

**"Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all"**

1 Timothy 4:15

**Journal
of
Theology**

Church of the Lutheran Confession

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Is there a need to study this particular subject at this time? Haven't we always taken for granted that the soul is immortal? Can't we simply assume that our fathers were correct in their presentation and therefore there is no need for us to study the matter in depth for ourselves?

Let it be said that there is need for such a study. Not only the expression "immortality of the soul," but also the concept which it describes, is being called into question in our day. Therefore it behooves us to return to the Scriptures which alone are able to supply us with the answers that the Holy Ghost intends us to have, and learn from them what we are to believe and teach.

I. Objections.

First, let us hear what objections have been made to the traditional teaching of the "immortality of the soul." A Lutheran pastor, Thomas Mails, says in his book: The Nature of Heresy in Our Time (published in 1963, p. 82): "How much is a heresy worth? When a member and I discussed this recently, he told me that his father died when he was a boy, and in a sincere effort to comfort him his pastor explained that 'this must be God's will, and he could be happy in knowing his father's soul was now in heaven. The member went on to describe then how the idea of a separated soul and body laid a foundation for compounded years of misunderstanding. He was astonished one day to learn from another pastor that no church teaching or Bible passage supported the comforting idea." Pastor Mails also writes (p. 196): "As to the resurrection of the soul immediately upon death, surely the idea comes from somewhere other than the Bible, the Church Fathers, the Creeds, Luther and most scholars. I suspect it came from wishful thinking, stemming from man's natural impatience to get everything he has coming at once. That's how he would do things if he were God. Or even more tragically, it may

have come from pastors who have chosen to comfort people by going along with this idea and the idea of reunion - even when they knew or ought to have known it wasn't supported by Scripture."

Another Lutheran pastor, Ronald Starenko (a former roommate of the undersigned), delivered an essay entitled: "The Soul after Death," to the Detroit Pastoral Conference of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, on Oct. 7, 1963, in which he said: "For, what I believe are sound Biblical reasons, we can no longer speak of death as the separation of body and soul, nor of the resurrection as the joining of body and soul."

Dr. Gilbert Thiele, a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, wrote in an article entitled "Easter Hope" in the March, 1958, issue of The Seminarian: "What a tragedy that this perversion, understandable and explicable from the Socratic view and the Platonic presupposition, but unpardonable as either the first or the last word for Christians, has become part of the sum and substance of much theology known to us! When we so speak: You have an immortal soul which Christ died to save; and when you die your soul(s) goes to God and to heaven. Is that not comforting? - when we so speak, we are essentially speaking the language of Plato, of Lessing, of the English and Continental thinkers, of Freemasonry, of the worst of all early-Church opposition, Gnosticism, and of Docetism." In the same article Dr. Thiele says: "We think it is consequently fair to say, to put it very bluntly, that when a man dies he is dead. The Bible when examined in its length and breadth knows of no disembodied condition in which man lives, temporarily, and certainly not permanently; it knows of neither a temporary nor permanent human immortality as such."

Prof. Thiele wrote another paper entitled: "Resurrection of the Body or Immortality of the Soul." His thesis is that a belief in the immortality of the soul cancels out and is in direct conflict with a belief in the resurrection of the body. Resurrection and immortality are assumed to be mutually exclusive terms.

A German Lutheran professor of theology, Gerhard

Gloege, wrote in The Day of His Coming (1963): "At this point the possibility emerges that Jesus expected not only a coming resurrection of the dead, as the apocalyptists had done previously. The indication is that he knew of an unbroken life of man which death could not destroy. This need not be understood in the sense of the Greek view of the 'immortality of the soul.' Jesus was not a philosopher and he knew nothing of an isolated soul which is a never-dying substance of man, so to speak. Immortality was not a predicate of man or of a 'higher' part of him in Jesus' view, but part of the glorious nature of God."

Paul Althaus, another prominent European theologian, says in his Handbook of Christian Theology: "This certainty is something totally different from the Platonic idea of an 'immortality of the soul.' The latter idea denies the death of at least the spiritual part of the person, which supposedly is free from evil. Christian faith, however, takes man as a whole, ontologically as well as ethically. We sin as whole beings and we die as whole beings. We expect the state beyond death only in God's act of the resurrection. This act, like death, is concerned with the whole human being. In the question of death and the new life we do not distinguish dualistically between soul (or spirit) and body."

The Seminarian of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, said in its March, 1968, issue: "One who believes in the 'Immortality of the Soul' shows, thereby, that he is not a Christian. As Justin said: If you have fallen in with some who are called Christians.... and who say that there is no resurrection of the dead, but that their souls, when they die are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians." The implication is that a belief in the immortality of the soul automatically negates a belief in the resurrection of the body.

