The good would be subject to blessing and the wicked might range from a dismal state to physical torture. Basically, we see that the Old Testament concepts continue but there are many doubts and uncertainties as to what really happened to the individual. And certainly they were perplexed by the problem, What difference did Christ's death make?

As for the actual state of the dead, the believers also continued to follow closely along the line of the Old Testament beliefs. At the juncture of death man disintegrated into the three elements which combined make man man. This trichotomy appears in First Thessalonians 5:23. There is no clear distinction as to what happens to the three elements for though the elements themselves are often diffused the basic trichotomy continues. Man is an

integration of "body," "soul," and "spirit" but when he passed into the intermediate state these constituting factors are dismantled. Everyman regardless of his moral condition has to undergo this fragmentation and according to Hebrew thought, all these parts are necessary to make a whole man. Thus, the inference is made that man at death is something less than whole.

Man at the instant of death parts with his "psyche." However, for the Christian the "psyche" is maintained in safe keeping under the watchful eye of the Creator, who will reembody it at the Parousia. The souls of men are separated to enter Hades, except for the soul of Jesus who was not abandoned to Hades (Acts 2:31). Hades stands for the immediate position of the soul but not the final place.

Capernaum is to be 'brought down into Hades' --i.e. cease to be (Lk 10:15). Dives passes to Hades as soon as he dies (Lk 16:22f). When Matthew says that 'the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the church' (Mt 16:18), he means that it will last unto the Parousia, spite all that death can do to Christians--- or, as the writer takes the phrase, in spite of the fact that Jesus Himself is to die (cf. Ac 2:27-31, Rev. 1:18). It is before the End that 'Death' with his henchman 'Hades,' will 'kill' a quarter of mankind (Rev. 6:8). Finally, there is the statement that at the Parousia 'Death and Hades', having yielded up their toll of dead men, will

themselves be 'cast into the lake of fire' and cease to be (Rev 20:13f). It need hardly be said that 'hell' is a mistranslation for 'hades.' It is the realm to which every man's psyche, whether he be good or bad, passes at death.

Then what is to become of the 'spirit' of the dead?

There is here no difference between the two Testaments.

Early Hebrew thought maintained that man was a dichotomy of 'soul' and 'body.' During the period of the Exile man evolved from a dichotomy to a trichotomy, adding a 'spirit' which first appears in the Book of Enoch. The 'spirit' continues to maintain its individuality and take on form unrelated to their earthly bodies. Jesus asked, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' (Lk 23:46). The whole tradition of the Church has been that certainly God did receive His spirit. Then we have also Stephen asking in his prayer, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit' (Acts 7:59). The spirit of the good thus goes to be with God, yet the spirit of evil goes to prison (I Pet. 3:19). This concept of the prison comes from the Book of Enoch (Ch. 67).

The body was not so difficult to understand, for with the open family tombs, the dead were seen in all stages of decomposition. The body had to be put away to maintain the dignity of the individual in the Hebrew religion.

Also it was maintained that the corpse was itself unclean and defiled those who dealt with it. However, you find the thought pattern of the Hebrew to be such that when he referred to the burial of the individual he meant only the body. This body was destructible for it was corruptible. Except for the body of Jesus, the New Testament merely reiterates the Old Testament concept of the body.

Thus it is quite wrong to infer that the whole of a man passes into the intermediate state. One disintegrates into three separate forms at death, each part having its own fate. However, it becomes very confusing because each part may be referred to by the personal name or pronoun. The New Testament merely engulfs the Old Testament trichotomy adding to it the concept of dying and being with Christ which merely is a modification of the older thought.

The concept of the dead being asleep is also present in the New Testament. This term stems from the close proximity of sleep and death in outward appearance. The idea hangs on from Old Testament times and lingers on today, no doubt because of the restful and peaceful manner of both. While this term can be used for all the dead, it is usually reserved for the good who have died. While it was never pressed as to which aspect of the individual actually

slept the implication was that it was both soul and body that slept. "When the first Christians, speaking of their dead, used the ancient Hebrew word 'sleep', they used it in the old Hebrew way, not stopping to ask whether they meant 'body and soul', but none the less meaning 'both' - - -even though they are now separate. For instance, Stephen was asleep, body and soul, now. But, while using the Hebrew idea, the Christians adopted it under the usual differentia. Christ was 'the first-fruits of them that are asleep' and His disciples, when they die, 'fall asleep in Christ', awaiting resurrection (I Co 15:18,20). This is very far different from the belief of the chasideim that the 'sleep' of death was endless and hopeless."⁶

Jesus used the term 'Paradise' in reference to the plea of the man on the cross. Jesus states that this very day he will enter Paradise with Jesus, which by implication means that he will be present with Jesus in Paradise. Paradise itself has many synonyms for Luke uses 'everlasting tabernacles', 'Abraham's bosom', and 'for all we are alive to (God).' The implication of all of these is the nearness to God. Out of these three passages no definite teaching concerning Paradise may be drawn.

In the Gospels themselves there is just this one passage in Luke to consider which is the statement to the

dying thief (Lk. 23:43). Sometimes it is viewed as the intermediate abode of the righteous as in I Enoch 60:8 -61:12; then at the other occasions it means an eternal abode as in 2 Enoch 8:9; 42:3; 61:3; 65:10; 2(4) Esdras 7:36, 123; 8:52. Jesus could have implied either meaning when He spoke these words. One should not conjecture very much on these words as this was obviously no place to develop a theology of the hereafter. The utterance of this word implied in simple language the complete assurance to the thief, in words that held meaning for him, that he would be with God and with Christ.

In Heaven the righteous and the angels dwell with God. Thus Jesus addresses God as the Father "who art in heaven" (Mt. 6:9) and again as "My Father who is in Heaven" (Mt. 10:33). He also declares that the angels of the little ones do always 'behold the face of my Father who is in heaven' (Mt. 18:10). Heaven was the abode of Jesus before His descent to earth, and thither He returned when His redemptive work was completed (Lk. 24:51). The final abode with God in Heaven prevails in the New Testament. Jesus speaks of the time when He will appear from heaven and will gather together His elect (Mt. 24:30f., Mk. 13:26f., Lk. 21:27). In heaven His disciples will enjoy a great

reward (Mt. 5:12, Lk. 6:23). They are urged to lay up treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:20).

Before one can come to any understanding or reach any conclusions with regard to the concept of Death in the Synoptic Gospels he will have to look carefully at those passages which deal specifically with death. In the Gospel of Luke (Lk. 2:25-35) there is found the famous Nunc Dimittis passage. This is the first recorded encounter that Jesus has with the thought of death. Simeon is regarded as a saintly and elderly man by implication, who has waited patiently in the temple area for the coming of the Messiah. By some mysterious revelation through the Holy Spirit, he was informed that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. While it is generally assumed that Simeon was a very old man it is not however necessarily true. In fact there is nothing said in the account of the age of Simeon. Readers draw this conclusion by lack of careful examination. No doubt, one is confused with the following story of the prophetess as the text tells us that "Anna, a prophetess . . . was of a great age" (Lk. 2:36).

The other error is the assumption that Simeon saw Jesus and died. "On the one hand the opening words of Simeon's song are often wrongly interpreted as a wish,

using the imperative of the verb (i. e. 'May I be allowed to depart in peace'). In fact the Greek is an indicative and means literally: 'Now thou art releasing thy servant.' This does not necessarily mean that Simeon is about to die, or praying to die; it does mean that he is ready to die having found that for which his whole life was a search. This need not imply that he was old."⁷ It is easily seen how we think that this man had waited about the temple during his lengthy life for the long awaited Messiah and then upon seeing Him, he dies. In actual fact the Scripture only tells us that at last his life was fulfilled because he had seen Jesus. Now, Simeon is prepared to meet death at any point because his encounter with the living God has made life complete. This of course is true of all Christian experience, yet to encounter God does not mean death, for it is only then that one can fulfil the task that he is asked to do.

The Greek word *Ἀπολύω* which is used here means to set free or release, thus Jesus could say to the crippled woman: 'Woman you are freed (or released) from your infirmity' (Lk. 13:12). "It is also used of release of a debtor (Mt. 18:27) and of forgiveness (Lk. 6:37). The sense of 'dismiss' is seen in Matthew 15:23, when the

disciples urged Jesus to 'send away' the Canaanite woman; also in cases of divorce, of a man 'putting away his wife' (Mt. 5:31). In view of the occurrence in Luke 2:29 of $\delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ (slave) and $\delta\epsilon\beta\omicron\tau\iota\omicron\tau\eta\varsigma$ (master) we can assume that there is a sense of superiority involved in the action of dismissal. That is, the verse recognizes the authority of God, who is supreme over life and death. But it is pressing inferences too far to suggest that life is regarded as a bondage or burden from which Simeon can now be released." ⁸ For him it was rather a sense of achievement, of fulfilling life which an encounter with the Christ involves. While this does not enter the concepts of death itself, the peace and confidence is not limited to this life. This came to Simeon not as release from a burden but as a release to achievement and fulfilment of life. This does not probe the meaning of death, yet it shows that this encounter opens him to a new depth and richness of experience which gives new meaning to both life and death. The high point of Simeon's life was to see Jesus because it was only through Jesus that Simeon was able to satisfy his longing. And because life now became full through the sight of Jesus: it was possible to resign himself to death to be with Jesus. So one concludes that

Simeon did not die upon seeing Jesus but rather he continued to live in a new sense of being 'in peace.' Now he could say that he truly lived 'in peace' and died 'in peace.'

Perhaps no passage has caused more difficulty in understanding than the famous Crux Interpretum (Mark 9:1, Matt. 16:28, Luke 9:27). The Markan passage reads 'there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God come with power.' This is one of the most difficult passages of eschatology. W. G. Kummel states:

It may therefore be safely asserted that Mark 9:1 bears the meaning that some of Jesus' hearers will live to see the appearance of the Kingdom of God in the comparatively near future and therefore will not fall victims to death.

Yet it is difficult to determine the precise significance of this saying. That it belongs to the oldest tradition is likely, if only because the fact that this prediction was not realized must have caused such serious difficulties that they would hardly have been created. It is equally clear that Jesus says of a limited number of persons only ($\tau\iota\upsilon\epsilon\varsigma$) that they will live to see the coming of the Kingdom of God; yet there is no reason for the assumption that this was intended (later?) to weaken the promise of its coming in this generation (Mark 13:30), because it is obvious that within a group of people only some individuals will remain alive until a definite date in the somewhat distant future.⁹

Now we know in retrospect~~ive~~ that the Kingdom did not come in as it was expected, And further, that those who were standing there did in fact experience death. The conclusion that one has to draw is the fact that Jesus was mistaken in regard to the imminence of the Kingdom. But one cannot solve that problem as to whether Jesus was misunderstood or wither He Himself was actually mistaken about the time of the end. "Our special interest being the interpretation of the meaning of death, we can conclude that Jesus was thinking of death as an inevitable event, not far distant, but equally not in the immediate future. It is possible that the particular phrase 'taste of death' owes something to the connexion with Elijah, through 4 Ezra; but this connexion does not require that Jesus was here promising that some of his hearers would never die."¹⁰

There are two graphic illustrations of Jesus confrontations with death in the Synoptic Gospels. These are the case of the daughter of Jairus and the case of the son of the widow of Nain which will be considered in detail. The account of the raising of the daughter of Jairus is to be found in Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26, Mark 5:21-24, 35-43, and again in Luke 8:40-42, 49-56. It is within Mark that we find the first and most comprehensive account so it is

to him that we turn for the majority of our information. The first criticism of this story is to level the charge that the girl was not really dead. The ruler of the synagogue approaches Jesus with the information that his daughter is at the point of death. So it is seen that at the commencement of the story, as far as Mark informs us, the girl was not dead. It would seem unreasonable that Jairus would come seeking Jesus to raise her from the dead. If this were true then Jesus would have been accepted as merely one of the numerous magicians moving through the lands. It is easier to maintain that the girl was at the point of death and that Jairus wanted her brought back from a critical illness. One has continually to remind himself that there was no clear distinction between being grievously ill and death itself. Anyone who had become seriously ill was already under the spell of death and to make recovery would be to rob the pangs of death. The use of the Greek (life) here stands in direct contrast with death in the other uses that Mark makes (Mk 12:27, 16:11). And though the girl was not yet dead she was not living a life worthy of being called life.

Jesus took this request with the utmost urgency and moved quickly along to the house without hesitation. Here

we see Jesus moving forward to an encounter with death, which laid a challenge to his entire ministry. He too, had to take faith because the Father had entrusted Him. To withdraw or to retreat at this stage would have meant defeat for Jesus and victory for the demonic, since this was the manner in which Jesus viewed the contest. On His way He met the woman with the issue of blood which "adds veracity to the whole story, for there is no attempt to fit these stories together by any literary artifice, and by far the most acceptable explanation is that the events took place as they are reported."¹¹ No doubt the incident with the woman added to the tension of an already anxious father who could waste no time. Then the messengers report that the daughter is dead. There was now no reason for Jesus to continue His journey as the girl was dead and there was nothing that He could do. But Jesus says to the father: 'Do not go on fearing; only continue to believe' (Mk 5:36). Now Mark is very clever in that he does not give any opinion from Jesus and thus we still do not know what Jesus' attitude actually was. Mark uses a difficult expression: ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς παρακούσας τὸν λόγον λαλοῦμενον. Parakousas can mean either 'overhearing' or 'not heeding.' Vincent Taylor prefers that the latter is correct; Jesus did not

heed what was said by the messengers. For him it was not true or if it was true, it did not stop him.¹²

When Jesus entered the house of Jairus the people were weeping and wailing loudly. Then Jesus said to them, "Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." (Mark 5:39). One cannot assume that Jesus did not think that the little girl was dead for all the evidence was against Him or He was indeed clairvoyant. The "professional" mourners had gathered about and began to 'laugh him to scorn' which shows their distrust of His statement. Perhaps they were friends and neighbours, who had watched and waited during the illness, and then saw the girl lapse into death. He was not going to tell them things that contradicted their own experience. Or, perhaps they could have been the professional mourners ~~who~~^{who} would never be called until the death was certain. Their presence and their actions are indeed a strong case that she had actually died.

Here Jesus may have been expressing His view of death from the point of view of God which would be an extension of the Old Testament concept. In death we sleep under God's watchful care and He will awaken the dead in His own time. "Men call it death---but from the divine

point of view it is a sleep---not the sleep of eternal inactivity, as when the idea of death as a sleep was first advanced, but a temporary state, by implication peaceful; from which there will be an awakening to a full existence with God. If this view goes a little beyond the evidence of the saying we are considering, it must be admitted that it accords more fully with all the facts."¹³

Whatever our personal reaction to the account must be there is absolutely no doubt in the Gospels that the girl was actually dead and they relate this story to indicate Jesus' power over death. Though one might find that the other accounts vary and are not as straightforward in detail, he still will have to admit that this is precisely what Mark meant in the earliest account of this story. "The fact that it is possible to interpret Mark as not strictly meaning the child was dead, is very strong evidence of the evangelist's care in presenting his material accurately. So if we cannot say without any doubt that the child was really dead, we may conclude that the evidence points very strongly in that direction. Further, it is sufficient to be able to say that most, if not all, the people involved thought the child was dead. Therefore this story can be taken as an illustration of the attitude of Jesus to

apparent death, even if a doubt remains whether it was 'real' death."¹⁴

As one re-reads this account he is struck with the fact that so little is known about the girl. We do not know the nature of her illness, nor do we know anything of the length of her personal suffering. All these facts are laid aside to present the encounter with Jesus and a young girl who has died. What does however come to our attention is the fact that Jesus works out of a compassion for the parents. Obviously, if the girl was dead there remained no more suffering for her so raising her from the dead could not have really been done for her sake. Thus it becomes apparent that the raising was in fact done for the parents who had suffered this great loss of their little daughter. Her illness and death gain significance only through the grief of her parents.

Jesus moves forward in this situation with confidence and poise looking intently into the seriousness of the matter without either belittling it or becoming anxious over the difficulty. He gives courage to the woman along the way as well as the father who must be undergoing great agony.

He spoke these words to Jairus also to help him; to encourage and strengthen

him in this distressing experience. Throughout the whole incident we seem to detect an air of quiet confidence and understanding sympathy emanating from Jesus. From this we can conclude that in the very presence of death, Jesus still acted with that supreme confidence which can only indicate real mastery. Here indeed is the Lord of life and death, showing forth his unmistakable power over man's last enemy. . . . Whatever significance this has for an interpretation of the method of healing used by our Lord, it also implies that he looked upon death as something to be faced calmly and realistically. It is not to be falsified by artificial emotion, nor should there be any attempt to obscure its reality by noisy demonstrations.¹⁵

From these two vivid accounts of Jesus' encounters with death we see that Jesus always faced up to the reality and the fact of death. He continually moves forward to meet it where it strikes. Certainly these two stories leave us with the most outstanding work of Christ which shows not only His uniqueness but His outgoing compassion.

The other related story is the raising of the son of the Widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17). This account for some unknown reason appears only in the Gospel of Luke. The tendency of criticism at this point is to maintain that it must be fabrication. However, one cannot so easily dismiss this as such for we have just seen the prototype in the three Gospels. So even though the facts are not present

in the other Gospel accounts the belief that Jesus had the power to raise the dead is confessed there. It may be that Mark was not there at ~~ent~~ time and did not want to relate such an amazing story in the third person. There will be some that will continue to harp on the fact that the man was not really dead. This is far more intangible than the account of Jairus' daughter. Here the whole community was aware of his death and Jesus encountered the funeral march on the way to the burial. It would be far easier to point a finger of scorn at the miracle than at the fact that the man was actually dead. When we have to deal with miracles, one cannot really be considered any more amazing than another. It is only a matter of degree. The Gospel writers must have felt that they had in their own way told enough of the story to be convincing for it would have been impossible to relate the entire story. Hence they were forced to pick and choose perhaps not always using the best discretion. Also it must be assumed that there were equally dramatic stories which did not enter the Gospels at all.

It is of great interest to note that in this account Luke uses for the first time δ κ $\acute{\upsilon}$ ρ ι \omicron ς which gives the implication that Jesus is Lord of life as well as Lord

over death. He is Lord because He manifests a power beyond Himself. The situation of the death of the son of the widow of Nain is even more tragic than Jairus' daughter. The widow of Nain, who had lost her husband, had now lost her son which meant that she would have to fend for herself since he was her only son. The entire community turned out to share in her sorrow because they too sensed the dire need of the widow as she stood alone in the world. Jesus again moves forward out of compassion for the bereaved rather than the deceased. Here the mourners are accepted as doing a necessary and proper function and hence are not rebuked by Jesus. This indicates that there were acceptable means of grieving as well as the very objectionable wailings and tumults. Jesus seems to have stumbled on a particularly tragic death without being asked to come. He moves forward first to give comfort to the bereaved widow. His comfort did not come merely from a sense of empathy but rather that He in fact could do something about it and thus He says, 'Do not go on weeping---cease to weep.' There is contained within these words the promise that something could and would be done because he did not rebuke the crowd for their mourning. Thus Jesus moved forward to the bier and after some actions the man immediately sat up. Again there is absolutely no evidence as to what Jesus might have

said or what in fact He did, leaving little room for the faith healer to conjure a ritual or formula. The words and actions seem so simple that they appear to draw no attention to themselves. Then we are simply told that he gave the son back to his mother. It is striking to note here also that nothing of the illness its length, nor its nature are known. There is also no indication as to how long the son may have been dead.

Death here, as in the account of Jairus' daughter, is defeated not so much because it is an evil but rather to meet the needs of those left behind. Death seems to be a much different matter with Jesus confronting it, as somehow mysteriously it changes its fearful hold and perhaps even its nature.

He can recall the dead to return to life, as if, indeed, the fact of death is not so great an obstacle to God as it inevitably seems to man. Our Lord's action here is very much like that of arousing someone from sleep, although the idea of sleep is not mentioned in the passage. It is perhaps worth noting that the natural tendency of a people with a long tradition of faith in God is to think God is the cause of this remarkable event. And it was easy for them to look beyond Jesus to God. It seems best to understand this miracle as our Lord's response to the tragic plight of the widow, and as an indication of his mastery over death---a mastery

never idly displayed to the curious, but all the more real by being kept under control.

Readers dimly but certainly realize that beyond the circumstances of physical death, there is a greater power of God at work in Jesus. Jesus did not come to take away from anyone the inevitable fact of mortality. He was not concerned to make anyone escape physical death. There were doubtless many cases of equal sadness with which our Lord did not deal in this way, although he could have done so. But he does mediate, through these accounts, his power to make death an important, yet not a tragic event. Many people of all sorts have turned from the grave of their loved one without bitterness because they know that he who could conquer physical death can overcome the sharpness of death and has indeed opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.¹⁶

There are two other accounts which must be raised for the sake of completeness but do not really fit in this context. There is the healing of the epileptic boy who had fallen into a state where he looked as if he were dead but there is no indication that he was by any means dead (Mark 9:26). There is also an account of the nobleman's slave at Capernaum in which his condition is described as 'sick and at the point of death' (Luke 7:2). There is no indication that the slave had died. Thus these accounts are ruled out because death is used only as a metaphorical

term.

What then was Jesus' attitude to His own death? This provocative question holds within it one of the great mysteries surrounding this entire study. There is perhaps no richer and more significant problem to be raised in the whole of the Gospel accounts. Our attitude towards death would be greatly enhanced and enlightened if we could come to some depth of understanding of this involved topic. Whatever we may say of the marvel and the mystery, the sacrifice and the scandal, the aura and the atonement, in the last analysis we must reiterate that His death was a human death. This point cannot be stressed too emphatically because this is precisely where most of our theological reasoning fails to probe. This is the one undeniable factor and thus constitutes the most logical approach to the problem. It is for this human aspect that the creeds cried out so that we might say above all else that Jesus' death was a human death. There is indeed, much more that may be said in regard to its uniqueness,¹⁷ its redemptive power, or even its cosmological significance but first and foremost it was a human death.

The same point can be made with regard to the frequent assertion that Christ's death was not just physical death---it

involved a spiritual 'death' and desolation such as could only be experienced by the Incarnate Son of God. This may be fully granted, but it does not lessen the meaning of Christ's death as human death. Sometimes commentators refer to 'mere physical death' as if it is really a matter of no account at all. This, at any rate, can be refuted from a consideration of the references in the Gospels to Christ's death. Whatever deeper significance can rightly be ascribed to that death, it is also to be considered as a significant human death.¹⁸

If we deny the humanity of the death of Jesus, we overlook God's purpose and plan contained within it and do indeed by our own thoughts and reflections condemn it to stark foolishness. It would seem from a proper reading of the New Testament that the whole point of the Gospels is to build up to the crescendo of Christ's death and to ignore or dismiss the human side will result in neither a complete nor a full theology. So it is to this objective fullness of Christ's death that we must now turn.

Jesus had begun His ministry with the full hope and expectation that the Kingdom of Heaven would come in due course without the anticipation of His own personal death. It would be more than difficult for a man to venture out with the expectation that His mission and message would end in utter failure unless you ascribe to Jesus the power

to see beyond His own time. He must have been caught up in the early successes of His teaching and healing ministry. The acclamation that He received must have assured Him that the Kingdom had drawn near the earth. The Gospels portray that the common people heard Him gladly and that people literally rushed from all over the country side to hear or to be healed. Not all those that came were shallow nor superficial in their commitment to Him. His words and deeds had spread so that He had become more than just a topic of discussion.

He falls quickly in the sight of human opinion. The fall is so rapid that the Gospels do not even attempt to trace it nor to analyze it. Death comes to His mind as the inexorable necessity and it is from this awareness that He then begins to turn to the thought that the Kingdom is of the future. Any attempt to make Jesus' death pre-planned by God leads to docetism and ultimately proceeds to the worship of a robot rather than a person. This does not mean that the concept of the present Kingdom is merely cast off, but rather He sets up the tension between the present and the future. This is what has been suggested as the synthesis of the two existing Kingdoms by R. H. Charles.¹⁹

As Jesus became aware of His own impending death and

its nature He began to foretell of it as demonstrated in the Passion narratives of Mark 8:27-33, 9:30-2, 10:32-34 which contain their counterparts in the other Gospels. These statements begin only after the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi, yet the actual thought comes much earlier.²⁰ It is from the point of the confession that there appears a new phase of His ministry. The call is for repentance as He moves toward Jerusalem. He turns from His preaching to the multitudes to the intimate group of twelve. "His subject is not so much the kingdom as Himself, and in particular His death."²¹ One cannot evade the Lord's deliberate attempt to teach His disciples not only of the fact of His death but also of its nature. The message and the foretelling are bold and clear, and stem from a deep sense of dedication. He has to move to Jerusalem where His death will be brought about by the leaders of the Jews. His own death shall be one which will follow physical punishment of mocking, spitting, and scourging. Jesus' death will not be the end but rather it will be followed by a resurrection.

'When the three disciples came down from the mount of Transfiguration he referred to the Son of Man rising again from the dead (Mk 9:9). His reply to the request of

the sons of Zebedee for a premier place in his kingdom, includes reference to the baptism he is to undergo, which plainly means his coming death (Mk 10:38-9). Again, in the same passage, he refers to his coming death as a ransom given for many (Mk 10:45). We can at least say that these references show that Jesus faced the prospect of death a considerable time before he entered Jerusalem. His death was neither a sudden surprise nor an accident."²²

There is no doubt in the Gospel accounts that Jesus must (δεῖ) die. This imperative means for Denney two things. On the one hand he views it as inevitable, for the powers had risen to such a high fervour that they could not be turned back and hence they must ensnare Him. On the other hand he maintains that Jesus must die in order to fulfil the mission He felt compelled to complete.

These two senses, of course, are not incompatible; but there may be a question as to their relation to each other. Most frequently the second is made to depend upon the first. Jesus, we are told, came to see that His death was inevitable because of the forces arrayed against Him; but being unable, as the well-beloved Son of the Father, merely to submit to the inevitable or to encounter death as a blind fate, He reconciled Himself to it by interpreting it as indispensable, as something which properly entered into His work and contributed to its success. It became

not a thing to endure, but a thing to do. The passion was converted into the sublimest of actions.²³

The death of Christ was brought about by the conspiracy of the Jewish leaders who looked upon Jesus as an out and out foe. No one can attempt to answer the problem as to the reason why Jesus had to die in this manner. It is all a part of the greater question of the problem of evil. Basically one can only point to the evil inherent in man. While His death was a common one which other innocent men had suffered, yet it was maliciously plotted that He should be killed.

His death was planned by the Jewish leaders who tried to take him by subtlety and kill him (Mk 14:1); the betrayal by one of the twelve was an important factor in the events which led to his arrest (Mk 14:44f); once he was arrested, the leaders of the Jews provided false witnesses to condemn him, and in spite of the judicial decision of Pilate, that Jesus was innocent, he was delivered up to be crucified. The gospels do not present these distasteful facts in order to elicit our pity for the victim, nor our condemnation of his enemies. The emphasis is upon the stark facts---facts, we must remember, in their outward appearance, not uncommon in those times. Indeed, looked at from the point of view of a Roman these events would probably be regarded as sordid and boring; the sort of thing that did happen from time to time in those remote corners of the empire. Again,

we insist that this is certainly not all there is to be considered in the death of Christ---all subsequent Christian history shows that to be false---but in its simplest outline here is a man facing death. Whatever else it is, it is brutal, sordid, painful human death; not the worst kind of death anyone could face, but bad enough to be considered one of the most brutal and unjustified, even on the grounds of common decency and justice.²⁴

Jesus' death was one of a common criminal by means of crucifixion outside the city walls of Jerusalem. And how did He look upon His own death? From what has been said previously, there is a strong case that Jesus knew not only of His death but also of its nature. Perhaps one who had a dramatic birth, and an unique life, could only expect an extraordinary death. There seems always to have been the freedom to turn away from the grim future just ahead. To what intent and purpose Jesus felt that He was responding to God's plan for Him can never be discerned.

Jesus drew away to the seclusion of the Garden of Gethsemane with James, John, and Peter. And it is to this intimate group that Jesus was able to express even more of His nature and purpose.

'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch' (Mk 14: 34); cf. Matthew 26: 38, which adds 'with me' to the Marcan form. The first part of this saying is an echo

rather than a quotation, apparently based on Psalms 42:5 and 43:5. 'Why are you cast down, O my soul?' These two psalms both deal with the disquietude, or in modern terminology, 'depression' of a man who normally enjoys fellowship with God. In the first instance the depression is caused by a loss of the sense of God's presence. 'My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.' 'When shall I come and behold the face of God?' (Ps. 42:2). This desolation is increased by the jibes of those who continually say unto him: 'Where is your God?' In the second instance, it is more plainly stated that it is a man's enemies which cause him 'to go mourning.' In both cases the solution to the difficulty is the same. 'Hope in God; for I shall again praise him my help and my God.'²⁵

Here Jesus turns to the depth of the thought of the Psalmist to express not only His discouragement but also His trust in God, the failures of man over against the hope in God.

The other aspect of the saying is the thought of, 'even unto death.' This idea finds its background in the Old Testament as well as in the Apocrypha. It comes most specifically from the Book of Jonah (4:9) where he is made weak, whipped by the wind, and wishing to escape he says; 'It is better for me to die than to live.' From what has already been discussed, one realizes that Jesus' words did not come from the knowledge of the weight of His own death though He knew something of it. Rather, it can be

said that it was only at this point that He began to fully realize the magnitude of His task. But we cannot avoid the fact, however much we want, that Jesus was afraid of death. This is a difficult position for most Christians to accept because they cannot see Jesus as one afraid of death or any other thing. The general assumption is made that the Christian ought not to fear death because Christ showed no fear of death. We could not be further from the truth. This belief has no doubt caused a great amount of undue anguish and suffering for the committed Christian, who finds that there is much to fear in this unknown realm of death, is criticized, either by society or mostly by his conscience, for he is thus showing a weakness in his beliefs. One cannot, regardless of his personal beliefs, come to death without some grave apprehensions if he is of sound mind. However, we are not in the least moved to assign these same feelings to Jesus. The reality of accepting Jesus as a man is indeed the hardest to do at this point. Professor Oscar Cullmann tells that he has received more criticism over a small book entitled, Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? than any other writing. But of all the bitter criticism he received he could say, "So far, no critic of either kind has attempted to refute

me by exegesis, that being the basis of our study."²⁶ Here he does a remarkable comparison and contrast between the death of Socrates as revealed in Phaedo and that of Jesus as revealed in the New Testament.

The Synoptic Evangelists furnish us, by and large, with a unanimous report. Jesus begins 'to tremble and be distressed', writes Mark (14:33). 'My soul is troubled, even to death, He says to His disciples. Jesus is so thoroughly human that He shares the natural fear of death. Jesus is afraid, though not as a coward would be of the men who will kill Him, still less of the pain and grief which preceded death. He is afraid in the face of death itself. Death for Him is not something divine: it is something dreadful. Jesus does not want to be alone in this moment. He knows, of course, that the Father stands by to help Him. He looks to Him in this decisive moment as He has done throughout his life. He turns to Him with all His human fear of this great enemy, death. He is afraid of death.²⁷

In contrast Socrates is calm and unassuming as he approaches death and immortality by lifting the hemlock and dies rather nonchalantly. However, Jesus is depressed, anxious, in a state of agony, and in need of the companionship of His disciples. Jesus on the cross utters forth: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

One's attention is certainly drawn to the parallels that Prof. Cullmann makes, but I think one is even more

conscious of the dissimilar factors. Jesus was under commitment, vocationally He was integrally tied to the Will of God, and hence He was directly responsible to God. A great part of His tension came from His desire to do what was right and yet never quite knowing what was right. Socrates was responsible to no one and thus could and did act as a free agent. Death came to Socrates at the end of life but for Jesus, it was only the start of life which had entry into deeper dimensions. Jesus was calling forth His disciples to life commitment while Socrates as a teacher knew that his thoughts would continue whether they were adhered to or not. Jesus was wrestling with cosmic dimensions while Socrates was proving his philosophy and making the best of an unforeseen situation. The entire nature of death was different as Socrates died an honourable death whereas Jesus died the most contemptible death upon the cross, not to mention the sheer difference in physical pain. Basically their whole attitude toward death was radically different in that Socrates viewed it as the freedom from an imprisoned life whereas Jesus saw it as man's only opportunity for imprisonment. All these points should be lifted up, but what Prof. Cullmann said was right and ought to resound again

and again, that Jesus was afraid of Death. This is self-evident and as His death has been accepted as unique, no comparison need be cited except as a matter of interest. Cullmann calls us sharply back to the humanity of Jesus, and whatever else may be said Jesus died a human death and had human fear concerning death. Jesus' fear of death is more one of the tremendous burden of responsibility upon Him than the ponderous unknown which accounts for His trembling. Death for Jesus was the greatest terror that could face Him. For death means that you are under the powers of the demonic and as far from God as possible.

Because it is God's enemy, it separates us from God, who is Life and the Creator of all life. Jesus, who is so closely tied to God, tied as no other man has ever been, for precisely this reason must experience death much more terribly than any other man. To be in the hands of the great enemy of God means to be forsaken by God. In a way quite different from others, Jesus must suffer this abandonment, this separation from God, the only condition really to be feared. Therefore He cries to God: 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' He is now actually in the hands of God's great enemy.