More recently much publicity has been given to the views of Dr. Krister Stendahl, an LCA clergyman and dean of the Harvard Divinity School. Referring to his lecture at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn., an article in the La Crosse Tribune of Jan. 7, 1972, carried the

heading: "Harvard Theologian Loses His Belief in Immortality." Dr. Stendahl predicted that "the whole long and glorious tradition of speaking about the immortality of the soul is coming to an end." He says that "the only immortality the Old Testament knew of was in the perpetuation of offspring. . . . The New Testament in a very interesting way speaks constantly about the Resurrection as over against immortality. . . . The glow of the immortality language has worn off." One reason for this, he said, is that it was a product of a Platonic view of the world that stressed the polarity between soul and body.

In commenting on Dr. Stendahl's lecture, the April, 1972, issue of Lutherans Alert quotes the president of the ALC, Dr. Kent S. Knutson, as saying in his monthly pastoral letter: "Immortality is a word which historically means man's own innate power to survive death - that man is immortal by virtue of his own nature. (The word immortal is used in the New Testament in only one passage and it does not mean that there.)"

All of the foregoing objections to the traditional doctrine of the immortality of the soul should provide us with sufficient cause to enter into a study of this doctrine, and seek to determine on the basis of Scripture whether or not these objections are valid.

II. Philosophy.

We noted in the preceding section that some ancient philosophers were referred to. The implication is that the idea of the immortality of the soul originated with them, that this teaching was unknown in the Old Testament, and that therefore the traditional teaching of the immortality of the soul has basis only in the philosophers, but not in Holy Scripture. Let us therefore take time to try to understand just what the philosophers taught in regard to immortality of the soul.

The favorite thesis of unbelievers is that death ends existence. This idea is, however, contradicted by man's innermost convictions. The majority of mankind has never

professed the view known as materialism, which holds that man has no soul, that he is nothing but matter, that hence when he dies his personal existence ceases. We would readily have to grant that the teaching of the immortality of the soul has by no means been limited to the Christian religion. It is one of the tenets of natural religion. Some of the heathen philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and others have endeavored to prove the immortality of the soul and to derive some measure of comfort for themselves and others from their philosophy.

If the question "What becomes of the soul after death?" were asked, various answers would have been given by different philosophers and civilizations. The most noteworthy of these answers, other than the traditional Christian teaching, would be grouped as follows:

- 1) Complete annihilation (the Materialists).
- 2) Survival of the soul for an indefinite period in a world of filmy shadows (Aboriginal).
- 3) Transmigration (Indic; the Egyptians, Plato, the Pythagoreans, and sporadic among the aborigines).
- 4) Absorption into an Infinite or Absolute Being (Pantheism; and Buddhistic Nirvana).
- 5) The survival of the individual in the form of the post-humous influence of his personality and achievement (many Evolutionists and Positivists).
- 6) Merging of diffusion of the psychic energy of the individual into an unseen hypothetical etheric energy (quasi-materialistic).

Among the Greeks the idea of immortality is found in the poems of Homer (about 850 B.C.) and in the philosophy of Pythagoras (582-507 B.C.). Belief in some form of immortality prevailed among the Greeks throughout their history, but it was not until Plato (427-347 B.C.) that a philosophic basis was furnished to the doctrine.

Plato taught that reason is the function of the immaterial soul, while sensation is bound up with the material body, in which the soul lives as in a prison. The soul is older than the body and existed prior to its union with the body. The doctrine of pre-existence is joined to Plato's

doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Plato's arguments for the immortality of the soul have been summarized in this way:

- 1) The soul is a self-moving principle; its motion, and consequently its life, is therefore perpetual;
- 2) The peculiar disease or evil of the soul is vice; if the disease peculiar to a thing does not destroy it, it is indestructible. Vice does not destroy (it corrupts) the soul, therefore it is indestructible.
- 3) The cyclical argument, namely, the cosmic law of the passage of opposites over into each other; for example, night, day; heat, cold; winter, summer; sleeping, walking; decaying seed, living plant; so death, life.
- 4) The doctrine of reminiscence shows the learning of mathematical and philosophical truths is only the application of ideas, principles or axioms already in the mind and this implies a pre-existent state.
- 5) The soul, as an immaterial entity, is essentially related to the immaterial, invisible ideas and these are eternal.
- 6) The idea of life is inseparable from the idea of soul (the Greek word $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ means "principle of life" as well as "soul.")
- 7) The soul is indivisible. That which is indivisible cannot be disintegrated.
- 8) The superior dignity and worth of the soul argue for its survival of the body.
- 9) The instinctive aspiration toward and longing for a future life shows that the doctrine of immortality is founded in the soul's nature.
- 10) The world as a moral, just world demands a future existence for the rectification of the inequalities in this life.

On the basis of these logical principles, Plato came to the conclusion that it is quite probable that man's spirit is immortal. But he and the other philosophers could offer no certainty that this was so. Moreover, they denied the possibility of the resurrection of the body, and did not even refer to it. His view of immortality of the soul was not that a person continues to exist after death. According to Plato,

the will of man and the sensibilities of man do not continue after death. What he called the immortality of the soul was nothing more than a perduration of the intelligence or the conservation and preservation of reason. The individual person, who is so important in the Christian view of things, is of no significance to Plato. The later Platonists looked upon the individual soul as being only an infinitesimal fraction of the great world soul, imprisoned for a time in a mortal body, but longing to be freed from that body to be absorbed and lost once more in the supreme unity of the spirit.

From all of this, we can see that there is a great deal of difference between the traditional Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the views of Plato or the ancient Egyptians, or whatever. They have this much in common, that they use the word "immortality" when referring to the state of the soul after death.

III. Difficulties.

We experience great difficulty when it comes to defining and describing the future life. After all, it is far above the ability of our finite minds to grasp the infinite joys of the blessed. Peter, having seen the visitors from heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration, was dazed with the wonder of what he had seen and proposed the building of 3 tabernacles, concerning which the evangelist remarks: "not knowing what he said," Luke 9:33. Having been caught up into Paradise, Paul tells us that he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter," 2 Cor. 12: 1-4.

Christians must guard against going beyond Scripture, or falling short of it, in describing the future state. We have no certain source of information other than the written Word of God. Whatever is not revealed in that Word must remain unanswered in this life. We cannot say: This or that is what it will or will not be like on the other side of death, if it is not taught or indicated in Scripture.

Paul, having had that glimpse of Paradise abode,

could verify the words of the prophet Isaiah (64:4) in saying: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him," 1 Cor. 2:9. The question arises: Are we to limit these words to the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day and from there on into eternity? We have no such right, for the verse simply pictures the inexpressible glory of the promised salvation. The verse must be understood in the light of the rest of Scripture.

Furthermore, is it proper to even apply the word "immortality" to the soul? In the Old Testament the word "immortality" is not to be found either in connection with the soul or the body. In the New Testament there are two different Greek words which are translated "immortality." The first word is ἀθανασία, derived from α (a negative particle) and θάνατος, death. The word therefore means: negative towards death, not subject to death. This word is used of God in 1 Tim. 6:16 - "Who only hath immortality." It is used at only one other place in the New Testament, namely, in 1 Cor. 15:53, 54, where it is used in connection with man's body at the resurrection on the Last Day. The words read: "this mortal must put on immortality.... this mortal shall have put on immortality."

The other word is ἀφθαρσία. This word is derived from the negative particle α and φθείρω, to wither or corrupt. The word therefore means: not subject to corruption, incorruptible, and therefore suggests unending existence. The word is used of God in 1 Tim. 1:17 - "Now unto the King eternal, immortal...." It is also applied to man in Rom. 2:7 - "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life," and in 2 Tim. 1:10 - "Our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." These words would seem to be applied to man's body. ἀφθαρσία is also translated "incorruption" in 1 Cor. 15:42, 50, 53, 54, and "incorruptible" in 1 Cor. 9:25; 15:52; and 1 Pet. 1:4, 23. (An interesting sidelight can be seen from the fact that this same word is used twice to describe spiritual incorruption. In Eph. 6:24

and Tit. 2:7, ἀφθαρσία is translated "sincerity." Our love toward the Lord Jesus and our doctrine are not to be corrupted by anything.)

This much is sure, therefore, that God is immortal. Since God does not have a body, but is a spirit (John 4:24), which hath not flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), it is possible for a living being to be immortal without a body, for God is immortal. - Scripture also clearly ascribes immortality to man's body after the resurrection.