We must be grateful to the Evangelists for having glossed over nothing at this point. Later (as early as the beginning of the second century, and probably even earlier) there were people who took offence at this---people of

Greek provenance. In early Christian history we call them Gnostics.²⁸

Perhaps the most striking factor in all the Gospel accounts dealing with the death of Christ is that the emphasis always is one of physical death. Here in Jerusalem, Jesus is led to the very common and excruciating death. There is here no theological implication: it is presented as a story of a man who was to die by being crucified. The theology of the event certainly comes afterwards for here plainly is a physical death for which He sought escape. First and foremost the Gospels give us an account of a real death faced in a realistic manner. This is the basic thing we learn from the New Testament concerning death.

Jesus had proclaimed to His disciples: 'Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell' (Matt. 10:28 and Luke 12:4). There is a world of difference in a fear of men who can bring death upon you and death itself, the first being an earthly fear as opposed to the ultimate fear of being under the spell of death. He was afraid and rightly so, but not ultimately afraid. Beyond this fear was the light of confidence that this same god, the god He served, would somehow see Him

through. The fear rests more in His own confidence, "Will I be able to undergo this task and see my way through? Can I remain faithful with such a burden"? He was as a warrior doing battle without the knowledge of the enemy's power. It was a David fighting a Goliath of evil. Always there was the risk or uncertainty that one might go down to defeat. It would have been no struggle at all if the score was known by Him. Then there was the hope that He would fill the expectations of God and those He would have to confront for the generations to come. This was no battle fought off in the hazy realms of Sheol but rather the turning point of History.

Because Jesus underwent death in all its horror, not only in His body, but also in His soul ('My God, why hast thou forsaken me'), and as He is regarded by the first Christians as the Mediator of salvation, He must indeed be the very one who in His death conquers death itself. He cannot obtain this victory by simply living on as an immortal soul, thus fundamentally not dying. He can conquer death only by actually dying, by betaking Himself to the sphere of death, the destroyer of life, to the sphere of 'nothingness', of abandonment by God. When one wishes to overcome someone else, one must enter his territory. Whoever wants to conquer death must die; he must really cease to live---not simply live on as an immortal soul, but die in

body and soul, lose life itself, the most precious good which God has given us. For this reason the Evangelists, who none the less intended to present Jesus as the Son of God, have not tried to soften the terribleness of His thoroughly human death.²⁹

With these thoughts as background for His death is it any wonder that He was shaken to the point of being afraid? And in a real sense we too have the right to shrink back from death. Anything less than this is to ascribe to Jesus something less than full humanity. Regardless of what effects this may have on our personal faith these are the facts and this is what the Evangelists simply and plainly wanted us to see. This by no means should weaken our faith but rather increase it for Jesus faced up to the realities of death and for the first time in History, here was a man who did something about death. There is no attempt to deny nor belittle death as the other religions of the world attempt to do. But the story does not end here and it is not right that we should come to have a fixation on the death or its agony as a whole host of Christian people believe. It is a victory through fear and trembling and hence all the more a victory. Jesus refused the sympathetic narcotic that he would be fully conscious of death and its meaning. The narcotic

would only allow Jesus a further opportunity to escape the reality of death. This is not a man seeking the easy way out. The Gospels drive us to look beyond the crucifixion. In fact they tell of the death of their leader with undue constraint. Their story is briefly told without adding philosophy, emotion, condemnation, or sentimentality.

It is very evident that there is a great gap in contemporary writing with regard to the "Last Things" and especially within the realm and the meaning of death. But whatever disappointments the original disciples must have felt over the humiliation and subsequently the Crucifixion, which was followed by the shock and the embarrassment of it all, they nevertheless overcame it. They were so changed by it that "the centre of gravity in their world changed, and their whole being swung round into equilibrium in a new position. Their inspiration came from what had once alarmed, grieved, and discomfited them. The word they preached was the very thing which had once made them afraid to speak."³⁰ They must have somehow been convinced that their Master, who had died, had survived death. This sent them seeking an answer to what was in fact a gross contradiction of their concept of the Messiahship. "A close scrutiny of the New Testament writings

themselves soon suggests that the origins of the Christian soteriology constitute a problem far more complex than Christian apologia is accustomed to admit."³¹ The members of the early church were certainly perplexed by the entire problem of soteriology but even so they were willing to work on it and develop it rather than hide it as the members of the Twentieth Century wish.

It is evident from the sources that "the Christian Church has never agreed to be silent as to the fate of the lost; the majority of its representatives have asserted the doctrine of Eternal Evil with vigor and decision. The idea that we should have nothing to say about the final fortunes of humanity is a recent discovery, and is due to the pressure of sustained criticism, both within and without the Church."³²

It is certainly apparent that the failure to develop the theology of eschatology has made a large gap in an otherwise well defended facade. It could be likened unto a garrison; or the Nazi Western Wall which was rendered useless because of some exposure such as an open door or roof. Theologians continue to build and rebuild the walls, which is of little avail with such a vulnerable and unprotected gap. Is it not a matter of making the strongest

point the weakest by a complete inversion of the theological system? Dare we hope that the critics of the Faith will desist from attacking the lines of least resistance? It is precisely the eschatology where the majority of the scorn and abuse are poured. The failure to defend man's destiny in Christianity is already to admit defeat. With a faith firmly rooted in its eschatology it dare not be neglected.

It cannot be put down (nor will it be), for Resurrection must be consistent with truth. To deny any aspect of the wholeness Of Christianity is to deny Christianity. However insecure we may feel about the "Last Things" the problems still confront the whole church and must be grappled with. Thus an attempt will be made here.

There is a frightening passage which is reported as a part of the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (26:24). Here Jesus issues a condemnation of Judas by saying that it would have been better if he had not been born. It is one of those sayings which you attempt to rule out because it seems to inconsistent with the sayings of Jesus. It is however idiomatic and perhaps as such was rather popular. The origins are at least as old as Second Enoch (38:2). It seems that this is no doubt the meaning

Jesus had in mind and consequently it is not as drastic as it may first appear.

No statement of Jesus has caused greater distress and mental anguish than our Lord's statement that the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven. The exact implications will always remain obscure. But viewed against the context it is a comment to the Scribes who had acknowledged the works of Jesus to be one with those of the demons.

In so doing they blasphemed against the divine spirit of compassion which inspired the healing ministry of the Saviour. They sinned against love; and this was ever the kind of offence that was most hateful to Jesus. Hence He declared with passionate indignation that their attitude was beyond the reach of forgiveness. This pronouncement of His cannot, however, be said to convey a sentence of personal and irrevocable doom unless we can be sure that it was directed against individual men. And we cannot attain to such certainty. Rather does it seem that the offence of the Scribes was committed by them as a class or party, not as separate persons. This interpretation is rendered probable by the fact that the Jewish mind was accustomed to the idea that nations and bodies of men could commit an unforgivable sin. Thus it is said in the Book of Jubilees that when the children of Israel break the law of circumcision, 'there will be no more pardon or forgiveness unto them for all the sin of this eternal error.' (Jub. 15:34).³³

If Jesus hurled this condemnation at one specific person it would be a blatant contradiction of all one can gather concerning Him from the New Testament. It would be hard to believe that man could reap eternal condemnation for one action. But even sharper is the realization that Paul was a zealous member of the Pharisees, the group Jesus had in mind when He spoke. Now Paul would have stood under this condemnation yet it is the same man who is so forgiven for "his sin against the Holy Spirit" that he became a leader of the Church. As a case in point one may have to withdraw from the idea of this concerning an individual and conclude that it meant the whole body of Pharisees.

In the Gospel account it is clear that good and evil are opposed to each other as light is to darkness with each having its own goal. However, when consideration is made of the term "destruction" the term leaves no clear distinction as to what it means.

Indeed, the habit of applying the methods of minute verbal analysis to such words of Jesus is unhistorical in spirit, and is not conducive either to reverence or understanding. It distracts attention from the religious and prophetic force of the evangelic sayings, and directs the mind to the mere details of their expression. It thus subordinates that which is vital, and that of which we can be sure, to formal peculiarities

which are usually doubtful and always of minor moment. Also, it compels us to bring the utterances of our Lord into the region of laboured controversy; and whatever is made the subject of prolonged debate begins to wear an aspect of uncertainty. The longer one studies the works of partisan divines the more one is convinced that the path of wisdom lies in refusing to base doctrinal conclusions on any single test or on any merely verbal grounds. No doctrine is secure that is not supported by a persistent element in the Gospel records.³⁴

There is however, running through the entire Gospel, the idea of exclusion. The theme occurs too frequently and in too many separate places to deny it a position of authenticity. The King is seen as closing the gates excluding those who remain outside and keeps it shut even to those who continue to wail outside the walls (Matt. 25: 11). This comes as a serious and stern warning from the Lord and it was uttered with both concern and compassion.

It belongs to a minor strain which is heard in the voice of our Lord---a sadness of foreboding, a stern perception of ominous possibilities. There is a broad and easy way that leads to destruction; it profits a man nothing if he gain the whole world and lose his own life; it had been well for Judas if he had never been born; apostate disciples are as salt that has lost its virtue and is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men; there is an obscurity of the soul, wherein the very

light is as darkness; there are those whose lives are like painted tombs full of dead men's bonds and all uncleanness; there are offenders for whom it were better that a millstone were hanged about the neck and they were drowned in the depth of the sea. These are all sayings that are weighted with a burden of prophetic warning. They compel us to recognise, with an awe of spirit which is the deeper the more humbly we acknowledge the authority of Jesus, that He believed in an immeasurable danger which threatened the souls of men; a horror of great darkness from which they had to be delivered; a desert of dreary exile towards which the beloved race of mortals was straying with careless feet.³⁵

The other aspect of the Lord's teachings has a more hopeful aspect. If one takes the concept of Gehenna as the common belief of a rather fixed state regarding the theory of destiny, one finds the tradition does not leave sufficient material to assume that the fate of the lost is in any way different from those revealed in His apocalyptic prophecies. One cannot enlarge on these concepts of doom, amplifying them all out of proportion, for one must realize that there is an element of teaching here. It seems ironic but there has been the tendency of the far extremes on both sides of the Christian continuum to lift one phrase and expound it for use directly against the opposing side. Yet, they are both guilty of the same mistake.

The call of Jesus in the account of Luke 12:58-59 is a call to place our affairs in order before the coming of the Lord. There is not contained within this passage any information concerning the duration of the penalty,

We may conjecture, indeed, that if He had really declared any definite doctrine on this subject we would not have had to seek for it in the obscure corners of the Gospel story in the details of a picture, in the chance turning of a phrase.

Jesus certainly taught that there would be degrees of future punishment and a greater and lesser condemnation. In short, the three earlier Evangelists do ascribe sayings to Jesus which tend to modify the accepted doctrine of perdition, though they do not afford a basis for confident conclusions.³⁶

Jesus was placed in a precarious position by being forced to take a stand either with or against the Sadducees (Mark 12:18-27). The question was certainly one which had no easy way out but one designed specifically to ensnare Jesus. No doubt the rabbis had pondered over it for some time as indeed it is thought-provoking. There is contained within this passage the controversy of the various opinions concerning man's fate and destiny in the departed realms. The Sadducees are revealed as those who say that there is no resurrection ἀνάστασις. By word of condemnation in Acts 23:8 the Sadducees are said to deny the

resurrection, angels, and the spirit πνεῦμα . The statement here is that the Pharisees believed these things and it became a matter which pitted the Sadducees against the Pharisees leaving an irreparable cleavage. The concept of the resurrection of the dead was widespread which is shown in verse twenty-five ὅτι... ἐκ γειρῶν ἀναστῶσιν which is contained elsewhere in the New Testament and is certainly consistent with Hebrew thought. The Hebrews believed man to be a psycho-physical organism so that there could be no afterlife without the body, even though a spiritual body. Without the reconstitution of both body and soul it could not really be considered as an existence. Resurrection is viewed as the predestinated experience of all Jewish people which does not take into consideration any ethical qualifications. The passage goes on to say that the resurrection is inevitable because it was ordained by God hence the patriarchs were not dead but living.

Jesus sides with the Pharisees in this debate in the communal as well as the individualistic sense. He believed that the righteous dead would enter Sheol but would rise again to partake in the Kingdom of God (Matt. 22:23-33). The Sadducees' argument proceeds along the lines of Mosaic Law for to them this was the only proper

means of argument. While their contention seem absurd from our point of view, yet this was their formula. It would be very possible that this was an old argument that had been used successively to confound believers of the resurrection, as well it might have. There is absolutely no ground to maintain that this was a new problem for them. The concept of Levirate marriage was developed fully almost to obscure the issue. Jesus' reply begins by stating that their presuppositions are wrong. One cannot assume that the future Kingdom will be just an extension of the existing life and this is where they err. There are rather new dimensions and ramifications far beyond their imagination as the dead are as the "angels," for this existence is beyond the present life and obviously of a higher order. Jesus sustains the thought that we will continue with bodies which are transformed and glorified as are the angels.

Here Jesus is following what we saw to have come to be the prevalent view - - - that in the future life we shall indeed have bodies, but angelic bodies 'made from the light and glory of God', and not the earthly ones we now possess. This teaching is found as early as the Book of Enoch, and 'was current among the cultured Pharisees in the century immediately preceding the Christian era' - - - Josephus, as we saw, putting it down as the Pharisaic doctrine that the souls of the righteous will 'pass into a

body of another kind'. The Talmud attributes to a well-known Rabbinic teacher belonging to an early Christian century the saying that 'In the world to come there is no eating or drinking or marrying or envy or hate.' To refuse to contemplate the possibility of such a new embodiment is, says, Jesus, 'not to know the power of God'.³⁷

In conclusion He challenges the accusers for they do not know the power of God. In a real sense He has succeeded in returning the question to the Sadducees in what was a most offensive retort. Jesus picks up the discussion, arguing from their authority, that of the Scriptures; He points out that it is the Sadducees who continually harp on the fact that their God is indeed the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The implication is that their God must be one who cares for these men or else God is somehow greatly diminished. He is then not the great awesome God who called everything into being.

If God had been merely the nation's God, then the immortality of the nation would be all we could properly hope for. But if God is the God of individuals, if individuals can enter into fellowship with Him, if individuals are precious in His sight, then our hope in God necessarily becomes a hope for the individual.

The argument is unanswerable; and is indeed the only unanswerable argument for immortality that has ever been given, or ever can be given. It cannot be evaded

except by a denial of the premisses. If the individual can commune with God, then he must matter to God; and if he matters to God, he must share God's eternity. For if God really rules, He cannot be conceived as scrapping what is precious in His sight. It is in the conjunction with God that the promise of eternal life resides.³⁸

This comes from the logical extension of a personalized religion developed to its fullest.

Jesus' argument here rests on the existing beliefs and He makes no attempt to reform these thoughts. He merely points out the glaring inconsistency in what they uphold on the one hand and on the other hand what they in fact believe. There was no more shattering attack which could be leveled at these devout Jews than an approach to the Torah.

The call to life is more than a return to the shadowy existence of death. This at best was a feeble existence which was placed beyond the realm of God; not past His awareness but beyond His power. However, Jesus tells us that there is more than this for there is complete communion with God. There is needed a resurrection of the whole of man before this participation could be complete. Luke has a variant on the theme (20:38) for He makes the statement that "all live unto him (God)."

He teaches that all men regardless of their moral status live in the future life unto God. The just and the unjust, the good and the evil, and the moral and immoral shall be brought into the resurrection. This of course runs counter to the arguments proposed by both Matthew and Mark.

The New Testament stands out against its background and other writings of the period because the concept of Resurrection takes a far more prominent position. The Resurrection of Jesus becomes the core and the centre of the Gospel account and all the ministry and teaching of Christ are seen through it or reflected by it. The Resurrection is stamped on every page of the New Testament which in turn transforms all former Hebrew ideas and concepts. However when one comes to a close scrutiny of the nature and the meaning of the Resurrection from the sources of the New Testament there is no clear picture. Rather one finds various fragments which when fitted together do not make a logical nor consistent whole. While the criticism comes because of a lack of unity there is absolutely no question about the Fact of the Resurrection, this above all else stands out. It was this experience that transformed the unmentionable into the very vortex of their proclamation. Whatever had been the disheartening effects of the death

and Crucifixion, the first disciples became convinced beyond a reasonable shadow of doubt that their Master rose again from the dead and it was from this assurance that they moved forward with such force and vigour that they cut deep a pattern which has not been put down. The attention of the New Testament is directed to the mystery and the marvel of the life it offers. Perhaps, not to distract from this glory, the state of the unrighteous is seldom mentioned. Their concern was for those who would be a part of the "new creation" so that they hardly addressed themselves to the state of the unrighteous but maintained that they also must be present as individuals whole and conscious "on that day." So filled were they with the glory of this experience that their sight would not be allowed the tarnishment of the unregenerate.

The concept of a literal physical resurrection is not to be attributed to the New Testament. In the resurrection the individuals are to be embodied; thus they could never be confused with the free floating spirits of the Greeks. Any statement in regard to the new body must be sheer conjecture. However one can conclude that the resurrection will involve the full human nature of the individual. There will be no need on continuing sex re-

relationships as there will be no further need for such (Mk. 12:24-25; Mt. 22:29-30; Lk. 20:34-35). Obviously it is maintained that procreation is a part of the temporal order and hence is not needed for the fulfilment of life. Jesus also made reference to eating and drinking in the Kingdom (Lk. 22:18 & 30, Mk. 14:25, Mt. 26:29). Scholars maintain that these terms are figurative and not really a part of the Kingdom for we are "as the angels." The assumption is that angels do not eat. The argument should be based on the nature of these bodies. If they are to be living physical organisms then they will require nourishment, but if they transcend physical existence there cannot be any form of nourishment as we know it, nor can sex persist.

Aside from the information given concerning Christ's Resurrection there are two other accounts given in the Synoptics.

The first in the narrative sequence is that related by Matthew as occurring immediately after the Crucifixion: 'and the tombs were opened; and many bodies ($\piολλὰ \sigmaώματα$) of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised ($ἤγειραν$ $\sigmaα$ \checkmark); and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many' (Mt. 27:51-3). The Resurrection of Jesus itself was clearly

conceived of as being of the same order: This is particularly brought out in the Gospel of Luke, (Lk. 24:37-43), where at the appearance of the Risen Jesus the disciples are described as being 'terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit (πνεῦμα)'. But Jesus reassures them: See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having. And when he had said this he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? And they gave him a piece of a boiled [sic] fish. And he took it, and did eat before them.³⁹

The core of Matthew and Mark (Mt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25f.) make it plain that there is not to be a general resurrection but rather one of the righteous. There can also be a case made for the Lukan account that the earliest texts taught only a resurrection of the righteous.

For the Hebrew mind a general resurrection is not a prerequisite for a general judgment. There could be, according to earlier apocalyptic thought, a final judgment without a bodily form. There can be found in the Book of Jubilees (23:31) such an illustration. Also in Eth. Enoch 91-101 there is likewise a final judgment to which only the spirits of the righteous are raised. The Jews took in universal judgment along with universal

resurrection, the logical counterpart, but they do not necessarily go together.

The New Testament makes no attempt to prove the fact of Christ's Resurrection from the point of the belief in a general resurrection which was so widely claimed at that time. Rather their whole argument hinges on the Resurrection of Christ and moves on from this. However it would be wrong to assume that this was their only ground for hope, as many accepted the common belief from the Pharisees or on the grounds of Platonic discussions. The Hasidim had proved it with their lives and it followed that this was the extension of God's love. So the Resurrection of Christ becomes a case in point of the already accepted views.

By His Resurrection Jesus further proved the argument that their God was a god of the living not a god of the dead. He was not only the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but also the God of Jesus Christ for He had drawn all these men unto Himself.

Men who had found it not altogether impossible to continue thinking (as their fathers had done) of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as being long ago dead and done with. That the patriarchs were dear to God and must accordingly share in His eternity is a thought that

arrests; but that Jesus Christ was dear to God and must share in His eternity is a thought that compels. And again, that the children of Israel are so one with the patriarchs that they too must be immortal is a thought that arrests; but that the saints are so one with Christ that they too must be immortal is a thought that compels. Such, surely, is St. Paul's meaning. ⁴⁰

If one maintains that the disciples believed only because of their experiences in seeing the Risen Lord it would base the whole of Christianity on the physical senses.

If this be true of them, then they were not only less noble-minded than the disciples of Socrates whose faith in immortality rose triumphant from their master's death, but were less noble-minded also than their own Jewish fathers and mothers whose belief in resurrection had survived the disappearance of many a loved one beneath the sod. And that we cannot think to have been the case. That, then, is one reason why we must not say that the Church's faith in its ever-living Lord rests upon the fact that He was seen by His disciples after His death. No conviction can rest upon the point that they had seen a dead man walk. If we are to believe St. Luke, this very point was made by Jesus Himself. In the story of Dives and Lazarus He makes Dives plead with Abraham that he should send Lazarus back to earth to inform his five brothers of the reality of eternal life and the solemnity of the final judgement. (Luke 16:29-31). This second half of the parable may or may not be authentic,

but in either case it seems likely that it was applied by St. Luke to the case of the Resurrection of Jesus Himself. Its meaning for him seems to be that you cannot hope to bring faith to birth in men's souls, or to convince them of the truth of Christianity, by merely pointing to the fact of Jesus' return to earth. 'Originally', writes Dr. Montefiore, 'this part of the parable may have meant no more than it says. But to Luke the meaning was much more definite. Had the Jews hearkened to Moses and the Prophets, they would not have rejected Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus cannot convert them.'⁴¹

There is throughout the religions of the ancient Near East the concept of Judgment running through their religion and to this practice Israel was no exception. Thus the beliefs are transported into the New Testament so that there becomes a doctrine of judgment in Christianity. One of the basic discussions is raised in the parable of Dives and Lazarus which conducts the typical Jewish imagery on to our day. It proceeds on the grounds that the ultimate fate of the individual is determined immediately after death. As to the test or qualifications for entry into either portion of the future no norm or standard is laid down. Dives does not measure up to the standards given by 'Moses and the Prophets' while at the same time Lazarus is rewarded for his observance of them. This stands in agreement with the statement of Jesus to the

thief on the cross (Lk. 23:43). It is disappointing to realize that this is the only insight we have from Jesus concerning the conditions of life in Hades. It is seen that there is a division in which the souls are segregated with regard to righteousness or evilness. There is moreover the ability to conceive or visualize the life in the other area. Here also there is the beginning of reward and punishment but one is uncertain as to whether this is the intermediate state or the final state. One can conclude that Jesus certainly believed that the departed spirits continued to exist and that they were cognizant of one another. But in any case there is a separation more distant than one is able to communicate. While fire here may be symbolic and is similar to the religion of the Semites it cannot be merely neglected. For it conveys something dangerous which ought to be avoided at any cost. It is a stern warning and as such it dare not be reduced. However, it is equally wrong to dwell on the torment or cleansing aspects as they simply are not there. This probably stems from a familiar parable as specific names are used. Jesus did not tamper with the details of the story. He makes the thrust to read that it is a grievous error to pass by one who is in need. The failure to do this will be cata-

strophic.

The word Hades appears four times in the Gospels. "In Matt. 11:23 (Lk. 10:15) Jesus declares that Capernum shall go down to Hades. Concerning His church that is to be built upon the rock, He affirms that 'the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it' (Mt. 16:18). The other reference is in the story of Dives and Lazarus, where it is said that after the death and burial of the rich man, 'in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom' (Lk. 16:23)."⁴² The story of Dives and Lazarus relates Hades to the concept of torment. Here the traditional idea of the underworld is presented with its apocalyptic imagery. Either Jesus used these same familiar thought patterns or they were attributed to Him. The coming of the Parousia diminished any strong interest in the belief in Hades. "No intelligent Jewish believer thought of Hades as a state in which the righteous dead experienced anything else than pure happiness---a happiness only slightly less than the full glory of the Kingdom. And this was probably the character of the primitive Christian hope.... It is true that the doctrine of Hades does not hold any prominent place in the New

Testament. . . . The Intermediate State, therefore, held a small place in their thoughts, being cast into shadow by the expectation of the Second Advent, the great Reckoning, and the end of the world."⁴³

The concept of Gehenna has come here at the last. While the word "Gehenna" only appears twelve times in the whole of the New Testament there are several other terms used for the concept. In the Synoptic Gospels the words are reported to be Christ's own. Other terms used would be "the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 13:42), "eternal fire" or "unquenchable fire" (Mt. 18:8, 25:41 cf., Mk 9:43, 48), "eternal punishment" (Mt. 25:46), and "the furnace of fire." As it has been shown previously, the concept of Gehenna was very fluid and varied even among rabbis of the same period. Dr. Edward Langton analyses the various concepts of "Gehenna" but it will suit best our purposes to look at his summary.

The passages which have been indicated show quite clearly that the conception of Gehenna was a fluid one during the centuries immediately preceding the time of Jesus. Now one shade of meaning appears, now another. When therefore our Lord speaks of the consignment of the wicked to 'Gehenna' or to 'everlasting' or 'eternal' fire, the historical context alone does not enable us to define the precise meaning of His words.

From such criteria as the literature of the period offers alone we cannot say whether for Jesus Gehenna was a place of intermediate punishment or of final doom. . . . It behoves us therefore to exercise the utmost caution in dealing with a subject which throughout the period of revelation was treated with so much reserve. From the general nature of our Lord's teaching we may safely conclude that He conceived of the punishment of the wicked in Gehenna as a spiritual punishment.⁴⁴

Footnotes

- ¹ William Strawson, Jesus and the Future Life. (London: Epworth, 1959), p. 75.
- ² R. H. Charles, Doctrine of a Future Life (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1899, pp. 308-310 passim).
- ³ Ibid., pp. 310-312 passim.
- ⁴ C. Ryder Smith, The Bible Doctrine of The Hereafter (London: Epworth Press, 1958), p. 157.
- ⁵ Ibid., pp. 160-61.
- ⁶ Ibid., pp. 166-67.
- ⁷ Strawson, p. 71.
- ⁸ Strawson, pp. 71-72.
- ⁹ Werner Georg Kummel, Promise and Fulfilment (London: S. C. M., 1957), pp. 27-28.
- ¹⁰ Strawson, p. 74.
- ¹¹ Strawson, p. 81.
- ¹² Strawson, p. 82.
- ¹³ Strawson, p. 84.
- ¹⁴ Strawson, p. 85 passim.
- ¹⁵ Strawson, pp. 85-86 passim.
- ¹⁶ Strawson, pp. 89-90 passim.
- ¹⁷ James Denney, The Death of Christ. (London: Tyndale Press, 1956), p. 18.
- ¹⁸ Strawson, p. 92.

- ¹⁹ Charles, pp. 307-309.
- ²⁰ Denney, p. 23.
- ²¹ Denney, p. 25.
- ²² Strawson, pp. 92-93.
- ²³ Denney, pp. 26-27.
- ²⁴ Strawson, p. 93 passim.
- ²⁵ Strawson, p. 94.
- ²⁶ Oscar Cullmann, Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? (London: Epworth, 1959), p. 6.
- ²⁷ Cullmann, pp. 21-22.
- ²⁸ Cullmann, p. 25.
- ²⁹ Cullmann, pp. 25-26.
- ³⁰ Denney, p. 30.
- ³¹ S. G. F. Brandon, Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions (Manchester: University Press, 1962), p. 195.
- ³² J. H. Leckie, The World to Come and Final Destiny (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), p. 147.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 150.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 151-52.
- ³⁵ Ibid., pp. 152-53.
- ³⁶ Ibid., pp. 155-56 passim.
- ³⁷ John Baillie, And the Life Everlasting (London: Oxford, 1956), p. 136.
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 137.
- ³⁹ Brandon, p. 208.

⁴⁰Baillie, p. 140.

⁴¹Baillie, pp. 141-42 passim.

⁴²Edward Langton, Good and Evil Spirits (London: S. P. C. K., 1942), pp. 256-7.

⁴³Leckie, pp. 88-9 passim.

⁴⁴Langton, p. 262.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONCEPT OF DEATH IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

THE CONCEPT OF DEATH IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

After examining the scant eschatology of the Old Testament and that of the Synoptic Gospels, one is both shocked and surprised to find that when he comes to Paul's writings, he has a massive mountain of material to work with. It is amusing to note that most critics maintain that you cannot separate Paul's eschatology from his theology, yet in practice they relegate this to the final chapter and in the last analysis rationalize their motives for doing so. Even this is quite unfair to the writings of Paul as it is an attempt to sift and sort his works in order to fit them into contemporary schemes of systematic theology. Scholars impose upon his writings, thoughts and theologies which never once crossed his fertile mind. For Paul eschatology was theology and theology was eschatology, the two are indivisible. There was no need to distinguish

these two fields into separate concepts and hence there was never any conscious attempt to develop their differences. While it can be easily seen that both his theology and eschatology fluctuated during his life time and even to unheard lengths after his demise, he obviously saw no gross glaring inconsistencies and no doubt would not find himself comfortable in the modern framework of theological jargon.

Whereas we had looked at a barren Synoptics, Paul calls us to a bottomless oasis of material beside a desolate land. In the previous chapters one had to seek with diligence to grasp and study eschatology, now we are faced with such a flood of writings that only a very selective study can be made. One could not presuppose for a minute that Paul could have settled down to produce another Synoptic Gospel. This would have been quite wrong as he did not know Jesus as a child and perhaps he only briefly knew of Him as a man. But on that Damascus road Paul met the Christ, the Risen and Ascended Lord, which made him put away all previous notions that he maintained and confronted him with such a dramatic challenge that he dared not to refuse. Thus to approach the eschatology of Paul, we must be prepared to accept something completely different which can only be seen from the right perspective.

Hence I will list several important factors which must be foremost in our minds when we pursue Paul in order to keep a true picture.

1) The theme of Paul's theology was inevitably the result of his encounter with the Risen Christ. It was of no avail for him to mill about the empty tombs in hopes that the Christ might return and further he could not dwell on the wonderful example nor the marvelous teachings of Jesus because he simply was not there. Any information as such had to be reconstructed from the disciples in the new churches and as such came second-hand. But one cannot overlook the significance of the encounter with the Christ. At once Paul's attitude toward the Christian Community was changed, much of his Judaism fell by the wayside and some had to be transformed, but the encounter formed the nucleus of his theology. Thus one should have no difficulty in understanding why eschatology became the theme of Paul's theology, for it was the Risen Lord who appeared to Paul, henceforth Paul saw the "Last Things" first. Consequently we find in Paul the complete inversion of the Synoptic outlook. One may argue that this one instant was hardly enough to do all that was needed. First, it could be answered that in this one fleeting moment Paul received

all the assurance that Christians long for and hence he moved forward with the belief in the living God who entered into men's lives. Secondly, Paul never attempted to rest on the laurels of this one encounter but rather pounded out his theology on the anvil of human experience, as one theologian has stated. While this encounter was always par excellence, his whole life from this point on is presented as a dynamic continuous encounter between God and himself. He could move out and say, "I Paul, an apostle, of Christ Jesus." So Paul proclaimed the "Last Things" first, not so much because of their immanence but because of their importance in his life and indeed in the life of those to follow.

2) Paul speaks of the shadow of mortality which challenges and threatens every one. This to him is not some vague metaphor but rather one of personal experience as he was threatened by death so many times in his own life. This can be discerned throughout his entire corpus that he is "in peril every hour" and the "I die daily." After this he alludes to his personal difficulties: "humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus." (I Cor. 15:30-32). Whatever else one might say about this passage or its context, it is certainly made clear that Paul stood in

grievous danger at Ephesus for he was, as so often before, "often near death." (2 Cor. 11:23). Was it precisely in an opportunity such as this that Priscilla and Aquila actually "risked their necks" for Paul's sake and for which he expresses his personal gratitude? (Rom. 16:3-4). While this can never be answered with certainty, it is either this incident or perhaps even another where Paul stood in danger. It is quite evident that Paul does not draw attention to the dangers of his own life but only in so far as they appear in relation to his correspondence. Again and again we see these fleeting references and are never led directly to the details, yet from all of this we can certainly surmise that Paul's life was in constant danger. In Asia, he finds himself, as it were, already under the sentence of Death (2 Cor. 1:9). And again in the letter to the Philippians there was the possibility of death (1:20).

Though there are numerous occasions such as these on which he speaks of death, no doubt there were even more dangerous moments that have not come down to us. Perhaps, by far the most common danger was one of being shipwrecked of which we know (2 Cor. 11:25; Acts 27); then his ship was adrift for a night and a day (2 Cor. 11:25); probably there were numerous occasions during his journeys when he was

beset by all possible dangers (2 Cor. 11:26), then he just slipped through the hold of king Aretas (2 Cor. 11:32-33; Acts 9:23-25). Thus when Paul makes reference to death or dying it is never superficial nor an affectation but rather one of severe personal experience. Such statements as "in peril every hour" (I Cor. 15:30); "I did every day" (I Cor. 15:31); "we are afflicted in every way" (2 Cor. 4:8); "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:10); "while we live we are always being given up to death" (2 Cor. 4:11); "like men sentenced to death" (I Cor. 4:9), are not merely allusions but rather of deep and poignant meaning. Thus for Paul, it meant that he would have to encounter many "deaths" to follow Christ.

3) Paul drew a great deal of attention to himself as he stood in opposition to the Jerusalem Church. He caused a great deal of tension within the Church itself, which also resulted in even further difficulties and rejections which will be discussed at greater length. But one can discern that Paul was finally imprisoned in Rome where he lived as a lonely old man, who was distrusted by many of the churches. Now forsaken and forgotten even by the Church of Rome, he died a lonely and tragic death of a martyr which was only surpassed by Christ's own. Certainly

he bore the wounds of Christ in his body and died as he had lived, for Christ.