But what about man's soul before the resurrection? Although the word "immortality" is not clearly used in direct reference to man's soul, does that mean that the concept is not there? By no means! It is common knowledge that in our ecclesiastical terminology we often use words not found in Scripture to describe teachings that are found in Scripture. For example, we use the word "Trinity" to describe the Godhead, even though this word is not found in the Bible. We use the expression "Real Presence" to describe our teaching of the Lord's Supper, even though this is a non-Biblical expression. We have often used the word "unionism" to describe violations of the Scriptural concept of church fellowship, even though this word is not to be found in the Bible. The main thing is the concept, or teaching. If the concept is there, but no particular word is used in Scripture to describe it, it is not wrong for us to use an appropriate word of our own to describe that teaching.

We shall not here go into detail regarding the 3 Hebrew words used in the Old Testament for soul (nepesch, ruach, and neschamah), nor the 2 Greek words used in the New Testament (πνεῦμα and ψυχή). Rather we would refer our readers to a previous article appearing in this Journal of Theology (Vol. 10, No. 5, for December 1970), where a detailed study of these terms is presented.

Our next step would therefore seem to be an examination of the Old and New Testament texts, in order to ascertain if we may appropriately apply the term "immortality of the soul," to the concept there set forth.

IV. Old Testament.

Scripture directs our thoughts primarily to Judgment Day and Eternity. Paul speaks of "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. 1:7, "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body," Phil. 3:20-21. He says that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory," Col. 3:4. The resurrection of the dead is described in connection with Christ's second coming in 1 Thess. 4:13-17.

It is clear from Scripture that man consists in both body and soul. In this life they are dependent upon each other. In death body and soul are separated. The Preacher says concerning death: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," Eccl. 12:7. The death of the rich man whose ground had brought forth plentifully is described in this way: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke 12:20. Likewise of the dying Christ's suffering a real death, it is stated: "He yielded up the ghost" (Matt. 27:50) and "He gave up the ghost" (John 19:30). Stephen likewise, while being stoned unto death, prayed: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," Acts 7:59. No one can deny on the basis of Scripture that soul and body are separated from each other in death.

What then? The body is placed in the grave, there to await the resurrection on the Last Day. But what becomes of the soul? What is the state of the souls between death and the resurrection? There are relatively few passages in Holy Writ dealing with this intermediate state. Being bound by space and time, we really have no means of forming completely adequate concepts concerning the soul's mode of existence in the intermediate state.

The inspired writers of the Old Testament often used the Hebrew word Sheol. The etymology of this word seems to be uncertain. Gesenius thinks it is from Shawol, a hollow or subterranean place. Strong says it is derived from Shaal, to request or demand. Luther held it to be derived from Shalach, to demand, hence a place which is never

satisfied. Cp. Prov. 27:20; 30:15,16; Isa. 5:14. Sheol is used to designate a specific locality, Job 11:7, 8; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2. It is often used in a general way to describe the realm of the dead, in which both believers (Job 14:13) and unbelievers (Ps. 49:14) are found. This would refer to the grave. These passages do not describe the intermediate state. - Sheol is also used to describe the realm of the damned. Ps. 9:17 presents a contrast between believers and godless: "The wicked shall be turned into hell (Sheol), and all the nations that forget God." Consider the dirge in Ezek. 32:17-27, which would seem to be more than the realm of the dead in view of the repeated references to the uncircumcised. And we do not forget the many references to the "sorrows of Sheol," 2 Sam. 22:6; Ps. 18:5; 86:13; 116:3, etc.

It therefore becomes clear that the Old Testament provides us with this much information concerning the intermediate state, that Sheol at times denotes the place of the condemned souls. Sheol and death go hand in hand. Because of sin death is the beginning of eternal punishment, and thus Sheol denotes eternal damnation. The souls of the unbelievers are pictured as entering hell immediately and in a state of consciousness. Ps. 28:1-3; 49:14-19; Isa. 66:24 (Cp. Mark 9:48); Deut. 32:22; Num. 16:31-33 (Cp. Ps. 55:15).

The condition of the blessed in the intermediate state is not described in such great detail in the Old Testament. There are, of course, numerous passages describing the bliss of heaven. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore," Ps. 16:11. "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness," Ps. 17:15. Cp. Ps. 73:24; Isa. 25:8; 35:10; 60:20, etc.

In this connection we might include in our thinking a verse in the New Testament, which may help us to understand the teaching of the Old Testament. Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews, who refused to believe that He was the true and eternal God: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad," John 8:56. The

Greek word εἶδεν means to see, to witness an event. Cp. Luke 17:22, where it is also clear that this means a perception with the senses. - Furthermore, there would be the natural inference, that if the condemned souls enter upon their condemnation immediately after death, then the blessed souls also enter upon a condition of blessedness immediately after death, and that they are in a blessed state between death and resurrection. - Nor can we forget Elijah who was taken, according to both soul and body, into heaven, 2 Kings 2:11. This took place immediately after his earthly sojourn ended. The difference with Elijah was that also his body was taken to heaven, for he did not see death. So also of Enoch we are simply told that "God took him," Gen. 5:24.

V. New Testament.

We next turn our attention to the word Hades (ᾍδης). Its etymology is from ἰδεῖν and the α-privativum, namely, the unseen, the one who makes unseen, the unseen land. In ancient Greek mythology the concept was vague. In later Greek the term is used primarily to denote the place of the wicked.

In the Septuagint (300-150 B. C.) Sheol is translated with Hades in 61 out of 65 times, e. g. in 2 Sam. 22:6. Hades in the LXX thus denotes both: the abode of disembodied spirits and the place of the damned.

In the Rabbinical writings, a distinction is sometimes made between Hades and Gehenna, the latter always referring to a place of torment. There were various opinions among Jewish writers, e. g., that Hades was an intermediate state comprising both hell and paradise.

Josephus in his Antiquities (XVIII, 1, 3-5) describes 3 sects of philosophy peculiar to the Jews, from which we quote: "The Pharisees believe that souls have an immortal vigour in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and live again. . . . But the doctrine of

the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies....
 The doctrine of the Essenes is this: They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for."

The KJV translates Ἅδης in 10 instances with "hell." In Matt. 11:23 (Cp. Luke 10:15) Jesus says: "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell (Hades)." The context is significant. Here Hades cannot denote merely the realm of the dead, annihilation, or a state of probation (purgatory). - In Matt. 16:18 Jesus said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell (Hades) shall not prevail against it." The contrast here is between the city of God and that of Satan. The expression "gates of hell," πύλας ᾗδου, is figurative of the strength of the enemy. Hades as the abode of all disembodied spirits is contrary to the context, for the believers in the realm of the dead do not war against the Church.

In Acts 2:27, 31, Peter quoted from Ps. 16:10 in his Pentecost sermon: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (Hades), neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." There are two views as a result of two translations of ἐγκαταλείπω, to leave. 1) to forsake, as in 2 Tim. 4:10, 16. That is, God will not so far forsake me that I become a prey of hell. 2) To leave in a hopeless condition, as in Rom. 9:29. That is, God will not let my soul remain in the realm of death. This second view does better justice to the parallelism with "corruption of the flesh."

There are no cogent reasons why Luke 16:23 ("And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments") does not refer to Hades as a place of torment. We cannot accept the idea that Hades denotes the abode of both believers and unbelievers, in distinction from "being in torments" and "Abraham's bosom." Nor can we accept the idea that this story, whether a parable or not, teaches nothing concerning the condition of the soul in the intermediate state. And certainly we cannot accept the idea that this story does not happen until Judgment Day.

The word γέεννα, Gehenna, always denotes the

place of eternal torment. This is true in Matt. 18:9 and Mark 9:43-48; also Matt. 5:22, 29, 30 and 22:15, 33; Luke 12:5 and Matt. 10:28; James 3:6.

Likewise ἄβυσσος denotes the horrible abode of the devils before judgment. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3. - Then there is also τάρταρος in 2 Pet. 2:4, translated "hell." - Other descriptions of hell are: "Lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14, 15), "everlasting fire" (Matt. 25:41), "outer darkness" (Matt. 25:30) etc.

What conclusions can we then draw concerning the state of the wicked after death? We have seen that Hades, like Sheol, may designate the realm of the dead. It was so used by the church fathers Ignatius, Ireneus, and Tertulian. - Generally Hades, Gehenna, outer darkness, abyss, etc., are used synonymously and designate the abode of condemned souls. In 1 Pet. 3:19, φυλακή, prison, must refer to the abode of the wicked, and not a prison where the souls of the blessed are detained until their resurrection.

We must also conclude that the unbelievers enter upon the state of condemnation immediately upon death. According to 1 Pet. 3:19, the souls of the unbelieving people of Noah's day were in hell at the time of Christ's descent. In Jude 7, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc., are pictured as "suffering (Present participle) the vengeance of eternal fire." - This conclusion would also be in accord with Luke 16:23. It is fully in accord with the analogy of faith, that is, that the unbelievers are judged already, ἤδη, "even now," and the Perfect tense, κέκρικται, John 3:18b.

Now, what can we learn about the state of the blessed between death and resurrection? In Luke 16:22-23, the beggar Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. This was the place of those who died believing the promises given to Abraham. It is interesting to note that in v. 22, κόλπον, "bosom," is in the singular, while in v. 23 it is in the plural κόλποις. The latter would undoubtedly denote the sum total of Old Testament believers.