4) Paul's conversion to Christianity represents one of the most radical changes that any one could undergo. From one of the most zealous opponents of the faith to the staunchest defender, allowed Paul to run the whole gamut of psychological and spiritual change. Very few people can be radically changed in the manner that Paul was turned about. Because of this cleavage, Paul did not see himself so much as a continuous being but rather as one who had two radically distinct lives. Hence he could speak of this in only the most severe and drastic terminology as if he had "died." The distinction is never really clear in his reference to conversion as the words of life and death are often used as metaphors, they are used as the only alternatives to express this profound and radical cleavage between the "old" man and the "new" man in Christ. Hence, Paul's figurative language became for him a reality.

5) The eschatology of the New Testament is essentially the eschatology of Paul, hence it is in the field of eschatology that Paul becomes the theologian par excellence. There are two reasons for this; first he drowns out other competitors by sheer bulk; and secondly he devotes the

whole of his writing to eschatology. So it is to Paul that the Church must turn time and time again to find the Christian meaning of both life and death for in these matters he has become not only our authority but also our example.

With these concepts firmly fixed as a working reference for an understanding of Paul, one has more latitude to understand the technical aspects of Pauline eschatology. The first aspect that should take our attention is one of Paul's authority and position in the early Church. While it would appear easy to adjudge this position from the now existing sources, yet we come across some very interesting aspects which are more conspicuous by their absence than by any other factor. The history of the early Church is not so much one of marvel as it is one of mystery. For behind the exposition of the more excellent way there lay a seething cauldron of contempt, jealousy, and innuendo. No one was more at the base of these difficulties than one named Paul. Behind the Pauline corpus there was the hostile conflict between Paul and his opponents who shall ever remain anonymous. The issues that the Gentile converts raised merely opened the door to answer far deeper and far more serious rifts. One of the first accusations hurled at Paul, this Jewish entrepreneur, was one of

authority. As Professor Henry Chadwick pointed out so ably in his Gifford Lectures at St. Andrews University in the 1962 series, Paul placed himself on a par with the other apostles. On the one hand Paul maintained that he stood in direct line of the transmitted authority from Christ Jesus which entitled him to a full and rightful apostleship but on the other hand he claimed from his direct revelation of Christ, that he stood in a unique and independent position from all other apostles. It is not hard to see the difficulties that this led to, for one who had stood so far out of the Church now claimed to be the Lord's especially appointed apostle and as such could act as a free agent quite independent of the others and in counter-distinction with the established church of Jerusalem. Since authority in the early Church rested on that which one could witness to rather than that which one might possess in virtue or religiosity, Paul stood on solid ground and could not easily be shaken. The problem comes up in Galatians (1: 6-8) as being one of another gospel or again at Corinth (II Cor. 11:3-6) as a different gospel or even a different Christ. This would lead to the conclusion that there were at least two divergent views concerning the Gospels and the nature of the person of Jesus. The fact that Paul makes no attempt

to name names or parties would indicate that perhaps at this point they were so strong that he dared not attack them openly, hence he could only challenge them with the most subtle attack since he was in no position to challenge others in the church. "If they had been merely an irresponsible sect, Paul would surely have repudiated them with that vehement scorn of which he often shows himself so capable. Instead he refers to these opponents in an oblique way such as suggests embarrassment about their identity, especially since at the same time he shows the utmost consternation about their activity."¹ This was no doubt an attack on the nature of the teachings from the Jerusalem Church which would never have to answer for its authority. Anything less than this would not have been worthy of Paul's caution. So Paul was in disagreement with the very heart and core of all Christianity, the Mother Church at Jerusalem. Paul took his stand over against the apostles, who had followed Jesus in His daily life and knew Him so well, and the relatives of Jesus. This was no mean feat as he strongly proclaims that he is correct and even the best traditions and deepest personal experiences are in error. "We thus find ourselves, at the beginning of our attempt to understand the primitive soteriology of Christi-

anity, confronted with a puzzling situation, the paradoxical nature of which is increased when we recall the fact that the writings of Paul greatly exceed those of any other writer in the New Testament corpus---such a pre-eminence would suggest that he was the apostle par excellence of the Early Church and the recognised exponent of its doctrine, and yet his teaching apparently conflicted so fundamentally with that of the original disciples of the Mother Church of Jerusalem."² How could he for a moment believe that he was right and the whole of the original Church was in error? How can he, who saw Jesus perhaps only once, take a stand against those who dared to believe in Jesus from the very beginning? This is truly an interesting problem but even more amazing is the fact that Paul accomplished it. The fact that Paul was able to win out in victory was wholly due to the chain of the most extraordinary events. The most important event in this matter was of course the destruction of the early Church dispersing its members and as far as one can discern, dispelling its writings, its history and its traditions. Hence, with the earliest sources of the Church destroyed and the dispersion of its members, it left open the opportunity for new traditions and new leaders. And perhaps it is only because of this

one historical event that eschatology today is what it is. Had it not been so, Paul may have become the first great leader of a schism within the ranks of Christianity. Because Paul did succeed and due to his latter-day high esteem throughout Christendom the assumption has been that Paul was correct. But what of the Jerusalem theology, might it not be far easier to assume that this is the better ground on which Christians should stand? However, since Pauline theology is full and inclusive it has become the theology of the Christian Church and no doubt will continue uncontested. "Consequently, in our search for information about the Jerusalem gospel we are reduced to employing whatever a priori deductions we may legitimately make from certain general references in the Acts of the Apostles and to utilising what we can glean from Paul's tendentious references to the Jerusalem Christians and from what may be identified as fragments of the Jerusalem tradition preserved in the later Gospels and other writings."³

The Jerusalem Christians must have viewed themselves as being continuous with the Jewish tradition and felt that there was no need for a radical break. They present Jesus as being pro-Jewish and confining His ministry to the Jews. This is brought home in the account of the Syro-

Phoenician woman who sought out Jesus to save her daughter. The Gentiles were to remain outside the context of the teachings of Jesus, for them was left only the crumbs (τὰ ψιλλία). But for these very Jewish disciples the stumbling block came when they had to view their Master crucified as a common criminal, this was more than they could bear. Even if they were able to see through all this, how would they testify, or for that matter even face their critics? Their embarrassment still continued and the evidence of this remains in the Scriptures. The Church had to face up to the day when there remained no apostle that had known Jesus. The message still was one that Jesus' return was imminent. But as the time drew on they were not so certain that His return was imminent as now all accounts of Jesus came second and third-hand, they were left mortified. The promise was still that He would return but the most important question was: "How long?" They looked intently for symbols and signs which they were not to receive but this certainly did not stop the onslaught of criticism. They turned to the Old Testament and to all manner of sources vainly seeking their answers. Finally John, the Apostle, died, cutting them off from the earliest traditions, leaving them embarrassed by tomorrow. The only solution

was to completely re-examine their whole theology and since they were unable to do this by themselves, Paul provided the working solution. Paul started with the most offensive part, namely the crucifixion, and made it the very centre of his Gospel. And as Paul preached Christ and Christ crucified, the most repulsive account in the whole of Judaism, he found at the same time it was also the most magnetic teaching he had yet encountered. It would appear that the message of the Jerusalem Church was doomed to failure and if it had succeeded it would have come over under the wings of Judaism and perhaps would have lacked both the challenge and the power to establish itself firmly and permanently. Paul's words appealed neither to the Jew nor to the Greek in form but the inscrutable mystery behind it, kindled it afresh again and again to all mankind.

But whatever their personal objections to the Crucifixion they somehow came to stand on the firm conviction that their Master had survived, and someway they began to see a light through the fog of mystery and the darkness of doubt. Perhaps, too, they looked to the letters of Paul for a theology to lift them to the beyond. The account of the Ethiopian Eunuch raised the problem that the Crucifixion was indeed a tragic misfortune due merely to the sheer

ignorance of their own Jewish leaders, for they had hoped that it was He that would redeem Israel. However, they took both comfort and refuge in the fact that these events had been foretold and it was only by these means that Jesus was able to attain true Messiahship. Was it either by accident or design that the Eunuch happened to pick up the Islamic portrait of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh? This is the first direct instance of the identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant. Closer scrutiny will certainly indicate that this passage was hand-tailored to avoid the connexions with the sins of others in regard to the death of the victim. This conveniently took the problem out of their hands and safely vested it in the Old Testament tradition which was beyond contradiction. Since the fate of Jesus was now placed on the level of pre-existence, it also would remove any of the residual guilt that the Jerusalem Jews might have felt and hence this theme took the foremost position in the apologetic of the Jerusalem Christians. This having been solved, it became a "dead" issue and they immediately turned their full and complete attention to the Second Coming of Christ. Thus at an early stage their thought moved from the Crucifixion to the emphasis of Jesus' Second Coming as this seemed the only way

out to a tremendous problem.

"Now, it is to be particularly noted that this interpretation of Jesus and his mission contained no element of soteriology beyond the expectation that Jesus would at his second coming fulfil the role of the Messiah and save Israel from the oppression of its enemies. This point is one of immense importance in view of the subsequent developments of Christian thought, especially since it has been assumed (and there is much apparent justification for the assumption in the New Testament documents on cursory consideration) that the proclamation of Jesus as the Saviour of mankind was an essential part of the original gospel of Christianity, in fact that it was first enunciated by Jesus himself. However, we have seen evidence of the initial perplexity which assailed the disciples about the death of Jesus and of how they came to account for it in terms of contemporary Jewish thought, and to these considerations some others may also be added. The fact that the Jerusalem Christians identified Jesus with the Suffering Servant of Yahweh and the fact that the identification has been so often invoked in subsequent ages in soteriological exegesis inevitably suggests that its soteriological possibilities must have been recognised and worked out from the beginning by the Jerusalem Christians. But, that this was not so and that the concept of the Suffering Servant was not utilised beyond the point of the needed apologetic, as described above, becomes obvious on further consideration of the outlook of the Jerusalem Christians as zealous orthodox Jews. To them Jesus was the

Messiah of Israel, who would soon return in glory to save the chosen people of God from the oppression of the Gentiles---could they, therefore, possibly have conceived of their Messiah dying in order to save those very Gentiles from the consequences of their heathen wickedness and in effect to make them the spiritual equals of the faithful Israelites? We know from the charge which they brought against Paul, namely, that he was teaching Jews not to circumcise their children, that they passionately believed in the peculiar spiritual status of Israel and the episode of the Syro-Phoenician woman reminds us that they saw the Gentiles as *Κυριακά*. Accordingly, we must surely conclude that both by instinct and education the Jerusalem Christians were never led to draw out of the identification of their Master with the Suffering Servant of Yahweh those soteriological intimations that seem so obvious to us, who are the heirs to long centuries of Christian soteriological speculation."⁴

The general attitude to personal soteriology in the time of Paul was that of the old Jewish concept in which the Jew stood morally responsible to God and eventually would have to reveal a strict account to either God or the Messiah for all his actions. There was to be a resurrection of the soul and body restoring man to his complete nature excluding physical deformities where needed. The thinking out of the position of the Gentiles is not altogether clear, however one can safely conclude that it was basically for the Jews and the Gentiles were left out of the scheme.

Paul's Epistles were written to express his theology on certain prescribed issues that troubled the early Church, and any insights one might glean concerning his anthropology come only by way of inference. Hence, there is not contained within Paul any systematic approach to man and his potential, his physical or spiritual abilities, or any insight on his personality. There is no defined, clear-cut doctrine in regard to the body and soul in relation to one another. His theme is simply one of God's salvation brought through the work and life of Christ. And since this is the background of all his thoughts even in so far as they relate to contemporary difficulties among the existing churches and the concepts of man are merely tangent to his theme. Paul is inconsistent in even that little view of man that he speaks of as he sees man both as being dichotomous and trichotomous (I Thess. 5:23). Man's nature in this incident happens to be merely a sideline to the theology that he has in mind. Hence Paul was not concerned that he did express this rift as both were expressed in contemporary Hebrew thought.

The following statements can be made in regard to Paul's concept of man:

- 1) Resurrection had meaning for Paul only within

the context of a body. However Paul never meant to infer that it would be merely a continuation of this bodily existence. Paul's concept was one of continuity rather than continuation which would be a 'spiritual body' (I Cor. 15:44) or a 'glorious body' (Phil. 3:21; I Cor. 15:50). This was never to be confused with the immortality of the soul which took on no bodily existence. The body was always viewed as part of man's creaturehood and without it he could not exist as a being, albeit it would have to meet the specifications of its new existence.

2) Fornication as related in I Corinthians 6:12-20 would never be attacked if Paul could conceive of body and soul as being two distinct entities. This is where the Greeks could have a dual-morality system because sexual promiscuity did in no case effect their spiritual side. As long as the two elements could be completely divorced one from another they could exist in complete moral schizophrenia. But Paul saw that the body and soul were completely integrated internally as well as ~~e~~ternally, the actions of one element has severe and continued influence on the other. The difficulty at Corinth arose out of the failure to understand or appreciate the difference between the Hebrew concept of personality and the Platonic

dualism. Man's concept of himself as a being will ultimately raise various aspects of his nature and destiny. Hence, with this radical difference in the background, the confusion that followed could not be avoided. The Greek view was obviously used to rationalize sexual libertinism, "as was done later in certain Gnostic circles: fornication can be considered as an adiaphoron which does not essentially threaten the purity of the divine soul. In contrast with this Paul emphasizes the fact that what a human being does with his body does not only affect the physical side of life but his whole being. Hence Paul exhorts the members of the Church to remember that: 'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.'"⁵

Paul never attempts to raise or glorify the body of the soul at the expense of the other. Hence they are indispensable to one another and in fact indistinguishable. Paul never used the word "psyche" in those passages dealing with his beliefs on the future life. ~~While~~ One might counter that though it is not mentioned it is certainly inferred. However, the fact remains that Paul nowhere mentions "psyche" in this context (2 Cor. 5:1ff.; Phil. 1:23).

Then death is not viewed as the long expected liberator but rather as the ultimate in evil which reigns over both body and soul.

Paul's difficulties with the early Church can be seen in no better place than in the letters to the Galatians for he feels impelled to speak of these differences between himself and the Jerusalem Church in regard to the nature and the mission of Jesus. He at first feels called upon to defend his own position as one speaking or in this instance, correcting the Church. His revelation came not after man or even from man but rather through the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1:11-12). There is no human element in this so there is no opportunity for human error as it is divine. On the one hand he claims to be an apostle with full and equal status with all others yet on the other hand he claims that he speaks quite independently from all others by the nature of his special revelation. "But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and again I returned unto Damascus." (Gal.

1:15-17). He maintains that God had called him for the special and the specific purpose of bringing in Gentiles so that they might understand and believe. Hence his theology must have been different from those who were presenting Christ to the Jews or there would have been no need for his calling. Yet, Paul did not see this as a violation of principles because he had been ordained to do so. But could his mind rest over the fact that he was doing something different than perhaps any one else? And as he asked later with his own word: "Are there two gospels?" Paul did not feel under a heavy sense of obligation to the Church of Jerusalem as they were not responsible for his conversion, in fact they may have in truth detracted him from Christianity. His reaction to the early Church was one of utter violence as he sought to do away with it entirely. The clue is to be found in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1: 22-23): "Seeing that the Jews ask for signs ... but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block (σκάνδαλον). The skandalon here resides in the expression Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον---' a crucified Messiah'. As we have seen, the Crucifixion had been a skandalon to the original disciples, who had only surmounted it by the force of their own spiritual experience

and explained it by their invocation of the prophecy concerning the Suffering Servant in Isaiah."⁶ This, however, for Paul did not answer the problem for he saw it to be an easy solution to a far more complex problem. Standing in the tradition of the Hebrew fathers, the crucifixion still remained a skandalon for him, "when in the Galatian Epistle he specially sets forth his exegesis of the Torah injunction: 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'"⁷

While we shall never know the form nor the content of Paul's conversion, we have to conclude that for Paul it meant that Jesus did survive death and thus functioned in his own life. But his was no easy matter as he had to re-examine all of his thinking in terms of this one profound experience. He now found himself in the embarrassing position of being cast in the lot of disciples, certain that he was an outsider in thought and deed. This must have been for Paul a most traumatic experience and no doubt raised many perplexing problems for the Church. God, as it were, delivered a most offensive prodigal son at their very door step. As if this was not enough, he maintained that he was independent of their authority and challenged their traditions. It must have appeared to Paul that he was an apostle to the Gentiles more out of expediency rather

than divine necessity. "How then did he surmount the skandalon of the Crucifixion? Not by explaining it away, as did the original disciples, but by perceiving therein a divine mystery, the logic of which revolutionised the original form of Christianity by transforming it into a soteriological faith of universal relevance. Accordingly, the Crucifixion was put in the forefront of Paul's gospel."⁸ The disciples took the Crucifixion and hid it and belittled it. But not Paul, for he proceeded to lift it out of the specific historical context and re-introduced it in the esoteric concepts of the mythos.

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect the Greek word τέλειος in this context surely has a mystery-religion connotation : yet a wisdom not of the aion, nor of the rulers of the aion (οὐδὲ ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου), who are becoming nonentities: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery (ἐν μυστηρίῳ), the hidden wisdom, which God fore-ordained before the aiones unto our glory, which none of the rulers of this aion knoweth: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (I Cor. 2:6-8)."⁹ By this means of transplantation, the Crucifixion became a part of God's pre-existing plan. It was known to God before the beginning

of Creation and hence became a part of His plan of Creation. There is contained within this the concept of the universe, a being in constant struggle with the forces of the demonic, who is attempting to thwart God's plan and purpose.

Again we see in the Epistle to the Colossians (Col. 1:13-19) that Paul designates the Son, who for him was Christ, as veritable deuteros theos. Christ has won out in victory of the ordinances that were against us and defeated the principalities and the powers. (Col. 2:14-15). While there can be no final exegesis of these passages, again it must be seen that there is the struggle with the demonic forces which were answered in the Crucifixion. This power stemming from the universe is seen in Paul's writings (Col. 2:20, 2:8) in which he infers "the elements", meaning the planets and the stars give rise to understanding only the then popular religious and the philosophical ideals of their day. "Accordingly, we see Paul regarding the Christian disciple's mystical identification with Christ in his death as effecting some kind of delivery or emancipation from the celestial bodies of the universe."¹⁰ Further confirmation of this view is seen in Paul's writings, from another context, in the letter to the Galatians, Christians he maintains that they are under bondage to the rudiments of the world

having been released only in the fullness of time through God's Son. (Gal. 4:3-4). Again Paul points out that after one comes to the knowledge of God, he then turns his back on the weak and beggarly rudiments which one desires to be in bondage to them once more. (Gal. 4:8-11). This astral element lifted the conflict of powers from the plains of daily existence and placed it securely in the celestial realms; this then constituted the background of Paul's working reference for the mythos of salvation. Man had existed under the powers of the demonic which were of cosmic dimension and was in bondage to them. But from the very beginning God planned to release them by His power in sending His Son to become incarnate and then crucified in order to deceive and defeat the evil forces.

"That the logic of this mythos necessarily negated the peculiar spiritual claims of Israel remained curiously unrecognised, or rather unadmitted, by Paul, who still endeavoured to maintain his Jewish orthodoxy. But it was recognised for what it really was by the members of the Jerusalem Church, and they conducted a vigorous and an increasingly successful campaign against Paul, repudiating his authority as an apostle and a reliable teacher of the faith. His imprisonment in A. D. 56 seemed to seal the success of their efforts; but it was not to be so, for the Jewish revolt against the domination of Rome in the year 66 and the final

crushing of the rebellious people in the year 70 resulted in the utter disappearance of the Mother Church of Jerusalem, and it was in the aftermath of that Jewish disaster that Paul's reputation and his teaching were rehabilitated and his gospel became the accepted basis of what was to be Catholic Christianity."¹¹

From this we can discern that the whole of History is working towards God's salvation which has already been revealed in Christ. Hence there is applied to Paul the name of his concept as being "Salvation History." Though the process was preexistent in God's mind, and though it has begun and indeed become visible in Christ's life, its true fruition must wait upon the world to come. By means of tying past, present and future together Paul effectively bound Jewish, Jerusalem Christian, and his own thoughts together, crystallizing and strengthening it for its much wider worldly appeal. Since these divine events had already begun in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, they are represented in the whole "past" of History. And since the future was filled with earnest and eager expectation of the fulfilment of the completion of History, it remained for Paul that the here and now of earthly existence became by far the most important aspect for all mankind. Life then is viewed as being

transitory, lasting for only the interim period which passes before we know it. The imminence of the end is a binding force in our lives and in the whole of the community of the Church. Life too is bathed in "Salvation History" which has begun and continues to move rapidly to its fulfilment which is a part of his faith through which he sees through glass darkly. And since his concept of "Salvation History" is so essential to his thought, as his whole theme is centred and worked about it, for all that he is to say of life, death, or the future is an intricate part of this. One's death and destiny are linked because of his beliefs. Thus when some of the members of the Church in Corinth reject the teaching of the Resurrection, Paul fires back at them in First Corinthians Chapter Fifteen. Out of the Resurrection of Christ there comes an entirely new situation. By His death He has rung in a new age, as all the descendants of Adam shared in the certain death of inheritance so through Christ all shall be made alive. The Resurrection of Christ ushers in a new age of a new world (I Cor. 15:20-22). As one being first born from the dead He gives rise to a new expectation and an intensely deepened relationship with the Father. All of which is new because it is centred on the Resurrection of Christ

as the final guarantor.

It is easily seen how dominate^w and indeed domineering the creed of the Resurrection becomes for Paul by sheer weight if one only examines a short precis of his theology. Hence it is apparent that Paul is never far from the Resurrection in his writings nor his preaching.

"He addresses himself to the unfaithful Galatians as 'Paul an apostle---not from men nor through man but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead' (Gal. 1:1 - an attribute of God no less!). When informing the Romans of the tenor of his preachings, he refers to these at the beginning of his letter as 'the gospel concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 1:3,4). Further on in the same epistle he is able to define himself and the Church of Christ thus: 'us (we) who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification' (Rom. 4:24,25). This belief in the resurrection is no mere lip service, it springs from the heart (Rom. 10:9) as is witnessed by the Apostle's own life. If Christ had not been raised, then there would be no resurrection of the dead either, and all Paul's struggles with the threat of death before him would have been in vain (I Cor. 15:32). After having been in such great peril in Asia that he despaired of his life and felt as if he had already received

his death sentence, he realizes that all this was 'to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead' (2 Cor. 1:9)."12

The present for Paul was to be accepted in faith as being only a portion of salvation, looking continually to the fulfilment of salvation which would come at the end of things. While there is the assurance in Paul's writings that Christ has ultimately defeated evil and death on the Cross and through the Resurrection, nevertheless the demonic still has a tenacious and lasting grip on the world of man. Thus there will continually be this cosmic struggle but the Christian can proceed with assuredness that they are joining forces with the winning side because of what Christ did in the Resurrection. Still the whole of creation continues to groan and travail until God has completed His waiting and thus the true Son of God shall be revealed. While liberty in this world is only partial, those who have begun to taste the freedom long and cry out for its completion. It is only when Christ comes again in power that all dominion will be completely given over to God. (I Cor. 15:24-28).

Salvation has entered into the world and is working toward the end that Christ will come again, there will be the resurrection of the dead, followed by the last judgment,

and concluded when God becomes all in all. This is the constant vision that Paul finds behind his whole concept of life and what he believes will happen after death. From these basic concepts Paul did not change one iota. While he continued to mature in faith and insight, the very centre and core of his kerygma continued as a constant.

Professor J. N. Sevenster believes that for Paul the history of salvation in regard to the fulfilment in the second coming, the resurrection of the dead, and the last judgment, was and always remained the very core of his eschatological expectation. He further maintains that Hellenistic ideas never swayed or coloured his views concerning the doctrines of the last things. Even in those letters which come closest to Hellenistic thought, Paul did not waver from his original thoughts concerning the resurrection and the last judgment.

"He himself declares that his experiences, whereby he has been closely confronted with the possibility of dying, have obliged him to 'rely not on (himself) but on God who raises the dead' (2 Cor. 1:9). Accordingly there is nothing to prove that the threat of death has brought about any alteration in his expectations. In this letter, too, as in all his letters, he refers to the coming day of the Lord (2 Cor. 1:14). Even in the pericope in which Hellenistic notions have often

been claimed to be present, he writes in complete agreement with what has always formed the centre of his expectations: 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body' (2 Cor. 5:10). In the same letter he affirms: 'he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence' (2 Cor. 4:14). All four chapters of his letter to the Philippians also contain clear references to his expectation that God 'will bring to completion at the day of Jesus Christ' the good work that He has begun (Phil. 1:6; cf. 1:10; 2:16), that there will be a resurrection of the dead (3:11), that Jesus 'who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body' will return from heaven.¹³

This empirical faith is what Paul believes to be the entirely new element in the lives of the Gentile converts to Christ. Without the knowledge of God's revelation through Christ they were as ones 'having no hope and without God in the world' (Eph. 2:12). Now, having been transformed they can face life knowing that the problem of death is no longer the same as for those who 'have no hope' (I Thess. 4:13).

It is only in and through this same hope that Paul dared to venture forth into the world proclaiming the message of Christ and Christ crucified. Paul did not for a moment assert that he held all the answers for he tells

us that he was cast down and perplexed on every side. Yet, he did have the working solution to death and he need not face this tremendous problem alone nor in desperation. There was never to be found on the lips of Paul any kind words for death as it stood diametrically opposed to God and His plans. Death was the ultimate in evil, yet before the power of God even death had to quiver.

For Paul death is not the moment when the spirit is released from the fetters of the body; it is not the natural transition to another state, which takes place so spontaneously and gradually that it should arouse no fear whatsoever; it is not the natural consequence of a law of nature. Paul would not contemplate saying that death has nothing terrifying in itself, or that life is made dear to us by the boon and mercy of death, that death might be called the most precious discovery of Nature, optimum inventum naturae. On the contrary, for him death without Christ, 'the hope of glory' (Col. 1:27), is an enemy which has been able to force its way into God's universe Death is not natural, but unnatural in God's universe. It really has no place therein. Hence it can never become a kind and merciful friend; it would always have remained a feared enemy if Jesus Christ had not risen, if this had not deprived death of all hope of an ultimate victory, and removed death's sting, if Christ had not dethroned the last enemy, death, once and for all (I Cor. 15:55, 26).¹⁴

But it is only with these beliefs firmly rooted that he is bold to say that for the Christian dying can be gain

(Phil. 1:21).

The word Paul uses here for 'gain' (kerdos), is used twice by Socrates in the Apology, in the belief that he can deprive death of its fearfulness by representing it as a probably dreamless sleep (Apol. 40, d, e). Paul knows of no other reason for calling death a gain than the fact of the victory over death which has already taken place, and which will in time lead to a complete conquest. Without this victory death would not be a good, an adiaphoron: it would be impossible to imagine a worse evil than death.

That Paul now and then expresses the desire to depart this world arises from his knowledge that he would then be with Christ, which is preferable by far (Phil. 1:23). Death is dominated by the idea of 'being with the Lord':

'So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:6-8).'¹⁵

It would be hard to even assume at this that Paul could look directly upon death as being a gain, rather it is better to assume that he is looking beyond the intervention of death to the glory beyond. Death for Jesus or even for himself was neither attractive nor necessarily a positive gain as the early Church bore witness to and he would also. But beyond the experience of death he would be at one "with Christ" in a newer, deeper, more intimate way than he ever knew

possible which certainly held more for him than any aspect of this life. And so it is to be "with the Lord" that Paul can look past this life to the life to come in power and in fulness when he shall never be separated from the Lord

There is here no sense of escapism or liberation as in a real sense he had "died" in his conversion. He had become a "new man" and already had given himself over to death. Thus he could look forward to the day when he would come into his full reality and put away all the consequential limits that this creation imposes on both his body and soul. There cannot be a case made from his writings that he could ever envisage death as being a separation of body and soul. In fact the word 'soul' is never used when Paul speaks in terms of expectation. He may believe that in the interim period between death and the final resurrection the soul might exist empty of form. As Paul grows older it appears that he sees a rather long period existing between death and the resurrection as told in I Thess. 4:15-18. Man thus stands in apparent nakedness (2 Cor. 5:3), meaning for Paul individuals without bodies. This would not be in any sense the full complement of man and left much to be desired. Paul's thought here is intuned with the whole of the primitive Church, who

believed that in this interim period the individual would be subjected to sleep. "The idea of a temporary state of waiting is all the more repugnant to those who would like fuller information about this 'sleep' of the dead who, though stripped of their fleshly bodies, are still deprived of their resurrection bodies although in possession of the Holy Spirit. They are not able to observe the discretion of the New Testament authors, including St Paul, in this matter; or to be satisfied with the joyful assurance of the Apostle when he says that henceforth death can no longer separate from Christ those who have the Holy Spirit.

'Whether we live or die, we belong to Christ.'¹⁶ Now, the basic difficulty comes when we fail to realize that this is an analogy, and as such must fail as an analogy. Certainly Paul did not know exactly how one would come through the experience, and no matter how clairvoyant he may have been, he could never relate the sensations as such. The difficulty comes not because we sleep, but rather due to the fact that we really might not sleep. But whether one would be immediately with Christ or if it took a long time it would, in Paul's sight not really be a valid question. The thing that Paul knew was that ultimately he would be with Christ, whether it be in a moment that he would be transformed or

whether it might be at the end of time, for Paul it was all the same. He would be with Christ. Yet, however Paul may have rationalized the time sequence there is absolutely no doubt that he had hoped that it would be soon. He looks forward to the time when his body would be transformed and then he would be made whole (2 Cor. 5:2-4).

This represents a radical and basic contrast with the Greek philosophers. They are looking for two different things, for the Greeks look for separation as the ultimate goal whereas Paul looks to complete integration as being the only true freedom.

. . . What Seneca finds so desirable in death, is for Paul the temporary state of 'nakedness', which he wishes to be as brief as possible and from which he apparently recoils. While what Paul longs for with all the ardour of his faith, the resurrection of the dead in a new spiritual, transfigured body, would strike Seneca as a relapse into a state which death had finally superseded. Here too it is clear that 'der Eschatologe muss fast alle seine theologischen Geheimnisse verraten.' In expressing their views on the after-life, both Paul and Seneca disclose the mysteries of their doctrine concerning God and man, and in so doing also reveal their soteriology.¹

But wherever one begins with Paul's doctrine of the death of Christ, he must realize that this was not merely his theology, it was his gospel. "It is not possible to

argue that the death of Christ has less than a central, if not the central and fundamental place, in the apostle's gospel."¹⁸ It was continually present and foremost in thought in all his actions, meditations, and deeds. Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians that "though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man is preaching to you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8).

Professor Denney assumes here that Paul is arguing a case for religious intolerance. This would not be the case however, if one followed along the lines that Professor Brandon has presented. This for Brandon would easily be seen in the light that Paul was in constant and vicious conflict with the Jerusalem Church. Hence, Paul would be using these very words as a means to thwart the Jerusalem Christians. However, Denney does maintain that the difference between Paul and the common Christian tradition has been greatly exaggerated. He points out that Paul did not invent Christianity and that there would be disciples and preachers after Paul as there were before him. Since Paul makes many references to things that happened in Jesus's life that had

happened without Paul's awareness such as the Supper (I Cor. 11:23), one can only assume that Paul in fact did learn of these traditions from the early Church. Yet this did not deny him the opportunity to re-examine and re-interpret these traditions which in effect transformed them to meet the specific needs of those he intended to encounter.

The point at issue between the apostle and his Jewish Christian adversaries was not whether Christ had died for sins; every Christian believed that. It was rather how far this death of Christ reached in the way of producing or explaining the Christian life. To Paul it reached the whole way. It explained everything; it supplanted everything he could call a righteousness of his own; it inspired everything he could call righteousness at all. To his opponents, it did not so much supplant as supplement. . . . It is not necessary to enter into this controversy here. . . underneath the controversy Paul and his opponents agreed in the common Christian interpretation of Christ's death as a death in which sin had been so dealt with that it no longer barred fellowship between God and those who believed in Jesus. ¹⁹

It may be viewed that the tension resolved itself around the Jewish issue. The Jerusalem Church in an attempt to re-introduce Christ into contemporary Jewish thought was a means of regression and an endeavor to limit its scope. If this be the case, then Paul attempted to lift it out of this rather narrow context and so interpret it that it

would become progressive and universal.

One awareness that must continually be present in our minds is the fact that the Epistles were written in a space of some fifteen years. Now it is madness to assume that after the Damascus Road experience onward there was a Pauline theology any more than we can assume that there was a New Testament theology in the New Testament period. Paul did not come upon his theology in full bloom, but rather it had to be nourished, cultured, and occasionally pruned. Hence we cannot assume that the theology of his first letters is necessarily consistent with his theology in his latter manuscripts. Yet, he remains so consistent with the nature and the meaning of Christ's death that systematically, we cannot discern one letter from another. "The apostle had one message on Christ's death from first to last of his Christian career. His gospel, and it was the only gospel he knew, was always 'the word of the cross' (I Cor. 1:18), or 'the word of reconciliation' (2 Cor. 5:19). The applications might be infinitely varied, for, as has been already pointed out, everything was involved in it, and the whole of Christianity was deduced from it; but this is not to say that it was in process of evolution itself."²⁰ While certainly the facts and the nature of the death of

Christ were constant and unchanging, there is no reason to assume that Paul's own personal attitudes could not evolve and in fact did, which does not detract one iota from the nature of Christianity.