In Luke 23:43, Jesus said to the repentant malefactor: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Since the malefactor's body was taken down from the cross and buried,

Jesus could only have had reference to his soul. The malefactor's soul entered heaven. This was the same celestial paradise referred to in 2 Cor. 12:4 and Rev. 2:7.

The writer to the Hebrews speaks of the heavenly (ἑπουρανίῳ) Jerusalem. In Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 9ff., the indescribable, but conscious, joy of the perfected saints before the Judgment is described.

The word sleep is often used, e. g., "Christ is become the firstfruits of them that slept," 1 Cor. 15:20. Cp. 1 Thess. 4:13-15; Matt. 9:24; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52; John 11:11-14. This metaphor should not be pressed beyond the "tertium comparationis," the point of comparison. The word "sleep" is used to denote the saints' rest from earthly toil, Rev. 14:13, and the Christian's peaceful departure from the earthly to the heavenly life. (Cp. Luther on Gen. 25:7-10; St. L. Ed., I: 1756-1760.)

What conclusions can we now draw from Scripture itself concerning the condition of the believers in the intermediate state between death and Judgment? We conclude that the souls of the departed believers are in a conscious and active state. Jesus said that "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," Matt. 8:11. In Matt. 17:3, Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration conversed with Jesus concerning His impending passion. In Luke 20:38 and context, Jesus proves the resurrection of the body from God's name, the God of Abraham. "For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living." He then concludes His argument with the words: "For all live unto Him." This is simply repeating what He said in John 8:51 - "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." Cp. Rev. 6:9, 10; 7:9-14.

This bliss begins immediately upon the believer's death, for "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," Matt. 11:32. This was Paul's confidence when he wrote: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. 5:8. In Phil. 1:23, Paul says: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with

Christ; which is far better." Paul here cannot be speaking of his being with Christ in his resurrected body, because of his words "to depart, and to be with Christ." Cp. Hebr. 12:23 ("the spirits of just men made perfect") and Acts 7:56, 59, where Stephen saw the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God, and then prayed: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." His prayer was answered.

All of this is according to the analogy of faith. Our Justification is complete. Christ is the living head of the Church, and the members of His body are living saints on earth and in heaven. Jesus said: "Where I am, there shall also my servant be," John 12:26. Again: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John 14:2-3.

The fact that we cannot understand and comprehend the mode of existence, does not argue against the fact that, according to Scripture, the disembodied souls of the believers enjoy perfect bliss also in the intermediate state.

VI. Antitheses.

It only remains for us to consider several theories that have been proposed which run counter to what Scripture teaches in regard to the soul.

1) There are those who teach that man's soul is inherently mortal. This would include such groups as the Seventh-Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses. They contend that immortality is only conditional, being conditioned on "faith in Christ" (by which they mean "the good life"), or on obeying certain ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, or on making good use of the second opportunity during the millennium. - The Annihilationists teach that the souls of the wicked will be completely destroyed, either at Christ's second coming or at the end of the millennium.

According to the theory of evolution, death was a biological factor in the world before man developed as a rational being. Therefore man is inherently mortal. There is no difference between the dying of men and other animate

beings. Some evolutionists admit a conditioned immortality, which may be reached through a process of gradual development by meeting the various moral and spiritual conditions of a natural development.

The materialists deny the reality of psychic or spiritual forces and entities. There is no soul. Epicureanism is the classic example of materialism, which sought the highest good in man's release from the fears inspired by religion. This must lead to hedonism (living for pleasure). Cp. 1 Cor. 15:32 and Isa. 22:13, where this idea is summarized in the words: "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die." - The Sadducees were materialists, Matt. 22:23ff.; Acts 23:8. This same materialism is prevalent also today.

Pantheism teaches that God is the soul of the world. It denies the existence of personal souls, and therefore of personal immortality.

Unitarianism (Modernism), being a this-worldly religion, denies personal immortality. It admits only an "immortality of influence," that is, the individual "continues" after death through the influence which his good (or wicked) life exerts on the succeeding generations.

2) Then there is the theory known as Psychopannychism (ψυχῆ - πᾶν - ὑπνός), the soul sleeps through the night. This is the idea that through death the soul enters into a state of total unconsciousness from which it does not awaken until Judgment. In his History of the Church (VI, 37, Severus to Decius), Eusebius mentions that "a new group appeared on the Arabian scene, originators of a doctrine far removed from the truth, namely, that at the end of our life here the human soul dies for a time along with our bodies and perishes with them; later, when one day the resurrection comes, it will return with them to life." - The Anabaptists were representatives of this theory. John Calvin's first theological treatise was against psychopannychism. Today the Adventists are adherents of this view.