Paul viewed the whole conception of death and eschatology much more differently than those who stand in the modern tradition of Protestant theology. "The tradition of Protestant theology undoubtedly tends to isolate the death, and to think of it as a thing by itself, apart from the resurrection; sometimes, one is tempted to say, apart even from any distinct conception of Him who died."²¹ Paul always saw that there was an indestructible bond between Christ's death and His Resurrection. Few people have ever attempted to raise the Resurrection to the heights of theology that Paul has done. At times he relates it exactly for 'if we believe that Jesus died and rose again' on which hinges the whole Christian faith (I Thes. 4:14). In Romans the Resurrection and the Death are combined equally for Jesus 'was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.' (Rom. 4:25). This distillation of truths appears again in the letters to the Corinthians, "first of all. . . Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised

on the third day in accordance with the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3f.). But there are others in which the emphasis falls completely on the resurrection. For he writes, 'if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved' (Rom. 10:9) and the same standard returns in, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." (I Cor. 15:17). Then why is there within Paul such an ungainly view of the resurrection? This of course can only be seen in the historical context of the individual himself.

It was the appearance of the risen One to Paul which made him a Christian. What was revealed to him on the way to Damascus was that the crucified One was the Son of God, and the gospel that He preached afterwards was that of the Son of God crucified. There can be no salvation from sin unless there is a living Saviour: this explains the emphasis laid by the apostle on the resurrection. But the living One can be a Saviour only because He has died: this explains the emphasis laid on the cross. The Christian believes in a living Lord, or he could not believe at all; but he believes in a living Lord who died an atoning death, for no other can hold the faith of a soul under the doom of sin.²²

And it is from this sustained dynamic relationship with the Christ who has returned from the dead that Paul receives

his drive and power.

How then does Paul proceed to define his gospel? How does he work it out in the known context of the existing forms of the Church and established religion? He first begins in the context of God's nature. "Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and diety, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rom. 1:19-20). But this was not enough. It certainly makes known to all men everywhere His existence, and something of His divine power, glory, and faithfulness, but if man is to come to know God personally, as Paul did, to have his sins forgiven and to enter into relationship with God, he needs a more intimate and practical revelation. And it is only through the divine personal encounter with the living Christ that one can really come to understand His Holiness, His power to release men from their sin, and especially His love. And this is basically where Paul would separate the Old Testament from the New Testament, because of this fuller knowledge of God's love. And though God spoke of His love through the Prophets and the Psalmist, man could only begin to comprehend His love through the most vivid demonstration of that love. A demonstration that would

be etched on their minds and hearts so that it would never be forgotten, something never to be excelled, nothing short of an unique act. Everyman is occasionally touched by the good act or word of another but this must completely transcend and surpass all such human actions, "One will hardly die for a righteous man - though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God commends his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:7f.). Here then is the basic theme of Paul, the only true interpretation one can have of Christ's death is through God's love. And however Paul may approach the death of Christ he is always consistent with the expression of God's Love through Christ's death. For Paul it is then the Love of God with which all other theological convictions must be reconciled.

Then the other aspect of the death of Christ is the love of Christ Himself. Paul makes numerous reference to these passages among which are: 'who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2:20). 'The love of Christ constrains us; because we are convinced that one has died for all' (2 Cor. 5:14); "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it' (Eph. 5:25). Christ here is not some cold mechanical entity but rather an individual who

opens Himself to God's will.

The motive in which God acts is the motive in which He (Christ) acts: the Father and the Son are at one in the work of man's salvation. It is this which is expressed when the work of Christ is described, as it is in Phil. 2:8 and Rom. 5:19, as obedience---obedience unto death, and that the death of the cross. The obedience is conceived as obedience to the loving will of the Father to save men---that is, it is obedience in the vocation of Redeemer, which involves death for sin. It is not obedience merely in the sense of doing the will of God as other men are called to do it, the everyday keeping of God's commandments; it is obedience in this unique and incommunicable, yet moral, calling to be at the cost of life the Saviour of the world from sin. Hence it is in the obedience of Christ to the Father that the great demonstration of His love to men is given; 'He loved me,' the apostle says, 'and gave Himself for me.'²³

It is thus in this manner that Christ could move forward to the Cross as a means of fullest obedience measured out only in depth by His own death.

But what then is Christ's death in relation to sin? First and foremost Paul saw Christ's death as a death for sin. It was sin that caused God to enter this world in the person of Christ and it was sin that made Christ's death a necessity in order to reveal God's love as well as Christ's. It was only by sin that death held any power

over us and it was only by Jesus wrestling with evil that He could effectually accept our responsibility and---die for us.

It is easy to look upon death as being something quite natural, because all living things do in fact die. Yet on the other hand there is still much about death that is offensive and unnatural. And it is the unnatural aspect with which the Christian faith deals. And while death can be explained by all manner of natural phenomena it still does not "touch the profounder truth with which Paul is dealing, that death comes from God, and that it comes in man to a being who is under law to Him. Man is not like a plant or an animal, nor is death to him what it is at the lower levels of life. Man has a moral nature in which there is a reflection of the holy law of God, and everything that befalls him, including death itself, must be interpreted in relation to that nature."²⁴ But according to the apostle the view of God is that death is the wages of sin. "The connection between sin and death is real, though it is not physical; and because it is what it is, because death by God's ordinance has in the conscience of sinful men the tremendous significance which it does have, because it is the expression of God's implacable and final opposition to evil, He who came to

bear our sin must also die our death. Death is the word which sums up the whole liability of man in relation to sin, and therefore, when Christ came to give Himself for our sins, He did it by dying."²⁵

It was the Divine encounter with Christ which forced Paul by choice to reconsider the Jesus of History. He stood at the end of Christ's life and had to reshape the whole of Christ's life from entirely new criteria, all of which became transformed and developed into depth of spirit and thought for Paul. It was not so much the Crucifixion that offended Paul as it was the curse of the Torah which proclaimed that one who hung on a tree defiled the land from henceforth. Paul could not conceive of Jesus as a means of defilement. But through the Spirit the Cross was transformed "'from the wooden instrument of a dreamer's death to the supreme altar of the Christian Faith."²⁶ The Acts of the Apostles maintained that it was the fulfilment of God's purposes through Scripture. But William Manson is right when he says "'for the evidence of a more inward appreciation of the meaning of the Messiah's death we have. . . to look away from Acts to St. Paul."²⁷ One cannot make the erroneous assumption that Paul was the only Christian thinker who was wrestling with the truths of Christ's life.

On the contrary Paul himself has specially asserted that he owed to the Church a particular interpretation of the Death of Jesus (I Corinthians 15:3). . . . Paul shared in what might be called a treasury of thought on the Death of Jesus which was common in varying degrees to all Christians, and then he applied to that even certain interpretations that were current coin, as it were, in the primitive Church. To judge from the wealth of material presented to us on this subject by the various Epistles of the New Testament the Church must have become increasingly Cross-conscious. . . and markedly individual as is much of Paul's thought on the Death of Jesus, it developed against the background of a Church that was wrestling with the same problem.²⁸

Paul so took this rich inheritance and moulded it to his own concepts that he in fact did become an innovator.

The death of Jesus for the Jew must always be seen against a background of sacrifice. Our culture has moved so far from this tradition that it is not only incomprehensible but deeply offensive. But for the Jew it was the necessary and proper approach to God. The Death of Christ and the New Life are as two foci of an ellipse being held together by the concept of 'blood' which had been sacrificed. To his mind there could never be atonement without sacrifice and sacrifice involving the shedding of blood. W. D. Davies following C. H. Dodd maintains that ilasterion is expiation not propitiation, resulting in the Christian counterpart of

the Jewish kapporeth. Further Davies maintains that since the First Corinthians was written before the Passover season, the terms and thoughts of its ritual were definitely on the mind of Paul.²⁹ There are examples such as 15:23 firstfruits and elements of ritual and again in I Corinthians 5:7. While these need not be correlated exactly to the Christian faith, it has been the task of Christian apologists to transform older symbols and rituals into newer and more appropriate meanings.

Paul then views the Last Supper as the Covenant relationship which was sealed by the blood of Christ and sets this forth as being central to his message. Paul gathers up the traditions about the early Church and makes them definite and complete. Jesus, standing in the Jewish tradition, must also have seen the Last Supper as a means of instituting a covenant relationship. And while Paul gathered these elements from the Church, they were viewed through the traditional Rabbinic thought. One cannot enter here into the covenant significance and its ramifications but the important element that must be raised is that of the nature of obedience. Through a covenant an individual found himself in a special relation to God and he could only continue his relationship by his response of obedience.

For Paul supreme obedience could best be shown through martyrdom. Perhaps there is here a high regard for the Hasidim, who placed the highest value on obedience even unto death. Now the death of Jesus for Paul meant an act of obedience to the complete will of God. Whereas, in all Old Testament sacrifice the unblemished lamb is led to the slaughter, the compelling thing about Jesus was his personal choice. Hence it came as the highest form of sacrifice in that the participant had freedom of choice. Paul raises these factors in Second Corinthians 10:5, Romans 5:13-18, and Philippians 2:8 which gives the key that Paul saw this in terms of Rabbinic thought. Here for Paul the concept of obedience is primary whereas in the Book of Hebrews, sacrifice is the primary factor as opposed to Romans (Rom. 5:17-19).

There is also found in Paul the most interesting doctrine of Merits. This comes directly out of Paul's Rabbinic background where there was always the appeal made to the merits of the fathers and those particularly of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It can be found in Rabbinic literature such as Rabbi Meir (A. D. 140-65); "The dead ones of the Gentiles are dead, those of the Israelites are not dead, for through their merit the living exist; an instance

for this is, when Israel did that deed, had Moses not mentioned the merits of the Fathers they surely would have perished from the world."³⁰ These thoughts appear in the writings of Paul in Romans 9:5 and 11:5 as this appeal had come to take its common place among the Jews at the time of Paul. Even the terminology of Paul is couched in these doctrines.

The terms which Paul chiefly used to describe the results of the work of Christ are 'redemption', 'justification' and 'atonement'. It is not our task to examine what each of these terms signifies; we are merely concerned to point out that these are the conceptions most often found in the Rabbinical literature to describe the effects of the merits of the righteous, a fact which will be abundantly illustrated by the passages quoted above. The three terms referred to are such as would fall with great familiarity on the ears of the Rabbis of the first century and such as a Rabbi like Paul would naturally use in declaring the 'merits' of Christ and their benefits.³¹

So the Death of Jesus was seen through very Rabbinic eyes and rested these in the familiar patterns and thoughts of Rabbinic Judaism. And Paul saw Jesus not only as one who fulfilled His obedience completely (Phil. 2:5f) but also the Messiah, the Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah. "If our thesis be correct, the suffering of Jesus as Messiah would not in itself be an insuperable difficulty for a

Rabbi such as Paul, at least it would probably have been less difficult for him than for simpler folk who had perhaps less refined conceptions of the Messianic Kingdom than the Rabbis. Nevertheless, we do know that there was a skandalon for Paul in the Death of Jesus and we now suggest that even if Judaism did not expect a Suffering Messiah at all the chief cause of the element of skandalon in the Death of Jesus for Paul was not the Death in itself but the form which it took; it was the death of the Cross that constituted the skandalon."³² Suffering and death were quite within the realm of possibility, but Paul was too refined and too serious as a respect^r of the Torah not to be upset by the difficulties of the Cross. This was almost more than they could either accept or comprehend. Time has so removed us from their minds and traditions that we shall never measure the depth with which this skandalon resounded.

It appears quite ludicrous that W. D. Davies criticizes all other authors for separating Paul's eschatology from his theology by placing it at the conclusion of their books and then proceeds to do the same himself. It makes the task of studying Paul's eschatology ever so much more difficult to approach when it is dissected at the end as

if it were some vestigial organ. As long as there continues to be the strong and serious rift in theology and eschatology in the thought of Paul, one will never come to grips with his real meaning and his importance. Paul can see meaning in the life of Jesus only when he concludes that here is truly the Messiah of old. And as has been previously mentioned his difficulty did not arise so much out of Jesus' failure to fulfil the contemporary expectations as it did by dying an accursed death. But it was only through the refinement of eschatology and application of these criteria to His teaching and preaching that the pieces began to take their rightful places. "The encounter with the living Christ, the awareness of living in a new creation, the influx of the Gentiles into true Israel, the experience of a new moral exodus, the discovery of a New Torah and the advent of the Spirit, all these were for Paul eschatological phenomena."³³ It was indeed Paul's eschatology that permeated all of his works and action and as such it was always in the foreground of his mind. This then became the norm for the approach to any understanding of Pauline thought.

The early Church conceived of its own work as one of placing the Jesus of History in the solid context of traditional Jewish thought, but the task was not as simple

as that. There were obviously many things that could not be reconciled and perhaps nothing was more difficult than the changing conception of the Kingdom. The earnest Jew still looked forward to this with anxious expectation and continued to live on, completely oblivious to the fact that the eternal rule had broken in upon him, and he remained ignorant of it. For if Jesus was the Messiah, the end had come in the truest sense of Jewish eschatology, but since it had not come in a majestic worldly manner, it caught the Jews unaware. To alleviate this general apathy and indifference, it was certainly believed that the Lord Jesus would return soon and at this juncture He would indeed fulfil the grandeur that was His. And no doubt there was no one more anxious than Paul to see this come about for he had visions in his zealous compassion of the complete fulfilment of God's reign. This too was promoted by the early Church believing in the urgency of the return from their awakening glimpses to their closing prayer of Maranatha. Paul also took comfort in the early return of Jesus, not only from the expectation of the early Church but also as the fulfilment of all the Old Testament doctrines and prophecies. The message of the early Church caught on and spread in unprecedented speed allowing Paul in his own

time to believe that it had truly gone out into all the world bringing the message to all mankind beyond his furthest hope and expectations. Also he came to believe that the forces of evil were building up into a grand crescendo for their last assault before utter destruction. All this went to reinforce, at least in his own mind, the success of Christianity and the assurance that the return of the Lord would come as quickly and unexpectedly as his first encounter along that Damascus Road.

But beyond his dreams and expectation he was brought back again and again to the daily realities of the Christian Churches and their individual problems. Death was taking more than its rightful toll and the individuals who once believed so strongly now had their fears and doubts. Was there no distinction among the dead? Just what relevance did the Resurrection have for the individual's death? Try as they might to understand the teaching and the preaching of the early evangelists, they remained shaken and anxious. Were they to 'sleep' on and miss the Messianic Age or would they not be awakened that they might share in this also. If you dismiss the Resurrection-life from the early Church you destroy it, for it must be true that those that came over to Christianity did so because of the consequences and

the extension of the Resurrection. And when it came to be challenged from within, some no doubt left the community and the Church was confronted with its first and most continued crisis, that being the meaning of the Resurrection for their own lives and deaths.

It is a mistake to believe that Paul's thought tied in exactly to the apocalyptic concepts of his day. "That, in his eschatology, the Apostle drew upon the latter for his terms will be obvious, but the character of that eschatology was determined not by any traditional scheme but by that significance which Paul had been led to give to Jesus. This is merely to affirm that his eschatology was subservient to his faith and not constitutive of it."³⁴

It was the task of Paul to take meaningful and significant current religious terminology and translate them into the forms and the context of Christianity. This is the vehicle of expression for all religious entrepreneurs, that is to take over the existing forms and give them new functions. It is a change in content without a change in terminology.

Paul conveys to the Christians at Thessalonica that those who had become one 'in Christ' were thus transformed into the resurrection mode which came upon them without entering into the experience of death. Again in Romans

(6:1-14) he maintains that out of the union with Christ who had brought life to all followers, they had already passed from death to life. And it was for these individuals that death now became an impossibility. But it is difficult to believe that Paul here maintains that people will not die for this was precisely the problem that he was facing and it would thus become a matter of arguing in circles. Here Paul must be saying that while the forms of death persist, for those 'in Christ' the function is different. r

In another passage (I Cor. 11:27-34) Paul suggests that the death of a Christian was a sign and indication of moral failure. . . . "But in I Thessalonians, writing to a Church that was strangely agitated by this problem, Paul has to reassure his fellow-Christians that at the advent of Christ those Christians who had died would be raised so as to share in the same privileges as those who had survived. There is no need to postulate that Paul here introduces the belief in a two fold resurrection under pressure from the logic of Jewish apocalyptic thought. On the contrary, the situation that confronted him at Thessalonica was the natural outcome of his own preaching."³⁵

W. D. Davies further illuminates this by quoting Héring: "We do not err in affirming that Paul himself at

an early period had expressly denied that future resurrection and that the anti-resurrectionists at Thessalonica and Corinth were after all only the representatives of the unchanged Pauline belief. It is no less true that their position was strongly placed in line with the fundamental conceptions of the Apostle---a fact which explains both their influence and the difficulty that Paul had to convince them."³⁶ Whether as individuals we adopt this solution or not, we are brought to believe that not only Paul but the entire Church did change their outlook on the Resurrection as well as death for the individual. It thus follows that Paul was ^{is} ~~revising~~ his ideas during the course of writing his letters. Since he never held the entire corpus before him at one time there would be no opportunity to correct himself except by expressing his new beliefs at a later period. However, as it happened, these newer insights were not always addressed to the community that raised the problem in the first instance. Thus it would be quite feasible that at these Pauline communities various views on the same problem were held at the same time, but all having a common denominator in that it was all Pauline theology. This can become most confusing and to a certain extent disillusioning but in the last analysis the essence

of the basic dogmas was not in flux but Paul attempted to bring into sharper focus some of the fuzzier details.

This being the case, the basic theology and eschatology of Paul were much simpler than latter day scholars would lead us to believe. "It contains no reference to a Messianic Kingdom such as is contemplated in Baruch, 4 Ezra, and Revelation and can be briefly summarized as the early expectation of the Parousia when there would be a final judgement, a general resurrection of the righteous dead (and possibly of all the dead), the transformation of the righteous living and ensuing upon all this the final consummation, the perfected Kingdom of God when God would be all in all."³⁷

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that Christianity did not come upon a tabula rasa, as was also made clear with regard to Judaism. The Jews had been looking forward to the belief of Resurrection for a long time and in fact Jesus found great sympathy among the Pharisees because they accepted His teachings on resurrection. Jesus argued from the point of view of their attitudes toward resurrection and never with regard to His own. He was steeped in this tradition and from this one point of view He had little difficulty. Yet, the Jews did not have to go out of Jeru-

salem to find the strong Hellenistic views for they were right there with them. In fact it can be said that the Talmud is more a monument to Greek philosophy than it is a contribution to Jewish religion. Perhaps the Greeks had no greater influence on the world than with their gift of the concept of Man. And thus it was at this juncture that the line of battle had to be drawn and continued to be fought. Paul had to call his Christian followers back to the essential Hebrew anthropology. There is an excellent summary of the Jewish position written by Guignebert; "The Jews could only conceive of Man in his totality, as the vital union of flesh and soul. Their anthropological dichotomy was not dualistic . . . a truly living being was always an embodied spirit, soul and body having been created by God for a mutual interdependence and being therefore incapable of genuine life apart from one another."³⁸

Death involved an unnatural separation of the body from the soul. Hence, any conception of after-life must be the reunion and complete integration of these two forms of life. This difficulty was not only perplexing to the Christians but had made marked inroads on Judaism of the first century. "It is clear that there were those who

under the influence of Hellenistic conceptions had either modified or abandoned the doctrine of resurrection in favour of the Hellenistic conception of the immortality of the soul."³⁹ Now it is easily seen how this could come about as the Greeks had a much more likely approach, as the doctrine of the body still remains a very difficult proposition. No wonder the Jews who saw the dissolution of their people found it easier to follow the Greek explanation even though it was less sophisticated. And it is with such a problem that Paul is challenged to deal in the Corinthian Church. For individuals who were under the Hellenistic influences had difficulty in seeing anything other than a very spiritualized existence. "Resurrection implied that after death the soul departed to Hades or Sheol, and waited there till the day of judgement when it would be reunited to a body. To the educated Hellenistic world, however, such a view of the destiny of the soul was unacceptable on two grounds. First, as Knox has written: 'No intelligent and educated person believed in a subterranean Hades; even the authority of Homer and Plato was unable to save it. . . .' And secondly, as we saw above, it was escape from the body, not any future reunion with it in resurrection, that seemed desirable to the

Hellenistic world owing to its particular anthropology."⁴⁰

With this in mind it is little wonder that the Corinthians were bound for difficulties. No doubt also that they, like we, reconciled themselves to a bodiless existence and would have been content to get away with it. Paul however felt that it so diluted the conception of Man that he ventured to take issue with them. There is however another side to these difficulties, for Paul here is attacking not only the Hellenistic concept of immortality but its converse. There were also the literal interpreters who accepted the physical restoration of the body. And it is between these two camps that Paul has to draw the line as to the true Christian conception, realizing that they both contained some of the truth. "In doing this he was not in any way departing from his pharisaic conceptions, because, as we have seen, there would be many Pharisees prepared to argue, as Paul does, for a transformed resurrection body. Moreover, as we have before asserted, we are not too hastily to assume that when Paul speaks of a 'spiritual' body he means thereby an 'immaterial one': the 'spirit' has a physical nuance for Paul such as it often had for his Rabbinic contemporaries. In any case it should be admitted that the 'newness' of Paul's conception of a spiritual mode of resurrection body

must not be over-emphasized. . . . "41

For R. H. Charles the concept of the 'new body' means "successive expressions of the same personality, though in different spheres", and further Paul points us to the fact that we should receive a new body at death.⁴² W. D. Davies maintains that Charles presses the analogy of the seed too far.⁴³ While Charles is right in calling for continuity, neither scholar is correct because they have not carefully weighted out the analogy. The essence of a seed is that it may remain dormant for an indefinite time and it certainly does not follow that one must receive a body immediately at death or else he would be naked. Davies does not acknowledge here that within the seed there is contained all that it needs for its transformation. Each seed is unique, though to the eye they may all look similar, yet here already are the contents to make profound differences. So in the resurrection there must be continuity or the concept is absurd, for unless we maintain our essential selves, a future life has no meaning. This would eventually lead us to a theory of transmigration of souls. There must be discontinuity in the Resurrection as a 'physical' continuation of our present existence which would handicap us from a deeper and truer fulfilment of life. Thus one must

conclude that there can only be a future life which must be both continuous and discontinuous. And the degree of such will not be comprehended by our finiteness.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer maintains in his book The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, that from the first to the last letter Paul expected the immediate return of Jesus, of Judgment and the Messianic glory. Further he maintains that if Paul underwent any change whatsoever, it was not in his eschatological expectation. It would have been more accurate if Dr. Schweitzer ^{had} ~~would have~~ held that Paul's eschatological themes were constant but the details in fact did change, which will be discussed later.

There is behind all of Paul's eschatological thought the strong thread of redemption. For in Jesus, Paul sees Him calling the world to an end and issuing forth the Messianic Kingdom. But this redemption was not only of this world, for it came from outside and beyond this earthly existence, as it was a cosmic process which was not invoked by Jesus but rather only announced by Him. And it was from these factors that the early Church had come to see redemption.

Paul could not be considered a promoter of Pharisaism, however it was from their theology that Paul was able to see the connexion of the two great themes of the reign of

the Messiah and the life hereafter. Paul's subjective confrontation had allied him with the intense and intimate religion of the Pharisees. The depths of their religious quest had touched the common ground in Paul's experience. In regard to the concept of salvation, Paul could not be further from the Pharisees.

The Jewish solution assumed no sudden entrance of evil into the world, nor any sudden defeat of its power; no total depravity through the sin of Adam, no deliverance through a special agent conceived as both divine and human. It assumed the influence of God slowly working in all human lives, to bring about in the course of ages the harmony which ought to be, between the Creator and His creatures, the Father and His children. There was no other way, if the fundamental facts were as Pharisees and Rabbis believed them to be. But it was the duty of every true servant of God to work with Him towards that great end, by spreading the knowledge of God, and winning men to His service. The end of that gradual process of salvation was far off, how far was known only to God; but its attainment was as certain as that the power and the love of God were sufficient. It did not depend on some sudden exercise of divine power, in a form and through an agent hitherto unknown. The factors remained the same throughout---God and man; and the immeasurable length of the process was due to the infinite complexity of the human lives involved, age after age. The note of hope has, therefore, always sounded in Rabbinical Judaism, in regard to the future of mankind, an unconquerable optimism based on unshakable trust in the goodness and righteousness of God.⁴⁴

Jesus in His thought and teachings could not separate redemption from the cosmic struggle with the demonic. This demonic power is on the increase but will ultimately be defeated. It is as if a strong man has been overcome and bound by yet another, who is even stronger. And the first can do nothing as the second lays aside all his works (Mt. 12:22-29). Jesus believed His own death was a means of defeating the 'Evil One' for this was His role of Messiahship. Thus when Jesus came to His rightful power He would proceed to cast out all that was alien to God and His purposes for man. Schweitzer feels that it is from the death of John the Baptist that Jesus made His resolution to suffer and die.⁴⁵ While it is apparent that the death of John did recall the seriousness and the inevitability of Jesus' own death, it must be assumed that Jesus had set Himself to the task earlier as was discussed in the previous chapter. Even in the Lord's Prayer, we echo this concern of Jesus, that we might be delivered from the 'Evil One.' As Jesus moved closer to death it became increasingly clear to Him that only by His atoning death could the power and the dominion of this 'Evil One' be broken. While redemption and atonement are intertwined for Jesus, they held a profound and simple meaning for the

Jews. Jesus, "in His death and resurrection has become the Messiah, will bring in the Kingdom. This explains why the belief of the Early Christians, starting at the death of Jesus, expressed itself in the two parallel assertions that through it He won for Himself exaltation to the Messiahship and also has obtained for His people the forgiveness of their sins. The two apparently disconnected ideas remain, however, in accordance with their origin, attached together by the belief in the nearness of the Kingdom."⁴⁶ There is much to be said about the truths that Schweitzer raises here but one must wonder if his time sequence is proper.

Interestingly enough, it is to Satan that Paul attributes the sufferings of his body. "Because he has been caught up into Heaven and Paradise and has heard things 'which it is not lawful to utter,' he has been delivered up in a special manner to 'the Angel of Satan,' who has authority to buffet him to the end that he may not be exalted overmuch (2 Cor. 12:1-7)."⁴⁷

As Paul envisages the Kingdom, he foresees an angelic struggle rather than the peaceful tranquility which is generally associated with the Kingdom. But one by one these apostate forces will come under the sway of Christ and His followers, when at last even Death then shall be

robbed of its power (I Cor. 15: 23-28). Death here is considered to be one of the angel-powers. This comes from the concept of the Angel of Death in the Apocalypse of Baruch (Chapt. 21). One cannot discern from this brief source whether the Angel of Death does in fact cause death or rather if he is merely over those who have died. However, it seems more reasonable that he shares with the demonic and rules from the underworld. "Paul also appears to assume that the Angel of Death not only has power over the dead but also causes death. In I Cor. 15:55 he speaks of the sting of Death. Whether the 'Destroyer' to whom, according to I Cor. 10:10, the Israelites who murmured in the wilderness fell a prey is to be identified with the Angel of Death cannot be determined. The one thing certain is that it is after the overcoming of the Angel of Death that the general Resurrection becomes possible, as is also implied in the Apocalypse of John (Rev. 20:13)."⁴⁸

With the defeat of Death the curtain is rung down on the Messianic Kingdom. Paul makes no mention of how long he believes this will last. Paul expects that Satan will be trodden under foot at the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom (Rom.16:20).The reverse is held by John in the Book of Revelation (20:2-3, 7-10), for Satan is bound during

this Messianic period from which he will be released later to rule once more and then at last, would be cast into the Lake of Fire. The whole point of Paul's theme here is that the Messiah has to bow to the authority of the angelic powers. But when He has fought the fight, all will have to render unto Him, His due authority. This must all be done so that at the End God will ^{il}prevade and be 'all in all.' Thus, all of Creation will reach its full and complete consummation. Those who have given themselves over to God and lived by Him, are thus united with Him with no distinction. Those who have separated themselves from God in this life will be separated from Him completely.

Paul conceived of Eternal Blessedness as more than a spiritual existence and conditioned by the bodily resurrection. The elect have found themselves to be partakers in the Messianic Kingdom and as such they retain their mode of existence already given in their state of blessedness. "When the condition which, at the Return of Jesus, they receive, either by resurrection or by 'being changed', is spoken of as a condition of incorruption, that means that it is thought of as eternal. What happens is just this, that after a Messianic reign all the dead who at the Judgment are found to be destined to blessedness enter likewise into

this condition of imperishable bodily existence."⁴⁹

Now, into the midst of Paul's conception of blessedness and angelic powers, he introduces a new strain which is distinctively his own. This then is the conception that the Law was given by Angels in order that they might make Man subservient to themselves. Now with the advent of Christ's death their power in and through the Law had been broken and as such no longer holds Man's allegiance. Hence at the beginning of the Messianic reign the Law topples from its ancient rule. Yet, in truth Paul sees the Law cancelled by the death of Christ. Paul sees all the miracles and healings that Jesus performed as combating and concluding the evil forces that were opposed to the Rule of God. But it is very interesting that he must have thought them to be of so little consequence in comparison to the miracle of the Resurrection and the ultimate defeat of the demonic that he does not feel that they are of sufficient consequence to make mention of them. It is also true, that in complete honesty, Paul had not seen these events with his own eyes and no doubt did not think it completely right to build his case on these events. After all he started with the very core of Christianity, and if individuals did not accept this it was unlikely that

his case would be any stronger when supported by the miracle stories.

Paul's view on the cancellation of the Law led directly to his tremendous conflict with the early Church. The Jews who were under the heavy sense of obligation to the Law began to see Jesus as the fulfilment of this Law. On the other hand there were the Gentiles that had no concern and no responsibility to the Law and thus could readily accept Jesus without being bound over to Jewish tradition and Law. Hence the two approaches would inevitably lead to troubles and discontentment, as indeed this eventually centred about Paul. The Church was fortunate indeed to have a man such as Paul, with his unique background, to calm the raging storm.

Schweitzer sees that the conflict in Pauline eschatology rises out of two converging streams of thought.

"In the first place, like the Apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra, a synthesis of the eschatology of the Prophets and of the 'Son-of-Man' eschatology of Daniel; and, in the second place, that it has to reckon with the facts, wholly unforeseen to Jewish eschatology, that the Messiah has already appeared as a man, has died, and is risen again."⁵⁰

Jesus fulfilled the concept of the Son-of-Man eschatology

contained in the Book of Daniel and Enoch. He proclaims the coming of the Son of Man, He speaks of Himself being surrounded by angels, and sees Himself coming in power from the clouds of heaven. His terminology is one of the Kingdom of God rather than the Messianic Kingdom. The thread of Danielic eschatology is picked up and carried out to the fullest expression in Jesus. There was no room within the prophetic eschatology for the conception of martyrdom and as such it had to give way to the more inclusive and less idealistic Danielic eschatology. The End comes from Daniel and Enoch: "and it is left an open question how far He was directly influenced by these books, and how far He simply adopts their views as current in His time in certain circles. His (Paul's) eschatology is thus simple and self-consistent. He expects a Judgment, which at the appearing of the Son-of-Man Messiah will include the Angels as well as all generations of men."⁵¹ Judgment is conceived of before the general resurrection.

The difference in these two eschatologies stems basically from a difference in view as to when the resurrection will occur. In the Apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra, the authors placed the resurrection at the end of the Messianic Kingdom. Jesus concurs with the Book of Daniel

by placing the resurrection at the onset of the Messianic Kingdom. The Scribes followed the teachings of the Apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra which tied together the prophetic as well as the Danielic threads linking them in a harmonious system. Since Paul was in agreement with the End as seen by the Apocalypses of Baruch and Ezra it is reasonable to assume that these were the accepted views on which Paul was nurtured.

Schweitzer conceives an entire sequence of events which constitute the End in accordance with the two-fold eschatology of the Scribes culminating in death being destroyed at the end of the Messianic Kingdom. Schweitzer maintains that Judgment and Resurrection can only happen at the end of the Messianic Kingdom. The Kingdom, according to Paul, then exists only for those believers living when it finally breaks in upon the world.

There are then the two forms of blessedness, one belonging to the Messianic and the other to the eternal. This leaves only those who have not died, the pleasures of both blessednesses. However, those who have died and believed then shall participate in the eternal blessedness. "The eschatology of Paul is therefore quite different from that of Jesus, a fact which has been hitherto never duly

appreciated. Instead of thinking as Jesus did along the lines of the simple eschatology of the Books of Daniel and Enoch, he represents the two-fold eschatology of the Scribes."⁵² But it is not simply a matter of Paul taking over these two eschatologies en masse for to it Paul adds his characteristic thought. "In assuming that the Elect in the Messianic Kingdom possess the resurrection mode of existence, Paul is not asserting something more or less self-evident, but something extraordinary, something at variance with the character of his eschatology. This has not heretofore been sufficiently realized. Jesus assumes a resurrection to participation in the Messianic Kingdom, and this assumption is also held in the Johannine Apocalypse (Rev. 20:4-6): it therefore would have seemed quite natural that Paul should hold the same view."⁵³ When the death of individuals within the Church did occur he rested in the thought that the Resurrection took place only after the Messianic Kingdom. Thus it was only consistent with his thought that all the dead must pass through the Messianic Kingdom and await the Resurrection at its end. This problem was not foreseen by those who conceived of the traditional eschatology for with the Messiah would come the fullness of the Kingdom. It was only after the advent of Jesus, the Messiah, that they could fully realize that the Messiah had come without

the completeness of the Kingdom. And here it must be realized that we only have the Christians in mind as the Jews still continue to await the Messiah, at least in theory if not in fact.

Now these difficulties would have been readily resolved if Christ did return within the life span of Paul, but of course He did not. Paul walked lightly around this difficulty by making the case that those who had died before the Messianic Kingdom would not thus have to wait through it until the final resurrection. Rather Paul raises the possibility that there would be an earlier special resurrection so that these dead might become participants in both blessings and as such, would not miss any of the glory. This ended the thought of privilege of living on until the Messiah returned. (I Thess. 4:13-18). It is easily seen that Paul himself had some difficulty in understanding completely the meaning for death in the early Church as he explains death in the Corinthian Church as the punishment of God for those who were not worthy of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:29-32).

In Hebrew thought it was believed that only those who were alive at the end were able to participate in the resurrection. Since they did not view religion as being

either personal or individual, their main concern was that they would see the continuity of the race, Israel. Thus it is not surprising that among Jewish circles there still continued the belief that only the survivors would participate in the resurrection as is seen in First Corinthians 15:12-18, 29-33. Schweitzer maintains that a core of people such as this resulted in the problem created by the Church in Corinth. Yet it would appear that these same deniers of the Resurrection had no difficulty in accepting the Resurrection of Jesus but only of themselves. This is clearly seen by the usage Paul makes as he argues from the specific resurrection to that of the general resurrection.

Schweitzer makes a case for the fact that the difficulty in the Church at Corinth is the result of an ultra-conservative group.⁵⁴ This could hardly be the case. It was far more difficult and it was anything but ultra-conservatism that flanked Paul as was already stated. Here Schweitzer attempts to make a simple solution to a far more complex problem. In response to these remarks W. D. Davies has said:

In view of what we have written above, Paul's eschatology is far simpler than Schweitzer would have us believe. It contains no reference to a Messianic Kingdom such

as is contemplated in Baruch, 4 Ezra, and Revelation and can be briefly summarized as the early expectation of the Parousia when there would be a final judgement, a general resurrection of the righteous dead (and possibly of all the dead), the transformation of the righteous living and ensuing upon all this the final consummation, the perfected Kingdom of God when God would be all in all. It will be readily admitted that his interpretation of Paul's eschatology brings the Resurrection of Jesus into closer proximity to the final consummation than does the schema of Schweitzer. Within the latter the Resurrection of Jesus can hardly be said to occupy anything but a minor place; the consummation is very far removed from the Resurrection of Jesus because there intervenes between the two events the Messianic Kingdom.⁵⁵

The specific solutions by which the churches found their answers is not known to us per se. It must have been somehow resolved by the churches or they would have easily gone under. The solution bore hard upon them and they must have, like Paul, accepted that the dead would arise with the advent of Christ. This obstacle may be less than we have imagined as the Jewish Christians had come to a belief in the resurrection before Christ's death and they trusted, with no proof, that God had drawn Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to Himself. Paul resolved this by the impartiality of the two resurrection theories. However much we may say for

or against these theories of the resurrection, they must ultimately rest on Paul as the creator and innovator. There is no precedent for these two concepts. Previous Jewish eschatologies maintained that there would be one and only one resurrection, the difference being the timing. "When he decides to put upon the old garment of the two-fold eschatology of the Scribes the new patch of the resurrection-and-transformation concept, he does this under the influence not of the teaching of Jesus but of the fact of His death and resurrection. This is evident from the way that in 1st Thessalonians he deduces the resurrection of those who have died in Christ from the resurrection of Jesus."⁵⁶ The mere presence of Jesus in the world must call for a change in classical eschatology so that their plans and systems must be reworked to make it applicable to the new evidence. Perhaps his weakness is a direct result of his attempt to be all inclusive in binding the old threads together. His greatest difficulty is that of the juxtaposition of the natural man and the new man having the same position until the final resurrection. It is surprising that emotion seems to have reached Paul before the wave of logic. On the one hand it could be assumed that their fates, though different, could be similar to their pre-natal existence,

which is not revolting. The other is that if a person was truly "asleep", which Paul maintains, there would be no difficulty as they would be quite unaware. There is also an internal inconsistency in that Death is not defeated until the very End, yet Paul maintains that it has been completely abolished, conflicting with his thought that only the 'sting' had been removed. There is then also difficulty with the belief that those who live are immediately transformed into a mode of resurrection existence. But does not one have to die before he can attain this mode? This problem was latent in the teaching of Jesus and also acknowledged by the Scribes. The Apocalypse of Ezra, by maintaining that at the appearance of the Kingdom all die together, so that along with all the dead they may pass into ternal life answered this difficulty. The problem was inescapable as Jesus has passed through the gates of death to take on the resurrection existence, so too would all the followers. This does not really seem to be a very large problem as it would seem apparent that the actual form is beyond our comprehension and would no longer appear to be a major obstacle.

Paul's conception is, that believers in a mysterious fashion share the dying and rising again of Christ, and in this way are swept away out of their ordinary

mode of existence, and form a special category of humanity. When the Messianic Kingdom dawns, those of them who are still in life are not natural men like others, but men who have in some way passed through death and resurrection along with Christ, and are thus capable of becoming partakers of the resurrection mode of existence, while other men pass under the dominion of death. And similarly, those who have died in Christ are not dead as others are, but have become capable through their dying and rising again with Christ or rising before other men.⁵⁷

It would be a serious mistake for Paul or any other Christian to maintain that a being "in Christ" did not die. There does not seem to be any promise of the complete defeat of death until the end. Until that time all mankind, both Christians and "natural" men, are under its sway and as such must inevitably die. To assume that the death of the Christian or of Christ, for that matter is any different than any other, is to fall into the same mistake that the first Christians tried so hard to answer. The one thing that we can say with certainty is that Christ died and that we must also die, for we are all that much of natural man.

One cannot approach the subject of Pauline eschatology by assuming that what was apparent for Jesus was also apparent for Paul. While a large amount, it is true, is held in common, there are also wide differences, yet in the

last analysis they must both be reconciled in the context of the whole of Christianity. The man who begins to think out the Resurrection and its implications consistently and continually, will come across some profound thoughts and perhaps be labelled a mystic. If one places this at the front of his thoughts, he will be intensely changed. But how then, after the Resurrection, does man stand in relation to his universe? Is he still a part of the natural world or has he indeed passed on to the world of the supernatural? If Jesus did enter into History as the Messiah, then we live in the post-Messianic age and there is no longer a clear distinction in the Then and Now, nor are past, present and future such distinct entities.

If Jesus has risen, that means, for those who dare to think consistently, that it is now already the supernatural age. And this is Paul's point of view. He cannot regard the resurrection of Jesus as an isolated event, but must regard it as the initial event of the rising of the dead in general. According to his view Jesus rose as 'The first-fruits of those that had fallen asleep' (aparche ton kekoimemenon, I Cor. 15:20). We are therefore in the Resurrection period, even though the resurrection of others is still to come. Paul draws the logical inference from the fact that Jesus, after His earthly existence, was not simply rapt away to heaven in order to return thence in glory as the Messiah, but Himself passes through death and resurrection. 58

Within the Resurrection of Jesus Paul came to see the beginning of the End for the powers of the Kingdom were operative in this world. While the first-fruits have been sown, the plants will continue to grow and spread so that the full harvest will follow. While one has to admire Schweitzer's statement here, one is also aware that it comes much closer to the truth and in so doing it violates his whole schematical position that he has so laboriously written. Schweitzer, however, remains oblivious to this difficulty. Not only is this the essential truth of the Christian faith but it must be seen that this will in effect change the whole of our lives in every aspect and detail if we would live with Schweitzer's suggestion about the Resurrection. And of all the followers of Christ, no one has been able to think the Resurrection through on the application of his life more intently and compatibly than Paul. For it was Paul alone who gave proper respect to the Resurrection. And hence it followed that Paul would also be the one to maintain that the traditional eschatology of old could no longer exist unchanged but rather face up to the fact that all things now were completely different. This could alone be realized by those who had steadied their eyes on the Resurrection.

The continuing fellowship of the Elect with their Messiah and with each other give rise in due course to a Christ-Mysticism which extended into the world. This is not here either the invention nor the innovation of Paul for the rudiments of it will be found in the teaching and preaching of Jesus. For as individuals they are bound together and to their Lord in an entirely new relationship of intense depth. And through this relationship of their corporal existence they have become as one through the death and Resurrection of Jesus. Thus for them the process of dying and rising have already begun even though there can be no external manifestation of this communion.

The content and the actions of Jesus are not simply limited to this world but must be thought out in the context of their cosmic significance. Thus Paul finds himself in his concept of the doctrine of redemption with its ramifications that the Angelic forces are being destroyed and that there is the continual, even if gradual, transformation of this worldly existence to that of a super-earthly existence. "The Pauline Mysticism is therefore nothing else than the doctrine of the making manifest, in consequence of the death and resurrection of Jesus, of the pre-existent Church (the Community of God)."⁵⁹ And from

this concept there grew a solidarity among the believers that entered into any depth in this relationship. "The Spirit of Him that raised Jesus from the dead, which dwells in them will also give life to their mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11). Being grafted into Christ's death, they are also grafted into His Resurrection (Rom. 6:5) and have the certainty that they will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)."⁶⁰ And the term "Being in Christ" was as near as they could come to any expression of the very subjective experience this held for them. As one being is grafted into this relationship, the old individual subsides and the new being is left. It was certainly a case of the individual losing his personality, his individuality, and probably to a certain extent his personal desires. One continued only as a smaller part of a larger body, and as such had to act in accordance with the desires and the will of the individuals who functioned beside him.

"The fact that the believer's whole being, down to his most ordinary everyday thoughts and actions, is thus brought within the sphere of the mystical experience has its effect of giving to his mysticism a breadth, a permanence, a practicability, and a strength almost unexampled elsewhere in mysticism. Certainly in this it is entirely

different in character from the Hellenistic mysticism, which allowed daily life to go its own way apart from the mystical experience and without relation to it."⁶¹ Mysticism must always be an intensely personal relation which defies complete defining of itself, the manifestation of such must however define itself through the media of human personality. We will always be at a loss when we come to Pauline mysticism and the foundations for it, as there has never been found the complete exposition of it by Paul. The full understanding of what Paul meant as a 'being-in-Christ' is never systematically produced and thus we are left with the implications which are stated in a matter of fact way that they would appear self-evident. It would thus seem that the essence of the Pauline mysticism was certainly not the most important thing for Paul or he would have developed it for his followers. It is rather a case of each individual working out their own salvation with fear and trembling and in such a manner that they will enter into their own relationship as a 'being-in-Christ'. There is no plan nor scheme left for us to imitate or to develop rigidly which works to the advantage of the Church. It is also apparent that those who have so desired to find the meaning of Christian-mysticism throughout the centuries

have had no difficulty in doing so if they were willing to give themselves over to it completely.

As one approaches the whole of apostolic writings he is caught in a dilemma, for on the one hand he has horrible predictions of doom and on the other, the mercy and the love of God which seems to far surpass our fondest desires. There are here two factors that seem so irreconcilable that they have resulted in driving many seekers away from the Church. This then was something of the nature of the apostolic eschatology as it is sought to deal with these difficulties and to bring them into a whole body of Christian thought. There was within Paul the growing belief that the works of God extended to all men for in God's sight all men stand the same. And again there was the dark and seamy side of the New Testament message which is chiefly expressed in those passages which speak of "the state of spiritual 'death' that awaits the children of this world. It is in the light of these utterances that we must interpret such words as 'perdition' ($\acute{\alpha}\pi\omega\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha$), and 'corruption' or 'decay' ($\phi\thetaορ\acute{\alpha}$), and 'destruction' ($\acute{\omicron}\lambda\epsilon\theta\rho\sigma$). The state of being lost, of decay, and of destruction, is equivalent to that mysterious condition of death which is declared to be the appointed lot of sinners beyond the Judgment."⁶²

While the writings of John see death as a part of the present world, Paul usually thinks in terms of death as being part of the here-after and the fate which shall be determined then. In Romans (6:23) Paul could say; "The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The negative side of Paul's doctrine is a frustrating and shattering concept to study. Paul had a fascination for death that ran to an obsession. His concept of death was two-fold in that he saw it as both a physical entity and a spiritual state or existence.

His references to it are so frequent, and exceed so much in variety of meaning all contemporary example, as to suggest a personal characteristic. He has recourse to the symbolism of 'death' whenever he is deeply moved by the sad and stern aspect of things, and whenever he wishes to describe painful experiences or any want of sensibility. Sometimes he uses it in an extremely rhetorical way, as when he said, 'I die daily'; 'death worketh in us, but life in you'; 'if Christ be in you, the body is dead.' Again this phraseology often indicates the idea that those who are under sway of any one influence are free from the power of the opposite, as in the declaration that those who are alive to God are dead to sin. In this aspect, the symbol of death and dying is devoid of all colour of its own and takes a bright or a dark meaning according to the connection in which it occurs. ⁶³

Paul likens baptism to burial in that for the Christian it is his crucifixion and as such the believers can be considered as dead. "An excellent example also, of the hyperbolical in which he speaks of 'dying' is found in the statement, 'sin revived, and I died.' Clearly, it was not the habit of the Apostle to weigh his terms with care, or to measure his language in a scientific spirit; and he employed the tremendous symbolism of death in cases where writers of a different temperament would have expressed themselves with more moderation and variety. And he thus lays himself open to the danger of being misunderstood by literal and laborious minds. We may conjecture that he never expected his words to be so carefully examined, and would have been surprised at the importance which has often been attached to his impetuous expressions."⁶⁴

We, however, dare not take the meaning of Paul's words lightly. In all Paul's prophecy of the "wages of sin is death" is as profound as it is contemporary. For Paul and his tradition there was nothing more appalling than physical dissolution. This he approached with utter conviction and sincerity and gave his life over that others might see these implications and ramifications. "He saw in the king of terrors a fitting symbol of the uttermost

spiritual doom. For him, as for Philo, to be unspiritual was to be dead now, and was to be moving towards a climax of death beyond the grave. To fail of eternal life at the last was to be given over to the powers of ruin and decay."⁶⁵

Then turning to the negative side of Paul's message, here the concepts of Gehenna and only its torments are conspicuous by their absence. We know that Paul was nurtured in Rabbinic thought which was continually upholding the symbols of eternal fire. Yet, here he is silent. Nothing could be more profound than this. In doing this he sets himself over against Judaism, the Synoptic tradition, and the teachings of Jesus. Could it be that Paul was really closer to the truth than we have believed? It must be at once apparent that Paul could not endorse or promote the concept of perpetual torment which Jesus had supported. In all of his letters there is only one incident where Paul even attempts to suggest this conception (Romans 2: 8-11). It is far more common that Paul should speak in terms of death, decay, and perdition rather than the destruction by perpetual fires. While Paul went out of his way to tie in all the existing forms of eschatology, he clearly rejected the symbol of Gehenna as being unsuited for his beliefs or his teachings. And yet that possibility

that he raised may have been far worse and there was no need to call on the superficial concepts of Gehenna to invoke belief by fear. Paul believed that the most tragic event that could confront an individual is that he might die after he was dead. This means that as individuals we would be given over to irrevocable death rather than the converse of eternal life. And this indeed was much more to be feared than anything that we might imagine.

We might be ready to say that the prophecy, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye must die,' pointed to a fixed and final event, if we did not remember the similar and clearly imaginative saying, 'Sin revived, and I died.' We have always to bear in mind that the terms of the 'death' imagery had no such theological content for him as they have for us, to whom they represent a long dogmatic tradition. He had been nurtured in the Jewish Church which had no assured doctrine of immortality, far less of ultimate destiny; and members of that Church had spoken of death as the wages of sin, without themselves having any faith in a life to come. Also, St. Paul was a pupil of a Rabbinic school which was only beginning to consider the problems of future existence. Hence, words like 'death' and 'perdition' were for him still in a plastic state, and were ready to take many different forms of meaning under the touch of his individual and creative genius.⁶⁶

The first occasion that Paul addressed himself to these details at any length occurred in the letter to

Corinthians in which he exhibits "with wonderful completeness all the varied characteristics of the Apostle's genius; his impetuous logic, his rhetoric, his indignation and pathos, the electric leap of his thought from point to point, his passionate faith and hope. It is also a signal illustration of that originality of mind which enabled him to employ the old apocalyptic forms in such a way as to express through them his own distinctive gospel and to make them the instrument of his speculative thought."⁶⁷ It was within this context that Paul's true uniqueness shows through and it is against this that we must examine any doubts and scepticisms concerning his authority and apostleship. It is in this manner that his apostleship par excellence shows through and this is precisely why in so many people's thought Paul stands far above his colleagues "in Christ."

There are only two sayings of little importance in the whole of the Pauline corpus that reflect the traditional doom of the New Testament. But this is sufficient to indicate that it was a matter both serious and present because within these there is the thought of perdition and exclusion from the Kingdom. For Paul believed that the unregenerate men were already 'dead' in this world and as such were under the bondage of 'decay' and 'perdition,' but there

was always the strong element of hope that they might arouse themselves to an awareness and change their state before it became too late. The question arises as to when does this hope end and this we are not told. Can one maintain that those who are under the bondage of decay and death are in an endless and incurable state forever? Conversely, there are no specific grounds on which to argue that man can have salvation even after his death. The ambiguity of this situation has left room for the followers to hold up Paul as the disciple of Universal salvation. "The most forcible objections to the Universalist view are that the Apostle's warnings of approaching doom do have a note of finality in them and that his prophecies of a final reconciliation do not certainly imply that every man will enjoy the fulness of redemption."⁶⁸

While it is basically true that Paul held mostly to the concepts of the Jewish fathers, after his confrontation with the Lord, his faith in the Redeeming love of Christ transcended all other thoughts and personal beliefs had to give way. This became such a shining light to all his life that it truly blinded him to the irrelevant difficulties that at first disturbed him and the churches he came into contact with. "Till the last he spoke of those who were

lost, whose end was perdition, but he became less and less able to set limits or bounds to the reconciling energy of God in Jesus Christ the Lord. All this is clear; but beyond this we cannot go. We do not know that he ever held one definite, coherent theory as to the final state of mankind, or that on this subject he had 'beat his music out,' and completed the development of his thought."⁶⁹ If this be true then it is up to the followers to work out the music till the song is completed.

There is no greater difficulty in dealing with Paul than approaching his words with the assumption that the words that he uses have the same meaning and relevance for today as they had for Paul. Not only are we separated in thought but the proximity of the Resurrection shaded his entire thought and approach which we can by no means duplicate. To the Greeks that he encountered, death came also as the darkness of a cloud against their shining lives. The epitaphs on their sepulchres bear witness to this by using such terms as 'bitter', 'ruinous,' and 'relentless.' Nevertheless euphemisms were far more uncommon to the Greeks than to our enlightened age. The underworld stretched before them as the inevitable abyss where they must enter to exist in a 'withered' form. And for the Hebrew, he believed in God

whose first claim was that He was a living God. Somewhere along the way, as it is exceedingly difficult to set the exact time, the Hebrews came to believe that there was a connection between sin and death. By the time of Paul this lay on the consciousness of the populace. They believed that sin not only resulted in personal catastrophe but could and did effect families even unto the third generation. While these roots are hopelessly obscured, it followed logically from a sophisticated view of sin. Sin is that element that separates Man from God. Hence, also, death separated Man from God in a fuller and more ultimate manner. If death continued to hold the upper hand it was both judgment and doom. Thus it was not hard for them to believe that sin and death were inextricably interwoven. In the Book of Ezekiel we read that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" which probably is the same belief that underlies the writing of Genesis Chapter Three. But even for the most primitive tribesman there is something about death that offends. Death even for them seems to be unnatural but immortality seems to be the normal course. "The frailty and transiency of which it is the crowning proof, the sharp pangs which accompany its approach, the unsightliness and decay which follow its presence, the bitter pain of

soul it inflicts on those who are left behind---all these, its associations impress them as an outrage upon a creation made in the image of God. Plainly, therefore, we may say that for the Hebrew mind the physical fact has a spiritual significance. . . . Thus death is only intelligible to them in the light of the weakness and sinfulness of humanity."⁷⁰ So we see that the background for death is the fearful separation from God. Death then pronounces the last word on Man's fate and destiny and hence it always speaks of doom. Thus to Paul's mind there could be no more grievous penalty for sin than death; the death which would mean banishment from God and the complete paralysis of the individual.

Thus the Hebrew filled his mind with life and the fulfilment of it. He looked for pleasure in having a large family, prosperity, communion with God, and a long life. This was how to live out one's destiny to the fullest and best tradition. And to a certain extent they must have shrunk back from their gloomy and shadowy existence in Sheol which was despairing and hopeless. Death would mean for Paul the utter separation from God which would be overwhelmingly experienced and would eventually rend a person asunder. Death was chaos, ruin and disaster.

It will always, indeed, be impossible to reach a complete analysis of delicate spiritual experiences; but the apostle has set forth clearly enough the general features of his own appropriation of the Divine gift of life, its conditions, and its channel. Whatever St Paul may have carried with him from his training in a devout Jewish home and subsequently in the schools of the Pharisees, the unique spiritual crisis of his own life formed the regulating factor in his conceptions of the Divine workings in human experience. . . . For except on the ground of unshaken conviction, no man, who in describing other visions and revelations, employs so entirely different a tone, could have uttered the bare statement, 'Have not I seen Jesus our Lord?' (I Cor. 9:1).⁷¹

Whatever we come to understand as Pauline doctrine in eschatology, it will be impossible to make any clear demarcation in Paul's historical tradition and that of his personal encounter.

The clue for the understanding of Paul's eschatology is embraced in the expression, 'I have been crucified with Christ.' It was this same risen Lord that appeared to him on the Damascus journey who had been crucified for his own personal sin that made all the difference in Paul's life and thought. For within that meeting Paul found acceptance beyond himself, acceptance that he could not fathom, only acknowledge. Thus sin became for Paul what it had become

for Christ. While Christ died for Paul, Paul must now live for Christ as this is the fullest meaning of having been 'crucified with Christ.' Professor Denney ably states the case; "The faith which abandons itself to Christ is at the same time a receiving of the Spirit of Christ, or of what to experience is the same thing, Christ in the Spirit; there are not two things here but one, though it can be represented in the two relations which the words Faith and Spirit suggest."⁷² Baptism became both the sign and the symbol of this new faith. It very vividly portrays the old man going down to the depth never to be seen again as the new man rises fresh and purified by the water. This is all an appropriate symbol of the atoning death and resurrection as the individual passes from this sinful life in the flesh, having been cancelled by the Cross, and hence rises anew with the risen Lord to the completeness and fullness of the life in the Spirit. "But obviously, the picture also symbolises the relation of the believer to the Spirit. For all that has happened to him in the experience of salvation, his death to sin (immersion beneath the water), and his entrance upon a new life (emergence from the water), is really accomplished for him in response to his faith, accomplished by the Divine operation; is

the work, as St Paul would put it, of the Holy Spirit. Necessarily, in that sense, the experience of baptism emphasises the reality and significance of the gift of the Spirit, and thus quickens the believer's consciousness of its possession."⁷³

The totality of the individuals' experiences in Pauline theology is tied together by the unity of life itself. Life then becomes the summation of the totality of all his energies. One cannot be dissected by segments and held up in contrast to the other parts. The only contrast to Life is Death. "Death for the apostle means the ruin of the whole personality. Life means its triumphant continuance in the power of the Spirit beyond the barriers of earth and time, in conformity with the nature of the glorified Christ, who is the Image of the invisible God."⁷⁴

The majority of this paper has dealt with a topical approach to the problems of Pauline eschatology. This seemed to be the most reasonable way to enter upon the discussion because Paul makes no attempt to present his eschatology in a systematic framework. The framework must be super-imposed, which has been attempted. Now, for completeness sake it will be necessary to turn to a chronological survey to determine the development of thought in

its evolutionary form. Since the dating of these books is not completely settled, the form that will be followed will be that of Professor James Denney because he gives the most thorough and complete exposition of these Epistles in regard to the problem of death. The order is as follows; Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, and the Epistles of the imprisonment - Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians.

Thessalonians

In this First Epistle Paul eagerly expects an early return of Jesus. As certainly as Jesus died and rose again, He will return and take with Him those that have fallen asleep. Within these writings the Parousia, Resurrection and final judgment are closely connected as parts of one supreme event. There is here no introduction of a millennial reign on the earth. When Jesus descends, the dead in Christ shall arise so that the living and the resurrected righteous will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and will be forever with Him (I Thess. 4:16-18). The reference here is only for the Christians as there is no indication that there shall be any resurrection for the wicked. By implication we can conclude that after the resurrection of

the righteous of the world, those who did not share will remain in destruction. This is the concept of "vengeance" referred to in II Thessalonians 1:8.

The End will come about by the direct intervention of God when evil has reached its apex. This is in direct agreement with Jewish Apocalyptic thought. This day of the Lord cannot come "except the falling away (ἡ ἀποστασία) come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition whose coming is according to the working of Satan---with all deceit of unrighteousness of them that are perishing" (II Thess. 2:3, 9-10). It is the power of evil that shall call this into being by its strength. At this time Christ will descend from heaven and slay Satan with the breath of His mouth. (II Thess. 2:8).

This is all to occur within Paul's own lifetime (I Thess. 2:19). There will be obvious signs that will precede the actual event (II Thess. 2). The appearance will be that of a thief in the night bringing with it the day of Judgment. Those who have died in Christ are to sleep on until the Resurrection.

Professor Denney sees the only indisputable relevant passage contained within these Epistles as Thessalonians 5:9f.; 'God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the ob-

taining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.' In reply to the question, what did Christ do for us in regard to salvation? Paul would say simply he died for us. He died for us as this was the price that sin exacted. "In the nature of things the relation of sin and death made it binding on him to die if He was to annul sin. . . This passage suggests that His power to redeem is dependent on His making all our experiences His own. If we are to be His in death and life, then He must take our death and life to Himself. If what is His is to become ours, it is only on the condition that what is ours He first makes His. There is the same suggestion in Romans 14:9; 'To this end Christ died, and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.'⁷⁵ It was only by opening Himself fully to the whole gamut of human experience and expression that Jesus could truly become the Lord of all mankind. It was this willingness to stand with us, or even more to stand for us, that represented the Love of God and the Love of Christ over against the powers of evil. It was only by Christ stooping to the utter depths of sinful humanity that He could do us any good. But first and foremost

'Christ died for our sins.'

It is the awareness of the revelation which has begun in the resurrection of Christ which instantaneously called forth the hope for the fulfilment of salvation for the second coming of Christ. When He does come all will surrender up in dominion and power to God (I Cor. 15: 24-28). And it is this anxious expectation that elicits the resurrection of Christ and His second coming in the same breath when he refers to the substance of the faith of those Gentiles who had accepted the Gospel (I Thess. 1:9-10). It is Paul's unshaken hope that God will be all in all, that is the radically new element in the lives of these members. When they were Gentiles they had no knowledge of Christ and they were thus considered as ones 'having no hope and without God in the world' (Eph. 2:12). But Paul can now speak out of joy in telling them that their attitude towards the problem of death is no longer that of others 'who have no hope' (I Thess. 4:13). At this stage it is true that Paul believed that after death the soul would live on in the interim period. This is seen in his answer to the church at Thessalonica (I Thess. 4:15-18).

First Corinthians

First Corinthians is without a doubt the locus classicus of the Christian Faith in regard to eschatology. There is a great deal of thought compactly placed away in this one book and especially concentrated in the Fifteenth Chapter. In fact there is so much content here that Karl Barth writes a whole volume centred about this chapter. While it would be interesting but too consuming an enterprise to discuss at length the details of the book it will be of interest to reiterate some of the details.

The letters were addressed specifically to meet the problems of the Corinthian Church. Because Corinth was such a unique mixture of people and tradesmen, it is not difficult to see how they got into so many wrangles. "The main defect of the Corinthian conditions . . . Paul sees to consist in the boldness, assurance, and enthusiasm with which they believe, not in God, but in their own belief in God and in particular leaders and heroes; in the fact that they confuse belief with specific human experiences, convictions, trends of thought and theories--- the special human content of which logically makes the recollection of particular human names unavoidable."⁷⁶ Some of these individuals may have attempted to interpret

Christianity in terms of the Greek gods. Others may have been divided on social, economic and theological differences. These differences may have been the means of rationalizing their own positions. But whatever we might conjecture, the fact remains that the church was badly torn and perhaps the church at Corinth was the most difficult of all the churches that Paul established.

Paul pleads that they turn away from their various and sundry ways; "Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (4:16). The context makes this unmistakably clear: Come down from your wisdom, from your self-content, from your wealth, from the kingly consciousness which now fills you as Christians; come down from the brilliance of the all too Greek Christianity into which you have strayed, and, if you want to sail under the Pauline flag, come down into the foolishness and ignominy of Christ, where the truth is, where not man, not even the Christian man, but God is great, and where I, Paul, your father in Christ, am to be found."⁷⁷ Barth continues that it is not proper that "the testimony of Christ should be made an object of religious athleticism and brilliance, as the Greek religious world was fond of doing, regarding in an all too human manner the Great, the Estimable, the Amazing simply in the relation of Either-Or."⁷⁸

There is from God the Word of the Cross (1:18) which is salvation and as such is God's Word for us. "So are things placed in the scales in the Cross of Christ, which is the focus of the testimony of Him; on the one side, death is the last, the absolute last which we can see and understand; on the other side is life, of which we know nothing at all, which we can only comprehend as the life of God Himself, without having in our hands anything more than an empty conception thereof---apart from the fullness that God alone gives and His revelation in the resurrection."⁷⁹

But in dealing with some rather irrelevant problems in the letters to the Corinthians, Paul tackles the greatest problem of all. This is the problem of Death which is only a small part of the problem of Evil. This comes then as the crown and apex of all Pauline thought which has endeared him to the Christian Faith forever. While Paul formerly had the attitude of scolding, he now turns to the most positive assertion and apologia of the Christian Church. For it is the Resurrection of the Dead that makes the whole of Christianity universally relevant to mankind. "The Resurrection of the Dead is the point from which Paul is speaking and to which he points. From this standpoint, not only the death of those now living, but, above all,

their life this side of the threshold of death, is in the apostolic sermon, veritably seen, understood, judged, and placed in the light of the last severity, the last hope."⁸⁰

Here then in this one chapter is the expression of Paul's doctrine of the Last Things. There is perhaps no profounder statement in the whole of Christian dogma than this. "The great answer which, by reason of the fact that it is exactly given there, first awakens all the questions of life, comprehends in a single great question, can only confront mankind as the question of all questions, and in this disguise as question can only be grasped as answer also."⁸¹ Professor Barth continues that the last word "that is spoken here must be so understood as last word that it can at the same time be understood as first word, the history of the end at the same time, and, as such, the history of the beginning---as the first word, and as the history of the beginning of all time, of the whole of time, of the oldest ages as well as the latest ages, and of all the ages situated at the centre."⁸² Barth is maintaining that whether History is contracted or expanded, this is still the ultimate message. It was from the beginning the same as it will be at the consummation. It is the word for all time, constant, unchanging and immutable. It

transcends all, for in itself it is the Infinite, the Alpha and Omega, and the clue to existence.

But whatever else Paul may have lifted in those Corinthian hearts in the realm of faith, hope and trust, it all subsided in Paul's absence to the greater question of Death. Perhaps the very background of this stems from the sheer materialism of Christianity. What does Christianity mean for me? What benefits shall I derive out of it? This seems very crude but the form is so common that one cannot escape it as a possibility. So Paul must begin with what he preached so strongly and succinctly, invoking the very core of their beliefs and confession, hoping that these familiar words will come resounding back again to their full significance. "To follow the movement of his thoughts from afar and to hear with more or less distinctness the most vital things which he intended to say and yet nowhere can say---all this we must now show. Let us be prepared for partial failure from the start. We are probably (and not only historically) too far away from Paul to be able to approach him here, even approximately."⁸³ In all honesty it must be maintained that Paul is not here teaching new doctrine. The Church is too torn and confused to begin with something new. It must be seen that this is his same

thought delivered to them meticulously worked out to convince and to reassure them. It makes no attempt to lead them to other pastures but rather attempts to bring the straying sheep back to the fold from whence they came. "They merely took offence, as Lietzmann believes, at the Jewish doctrine of the resurrection, from the standpoint of the Greek belief in immortality, or as Bousset suggests: at the unconscious compromise between the Jewish and the Greek conception of the future life, within which Paul moved, but for the rest obviously did not dream of unravelling the antagonism between themselves and Paul in its fundamental acuteness."⁸⁴

The meaning of the verses 12 through 28 in 1st Corinthians 15 is that the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead depends on the general resurrection for its validity. It is quite plain that we could say, "he died" and "he was buried", but the action of God depends on the statement that He was raised from the dead. The first two incidents occur quite naturally without the interference of anyone or anything, it is only when He was raised from the dead that we must begin to look to an outside force. And if He had been raised from the dead, then it was possible for Him to be seen. After Christ's appearances He moves on

to encounters which transcend the normal concept of personal encounters. There is little known about these post-resurrection appearances, and it would thus appear that our lack of knowledge is as striking as the knowledge we have. The real point that Paul is driving at is the fact as to whether the Church can exist when it no longer continues to believe in the Resurrection, the ground and core of its existence. Without this belief it leads only to a purely illegitimate existence. This is the serious difficulty which the Church from time to time must seriously ask itself: "What does this mean?" The Church must continually endeavor to find new answers to this question and make them relevant for society. "Paul does not shrink from putting his 'Either-Or' so sharply that beside the impossible, unbelievable, inaccessible gospel of the Resurrection of the Dead there is left only the abyss of an utterly radical scepticism towards everything divine even towards everything that is humanly highest, holding the danger that somebody may fall into it and be unable to get out."⁸⁵ Paul makes no attempt to delude himself or ourselves.