It might be noted that Luther has been charged with the teaching that the soul is unconscious. Luther's interest in emphasizing the soul's sleep was his opposition to Rome's

error of purgatory. Even as there is life and activity during the natural sleep (dreams) without the sleeper being conscious of what is going on outside of himself, so also the blessed dead are in a mode of existence which we cannot understand.

3) Reincarnation (or Transmigration) is the theory that the soul passes from one body to another for the purpose of ethical development. They hold that the sum total of a man's acts will determine the lot of the soul in the succeeding existence. The law of Karma (i. e. an act) governs each of the countless rounds of transmigrations until the soul acquired the true knowledge of its freedom. (Nirvana) This idea is held by Buddhism and modern Theosophical societies.

The Bible knows nothing of this theory. The Pharisees may have believed it, likewise Herod, Matt. 14:2. The common people identified John the Baptist with Elijah for other reasons, Matt. 16:14; Mark 8:28. - This doctrine is contrary to Scripture. For one thing, it denies the doctrine of original sin by teaching that evil deeds are the result of a previous existence. It presents the pagan idea of a soul seeking a new body, sometimes in vain. It denies the personal existence of a soul. Modern Theosophists teach "soul-marriages." The caste-system in India resulted from this idea, since there is no sympathy for the unfortunate neighbor, for his plight is the result of Karma. Work-righteousness is a prominent feature, as the asceticism of the Hindus. The theory must drive to despair, because man is endlessly hurried along the path of repeated sufferings and death.

4) According to Spiritism, the departed spirits take their earthly experiences into the future life. On the basis of the past and of additional experiences in the disembodied state, they are in a position to counsel men. These disembodied spirits are able to communicate with men and thus become sources of divine revelation. They continue to develop in their disembodied state.

According to Scripture, the departed know nothing of our condition. In Isa. 63:16 we read: "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel

acknowledge us not." - There is no need of additional revelation. The rich man in hell thought that his five brethren needed additional revelation. But Abraham said to him: "They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them," Luke 16:27-29. - Consulting the dead is a Satanic practice. The command was given in Ex. 22:18 - "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." In Deut. 18:10-12, various classes of wizards and necromancers are described as being "an abomination unto the Lord." The Satanic origin of spiritism is evident from the disastrous effects it has on men's minds.

VII. Conclusion.

Scripture does not answer all questions we may have as to what will take place on the other side of death. However, on the basis of Scripture, we do not believe that the "immortality of the soul" after death and the "resurrection of the body" on the Last Day should be considered in an "either - or" relationship. From the divinely-inspired pages of Holy Writ we have far more reason to think of it as a "both - and" relationship. "With God nothing shall be impossible," Luke 1:37.

The apostle Paul had seen sufferings aplenty in this life on account of the Gospel which he proclaimed, and he had also been given a glimpse into the life yet to come in eternity. Comparing the two, as in a scale, he could only say: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. 8:18. Let us make it our chief earthly concern to prepare for death and eternity by a living faith in Jesus Christ. In heaven all our questions will be answered and our joy will be complete. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

A. Schulz

BULTMANN:
DEMYTHOLOGIZING THE RESURRECTION

In 1941, Rudolf Bultmann, then professor of New Testament at the University of Marburg, published his New Testament and Mythology. Since that time the terms "mythology" and "demythologize" have come to be an important part of theological discussion among Lutherans. Bultmann's program to free the Christian message from its so-called mythological elements has received a varying reception. Some have regarded it as a necessary process if the Gospel is to have meaning and relevance to man in this age of skepticism. Such followers of Bultmann would seem to regard him as a sort of twentieth-century Luther. Others have viewed Bultmann's demythologizing as a serious break with Christian orthodoxy, which threatens to undermine the Gospel as a secure foundation for man's faith.

The Problem Bultmann Faced

It would seem that Bultmann developed his theology in an attempt to answer the modern-day problem of doubt. He recognized the pervading influence of naturalistic science and this-worldly materialism upon the mind of modern man. He saw how his contemporaries were more and more doubting the possibility of supernatural intervention in history, past, present, or future. He recognized how they were increasingly disinclined to accept the miraculous in Scripture, such as the creative act of God at the beginning of time, the casting out of demons by Christ and the apostles, or the empty tomb and the bodily resurrection of Jesus on the first Easter.