He does not defend himself, but he attacks: Christianity without resurrection, and says as forcibly as

he can, that it is a lie and a deceit, not because it is still without this article of faith, but because it is in itself an illusion, a fiction. Whereas they regard Paul as a dogmatist, who loads their reason with an unnecessary, unrealizable idea, he shows them that they are those who (not with their doubts and negations, but with what they admit and presumably also believe) are playing blind-man's-bluff with ideas divorced from the real actuality. In attempting to escape from the resurrection as the alleged absurd, they are making an absurdity of what to them appears not absurd, but reasonable and tolerable; they are sawing off the branch upon which they are sitting.⁸⁰

There could be nothing more tragic than a religious body that has become so out of tune with the original sound waves that it no longer recognizes them and indeed, attempts to rationalize their presence away. Then again if the Resurrection only proceeds on the basis that One proceeded from the dead and has no relevance for any other followers, it dupes its followers to believe in a super-natural event which has no relevance for their individual lives and as such is not worthy enough to hold our highest allegiance. If Christianity is sheer philosophy, ethics, or disciplined living---then let it be that but do not ^{impose} ~~interject~~ upon it the concepts of the miraculous and supernatural being to bolster-up an idealism. We should then turn away from the

Resurrection and its demands and applications to our daily existence. Thus we can embrace Jesus as the supreme teacher of righteousness, the leader and example for the good moral and ethical life. Paul obviously had emphasized his whole teaching and preaching on the wrong phases of the Christian Life. Was the Apostle wrong in his emphasis? Obviously those that opposed him so vehemently at Corinth have returned to the membership and multiplied.

Paul would maintain that death and judgment rule also on this side of life. "Or whence comes the desire to know anything else? Whence do we lay claim to the arrogance that dying means redemption? Dying is pitilessly nothing but dying, only the expression of the corruptibility of all finite things, if there be no end of the finite, no perishing of the corruptible, no death of death. We are not, with edifying enthusiasm, to just try and push past the fact of death, but to be right sober at the last (verse 34), just as in front of the Cross of Christ, and say to ourselves, that this last word attainable by us: that we must die, gives, at any rate, no occasion for religious optimism regarding our situation as understood apart from revelation."⁸⁷

The basic error with the Corinthians is much the same one that confronts the modern Church. It was not that they denied the Resurrection of Christ. They accepted it as an act of God once and for all but this is precisely where they failed. For their life in Christ ended with Resurrection rather than beginning there. They gave up just where they should have started. It was the finished work full, complete, and ended. It was carried no further. They did not see it as the example, standard, or norm of their own personal lives. "They comprehended what had happened in Christ in the world as something finished and satisfying in itself. In reality it is only a beginning, in fact only an indication; Christ is come to deliver the Kingdom to the Father, after He has taken their force away from the powers warring against God, and has undermined the world, so to speak (Zundel) (verse 24). The hostile powers are all independent beginnings and forces, whose relationship to God is not yet clear. We must see Christ in conflict with all that is in this sense obscure, not at peace with it."⁸⁸

Paul raises the problem of being Baptized for the dead which seems to be as mysterious as it is esoteric. While it may always be open for speculation, there is not

a great deal that can be said accurately about it. Professor Barth states that "verse 29 is a crux interpretum, and the reader must make up his mind that even I cannot tell him much that is satisfying on this point. What is the meaning of 'which are baptized for the dead'? To be really baptized again for others who are already dead, to be baptized vicariously for them?"⁸⁹

Indeed the life of the apostle had a special meaning in that before the face of death he acknowledged life. "In defiance of death, and thus in face of death, there where nothing but death is to be perpetually reckoned with, or in that case with the entire new beginning itself, but not with that which lies between, only from thence. If this Thence be removed, the apostleship becomes a stupid farce. It would then be really appropriate to discuss the requirements and possibilities of life (of life apart from the Cross) in a somewhat more practical manner."⁹⁰ Barth continues, "That I (Paul), as apostle, can only reckon with death, or then with the resurrection itself, that alone places you in the position, with apparent rightness without fear of death, without faith in resurrection, to regard it differently. But how could I persist in this Either-Or if I were not sure of my cause? if I did

not know that the oppression of death must be for the sake of the Life which I preach, which can only be preached from just this standpoint?"⁹¹ Perhaps it was not strictly a matter here of some people accepting the Resurrection and others denying it, but rather a continuum with all shades of belief and disbelief. Doubtless few have seen the Resurrection with the depth, consistency, and intensity that Paul did and hence there have been few that could agree with him completely.

The bodily existence does not continue in the flesh and blood as there is virtually no purpose for this body to continue in the limits and the confines of the earthly existence. In reality it was nothing to do with flesh and blood. Paul came to see that beyond death the body was so much a constricting factor as it gave entry to the true depth and expression of human personality. At death God steps in to redeem us even though we are unredeemable.

The corruptibility, dishonour, and weakness of man is, in fact, that of his corporeality. Death is the death of his body. If death be not only the end---but the turning point, then the new life must consist in the reprecipitation of his corporeality. To be sown and to rise again must then apply to the body. The body is man, body

in relation to a non-bodily, determined, indeed, by this non-bodily, but body. The change in the relationship of the body to this non-bodily is just the resurrection. Not, therefore, some transition of man to a merely non-bodily existence. Of such Paul knows nothing whatever. The persisting subject is rather just the body. It is 'natural' body this side, 'spiritual' body beyond the resurrection.⁹²

Now as far as doctrine changes or insights are concerned the following observations can be made. Basically it is very similar to Thessalonians. The Parousia and the Final Judgment are to occur in the Apostle's life. This is to be preceded by severe trials which will last only for a short period. The Judgment will follow immediately after the Parousia so that there will be no lapse of time. It is seen that here Christ will be the Judge and people will be judged by works. The individual's resurrection is organically connected to the Resurrection of Christ. This is limited to the righteous who will retain some of the personal bodily qualities. In the new form there is to be continuity and discontinuity, but nevertheless contingent on one another. "This essential likeness proceeds from the fact that they are successive expressions of the same personality, though in different spheres. It is the same individual vital principle that organises both. From this description of the resurrection body it is obvious

that only the righteous can share in the resurrection."⁹³
The faithless are to remain naked or to have no existence at all.

The resurrection of the faithful follows immediately after death and will not be put off until the Parousia as there is no waiting for the trumpet. "Of this variance between his living and growing thought and inherited Jewish views the Apostle does not seem conscious in I Corinthians. In the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians we shall find that the Apostle has become conscious of the inherent inconsistencies of his former view, which was the traditional one, and abandoned it in favour of the doctrine of a resurrection of the righteous following immediately on death."⁹⁴ Paul's teaching here is not entirely novel but follows readily the more advanced apocalyptic literature.

Christ's Kingdom will end with the conclusion of this world. As the resurrection is only for those who continue in a vital dynamic relationship with Christ, there is no resurrection for the wicked. Nothing per se is said of the doom of the wicked, except such general statements that all will be judged according to their works (2 Cor. 5:10). There is also a word about Grace here for we were all bought with a price (I Cor. 6:20; 7:23). Grace is

freely given and freely received, yet this is not in the least to infer that it is cheap. We should glorify God for such an expensive price and beware not to become servants of man for our responsibility is to God. While one is hard pressed to make any elaboration out of this divine economics it is quite clear that the idea of the work of man's salvation was a costly work, and that the cost, however we are to construe it, is represented by the death of Christ. Salvation cannot be taken for granted as a small and unimportant thing but rather as the enormous cosmic struggle. "Salvation is a difficult thing, an incredible thing, an impossible thing. It is the miracle of miracles that such a thing should be; the wonder of it never ceases, and it nowhere finds a more thrilling expression than in Paul's words, 'Ye were bought with a price.'"⁹⁵

Second Corinthians

Paul begins defensively about his position as an apostle. No doubt he was under attack and he used such an opportunity to make known his position to his opponents who were probably not the Corinthians. There are two

bases for his assertions; one is his comprehension of the doctrine of Christ and secondly the latter day success he had in preaching it. Not only is he presenting the Gospel but he indeed bore about in his body the dying of Jesus. Here it is clear that for Paul, to preach Christ was to do so at the expense of his life. His trials and tribulations of discipleship will eventually cost his life as it did his Master, for daily he feels the force of death over taking him (1:5 & 4:10).

In the Fifth Chapter we have the exposition of what Christ's death was in relationship to sin.

... The motive of his conduct is always the same, 'the love of Christ constrains us. . . because we thus judge, that one died for all (so then all died), and died for all that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them, and rose again'. (5:14-15). The importance of this passage is that it connects the two relations in which Paul is in the habit of defining Christ's death, that is its relation to the love in which it originated, and to the sin with which it dealt. It shows us also how to construe these two things in relation to each other. Christ's death, we are enabled to see, was a loving death so far as men are concerned only because in that death He took the responsibilities of men upon Himself. Deny that, and it will be impossible to show any ground on which the death can be construed as a loving death at all.⁹⁶

The theory behind this for Denney is:

It is that one died for all means that the interest of all was aimed at and involved in the death of the one. How it was involved in it these words do not enable us to say. They do not by themselves show the connection between Christ's death and the world's good. But Paul draws an immediate inference from them: 'so then all died.' In one sense, it is irrelevant and interrupts his argument. He puts it into a hurried parenthesis, and then eagerly resumes what it had suspended. 'One died for all (so then all died), and died for all that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again.' Yet it is in this immediate inference--- that the death of Christ for all involved the death of all---that the missing link is found. It is because Christ's death has this inclusive character, because, as Athanasius puts it, 'the death of all was fulfilled in the Lord's body', that His death has in it a power which puts constraint on men to live for Him.

What then is the relationship of Christ's death to our own? What is in this that has the power to constrain men ever since these words were uttered?

And this is precisely what we discover in the inferential clause: 'so then all died'. This clause puts as plainly as it can be put the idea that His death was equivalent to the death of all. In other words, it was the death of all men which was died by Him. Were this not so, His death would be nothing to them. It is beside the mark to say that His death is died by them rather

than theirs by Him. The very point of the apostle's argument may be said to be that in order that they may die His death He must first die theirs. Our dying His death is not, in the New Testament, a thing which we achieve on our own initiative or out of our own resources. It is the fruit of His dying ours. If it is our death that Christ died on the cross, there is in the cross the constraint of an infinite love. But if it is not our death at all, if it is not our burden and doom that He has taken to Himself there, what then is it to us? The death of all was died by Him. His death can put the constraint of love upon all men, only when it is thus judged.⁹⁸

Hence it is Reconciliation which is the subject of this death. This was what God was doing in and through Christ, reconciling them to God. Of this one great Divine act we see that the subject is God and the object is Man. It was always God who stooped to take the initiative and paid the overwhelming cost. Katallassein does not come over exactly into the English, we assume that one has to lay aside all fear, distrust and love of evil, and has entered, in point of fact, into relations of peace and friendship with God. The work of reconciliation, in the sense of the New Testament, is a work which is finished, and which we must conceive to be finished before the gospel is preached. It is only with this concept that the Church must and can move forward. "It is a work---as Cromwell

said of the covenant---outside of us, in which God so deals in Christ with the sin of the world, that it shall no longer be a barrier between Himself and men Reconciliation in the New Testament sense, is not something which is being done; it is something which is done."⁹⁹ Unless it is a completed work we have no real gospel for man. "'He died for our sins.' When the sinless one, in obedience to the will of the Father, died on the cross the death of all, the death in which sin had involved all, then, and in that sense, God made Him to be sin for all."¹⁰⁰ Thus if the Reconciliation of Man to God is thus the finished work, the only reconciliation that can remain is man's reconciliation to man. Thus there is the call to participate in the extension of reconciliation by becoming a part of the reconciling community, the Christian Church. It is in accepting His death for us and our responses of continuing His work by dying unto Him so that we can become part of this community.

There are in this Epistle the following elements of change. There is tremendous growth in that the time of the end has been expanded by Paul as well as deepened the understanding of the Kingdom. The Kingdom has to spread and will close the culmination of evil. The world will

thus be faced with the conversion of all mankind. The Parusia is followed by Judgment that will be by works, which is the normal expression of faith. There is no other form of retribution other than by man's works (II Cor. 11:15).

The Resurrection is to follow immediately after the death of the individual. It would appear that Paul has caught himself on his own inconsistencies with regard to the placing of the Resurrection. The main doctrine of Pauline eschatology is rethought and reshaped in the context of Second Corinthians 5:1-8. "We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. . ." At first (v.4) Paul expresses his deep desire to live on to the Parusia in order that he might escape dissolution fulfilling his highest hopes. However, in the much more realistic verses he squarely faces up to the possibilities of death. To the prospect before them, of their possible shape, Paul expresses that we come into the possession of an immortal body in heaven. It would be hoped that the Elect received their bodies at the point of their election but as the text shows it is not until death. This new body is the combination of the divine gift of God and the works of the individual. Paul

drops the terminology of the resurrection of the righteous at the Parousia in place of their revelation in glory. There is thus a spiritual resurrection of the faithful that continues on. Then later Paul can say that they are "alive from the Dead" (Rom. 6:13), as those "raised with Christ through faith" (Col. 2:12, 3:1); and even "quicken together and raised up," and again "made to sit with him in heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6).

Galatians

When we come to the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul deals more wholly and exclusively with the death of Christ than any other book in the whole of the New Testament. It is Christ who gave Himself over for our sins that He might redeem us. There are the strong words of Paul as he anathematizes those who preach another gospel. Then at the conclusion of chapter two Paul states his unshaken conviction that Christianity is a new and true religion which is an end in itself and can never be compromised nor complemented. This is because of the uniqueness and the power of the death of Christ.

"I have been crucified with Christ; my life is no longer mine, it is Christ who lives in me; the life I now

live in flesh I live in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me'"(2:20). "The whole of the Christian religion lies in that. The whole of Christian life is a response to the love exhibited in the death of the Son of God for men."¹⁰¹ Total trust is the only right thing a man can do when confronted with the living Christ. To add or subtract from this, is compromise. "If righteousness is by law, as he sums it up in one of his passionate and decisive words, then Christ died for nothing (2:21). Paul knew by experience that all he was, or could ever become as a Christian came out of the cross. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world' (Gal. 6:14). . . We may say that the aim of the Epistle to the Galatians is to show that all Christianity is contained in the cross, which is the generative principle of everything Christian in the life of man."¹⁰² Conversely the law contributes nothing to that life.

Paul worked his religion out between himself and his Creator. For Christ came and lived under the law and was subject to the Law. This not only was part of His humanity but it was the element that led to His death

and crucifixion. But Christ came to break us from the spell of the Law (Gal. 3:13) through his obedience. For Paul the whole subject of Christ's death is only known through obedience. This is the key to the mystery of Christ's death. Now we are no longer subject to the Law, but through Christ's obedience we are now subject to Him. "Death is the curse of the law. It is the experience in which the final repulsion of evil by God is decisively expressed; and Christ died. In His death everything was made His that sin had made ours---everything in sin except its sinfulness. There is no essential significance in the crucifixion, as though it would have been impossible to say that Christ became a curse for us if He had died in any other way. The curse, in truth, is only one of Paul's synonyms for the death of Christ---one which is relative, no doubt, to the conception of Christ as 'under the law', but which for its meaning is entirely independent of the passage in Deuteronomy."¹⁰³

Those who have been crucified with Christ have died unto the passions and lusts of the flesh. For those who have pried open the mystery of Calvary and who now live with Christ are now aware that sin is sentenced to doom (5:24). To come to any depth of relationship with its

meaning is truly the end of our fleshly existence. So to this continuing thought Paul thus turns in conclusion: "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto men, and I unto the world." (6:14). Paul has run full circle in this Epistle and thus ends precisely where he began.

Romans

This Epistle of Romans coming a bit later and addressed more in summary than to a church that is torn such as the Corinthians, is not so controversial. The underlying theme is how shall such a sinful creature as man be made righteous in the sight of God. The righteousness of God is expressed through the Death of Christ (3:25). So again we see, as in Galatians, the Death of Christ is the source of all Christian truth and meaning. It is the focus of all God's actions and love, and expounding it or developing it there is all of what is Christian Theology. It negates the past, makes way for the future, and assures us in our day to day transitory existence as we move on to that which is eternal. (5:9ff., 8:31 ff.).

One of the crucial passages is that raised by

Romans 3:21f. The two outstanding difficulties are the meaning of ilasterion (propitiation) in verse 25. The other problem is whether there is one consistent meaning of the 'righteousness of God' or whether it holds different meanings in passages such as verse 22 and verse 26. "Not that these two principal difficulties are unrelated to each other. On the contrary, they are inextricably intertwined, and cannot be discussed apart. It is an argument for distinguishing two senses of δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ (the righteousness of God) that when we do so we are enabled to see more clearly the meaning of ἱλαστήριον^v. It is the very function of Jesus Christ set forth by God as a propitiation in His blood to exhibit these two senses (which are equally indispensable if there is to be a religion for sinful men) in their unity and consistency with each other. And, on the other hand, the term ἱλαστήριον^v, to say the least, is relative to some problem created by sin for a God who would justify sinners; and the distinction of two senses in which δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ is used enables us to state this problem in a definite form."¹⁰⁴ For there can be no Gospel unless there is the presupposition of the righteousness of God extending to the ungodly. Then the question returns; How do you relate this righteous God to

this sinful world? Paul sums up his solution to the problem by stating: "Jesus Christ whom God set forth a propitiation (or, in propitiatory power) in His blood.' This is how God has acted to justify the ungodly who have accepted Jesus and yet retained His righteousness.

Denney maintains, and quite rightly so, that so many of the explanations of the Death of Christ miss the point because they show no relation either to the freedom from the law nor to existing controversies within His churches. This is precisely the point where so many Pauline theologians have been side-tracked.

The passage in Romans becomes simple as soon as we read it in the light of those we have already examined in 2 Corinthians and in Galatians. It is Christ set forth in His blood who is a propitiation; that is, it is Christ who died. In dying, as Paul conceived it, He made our sin His own. He took it on Himself as the reality which it is in God's sight and to God's law. He became sin, became a curse for us. It is this which gives His death a propitiatory character and power, which makes it possible, in other words, for God to be at once righteous and a God who accepts as righteous those who believe in Jesus. He is righteous, for in the death of Christ His law is honoured by the Son who takes the sin of the world to Himself as all that it is to God; and He can accept as righteous those who believe in Jesus, for in so believing sin becomes

to them what it is to Him. I do not know any word which conveys the truth of this if 'vicarious' or 'substitutionary' does not. Nor do I know any interpretation of Christ's death which enables us to regard it as a demonstration of love to sinners, if this vicarious or substitutionary character is denied.¹⁰⁵

The New Testament calls us to acknowledge this love as we look at the Cross where He bore our sins and He died our death. Hence it is this love that constrains us.

"Accepting this interpretation, we see that the whole secret of Christianity is contained in Christ's death, and in the believing abandonment of the soul to that death in faith. It is from Christ's death, and the love which it demonstrates, that all Christian inferences are drawn. . . . For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled, shall we be saved by His life' (Rom. 5:8ff.). . . . The propitiatory death of Christ, as an all-transcending demonstration of love, evokes in sinful souls a response which is the whole of Christianity. The love of Christ constraineth us: whoever can say that can say all that is to be said about the Christian life."¹⁰⁶

There is really no argument that we can raise against the Gospel that Paul gives, for it is not a philosophy. It was a matter of Paul living out the con-

text of his life and death under the dynamic relationship with a vital caring God. The only objections that can be raised are from those individuals that have come as close to God as he has. It might be that if one so ventured out as Paul did, his disagreements would depreciate as his respect increased. For as individuals, we still come to Paul seeing through glass darkly. It is a witness to be born out in a life of both servitude and gratitude. This life Paul best described by means of Baptism in which individuals went down to sin in death but were transformed by the act and rose as new beings in full dimensions of life.

Paul sees death as a three-fold concept; a death to sin, a death to flesh and a death to law. Since Christ has in fact died our death on the cross, the commitment to it also evokes a death. Christ's death first and foremost was a death for sin, because sin produced the situation that led to Christ's death. (Rom. 6:10). "For us, dying to sin may seem to have a different meaning; it is not only a discharge from its responsibilities that is wanted, but a deliverance from its power. But this can come only on the foundation of the other; it is the discharge from the responsibilities of sin involved in

Christ's death and appropriated in faith, which is the motive power in the daily ethical dying to sin. It really is such a motive power, and the only one in the world, when we realize what it is."¹⁰⁷ Paul challenges us to take the whole matter of sin as seriously as Christ did in facing death. There must be an all out drive of the individual to separate himself completely from sin. This would evoke within the individual a death unto sin through the whole of life. This calls for our daily mortification of evil which in effect shares in the Crucifixion with Christ by our daily taking up the cross against the passion and lusts.

It is a death to the flesh as stated in Romans 8:3f. Law has become impotent in regard to the flesh. By the concept of flesh it means "sin in its constitutional and instinctive character, sin as the nature or the second nature of man, it does not here matter which. What the law could not do God took another way of doing. He sent His Son in the likeness of flesh of sin, and as a sin-offering, and in so doing condemned sin in the flesh.

ὁμοίωμα here no doubt emphasizes Christ's likeness to us: it is not meant to suggest difference or unreality in His nature."¹⁰⁸ Thus by this manner of propitiation

God did condemn sin in the flesh. His Judgment was pronounced upon it in Christ's death thus ending both its nature and power. Through this death it cancelled the Law in that it did to sin what the Law could never do, and that was to break its power.

Paul repeatedly refers to death for the Christian as a death to the law. (Rom. 6:14; 7:4; Gal. 2:19). This is the point at which both the critics and the followers have jumped in and have done the most harm because they have misunderstood Paul. "On the one hand, when Christ died, justice was done to the law of God, both as an imperative and as a condemning law, as it had never been done before. The will of God had been honoured by a life of perfect obedience, and the awful experience of death in which God's inexorable judgment on sin comes home to the conscience had been borne in the same obedience and love by His sinless Son. On the other hand, when this death evokes the faith for which it appeals the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in the believer; the law gets its due in his life also, or, as the apostle puts it, it is established by faith. How is it, then that faith involves a death to the law? It is through the assurance, given to faith at the cross, that so far as

doing the will of God is concerned a new and living way has been found."¹⁰⁹ It is not the only statutory law which was so cumbersome but rather the law transformed by the atonement. And it is the inspiration of Christ which directs the whole of Christian life not the rigidity and confines of the law.

Hence springs the liberty which Paul talks about. It is the same thing that St. Augustine meant when he asked us to love God and then do as we please. It is the perfect freedom to open oneself to power and the glory of Christ's message. It is the freedom and the liberty to fulfill the task for which we were called. It is the call to serve one whose service is perfect freedom. Thus through the Atonement the individual is dead to the Law through the death of Christ.

We are not just left as such. It is not simply a matter of working out our destiny with fear and trembling for we are given the Spirit. And it is the Spirit that relates us daily and directly to the meaning of Christ's death for our own lives.

But if we are speaking of the new moral life of the Christian, and ask what we mean by the Spirit psychologically, that is, what form the experience of His work takes, I should say it is

indistinguishable from that infinite assurance of God's love, given in Christ's death, through which the Christian is made more than conqueror in all the difficulties of life, inward or external. It is with this assurance that the Spirit is connected when Paul opens his discussion of the subject in Romans 5:5 'The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us.' With this same assurance he concludes his discussion in Romans 8:35: 'Who shall separate us from the love of God?' The triumphant certainty of this love, a certainty always recurring to and resting on that miracle of miracles, the sin-bearing death of Christ, is the same thing as joy in the Holy Spirit, and it is this joy which is the Christian's strength. From the Spirit, then, or from the love of God as an assured possession, the Christian life may equally be explained. And it is not another, but the same explanation, when we say that it is begotten and sustained from beginning to end by the virtue which dwells in the propitiatory death of Jesus.¹¹⁰

The Epistles of the Imprisonment

The letters constitute a new peak of Paul's writings as he must have surveyed the whole of his work, the trials and tribulations, the persecutions and the joys, as well as the failures and the successes. The work of the Epistle to the Philippians ties in readily with those to Galatians

and Romans, thus even in the end he held tenaciously and consistently to his beliefs (Phil. 3:9f). So within these letters Paul does not stray from the fundamental doctrines which he first maintained, it is rather a case of him bringing into focus the items on the fringes as his own faith had to define the challenges confronting him.

He sees before him the whole world and all Mankind in a much larger framework and grander scale as set against the universe as a whole. God has been pleased 'through Him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens' (Col. 1:20). Reconciliation is now seen in the context of History, for 'you who were once estranged, and enemies in mind by wicked works, He has now reconciled in the body of His flesh through death' (Col. 1:21f. also Eph. 1:7ff.). He has begun his belief with the encounter with the Jesus (the historical Christ) but now the mysteries of Christ have been revealed to him as he conceives the end as 'the gathering together in one of all things in Him, both things in (or above) the heavens and things on the earth' (Eph. 1:10). This larger scope of the world is countered by its part in the spiritual world, and the one has

consequences that influence the other. Thus sin has far reaching factors which not only have their inter-play upon earth but also their ramifications that extend to all nature. It is like a cancer that may start in any part of the system and will ultimately spread throughout.

The people to whom he wrote believed in 'thrones and dominions and principalities and powers'; and although there may be a touch of indifference, not to say scorn, in some of his own allusions to the high-sounding names---for instance, in Eph. 1:21f.---they had some sort of reality for him too. There are passages like Col. 2:15, or those in which he refers to (Gal. 4:3; Col. 2:8), where he seems to connect the spiritual beings in question with the angels through whom the law was given (Gal. 3:19, Acts 7:53), and to represent the superseding of Judaism by Christianity as a victory of Jesus over these inferior but refractory powers to whom for a while the administration of human affairs, and especially of the immature, materialistic and legal stages of religion had been committed.¹¹¹

However if Paul held strongly to these beliefs it would probably be true that they would have come up more frequently.

The greater scale to which Jesus is elevated in these Epistles of Imprisonment is that Paul raises Christ to cosmic significance. Christ has outgrown the concept of the second Adam and has become the head of the new humanity, as in the earlier letters (Rom. 5:12ff.; I Cor. 15:45ff.).

"He is the centre of the universe. He is a person so great that Paul is obliged to reconstruct His whole world around Him. He is the primary source of all creation, its principle of unity, its goal (Col. 1:15ff.)."¹¹² His works permeate all the Universe. He has come for all and has a claim on all.

What is of consequence is his conviction that in Jesus Christ dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead---all that makes God in the full sense of the term God---bodily, that is, in organic unity and completeness; and that the same completeness and finality belong to His reconciling work. 'The blood of His cross': it is in this we find the resolution of all discords, not only in the life of man, but in the universe at large. It is in this we see a divine love which does not shrink from taking on itself to the uttermost the moral responsibility for the world it has made, for all the orders of being in it, and all their failures and fortunes.¹¹³

There will be a universal reconciliation when Jews and Gentiles have been made one through the body of Christ (Eph. 2:11-22). Here is one of the high points of Paul's thinking that God is not the God of the Jews only. (Rom. 3:29). A God of such significance and supremacy cannot be working merely for one minority group. 'On the contrary, there is nothing in the world so universally intelligible as the cross. Hence it is the meeting-place not only of

God and man, but of all races and conditions of men with each other. There is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female, bond nor free, there. The cross is the basis of a universal religion, and has in it the hope of a universal peace."¹¹⁴

In conclusion we can say that the immediacy and hope of an early return of Jesus have vanished. Paul no longer expects to be present to watch the Parousia but rather wants to press on "to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). The Kingdom of Christ will have an everlasting duration and all will be subject to His power. It is by faith in the righteousness of God through faith in Christ that he hopes to share in the power of Christ's Resurrection and thus attain unto the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10ff.). Not only is Christ raised to cosmic significance but He is the goal to which all creation is moving. All things are to be 'summed up in Christ' (Eph. 1:10), 'reconciling all things to himself' (Col. 1:20). Thus there shall be no trace of evil or wickedness to survive for it will be completely obliterated. For it shall either bow before Christ's presence or be utterly destroyed. Thus throughout these Epistles there is an entirely new growth and completeness not previously

expressed. He is more settled in his own mind and has the opportunity to reflect with clearness of thought the problems which his earlier letters did not allow. His eschatology is bound up in a statement in Titus (3:4ff.), "When the kindness of God our Saviour, and His love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."¹¹⁵

Footnotes

¹ S.G.F. Brandon, Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions (Manchester: University Press, 1962), p. 197.

² Ibid., p. 198.

³ Ibid., p. 198.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 203-04.

⁵ J. N. Sevenster, Paul and Seneca (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), p. 75.

⁶ Brandon, p. 213.

⁷ Brandon, p. 213.

⁸ Brandon, p. 213.

⁹ Brandon, pp. 213-14.

¹⁰ Brandon, p. 215.

¹¹ Brandon, p. 216.

¹² Sevenster, p. 233.

¹³ Sevenster, p. 236.

¹⁴ Sevenster, p. 237.

¹⁵ Sevenster, pp. 237-38.

¹⁶ Oscar Cullmann, Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? (London: Epworth, 1959), p. 10-11.

¹⁷ Sevenster, p. 239.

¹⁸ James Denney, The Death of Christ (London: Tyndale Press, 1956), p. 65.

¹⁹ Denney, p. 68.

- ²⁰Denney, pp. 69-70.
- ²¹Denney, pp. 72-73.
- ²²Denney, p. 73.
- ²³Denney, p. 75.
- ²⁴Denney, p. 76.
- ²⁵Denney, p. 76.
- ²⁶W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (London: S. P. C. K., 1948), p. 228.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 229.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 229.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 237.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 271.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 273.
- ³²Ibid., pp. 283-84.
- ³³Ibid., p. 285.
- ³⁴Ibid., p. 290.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 291.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 292.
- ³⁷Ibid., p. 297.
- ³⁸Ibid., p. 299.
- ³⁹Ibid., p. 302.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 303-04.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 308.

⁴²R. H. Charles, Doctrine of a Future Life (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1899), p. 394.

⁴³Davies, p. 310.

⁴⁴R. Travers Herford, The Pharisees (New York: Macmillan, 1924), pp. 168-69.

⁴⁵Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle (London: A. & C. Black, 1931), pp. 54-59, passim.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 68.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 76.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 83.

⁵²Ibid., p. 90.

⁵³Ibid., p. 91.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 93.

⁵⁵Davies, p. 297.

⁵⁶Schweitzer, p. 95.

⁵⁷Schweitzer, pp. 96-97.

⁵⁸Schweitzer, p. 98

⁵⁹Schweitzer, p. 116.

⁶⁰Schweitzer, p. 119.

⁶¹Schweitzer, p. 125.

⁶²J. H. Leckie, The World to Come and Final Destiny (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), p. 161.

- ⁶³ Ibid., p. 168.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 169.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 169.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 172-73.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 174.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 181.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 182.
- ⁷⁰ H. A. A. Kennedy, St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1904), p. 110.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 140-41.
- ⁷² Ibid., p. 143.
- ⁷³ Ibid., pp. 151-52.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 157.
- ⁷⁵ Denney, pp. 77-78.
- ⁷⁶ Karl Barth, The Resurrection of the Dead (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933), p. 17.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 21.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 22.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 22-23.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 107.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 107.
- ⁸² Ibid., p. 112.
- ⁸³ Ibid., p. 118.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 128.

- 85 Ibid., p. 157.
- 86 Ibid., p. 161.
- 87 Ibid., p. 167.
- 88 Ibid., p. 177.
- 89 Ibid., p. 181.
- 90 Ibid., p. 185.
- 91 Ibid., p. 186.
- 92 Ibid., p. 201.
- 93 Charles, p. 394.
- 94 Charles, p. 395.
- 95 Denney, p. 79.
- 96 Denney, p. 83.
- 97 Denney, pp. 83-84.
- 98 Denney, p. 84.
- 99 Denney, p. 86.
- 100 Denney, p. 87.
- 101 Denney, p. 89.
- 102 Denney, pp. 89-90.
- 103 Denney, p. 94.
- 104 Denney, p. 97.
- 105 Denney, pp. 102-03.
- 106 Denney, p. 104.
- 107 Denney, p. 108.

108 Denney, p. 109.

109 Denney, p. 110.

110 Denney, p. 111.

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112 Denney, p. 116.

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THE CONCEPT OF DEATH IN THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS

For the purpose of simplicity the writings in the New Testament attributed to John will be dealt with in this chapter entitled, "The Concept of Death in Johannine Writings." Recent scholarship in this area would seem to indicate that this is perhaps more practical and realistic than was held at the turn of the century. However, it is the theology not the authorship that this paper wishes to examine. In the pattern of Archdeacon R. H. Charles and Professor James Denney, the Apocalypse will be examined first and this will be followed by an evaluation of the Gospel and the Epistles.

One of the unifying factors of the corpus of Johannine Writings is the strong bend toward eschatology. John does not run from the eschatology of the New Testament rather

. . . he has emphasized its truth, and at the same time emphasized its problems and inadequacies, perhaps more strongly than any other writer. Eschatology is least inadequate in figurative description

of the final end and goal of history. It gives a tolerable account of the work and person of Jesus, which in any case are paradoxical. It is least satisfactory in dealing with the age of the Church, the interval which lies between the adumbration of the end in Jesus and the end itself. This age however is the age which John was primarily concerned to explain, and it was the necessity of explaining it which, more than any other factor, led to the development of his theology. Johannine theology is not so much the imposition of alien forms and terminology upon primitive Christian thought (though it is expressed partly in new forms and terminology), as the spontaneous development of primitive Christian thought under the pressure of inner necessity and the lapse of time.¹

It is readily seen that the terminology of this corpus is "loaded." The term "loaded" here means that the words are used as a vehicle to carry or convey meanings far beyond their normal capacity of usage. These nuances become the means by which the theology of John is expressed. No author or authors was as adept at using words as symbols, parables or signs as John. No New Testament writer was quite so quick to relate the whole of Christian thought to the Greek world. This is not so surprising when we reflect that it was John who had a deep and abiding respect for the Word and the words of God.

The Word of God for John is a dynamic creative life-giving, light-giving force which seeks out men in order

that they might find a right relationship with God and seeks to hold them there. By His Word was the world created and brought into being. Thus it was John's high and holy thought that this same Jesus was not a word from God in the sense of an ongoing revelation but rather Jesus was the very Word of God. This infers that Jesus was not only God's first word to man but also His last word. Jesus as the Word is God's fullest and finest revelation. With this great interest in semantics and revelation we are assured that his words are clear, cogent and consistent so that they might convey what John intended.

Whatever words John might have used to accomplish his task the theme remains a constant. It is simply the Love of God. Nowhere do we find a more succinct expression of this than in John 3:16. Death can no longer remain as an abstraction for the Love of God has made Man's relation to Death the most subjective element in the universe.

Everything, we have seen, comes from the love of God. The death of Christ is to be construed in harmony with this, not in any antagonism to it. But the love of God to the world is never conceived in Scripture abstractly. . . . The giving of the Son includes at least the giving of Him to that death which, as we have seen, pervades the Gospel from beginning to end; indeed, the death is emphasized in the immediate context (3:14ff.). Nor are we left with-

out sufficiently clear hints as to the necessity which determined the gift. In the passage just referred to (3:16) we see that apart from it men are lost; they perish, instead of having eternal life. John's mind revolves round these ultimate ideas, death and life, rather than their moral equivalents or presuppositions, sin and righteousness. But we cannot suppose that he did not include in 'death' and 'life' all that we mean by these latter words.²

These "ultimates" communicate depths of insight which are still obscure to our minds. Here then, John expresses the inscrutable mysteries of God in terms which are both applicable and lasting. It was John's task not to project Christians into the future but rather to make the future active and present in the daily activities of the Church.

Moving on then from these general considerations of the Johannine corpus, we shall consider the Apocalypse in detail. Here one finds himself immersed by a "new heaven" and a "new earth" in linguistic symbols. As a background for his writings we know that John used I Enoch, the Twelve Testaments, the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, and something of Paul. Even though he used I Enoch considerably and the Old Testament greatly, his work is not dependent upon them. A wide and diverse stream of literature and wisdom flows through the Apocalypse, it stands as a unity in and of itself. Dr. Austin Farrer states that John never attempted

to copy sources, but fully digested his material and came out with a real grasp of the ancient scriptures.³ The Apocalypse stands as a monument to apocalyptic literature. The same symbols are used here, yet John stands in view of the accomplished mission, for to him the end is in view. The message of John is a high point of Christian theology as he moves far beyond the Old Testament writers. For John has seen the end of History and writes from that vantage point, thus to him has been revealed the true meaning of History. Even though John has been proven to be not completely right about History, his insights into the fundamentals of the Christian Faith give an eternal significance, which is operative in every age. Thus the message is always contemporaneous with History. The writing is never impaired by the narrow scope of the needs for which it was written. This adds to the assurance of its revelatory nature. There is absolutely no doubt in John's mind, that the Church will win out in Victory. In spite of all the troubles and fears, God has the last word. His complete trust in God as Author and Finisher, as Creator and Redeemer in this life and the next is unsurpassed. So too is his language, for its linguistic nature makes the Apocalypse absolutely unique.

There is no doubt that symbolism was the only means open to express the conflicts of Christ and Caesar, of the Church and the World and of God and the demonic. But here John is not really concerned with the symbolism itself or where it came from. His concern is only to set forth the Glory of God in the Slain Lamb as He was revealed to John. The symbolism of the symbols became more real than reality for John. The warp and woof of the symbolism are ancient but from these threads and his unsurpassed skill, he weaves a new pattern which is sui generis. It stands at the end of a great continuum of apocalyptic literature, but it is far greater because it fully and finally ends this literature with the appearance of Jesus Christ. It is no mere revelation, it is the Revelation. Martin Kiddle states: "No matter what further information may be gleaned concerning John in the future, it cannot add to or take away from the value of the message as he has delivered it."⁴ The value of the book ". . . lies in the splendid energy of its faith, in the unfaltering certainty that God's own cause is at issue now and here and must ultimately prevail, and that the cause of Jesus Christ is inseparably linked therewith, and the main aim of which, as is clear from every page, is to emphasise the overwhelming worth of

things spiritual as contrasted with things material---a lesson never more needed than at present---and in the next place to glorify martyrdom, to encourage the faithful to face death with constancy, nay more with rapturous joy: 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.'⁵ Thus in the face of death and persecution the Book of Revelation comes as a means of encouragement. It is the members of the Church who do have the victory. John who has seen the ultimate end testifies and proclaims that even though death may hold its sway, it is God who has won the battle.

In the vision John has of Jesus, He is not immediately perceived by John. If we follow the spirit of these writings we are aware that this is not the same Jesus of Nazareth whom John perhaps knew. But now there was a tremendous difference, for what John saw was Jesus the Christ, the Risen and Ascended Lord. He was exalted in glory and in power. Christ moves forward to calm John, for the Lord of Glory was the same Jesus of Nazareth---there was no need to fear. Here stood the Eternal One, the Ancient of Days, the firstborn from the dead and the Alpha and Omega. The Glory of the Lord shone around him and he was afraid for he had seen the Divine. One who had broken through the bonds of death came back to show the Way. The whole

activity here is the tremendous demonstration of love.

"But he cannot contemplate him, nor think of the grace and peace which he invokes on the churches from Him, without recurring to the great deed of Christ on which they ultimate depend. . . . He does not say, 'who liberates us from our sins', as though a progressive purification were in view; but 'who liberated us', pointing to a finished work."⁶ It was love that paid the price in terms of blood shed. Thus one finds that "Christianity is as real as the blood of Christ. It is as real as the agony in the garden and the death on the cross. It is not less real than this, nor more real; it has no reality whatever which is separable from these historical things."⁷ The activity of Christ in His redeeming love can be known only through the subjective encounter which must always remain self-authenticating. Through the process of redemption we are bound together as ones who acknowledge the rule of God over us. "'He made us priests' means that in virtue of His action we are constituted a worshipping people of God; on the ground of it we have access to the Father. . . . All dignity and all privilege rest on the fact that He set us free from our sins at the cost of His blood. . . . The vision of Christ calls out the whole contents of the

Christian consciousness; the Christian heart is sensible of all it owes to Him, and sensible that it owes it all in some way to His death."⁸ To pry further than this is unaskable, this is precisely where faith meets the believer.

The emphasis for Jesus is to fulfil the rôle of the Lamb of God. This title appears some twenty-nine times. This is an attempt to see Jesus almost exclusively in terms of Hebrew sacrifice. "It has the character which sacrifice confers, but it is alive. Although it is not dead, it has the virtue of its death in it. It is on the ground of this death, and of the redemption (or purchase of men for God) effected by it, that all praise is ascribed to the Lamb, and the knowledge and control of all providence put into His hands."⁹ This then is the Ultimate display of love. "Here we have the ideas of 1:5 repeated, with the further thought that love like that displayed in Christ's death for man's redemption is worthy not only of all praise, but of having all the future committed to its care. It is really a pictorial way of saying that redeeming love is the last reality in the universe, which all praise must exalt, and to which everything else must be subordinate."¹⁰

The nature of John's theology is conveyed in the

theme of the Lamb of God, seen as One who takes away the sin of the world. "When sin is taken away by a lamb, it is taken away sacrificially. It is borne off by being in some sense (in the case of an unintelligent sacrifice, only a figurative sense) borne. It is not too much to say that the conception of Christ's death as a sacrifice for sin, found thus, at the very beginning of the Gospel, on the lips of the great witness to Jesus, is meant to convey decisively the evangelist's own conception of Jesus and His work. He is here to put away sin. That sums up His vocation. And He puts it away by a sacrifice in which it has to be borne."¹¹ The theology of the Lamb of God being sacrificed brings out three important concepts. The first idea is the concept of the Lamb who was obedient unto death. This theme is parallel to the concept of obedience lifted up by Paul's writings. "This spontaneity on the part of Jesus, when it is put in relation to the love of the Father in giving the Son, appears as obedience. The authority or liberty He has to lay down His life and to take it again is a commandment He has received from the Father. Equally with Paul or with the writer to the Hebrews, John could use the term 'obedience' to describe the whole work of Christ. But as with them, so with him

too, it is loving obedience to a will of love, an attitude at once to God's purpose and to man's need which makes the passion the sublimest of actions, and justifies the paradox of the gospel that the cross is a 'lifting up' or a glorifying of Jesus."¹² The obedience of the Lamb to the very end makes the sacrifice efficacious.

The second point of the sacrifice is the morality. Previously the Jews had used an unblemished lamb who was bound and offered as a sacrifice. The Lamb of God conversely had free will. At any point Jesus could have turned from the task and would have been released gladly. "The perfect freedom with which Christ acts the shepherd's part, including the final sacrifice which it demands, is apparently the characteristic of His work to which he attaches the greatest importance. And it is so because it is through the freeness with which the surrender of life is made that the love which is its motive is revealed. 'I lay down My life of Myself. No one taketh it from Me. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again.'"¹³ Jesus died the sacrificial death because it became His will to do so. This lifts the death of Jesus to a high morality, which was not a part of the theology of the Jewish sacrifice.

The third point is the whole aspect of the Lamb of God can only be seen aright from the Love of God.

Everything, we have seen, comes from the love of God. The death of Christ is to be construed in harmony with this, not in any antagonism to it. But the love of God to the world is never conceived in Scripture abstractly. It is not manifested in some evolutionary process which is necessarily determined a priori, as some may have hastily inferred from the prologue to this Gospel. To conceive it so would be to deny its grace. It is conceived, practically, in relation to definite needs of man which it meets. It is manifested not on the analogy of natural forces, which simply are what they are, but on the analogy of the free actions of men, which are determined by specific motives. To deny this is to lose the living and gracious God of revelation, and to take in His place a metaphysical phantom. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.¹⁴

This is the Love of God expressed in His omnipotence. The slain Lamb appears to be the most powerful instrument in the universe. Here then is the paradox, the Lamb having been slain, weak from the loss of blood dashes the combination of forces for mankind. Thus the weakness of God is stronger than the strength of men. The Lamb of God in its traditional symbolism conveys magnificently the whole work of Christ.

The death of the Lamb of God in its empirical form

is a martyr's death. This then is the example of all followers who would be obedient unto death. ". . . The typical Christian is a martyr too. To be a martyr is to furnish the decisive proof that the abiding power of Christ's blood is being exercised over one's life. . . . Hence the blood of Christ does something both once for all, in breaking the bond by which sin holds us and bringing us into such a relation to God that we are a people of priests, and progressively, in assuring our gradual assimilation to Jesus Christ the faithful witness. In both respects the Christian life is absolutely indebted to it; without it, it could neither begin nor go on."¹⁵ Out of the trials and tribulations will come many martyrs. The blood of the Lamb will cleanse them and they will be sanctified. Just how this formula works we are not told. "The pressure put on them (the martyrs) would have been too great, and they would inevitably have succumbed to it. But with a motive behind them like the blood of the Lamb they were invincible. Now nothing can be a motive unless it has a meaning; nothing can be a motive in the sense implied here unless it has a gracious meaning. . . . With the cross on which He died for them before their eyes, they dared not betray His cause by cowardice, and love their

own lives more than He had loved His. They must be His, as He had been theirs. It is taken for granted here that in the blood of the Lamb there had been a great demonstration of love to them. . . . It is because it is an incomparable demonstration of love that it is an irresistible motive. And though the relation is not thought out nor defined here, for such a definition would have been utterly out of place, it is not forcing the language in the least to assume that it must have existed in fact for the author."¹⁶ One is left with the abiding sense that there is to be no salvation outside a relationship with the Lamb of God.

The Revelation that John receives is a forewarning of the Parousia. Christ addresses Himself to the various churches of that day as well as those of today. Christ's presence represents that He stands over against them in judgment as He knows their works and that His last coming to rectify the world is imminent. The Church is left in watchful expectation filled with an air of repentance.

"Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent" (3:3). "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. . . . 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

(22:12, 20). These writings are filled with the eager and honest expectation of His coming. He will come in power symbolized by the clouds which will usher forth a great day. "The judgment of the great day---'the great day of God' (16:14)---is represented under the image of illimitable slaughter, before the beginning of which the birds of prey are summoned to feast on the bodies and blood of men (19:17, 18, 21; cf. 14:20)."¹⁷ At the final judgment the Antichrists will be thrown into the lake of fire and their adherents will be slain. "The 'lake of fire' in which this 'second death' is experienced, and into which the devil, the beast, and the false prophet are cast, has its torments 'day and night for ever and ever.' It is exclusion from 'the marriage supper of the Lamb,' from 'the holy city,' from the fellowship of God in His 'tabernacle with men.' It is the death that is beyond all other death. It means existence without the resurrection of life and the crown of life, the existence that is eternal loss and dying."¹⁸

Satan having lost all his cohorts on earth stands powerless. He is then bound with chains for a thousand years (20:1-3).

Thereupon ensues the Millennium, when the martyrs, and the martyrs only, are raised in the first resurrection

and become priests of God (cf. Is. 61:6) and of Christ, and reign with Christ personally on earth for a thousand years (20:4-6), with Jerusalem as the centre of the kingdom. According to an earlier passage (5:10) they are made unto God 'a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.'¹⁹

So that individuals might "share in the blessings of the millennial reign of Christ the souls of the martyrs are raised up; they live and reign with Christ a thousand years (20:4, 60). This is called 'the first resurrection'. Those raised up are untouched by the second death; they are the priests of God and of Christ (20:5, 6) and reign upon the earth (5:10). The rest of the dead do not live again until the thousand years are finished (20:5)."²⁰

It is worth noting that this is the only passage in the whole of the New Testament where the doctrine of the Millennium is explicitly written. Certainly this one isolated passage cannot be used to sustain an important Christian doctrine. The doctrine itself ". . . in its present form, I repeat, that is, in its combination of the resurrection of the martyrs with a temporary Messianic kingdom under the Christian Messiah. In our earlier chapters we saw that when once the Messianic kingdom came to be regarded as temporary, from that moment---more than 150 years before the date of the New Testament

Apocalypse---the resurrection was relegated from the beginning of the Messianic kingdom to its close, and the righteous were conceived as rising not to the Messianic kingdom, but to eternal blessedness in a new world or in heaven itself."²¹ Edward Langton takes this same point of view when he states: "From the account of the New Testament teaching that has been given above, it is evident that the doctrine of the Millennium is not an essential feature of Christianity. It does not find any place in the most authoritative sources of Christian teaching. Not only is it true that no reference is made to it outside the Apocalypse. What is more impressive is the fact that no place is allowed by the writers for such an interval in their eschatological scheme of events, for the Second Advent and the last judgement follow immediately upon each other."²²

At the end of this thousand year reign of the Messianic kingdom, Satan will be freed. Then ". . . the nations Gog and Magog---the idea goes back ultimately to Ezek. 38:2-39:16---are stirred up to make the last assault on the kingdom of Christ (Rev. 20:7-9): 'And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations

which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.' In this attack they are destroyed by God Himself, who sends down fire from heaven (20:9). The devil is finally cast into the lake of fire (20:10), where are also the Beast and the false prophet."²³

At the end of this Millennium period, God takes His place on His great white throne to judge the world. "God is Judge, and yet in some respects the Messiah also (22:12): 'Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is' (cf. also 6:16,17). All are judged according to their works, which stand revealed in the heavenly books (22:12). The wicked are cast into the lake of fire (21:8; see also 19:20, 20:10). So likewise are death and Hades (20:14). Hades seems to be conceived in the Apocalypse as the intermediate abode of the wicked only; for it is always combined with death (see 1:18, 6:8, 20:13, 14)."²⁴ The souls of the martyrs are aggregated in a place beneath the altar. John takes a rather negative outlook on the vocation of the martyrs for they spend their time praying for the destruction

of those who persecuted them. The other faithful people are assigned to Paradise. Then they are aggregated in a place beneath the altar. Then there is to be the second death which is the "death of the soul, as the first is the death of the body. It is not the annihilation, but the endless torment of the wicked that is here meant. The expression is a familiar Rabbinic one (see Jerusalem Targ. on Deut. 33:6, where for 'let Reuben live and not die,' we have 'let Reuben live and not die the second death')."25

The end will come finally as a new world is brought about by the combination of a new heaven and a new earth plus the heavenly Jerusalem. "Then the ideal kingdom of God becomes actual. This city needs no temple: for God and Christ dwell in it (21:22). The throne of God and of the Lamb is set up therein (22:1, 3). The citizens dwell in perfect fellowship with God (22:4), and are as kings unto God (22:5). The Messiah still exercises His mediatorial functions (see 7:17, 21:22, 23, etc.)"26 There is to be a distinction between the Jews and Gentiles which will be of spiritual nature. "The redeemed of Israel are to dwell in the New Jerusalem, while the Gentiles are to walk in the light thereof (21:24, 26). The former are to

eat of the fruit of the tree of life, while the latter are to be healed by its leaves (22:2). The twelve gates of the heavenly city are to be named after the twelve tribes (21:12), and the names of the twelve Apostles are inscribed on the foundation stone of the city. Yet Jew and Gentile form one divine community, and are alike kings and priests unto God (1:6, 5:10)."²⁷

The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John was written to tell of the life, death, resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ. The author seems to look and write for those with the eye of faith that they might grow in faith. These accounts "are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (20:30). The theme is one of "Come and see, come and see" until this crescendo turns to "Follow me, follow me." A person is thus introduced to the reader, not just another person but rather one who is presented as being uniquely the Son of God. One of such magnitude that He stands before all Creation. An offer is held before the interested parties which is Life, Eternal Life for those who wish to participate in the inscrutable riches of God. The response that is required is to accept Jesus

as the Way, the Truth and the Life. John thus relegates to Jesus a position as being One with the Father. It was John's gracious thought that Jesus stands as the Word made flesh.

The presence of eternal life seems to arise first from who He was rather than what He did as is seen in the prologue. "Jesus redeems men, or gives them life, by revealing to them the truth about God. The revelation is made in His own person, by His words and deeds, no doubt, but supremely by what He is. 'This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ' (17:3). The work of redemption, to borrow the dogmatic category, is interpreted through the prophetic office of Christ almost exclusively."²⁸ W. F. Howard gives his interpretation of eternal life as "the actual impartation of the actual life of God is the core of the Johannine soteriology. It is this that makes the Gospel a gospel, and Christ the mediator of a real salvation. 'This is the witness, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' Thus Robert Law sums up the meaning of salvation as it is set before us in the writings of St. John. It is evident that, just as St. Paul found the central message of Christianity in salvation,

which he illustrated by figures taken from the law courts, or from the temple where slaves paid the ransom price for their manumission, so for St. John eternal life is the supreme gift of God brought to man by Christ Jesus."²⁹

The concept of Life and eternal life is best demonstrated in the account of the raising of Lazarus. This will be examined in greater detail later but it must now be seen as an expression of the meaning of eternal life.

The doctrine of eternal life is stated in two forms. First: 'He who believes in me, even if he dies, will come to life' (giving to zesetai the ingressive sense which properly belongs to the form). This may be taken as a confirmation of the popular eschatology as enunciated by Martha: faith in Christ gives the assurance that the believer will rise again after death. But the second statement is not the simple equivalent of this: 'Everyone who is alive and has faith in me will never die.' The implication is that the believer is already 'living' in a pregnant sense which excludes the possibility of ceasing to live. In other words, the 'resurrection' of which Jesus has spoken is something which may take place before bodily death, and has for its result the possession of eternal life here and now.³⁰

Then the believer who "'hears my word and believes on Him who sent me possesses eternal life, and he does not come to judgment, but has passed from death into life. I solemnly assure you, the time is coming, and now is, when

the dead will hear the voice of the Son of Man, and they who hear will come to life.' It is because the word of Christ has this power here and now that we can believe that it will have the same power hereafter. . . . The evangelist agrees with popular Christianity that the believer will enter into eternal life at the general resurrection, but for him this is a truth of less importance than the fact that the believer already enjoys eternal life, and the former is a consequence of the latter."³¹ This then is the controlling and sustaining factor of the Christian Faith, that is, the individual can participate in that which is from beyond. Basically "the 'eternal' is a qualitative term, not a quantitative; used not in order to add to the 'life' the idea of perpetuity, but to express more fully the quality which belongs to the 'life' itself. In John's writings 'death' is an ethical condition, the condition of failure and evil in which men exist by nature, and out of which they are raised by Christ. The 'life' is the new condition---the spiritual order of being, the existence of fellowship with God into which Christ brings men; and the 'eternal life' is this 'life' in its quality of the divine order of life, the life which fulfils the whole idea of life, the good of life, the perfection of

life, the satisfaction of life in God."³² Thus the values of Christianity are a present day occurrence. Here is what makes all the difference, whether one stands in a relationship to Life and Light or to death and darkness. The various passages that John uses to speak of eternal life ". . . affirm, first, that eternal life may be enjoyed here and now by those who respond to the word of Christ, and, secondly, that the same power which assures eternal life to believers during their earthly existence will, after the death of the body, raise the dead to renewed existence in a world beyond."³³

The concept of Life ($\zeta\omega\eta'$) is presented in its fullest and most radical way in the writings of John. He relates all of Christian theology to this concept of Life. Thus this is an all inclusive term which is related to the very act of Creation. Jesus not only possesses Life but is the source of all Life. "As such he naturally has a $\Upsilon\upsilon\chi\eta'$ and gives it up to death (10:11, 15, 17), whilst his $\zeta\omega\eta'$ is not interrupted by death. His $\zeta\omega\eta'$ is already described as the $\phi\omega\varsigma\ \tau\omega\upsilon\ \alpha\nu\ \theta\rho\acute{\omega}\tau\iota\omega\upsilon$ before the incarnation (1:4), because it was in the dependence of the whole creation on him that there lay for men the possibility of possessing life in him as the revelation

of God, by turning back in understanding to their source."³⁴

Not only is Jesus seen as the source of all Life, he is also the source and validity behind all faith.

However, since, as the revealer, he is and gives $\zeta\omega\eta$ (I John 1:1f.), and since it was with his coming that $\zeta\omega\eta$ was revealed, believers already have $\zeta\omega\eta$ as a present fact in faith. The paradoxical nature of this assertion is expressly stressed: whoever believes has already passed from death into life (5:24; I John 3:14); now, as he is speaking (and for the evangelist that also means every occasion when the Word is proclaimed) the eschatological hour takes place (5:25). He is, as the speaker, the $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\tau\omicron\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ and the $\zeta\omega\eta$, so that whoever believes in him lives, though he might die; indeed, in the true sense, he will not die at all (11:25). He has already given the $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ to his own in the revelation (17:22). Correspondingly, the promises relating to the future do not refer to a later eschatological future, but to the moment of decision when confronted with the Word. Whoever believes shall live. Yet, at the same time, this $\zeta\omega\eta$ is not understood in the timeless, idealist sense. It is $\zeta\omega\eta$ that has an everlasting future (4:14, 6:27, 12:25), and his own people, to whom he has given his $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$, are nevertheless directed to the future vision of $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ in fellowship with the glorified Son (17:24).³⁵

The enigmatic statement of individuals who die but do not die at all can be seen only from the ultimate concept. This implies that when they die, their death is apparently the same as one outside the Faith. Over against this natural death, God will ultimately restore them. Of course, this

can be seen only after one has dismissed the limitations imposed by time.

It is certainly not important that the individual Christian comprehends all the ramifications and implications of the concept of $\zeta\omega\eta$. One can assume that even John did not begin to comprehend all that might be implied by his words. The motivation of his writings is to get the individual to have a subjective experience. "The essential thing, at any rate, is to understand the present nature of $\zeta\omega\eta$. Just as it is not an ideal entity, so also it does not consist of an inward spiritual life, as, for example, in a mystic sense. For John did not spiritualize the primitive Christian eschatology and thereby dissolve it, but, rather, in the same tradition as Jesus and Paul, radicalised it. That is, he took seriously the idea that the coming of Jesus as the revealer is the decisive eschatological event, the $\kappa\rho\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$. It is not in relation to an idea or a suprahistorical, metaphysical being, but by adhering in faith to an historical fact and an historical person that $\zeta\omega\eta$ is attained, and, correspondingly, this life consists in the manner of an historical existence, in the certainty that comes through the word of revelation, which teaches one to understand any given moment in a new

way, free from the past and open to the future. Life is at the same time the way and the objective."³⁶

Some scholars have maintained that the Gospel of John contains less Jewish eschatology than the other New Testament books. However, this Gospel is written with a very strong and deep eschatological point of view. If you mean by eschatology the ongoing catastrophes and the final consummation in a catastrophic ending, this is not what John had in mind. The import of this writing is to bring these activities into the "here and now." Thus the crisis or catastrophe becomes personal and subjective.

Jesus as the Son of Man is commissioned with the functions of Judge and Giver of life. The spatial background of thought is the old Jewish apocalyptic contrast between the world above and the world below. The temporal framework of thought is partly concealed, but there are traces of the distinction between the two ages, the present age and the age to come. For it should not be overlooked that in such a passage as John 12:25 ('he that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal'), that favourite term in the Johannine vocabulary, 'eternal life,' is eschatological in its origin. In rabbinic language two technical terms are used antithetically, *hā 'ōlām hazzeḥ* and *hā 'ōlām habbā'.* These are equivalent to *ὁ αἰὼν ὁ ἐνεστώσ* or *ὁ κόσμος οὗτος*, and to *ὁ αἰὼν ὁ μέλλων*. Now the term 'eternal life,' *ζωὴ αἰώνια*, has the meaning, 'life in the coming age,' and it is understood so in the passage just quoted.

In the same connection we should notice that chronological indications of τὸ ἔσχατον run through the Gospel. 'The hour is not yet'; 'the hour is coming and now is.' Nor must we overlook the significance of the sublime cry from the cross, τέτελεσται. Nothing, however, is more remarkable than the recurring refrain in the sixth chapter: 'And I will raise him up at the last day.'³⁷

The Gospel contains only three references to the Kingdom of God. It is simple for John to use this term for it is either implicit or synonymous with 'eternal life.' "So in the Synoptics 'to inherit eternal life' and 'to enter into the Kingdom of God' seem to be interchangeable terms. But whereas the Kingdom is the favourite expression in the Synoptics, Eternal Life, or simply Life is the constantly recurring phrase in John. It is indeed true that the characteristic use of this term by St. John removes it from the region in which it took its rise. But the passage just quoted (John 3:36) sets it in sharp antithesis to the wrath of God, ἡ ὀργή, which (as the Pauline epistle witness) was a technical term in Jewish eschatology."³⁸

R. H. Charles states that though the concept of the Kingdom is mentioned only as such, it is certainly present in all the teachings. "The divine gift of eternal life, as the good of the individual, can only be realised in so far

as it brings the individual into vital union with the divine community, which is none other than the kingdom. The realisation of this life leads to unity with the brethren, such as prevails between the Father and the Son (17:21), and, through this unity consciously apprehended, the individual life attains to its perfection (27:23). Thus eternal life and the kingdom are correlative and complementary thoughts in the fourth Gospel. The indispensable evidence of this life in the individual is his love to the community. He who possesses it not has no divine life as an individual; he neither comes from God nor knows Him (I John 3:10, 4:8), but abides in darkness and death (I John 2:10, 3:14)."³⁹

What then is death for John? "In John's writings 'death' is an ethical condition, the condition of failure and evil in which men exist by nature, and out of which they are raised by Christ. The 'life' is the new condition ---the spiritual order of being, the existence of fellowship with God into which Christ brings men; and the 'eternal life' is this 'life' in its quality of the divine order of life, the life which fulfils the whole idea of life, the good of life, the perfection of life, the satisfaction of life in God."⁴⁰ Death is not just a

natural event to be found at the culmination of living for Jesus. "Christ's death is not an incident of His life, it is the aim of it. The laying down of His life is not an accident in His career, but His vocation; in it the divine purpose of His life is revealed."⁴¹ It was in, through and by death that Jesus was able to redeem mankind. There are various meanings for the concept of death in John's Gospel.

In the Fourth Gospel the first passage, already mentioned in passing, is 8:52-7. Here Jesus, using the term 'dead' in two senses, implies that in the higher sense Abraham is not dead, for he did not 'die in (his) sins'. He is in the place to which Jesus is Himself 'going' (verse 21). In 11:23-5 Jesus uses the word 'die' in the same two senses. When, in answer to Martha's word, 'I know that (Lazarus) shall rise again', Jesus says, 'He that believeth on me, though he die (in the lower sense), yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die (in the higher sense)', He teaches that for a dead believer there is already life, as with Abraham. In John 12:25f, where there is an explicit contrast between 'life (psyche) in this world' and 'life (zoe) everlasting', Jesus says, 'Where I am, there shall also my servant be', God 'honouring' him in this way. In 13:36 Jesus promises Peter that he shall 'follow (him) afterwards'. This does not mean that Peter will meet Christ at the Parousia, for this is not 'following' but as soon as he is martyred (21:28f). John 14:2-4 is the culminant and explanatory passage. Here Jesus does not mean that He will 'prepare a place'

for the Disciples after His return at the Parousia, for He is 'going away' to do this now. He is going 'to the Father' (e.g. 16:5, 28, 17:11, 13), and therefore to my Father's house'. This is another name for Paradise, the implication being that His Father is also the disciples' Father (cf. 20:17).⁴²

The account of the resurrection of Lazarus adds a new depth to the concept of Life which Christ gives. There is here a radical change in the nature of things: "that the gift of life is here presented expressly as victory over death. Resurrection is the reversal of the order of mortality, in which life always hastens towards death. The Hellenistic society to which the gospel was addressed was haunted by the spectacle of φθορά, the process by which all things pass into nothingness, and which engulfs all human existence. . . . Christ overcame death in dying. If therefore the episode of the Raising of Lazarus is to be a true *συνετον* of resurrection, it must in some way find place for the dying of Christ by virtue of which He is revealed as the resurrection and the life."⁴³ The Lazarus account must be seen in light of being a precursor to the death of Christ. "Thus the narrative before us is not only the story of dead Lazarus raised to life; it is also the story of Jesus going to

face death in order to conquer death. In the previous episode we were told that the Good Shepherd comes to give life to His flock, and that in doing so He lays down His life for the sheep (10:10-11). The episode we are now considering conforms exactly to that pattern."⁴⁴ The death of Jesus was the death of an activist as ". . . it became clear that while on the one side His death is a free act of self-sacrifice, on the other side it is the assault of the powers of darkness upon the Light."⁴⁵

The Good Shepherd account coupled with the concept of the seed, which must be dissolved, lift out the necessity of Christ's death. "'I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep' (10:11). This, it might be said, is only an ideal way of putting it; it is what the Good Shepherd would do if the situation emerged which required it. But it is not so recorded by the evangelist. The need has emerged, and the laying down of His life with a view to its resumption is made the sum and substance of the vocation of Jesus. 'Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received

I from My Father' (10:17f.)."⁴⁶ The Good Shepherd is "good" precisely because He is not only willing to give up His life for His own sheep but also for the 'other sheep' that there might be one flock.

The account of the seed is such that it must disintegrate so that there might be a crop. "Without the 'death' of the seed, no crop: without the death of Christ, no worldwide gathering of mankind. This strikes the key-note of the whole discourse."⁴⁷ Though the seed is a separate and a distinct entity from the crops that it will produce, yet there is a relationship with and a determination of the crops which will be developed. The necessity to provide for the whole 'crop' is contingent directly on the very death of Jesus. His death must be provided for the many. "In close connection with this there is the anticipation of the near and awful future, the shadow of which struck dark and cold upon the Saviour's soul. 'Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour' (12:27). 'This hour' is the great crisis in the life of Jesus, the hour which no one could anticipate (7:30, 8:20), but from which, now that it has come, He will not shrink. It has come, in the sense already explained,

as the hour in which the Son of Man is to be glorified, the hour in which He is to drink the cup which the Father gives Him to drink, and to crown the work the Father has given Him to do. The way in which He is moved by it, shrinks from it and accepts it, reveals the place it holds in His mind and in that of the evangelist also."⁴⁸

Another allusion to the Death of Christ as being both lifted up and glorified is to be found in 12:32 which reads: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself. This He said, signifying by what manner of death he should die." This and other passages (3:14; 8:28) are strongly suggestive of the Cross. The act of Christ dying is His glory and He will thus be glorified forever. "There is no conception of a humiliation in death followed and rewarded by an exaltation. On the contrary, Christ is lifted up and ascends through His death. His glory is revealed in that whole experience which death initiates and into which it enters, more than in all His miracles."⁴⁹ The glorification of Christ is the sheer power of God to "draw all men unto Him", that is, to raise all men to Himself. John envisions the power of the Cross as a magnet which will draw all men like helpless filings before this magnetic field.

Wherever one looks in the Gospel accounts, he cannot get past the necessity of death. Certainly, it was the necessity of the Death of Christ that accounts for a 'gospel' for the Gospels. "It is possible, however, to go further in defining the death of Christ in the Fourth Gospel. Proceeding as it does from the love of the Father and the Son, it is nevertheless not conceived as arbitrary. It is free, but there is a rational necessity for it. The Son of Man must be lifted up if He is to save those who believe. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die if it is not to abide alone. Not much, indeed, is said to explain this. The various ends secured by Christ's death . . . (10:11, 3:14ff., 11:52). . . these, no doubt, are all somehow dependent upon it. But just how, the evangelist is at no pains to tell. We do no violence to his thought, however, when we put this and that in the Gospel together in order to discern what he does not say explicitly."⁵⁰

It is difficult to talk in terms of what death means for the individual because there are two factors that continually enter in the subject. One is the emphasis on the Death of Christ and all its implications for us will meet our own specific needs. There is no reflection

on the subject of death for the Christian apart from the death of Christ. The second aspect is that John is so motivated by the concept of Life or eternal life that he would rather hold before individuals the positive and the attractive aspect of the question. Especially because this Life can begin in the "here and now." The picture of one who rejects the Life is the person who turns from life to death, from light to darkness, from truth to error, and from living water to abject thirst. Thus, he who dies in this condition is without Life. He has turned from the riches and the fulness of what Christ has to offer. Death is the negation of Life. Man would rather stand with his sin than to be redeemed. "But to St. John the world so regarded is the world of men alienated from God, blind to his presence, and hostile to his rule. He looks in one direction and sees Vanity Fair, with its cheap glitter and its empty pomps, its corruption and its disillusionment, and he foretells its swift decay. He looks in another direction, and he sees society organized in stark opposition to God, refusing to accept the freedom of the truth, resolutely bent upon the destruction of the Christian witness, and animated by hatred against Christ himself and all who make confession of his faith. . . . 'To

this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' St. John never leaves God out of account. The Gospel is the epic of the conflict between light and darkness, with its culminating intensity at the Cross. The Epistle carries on the tale as the struggle between the Church and the World. Fides Victrix!"⁵¹

There have been those who believe that the Death of Christ does not take prominence in the Fourth Gospel as it does in the rest of the New Testament. Professor Denney wishes to put away their fears.

This series of passages has not been cited at random, but to dissipate the impression which many people have, and which some writers of New Testament theology propagate, that the death of Christ has no place in the fourth Gospel corresponding to that which it has elsewhere in the New Testament. I think they are sufficient to dissipate such an impression. No doubt there is much in the fourth Gospel which makes it plausible to say, Paul deals with the work of Christ, John with His person; for Paul, Christ only lives to die; for John, He dies because death is the only issue from life; but such contrasts do as much to mislead as to illumine. As soon as we are past the prologue into the scenery of what Jesus actually said, did, thought, feared, and suffered, we see that His death really fills the place it does everywhere in the New Testament, and has the same decisive importance.⁵²

Death permeates all the writings of John as it is the very antithesis of eternal life which John is striving to convey. "Death is thus a central feature of John's Son of man doctrine, but it will be remarked that for him the death of Jesus is at the same time his glory. . . ."53

"All this means that the Son of man is the one true mediator between heaven and earth; he passes from the one to the other, and through his earthly sojourn he bestows upon men the revealed knowledge and the eternal life in virtue of which they in turn come to the life of heaven. This function of the Son of man is by no means inconsistent with his death, since John understands his death to represent at once his plunge into the depths of humanity and his ascent to the glory of the Father; and it is certainly not inconsistent with his eschatological functions.

. . . "61 "What John perceived with far greater clarity than any of his predecessors was that Jesus is the Gospel, and that the Gospel is Jesus. It was through the life, and especially through the death and resurrection, of Jesus that men had been admitted to the blessings of the messianic kingdom, and the highest blessing of that kingdom was, as Paul had already seen, the life of communion with Christ himself: 'for me, to live is Christ' (Phil. 1:21).

That is, when the Gospel was offered to men it was Christ himself who was offered to them, and received by them.

It was intolerable therefore that the person of Christ should remain undefined. Paul, who had recognized the same truth, evidently felt the same obligation."⁵⁵

The aspect of Jesus coming for man in the sight of John was not to establish a new morality or ethical aspect. It was man's means of salvation. "Salvation is the fruit of the whole incarnate life of Jesus Christ, including his death and resurrection; consequently it is revealed in all his actions. The miracles in particular show figuratively what salvation is---the curing of the sick, the feeding of the hungry, the giving of sight to the blind, and the raising of the dead. Salvation, that is, means the healing of the ills of mankind, and the imparting of light and life; in other words, Jesus deals with sin, and gives men knowledge and life. These aspects of salvation are seen from time to time in the course of the gospel, but appear pre-eminently in the death and resurrection of Jesus."⁵⁶

This salvation opens an entirely new sphere of man's relationship to God. This is what the entire activity of Christ was about.

What men needed was to be sanctified, that is, to be consecrated to God. It was not in their power to consecrate themselves, and surely no reason can be conceived for this but that which lies in their sin. But what they were not able to do for themselves Christ did for them in His own person. He consecrated Himself to God in His death. That the reference is to His death does not seem open to question; the present tense, ἀγιάζω, which suggests something going on at the moment, and the circumstances of our Lord, whose mind as He speaks is full of what is at hand, put out of court the idea that the word is intended to describe His life as a whole. His life was past, and now, in His own person, through death, He is about to establish between God and man a relation which men could never have established for themselves, but into which they can truly enter and into which they will be drawn once it is established by Him. This seems to me the exact equivalent of the Pauline doctrine that Christ dies our death that we may be drawn into the fellowship of His death, and so put right with God. He acts---'I sanctify Myself'; men are acted on---'that they themselves also may be sanctified'. He establishes the reconciliation; they, to use Pauline language, receive it (Rom. 5:11).⁵⁷

The very act of Christ's death followed by the resurrection is an eschatological event opening, as it were, "the Way" for all succeeding eschatological activity.

"His death was not a normal human fate but the death which God caused him to die for us. He did not deserve his death by his sin but was made a sinner for us by God and condemned

as one (II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 3:13f.); he died for us."⁵⁸ The details of the death and resurrection hold a special fascination for John. This in itself reflects a curious matter for John is able to fluctuate from the universal concepts such as the Logos to the specific detail of the grave clothes. Here is almost a breach with the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. Yet, John is not so quick to move from the historicity of Jesus as might be first imagined with his lofty ideas. "The Gospels all emphasize the fact that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was found empty, and therefore by implication the physical resurrection of the Lord. St. John (following St. Luke) has also emphasized the matter by his elaboration of the detail of the grave-clothes (vv. 6f.). There are no reasons whatever, either in modern science or in modern philosophy, why we should not accept the New Testament witness concerning the Empty Tomb. If we truly believe that God performed the stupendous act of raising Jesus from the dead, we will not quibble about how he could or could not have done it. The bodily resurrection of the Lord is theologically very important in showing that the whole of creation is to be redeemed, the physical no less than the spiritual. Nevertheless, St. John does not wish to

leave us with the impression that the body of Jesus was entirely unchanged; it was the same body by which his disciples had always recognized him, the body which bore the marks of the nails and the spear; yet it was transformed, a glorified body, for Jesus had now ascended to the Father. As usual St. John conveys deep theological truth in the form of a story. Jesus came and stood in the midst, in his resurrection body, although the doors were bolted FOR FEAR OF THE JEWS. Thus, the body of Jesus was now different in some respects from the body that hung on the cross; and yet it was the same body, for that was how the disciples knew who he was: HE SHOWED UNTO THEM HIS HANDS AND HIS SIDE (v. 20)."⁵⁹ The specific details considered here are a definite play to Hebrew thinking. For the Greek, this detail would have detracted from the pictures already shown by John.

Indeed in the Death of Christ, John brings us closest to His humanity. Whatever else we may say of the death of Christ, it was sheer agony. "The 'Agony' is taken at this point not because John feared that such human anxiety would spoil the effect of ch. 17 but because in the present chapter he was summing up the ministry of Jesus in terms of service and death. No synoptic narrative better illustrates

the devotion of one who hates his life in this world, and John's form of the story illustrates also God's strength made perfect in weakness; he thus presents the combined humiliation and glory of the earthly life of Jesus, both of which were to be consummated together in the cross."⁶⁰ Certainly it is at the Cross where the two natures of Christ become most apparent in tension. Jesus...

groans 'from grief and anger'. . . . But if we reflect that our Lord's gaze was directed not only at the sign but at what it signified, not only at the immediate circumstances, the physical death and the tears shed for it, but at the infinitely greater tragedy of spiritual death, the infinitely greater horror of the evil which causes it and thereby causes also the immensity of the world's pain, the lacrimae rerum, the tears with which the whole world is drenched; and if we add to this our Lord's awareness that this sign would precipitate the final attack upon himself and so bring about his own death, and that when he was lifted up there would be some who would gaze at him, not lovingly, to receive life, but jeering at him in a final act of life-rejection---if we bear all this in mind it is indeed not unreasonable to suppose, as was suggested above, that our Lord's intense anger was directed against the dark mystery of evil---soon, now, to be referred to as the 'Prince of this world' (12:31)---who is responsible in the last resort for all the vileness and treachery and cruelty, all the blindness and folly and futility, and all the appalling pain and misery, which darken the lives and the hearts of men.⁶¹

However difficult the agony may have been, it was not beyond the knowledge of God. "Even for Jesus obedience unto death is costly; but the cost, being expressed in the language of the Old Testament, does not lie outside God's calculation."⁶² Professor Denney states that there is a particular thrust in the Passion story which lifts up the aspect of death by the completeness of the account, as a means of prophetic fulfilment and the focus on some of the unusual circumstances surrounding the account.⁶³

The next important place where one can learn of John's concept of death is the account of the raising of Lazarus. This is the apex of miracle stories and is placed here to lift up the fact that this is to be the precursor of Christ's own death. The stage is set and the death and resurrection of Lazarus may well hasten on the Death of Christ. The background for the scene is the opportunity to discuss two different eschatologies. One is the current Jewish eschatology and it is compared with other, the early Christian point of view. Both doctrines have been noted previously. There is a conscious effort to relate this account with an earlier saying (5:28-9). "Lazarus, unlike the dead persons raised to life in the Synoptic Gospels, is already in the grave, and unlike them he comes to life

at the bare word of Jesus. It certainly appears as though the evangelist had deliberately dramatized the saying, 'Those who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth.' The miracle of Lazarus's bodily resurrection, which anticipates the final resurrection, is a symbol of the real resurrection by which a man passes from a merely physical existence, which is death, into the life which is life indeed, and which is proof against the death of the body."⁶⁴ This follows on the heels of the other miracle accounts which are seen in greater and increasing depth and trust---building into a great crescendo affirming that you will ultimately trust Him in Death as life, for He has become your Life. The weight and power of the account rests on the spoken word of Jesus. Does this not imply that here Jesus has truly reached the full implication of being the Word of God? If this is a parallel with the Creation account in Genesis we see that Jesus has manifested the dynamic creative power which is accomplished through the spoken Word of God.

Following this same thought more closely, one finds that if he is receptive to the Word of God in the "here and now", he participates in the "resurrection-in-life." In (6:54) we have "a parallel to the pregnant use of 'life' in the sense of 'life of the Age to come', which as we

have seen occurs occasionally in the Talmud, with 'death' as its antithesis. But here the 'death' which is in view is rather the mode of existence of unenlightened, unredeemed humanity. . . . According to his conception the death of the body alone can release man from death into the life which is life indeed. But as we have seen, some of the Hermetic writings allow the possibility of beginning such a life here and now. For John this present enjoyment of eternal life has become the controlling and all-important conception."⁶⁵ This life for the believer is a transcendent life. It escapes the various systems of time to making eternity operative today. "The thought of the Fourth Gospel has, as we have seen, some affinity with that of Philo. It appears that he too means by ζωὴ αἰώνιος 'eternal life' in the Platonic sense, at least so far, that it is a life not measured by months and years, a life which has properly speaking neither past nor future, but is lived in God's eternal To-day. To think of any end to such life would be a contradiction in terms. If therefore it is to be thought of in terms of time, that 'image of eternity' within which human experience lies, it must be thought of as everlasting."⁶⁶ Apparently the physical reappearance of Lazarus could be misconstrued. The emphasis

must fall on the sheer power of Life over death. Even though Lazarus was brought back from death--- this was not the important thing, rather it was the quality of Life over against the quantity of life. The raising of Lazarus is a very dramatic way of reiterating the theme. "Jesus is the resurrection and the life; apart from him there is no resurrection and no life, and where he is, resurrection and life must be. Jesus is always the realization, in this world, of eternal life in the experience of Christians; in order that this truth may be manifested in a sign he accomplishes the resurrection of Lazarus."⁶⁷

Much more emphasis is placed on the fact that Lazarus died than in similar healing accounts in the Synoptics. On this score John leaves one with no doubts. "'A state of death beyond the third day meant, from the popular Jewish point of view, an absolute dissolution of life. At this time the face cannot be recognized with certainty; the body bursts; and the soul, which until then had hovered over the body, parts from it. . . ."⁶⁸ Thus in the traditional Hebrew belief the soul was thought to hover over the body and then departed on the fourth day. A period of three days or less constituted a temporary residence and after four days it was considered a permanent residence. This

is why the New Testament Church made a point of proclaiming that Jesus arose on the third day to indicate to all that for Jesus the tomb was only a temporary abode. In the Lazarus story Jesus waits until the fourth day to attest his death. Thus John emphasizes the stupendous nature of the miracle. If there had been misunderstandings or doubts as to the actual deaths in the Synoptic accounts, this would alleviate all fears. This dramatic account lifts up the crisis and tension concerning death.

In one sense therefore the moment of death should seem of far less importance to the christian than to the non-believer. But in another sense it must be of far greater importance, since it is the moment of ultimate krisis or decision upon which eternity hangs; we pass judgement upon ourselves, and this is the moment at which sentence is definitively pronounced. Yet here again we are not to confuse religion with superstition: we are not to suppose that after a lifetime of truly loving and devoted service of God a man could in his last moments slip into some contravention of the law which would nullify all his love and his goodness plunge him into hell. We shall die as we have lived---we shall be, when death comes, what our way of life has made us---but with one qualification of immense importance: it is superstition to suppose that a lifetime of love can be wiped out by a moment of frailty; it is not superstition to believe that a lifetime of frailty can be redeemed by a moment of love, for our Lord, in his words to the 'good thief' and his comment on the woman 'who was a sinner',

tells us that this is so. Jesus is the Lord of life, physical and spiritual, temporal and eternal; and when he speaks to Martha of life and death it is with the life eternal that he is concerned. Martha's appeal for his help has been couched in vague terms: she has not formulated to herself the possibility of his raising Lazarus from the dead; when he tells her, 'Your brother will rise again', she thinks he is referring to the resurrection at the end of the world; and even when he goes on to declare that he is resurrection, here and now, because he is life, he still does not announce his immediate purpose, the 'sign', but states the ultimate reality to which that sign points: that those who believe in him shall never die, for already, here and now, they have triumphed over death in every sense of the word that really matters.⁶⁹

Implicit in the resurrection of Lazarus is something of his personal nature. He was either a man worthy of Life or had already begun to participate in the Life. Without this aspect of quality, this scene would be merely a demonstration. There is also a parallel here to the compassion of healing as demonstrated in the Synoptics. A part of the miracle was created out of compassion for Mary and Martha. Thus, Jesus responds once more to minister to the bereaved. Love must be the supreme force of motivation for all the miracles. The conclusion to the story is not that Jesus brought one man back from the dead but rather that He will bring all back from the dead, this

is the most significant "sign" in the entire "Book of Signs." "The truth of history is that Jesus was put to death not as a good man, a righteous prophet, a religious genius or an ethical teacher, but as the Son of God. Thus, the 'truth' of the Lazarus story is far greater than a literalistic, unimaginative reading of it could reveal: it concerns not the resuscitation of one dead man, out of all the millions of human dead, but the appearance in the history of the world of him who is the creator of life itself, Jesus the Son of God, the resurrection and the life."⁷⁰

What then are the specific implications of the eschatological ideas, as they are presented in the concepts of Parousia, Judgment, and the Resurrection with the final consummation? The introduction of the word Parousia by John implies that he looks to an objective advent in the final day. "While 'John' was no doubt one of the Christians for whom some of the details in the Church's account of the Parousia, the 'last day', and the Last Judgement, were symbolic, he does not silently discard the belief in the event called the End, but it lays bare its spiritual basis. Here, while he had predecessors in Paul and the writer to the Hebrews, he is a consummator."⁷¹ R. H. Charles sees

the Parousia as having a "twofold meaning, a spiritual and an historical, in St. John. Thus in 14:18, 19 the coming Advent is resolved into . . . an event already present: 'I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also.' Thus in a spiritual sense Christ is already present. (1 John 5:12): 'He that hath the Son hath life.' A spiritual and an abiding communion is already established between the exalted Christ and His own (12:26): 'If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.'⁷² Thus John puts Christianity on a faith union basis with Himself and the Father. The paradox of the writings of John is that they are written from two points of view with a frequent alternation.

From a standpoint placed in the period of the ministry of Jesus, 'the hour is coming'; from John's own natural standpoint within the life of the Church after the resurrection and Pentecost, 'the hour now is'. But this is only a partial explanation, for . . . the basis of John's thought is that true worship can exist only in and through Jesus, and that worship in and through him is true worship. Consequently it is correct to say that, wherever Jesus is, there worship in Spirit and truth is possible; but this possibility is necessarily qualified by a

future, or its equivalent ('the hour cometh'), because, and as long as, the person Jesus himself is qualified in this way; he is the Messiah and will be the Messiah; he has come and he will come. The worship of Christianity is an anticipation of the worship of heaven, but it is not yet the worship of heaven.⁷³

The implications of John 5:25 is not the same as John 5:28 nor is it an anticipation of Chapter 11. Rather his mind is here captivated by the immediate present. "A different kind of death and resurrection, of which the death and resurrection of the body are a parable, is in mind. There is a sense in which the word of the Son of God in the present world brings to life those who are dead (cf. 11:25f.); the promise is already being fulfilled, but is being fulfilled in such a way as to leave over something of itself for a future fulfilment also."⁷⁴ This rule over men is simply by the power of love. Its parallel is found in Augustine's 'dangerous doctrine' of love.

The futuristic portion of the Parousia doctrine is the drawing into closer proximity of God to His people. "Thus Christ will return from heaven and take His own unto Himself, that they may be with Him in heaven (14:2,3). . . . According to the New Testament, death translates believers to Christ (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Acts 7:59), but nowhere is He said to come and fetch them."⁷⁵ The Apostle

has a longing look towards the Parousia and hopes that he will be around long enough to see it as almost a reward for a long and lengthy life of service. ". . . Jesus proclaims the spiritual power of the eschaton, the final order, of the Kingdom which has already broken in. And this was a characteristic of his teaching which later tradition obscured. In Otto's own words: 'He is the eschatological Saviour. Only thus understood are all his deeds and words seen against their right background and in their true meaning. Directly or indirectly, they are all sustained by the idea of a divine power which breaks in to save. This idea has its immediate correlate in the new God whom he brings, the God who does not consume the sinner but seeks him; the Father God, who has drawn near to men out of his transcendence, who asks for a childlike mind and a childlike trust, who frees not only from fear of the devil but from all fear and anxiety, who fills the entire life with childlike freedom from care.'⁷⁶

The Kingdom is viewed only in fullest in the future according to Jesus. "But what distinguishes his eschatology from that which had preceded it is, on the one side, that he already lives in the present active miracle of the final age, that with clear vision he sees this as something which is already coming into being and growing up around him, He knows himself to be supported by his powers already pressing on as an

advance guard, and by their support and inspiration he works and preaches. On the other side, by his works, speech, parables, charismatic conferring of power, he mediates to a circle of disciples following in his steps, a contact with this miracle of the transcendent as a personal possession.' This is what is meant by the now familiar term 'realized eschatology.'⁷⁷

The Judgment is no longer seen as the great Judgment scene is updated to the here and now and "spiritualized" so to speak. The Light has already entered the world and the world can never be the same. It was John's concept that Judgment had already permeated the world. "Judgment is conceived by this evangelist as present and subjective and as future and objective. Judgment in the former sense is no arbitrary process, but the working out of an absolute law whereby the unbelieving world is self-condemned. For a man is justified or condemned according to the attitude he assumes to the light (John 3:19-21). . . ."⁷⁸ Since the Light is Jesus, the personal relation with Christ determines one's destiny both now and in the future. "There is no more characteristic term in the Fourth Gospel than Judgement. The noun and the verb occur thirty-one times in the Gospel. Here again the prevalent use by the Evangelist may easily

lead us to overlook such passages as John 5:21ff. This must be read in full, as it is the clearest evidence that can be adduced for the claim that there is a Johannine eschatology, and that it is an integral part of the Gospel."⁷⁹ The believer is left in watchful and eager expectation which makes him continually aware of being under Judgment. "The eschatological appeal on the lips of Jesus in the earlier Gospels, as also in the Pauline letters, is a call to vigilance.

'Watch, for you know not the day nor the hour.' So in the Fourth Gospel, where the present judgement dominates the thought, we meet with the same note of urgency, though the form of the appeal is not the same. Crisis overshadows the world. Men must walk in the light before darkness overtakes them. Obedient response to Jesus in faith must be given now. G. K. Chesterton's prayer, 'From sleep and from damnation, Deliver us, good Lord!', sums up the challenge to watchfulness in the Synoptic and in the Johannine language."⁸⁰ John's thinking on Judgment is not far removed from the concept running through the whole of the New Testament, which could be stated as --- "There is continual Judgement going on all the time in the sense that men are being divided into 'good' and 'bad'; for those who die before the Parousia there is a final judgement at the moment

of death, both for good men and bad, in the sense that all are then sentenced, the first to bliss and the second to woe; for those who are alive at the Parousia the final sentence falls when Christ comes."⁸¹

As a man finds it within himself to be faithful and obedient to the love of God he moves from darkness to light, from death to life and from estrangement to wholeness. "Since this present self-executing judgment is coextensive with the entire human life, it follows that a man's character is the result of all this process in the past, and is, in fact, the verdict of God on man's conduct from first to last. His ultimate destiny has thus already been determined by his spiritual condition. Hence, from this standpoint the final judgment cannot be otherwise conceived than as the recognition and manifestation of judgment already exercised and consummated."⁸²

The last aspect of this eschatological examination will deal with the resurrection and the final consummation. To be consistent with John's thought, Life is the gift of God and thus death must be the gift of the demonic. Then the doctrine of resurrection is to bring those who have walked in Light back continually in the Light, that is, to overcome the darkness of the demonic. "Thus the resur-

rection, spiritually conceived, is brought into the present, and Christ Himself as the resurrection and the life is its source (11:25): 'Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live.' This divine resurrection life cannot be affected by death. He that possesses it can never truly die (8:51): 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death.' 11:26. 'Whosoever liveth and believeth on me, shall never die.'⁸³ "Seeing, therefore, that the resurrection in the fourth Gospel is, spiritually conceived, synonymous with eternal life, and historically conceived, is the essential fruit of eternal life, two conclusions naturally follow: (1) The believer cannot lose this spiritual resurrection life at death, but must enter rather on a fuller consummation of it (2) Only the righteous can share in that resurrection life."⁸⁴ There are two aspects of resurrection lifted up in the Gospel of John. One is that the resurrection will come individually and the other that it will come at the last day. In chapter 5:28-9 "both righteous and unrighteous are described as coming forth from the tombs, and the scene is depicted in the most materialistic form---in fact, it would be hard to

find a more unspiritual description of the resurrection in the whole literature of the first century A. D. These considerations are of themselves quite sufficient to render these verses questionable in a high degree; for their teaching is in glaring conflict with the fundamental conceptions of this Gospel."⁸⁵ Basically the Johannine teaching gives the impression that the resurrection comes immediately after death. This then is to be followed by the consummation in which everything will be complete. "But the final result of this daily secret judgment must one day become manifest; believers shall have boldness in the day of judgment (1 John 2:28, 4:17), for it can only be the recognition and manifestation of judgment already exercised. A man's attitude to Christ determines now, and will determine finally, his relation to God and destiny (3:18, 19; 9:39)."⁸⁶

The end then of all this light-giving, life-giving process is the final consummation to blessedness. "After the final judgment the present world will pass away (1 John 2:17), and Christ will take His own to heaven---a state rather than a locality (14:2, 3): they are to be with Him where He is (12:26, 27:24). Eternal life---the resurrection life---is then truly consummated. Begun essentially on

earth, it is now realised in its fulness and perfected. The faithful now obtain their 'full reward' (2 John 8). As 'children of God' they are, through enjoyment of the divine vision, transformed into the divine likeness (I John 3:2, 3)."⁸⁷

In regard to the final state of man "the Apostle does not present us with any fresh teaching touching Hades and hell, he furnishes us with principles which in themselves necessitate a transformation of the Judaistic views regarding these intermediate and final abodes of the departed. Thus, when he teaches that God so loved the world as to give His only Son to redeem it (John 3:16), that 'God is love' (I John 4:8) that He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all, then Hades, which is wholly under His sway, must be a place where moral growth is possible; and as for hell, the final eternal abode of the damned, such a conception is impossible in the cosmos ruled by the God of justice and love. Sin, according to the Johannine view, is the destroyer of all life---physical, spiritual and ontological. Now, to check the ultimate effects of this process of destruction and preserve the sinner in a state of sin, in a state of ever-growing, ever-deepening sin, could in no sense be the work of God so conceived."⁸⁸

The Epistles

The teachings of John in the Epistles follow closely those presented in the Gospel. "The ideas and the characteristic forms of expression are the same in each. In each the central thought is life. In each this life is life in the largest sense, and is antithetical to death or to perdition. In each it is exhibited in essentially the same aspects and relations. In Christ's teaching the life has its source and its seat in the Father, and is given by the Father to the Son, so that it is in the Son and can be imparted by Him to men. So in John's teaching the life is the reality that is, before all time and behind all phenomena. It is with the Father in the beginning, and is historically manifested in the Son, so that it has been seen and borne witness to."⁸⁹ This Life comes to us as the fulfilment of the promise of God. "And this is what he has promised us, eternal life." (I John 2:25).

The Epistles of John cannot see the death of Christ apart from sin (I Jn. 1:7, 2:1f., 2:12, 3:5, 4:10). "We see here that the whole person and work of Christ, His whole manifestation in the world, and in some signal way His death, are set in relation to sin. . . . Here as in the

Gospel it is characteristic of the writer that his interest is in the end or result, the actual cleansing of the soul from sin. . . . If we walk in the light as God is in the light, the blood of Jesus His son continuously and progressively cleanses us from all sin: our sanctification is gradually achieved under its influence (1:7)."⁹⁰ Sin is here faced as a blunt reality as that which separates us from God. The restored relationship can only be brought about at the cost of the life of a living saviour. This however is not the end of the story. "The New Testament writers, though they speak often of Christ's death, never think of a dead Christ. Their Christ is One who became dead and is alive for evermore, and in His immortal life the virtue of His death is present. He did something when He died, and that something He continues to make effective for men in His risen life; but there is no meaning in saying that by His death His life, as something other than His death, is 'liberated' and 'made available' for men. On the contrary, what makes His risen life significant and a saving power for sinners is neither more nor less than this, that His death is in it. It is the life of One who by dying has dealt with the fatal necessities of man's situation, and in doing so

so has given a supreme demonstration of His love."⁹¹

The activity of Jesus on our behalf places Him as an ilasmos. "Now the idea of ilasmos or propitiation is not an insulated idea. There cannot, indeed, be any such thing. It is part of a system of ideas, which we have to reconstruct with the means at our disposal. It is related, for one thing, to the idea of sin. It is sin, according to the uniform teaching of the New Testament, which creates the necessity for it, and which is in some sense the object of it. In other words, sin is the problem with which ilasmos deals. John agrees with all New Testament writers in regarding sin as a problem. It cannot simply be ignored or suppressed. Something has to be done with it, and the effective something has been done by Christ the ilasmos."⁹² The whole relationship of Christ's Death for mankind is seen only through the idea of a blood sacrifice. "All that is divine, all the moral order of the world, all that we mean by the law of God, has right done by it in the death of Christ. Sin, in that sense, is neutralized by the propitiation, and if men could enter into it, or if the benefit of it could come to them, sin would no more be a barrier to their fellowship with God. The propitiation would draw them to God, put them right with Him and, as it held their hearts more closely,

would more effectually and thoroughly cleanse them from every taint of sin."⁹³ The primary factor is again, as we saw in the Gospels, man's acceptance of God. It is an act, once for all, completed in the fullest sense. Man's part is simply to accept and respond to this love of God. This then asks the question of what is the relation of the love of God to sin. ". . . John rises above all comparisons to an absolute point of view at which propitiation and love become ideas which explain each other, and which have no adequate illustration apart from each other. He defines not only the propitiation by relation to love--- 'God Himself loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins' (4:10); he defines love by relation to the propitiation---'in this have we come to know what love is, that He laid down His life for us' (3:16). . . . If the propitiatory death of Jesus is eliminated from the love of God, it might be unfair to say that the love of God is robbed of all meaning, but it is certainly robbed of its apostolic meaning. It has no longer that meaning which goes deeper than sin, sorrow, and death, and which recreates life in the adoring joy, wonder, and purity of the first Epistle of John."⁹⁴

Footnotes

¹C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St John (London: S. P. C. K., 1960), p. 57.

²James Denney, The Death of Christ (London: Tyndale Press, 1956), pp. 146-7.

³Austin Farrer, A Rebirth of Images (Glasgow: MacLehose and Co., 1949), p. 19.

⁴Martin Kiddle, The Revelation of St. John (New York: Harper, 1940), p. XXXVI.

⁵R. H. Charles, Eschatology (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 405.

⁶Denney, p. 134.

⁷Denney, p. 154.

⁸Denney, p. 135, passim.

⁹Denney, pp. 135-6.

¹⁰Denney, p. 136.

¹¹Denney, p. 141.

¹²Denney, p. 146.

¹³Denney, p. 146.

¹⁴Denney, pp. 146-7.

¹⁵Denney, p. 138.

¹⁶Denney, p. 137.

¹⁷Charles, p. 406.

¹⁸Stewart D. F. Salmond, The Christian Doctrine of Immortality (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), p. 343.

- ¹⁹Charles, p. 407.
- ²⁰Edward Langton, Good and Evil Spirits (London: S. P. C. K., 1942), p. 287.
- ²¹Charles, pp. 408-9.
- ²²Langton, pp. 287-8.
- ²³Charles, pp. 409-10.
- ²⁴Charles, p. 410.
- ²⁵Charles, p. 411.
- ²⁶Charles, p. 411.
- ²⁷Charles, p. 412.
- ²⁸Denney, p. 139.
- ²⁹W. F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John (London: Duckworth, 1958), p. 97.
- ³⁰C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of The Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), pp. 147-8.
- ³¹Dodd, p. 148.
- ³²Salmond, p. 391.
- ³³Dodd, p. 364.
- ³⁴Rudolph Bultmann, Life and Death (Kittel's Bible Key Words; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), p. 74.
- ³⁵Bultmann, p. 75.
- ³⁶Bultmann, p. 76.
- ³⁷Howard, p. 109.
- ³⁸Howard, p. 112.
- ³⁹Charles, p. 426.

- ⁴⁰Salmond, p. 391
- ⁴¹Denney, p. 143.
- ⁴²C. Ryder Smith, The Bible Doctrine of The Hereafter (London: Epworth Press, 1958), p. 169.
- ⁴³Dodd, p. 366.
- ⁴⁴Dodd, p. 367.
- ⁴⁵Dodd, p. 368.
- ⁴⁶Denney, pp. 142-3.
- ⁴⁷Dodd, p. 372.
- ⁴⁸Denney, p. 143.
- ⁴⁹Denney, p. 142.
- ⁵⁰Denney, p. 146.
- ⁵¹Howard, pp. 84-85.
- ⁵²Denney, p. 145.
- ⁵³Barrett, p. 60.
- ⁵⁴Barrett, p. 61.
- ⁵⁵Barrett, p. 58.
- ⁵⁶Barrett, p. 67.
- ⁵⁷Denney, p. 148.
- ⁵⁸Bultmann, p. 93.
- ⁵⁹Alan Richardson, The Gospel According to Saint John (Torch Bible Commentary; New York: Collier Books, 1962) pp. 210-11.
- ⁶⁰Barrett, p. 354

⁶¹Gerald Vann, The Eagle's Word (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961) pp. 83-4.

⁶²Barrett, p. 354.

⁶³Denney, pp. 144-5.

⁶⁴Dodd, p. 148.

⁶⁵Dodd, pp. 148-9.

⁶⁶Dodd, p. 150.

⁶⁷Barrett, p. 329.

⁶⁸Barrett, p. 335.

⁶⁹Vann, pp. 81-2.

⁷⁰Richardson, p. 134.

⁷¹Smith, p. 210.

⁷²Charles, p. 420.

⁷³Barrett, p. 56.

⁷⁴Barrett, p. 57.

⁷⁵Charles, pp. 421-2.

⁷⁶Howard, p. 116.

⁷⁷Howard, p. 117.

⁷⁸Charles, pp. 422-3.

⁷⁹Howard, pp. 112-3.

⁸⁰Howard, p. 120.

⁸¹Smith, p. 210.

⁸²Charles, p. 424.

- 83 Charles, pp. 427-8.
- 84 Charles, p. 428.
- 85 Charles, pp. 428-29.
- 86 Charles, p. 430.
- 87 Charles, pp. 430-31.
- 88 Charles, p. 431.
- 89 Salmond, p. 389.
- 90 Denney, p. 149.
- 91 Denney, pp. 149-50.
- 92 Denney, p. 150.
- 93 Denney, pp. 150-1.
- 94 Denney, pp. 151-2.

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