In one place Bultmann says that "... the world-view of the Scripture is mythological and is therefore unacceptable to modern man whose thinking has been shaped by science and is therefore no longer mythological. Modern man always makes use of technical means which are the result of science. In case of illness modern man has re-

course to physicians, to medical science. In case of economic and political affairs, he makes use of the results of psychological, social, economic and political sciences, and so on. Nobody reckons with direct intervention by transcendent powers.... There, modern man acknowledges as reality only such phenomena or events as are comprehensible within the framework of the rational order of the universe. He does not acknowledge miracles because they do not fit into this lawful order. When a strange or marvelous accident occurs, he does not rest until he has found a rational cause. The contrast between the ancient world-view of the Bible and the modern world-view is the contrast between two ways of thinking, the mythological and the scientific... But for present purposes it is enough to say that the thinking of modern men is really shaped by the scientific world-view, and that modern men need it for their daily lives. Therefore, it is mere wishful thinking to suppose that the ancient world-view of the Bible can be renewed."¹

Defining the Terms

The word "mythology" occurs several times in this quotation. What does Bultmann mean by it? He gives us the following definition: "Mythology is the use of imagery to express the otherworldly in terms of this world and the divine in terms of human life, the other side in terms of this side. For instance, divine transcendence is expressed as spatial distance."²

He would, it seems, attach the label of "mythological" to any occurrence, in Scripture or elsewhere, where the divine or supernatural is presented as impinging upon, or entering into, the events of history. In his own words: "Mythology expresses a certain understanding of human existence. It believes that the world and human life have their ground and their limits in a power which is beyond all that we can calculate or control. Mythology speaks about this power inadequately and insufficiently because it speaks about it as if it were a worldly power. It speaks of gods who represent the power beyond the visible, comprehensible

world. It speaks of gods as if they were men and of their actions as human actions, although it conceives of the gods as endowed with super-human power and of their actions as incalculable, as capable of breaking the normal, ordinary order of events. It may be said that myths give to the transcendent reality an immanent, this-worldly objectivity. Myths give worldly objectivity to that which is unworldly. (In German one would say, 'Der Mythos objektiviert das Jenseitige zum Diesseitigen.')

³

It is not that Bultmann rejects the idea of God and His transcendence, or the possibility of a personal confrontation with God and the "risen" Christ through the proclamation of the church and within the life and experience of an individual believer. He objects rather to the placing of supernatural events into the historical chain of natural events: "In mythological thinking the action of God, whether in nature, history, human fortune, or the inner life of the soul, is understood as an action which intervenes between the natural, or historical, or psychological course of events; it breaks and links them at the same time. The divine causality is inserted as a link in the chain of events which follow one another according to the causal nexus. This is meant by the popular notion that a miraculous event cannot be understood except as a miracle, that is, as the effect of a supernatural cause. In such thinking the action of God is indeed conceived in the same way as secular actions or events are conceived, for the divine power which effects miracles is considered as a natural power."

⁴

In accord with this understanding, Bultmann would regard as "mythological" such occurrences in the Bible as the six-day creation, the parting of the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus, the miracles of Christ, the physical resurrection of Christ, and His bodily ascension into heaven. Any happening which is associated by the holy writers with the direct action of God would be called "mythological."

In his essay of 1941, Bultmann proposed to "demythologize" Scripture, as a means of making it more palatable to the intellectual tastes of modern man. How would such demythologizing be accomplished? Not by striking the

mythological passages from the pages of Holy Writ, but by seeking to discover their underlying meaning. He says: "This method of interpretation of the New Testament which tries to recover the deeper meaning behind the mythological conceptions I call de-mythologizing--an unsatisfactory word, to be sure. Its aim is not to eliminate the mythological statements but to interpret them. It is a method of hermeneutics."⁵

It should be noted that this demythologizing does not involve a rationalizing of the miraculous in Scripture. We would not, for example, find Bultmann explaining the feeding of the 5000 in a naturalistic way, such as that the generosity of Jesus in sharing the few loaves and fish moved His hearers to open their own knapsacks and share from them. Again, we do not find him rationalizing the resurrection in the manner of David Strauss, who asserted that the resurrection accounts originated in the psychological need of the disciples, who could not face the fact of Jesus' death and therefore imagined Him to be risen and alive. In the words of Bultmann: "... the objection is raised by a mistake, namely, the objection that de-mythologizing means rationalizing the Christian message, that de-mythologizing dissolves the message into a product of human rational thinking, and that the mystery of God is destroyed by de-mythologizing. Not at all! On the contrary, de-mythologizing makes clear the true meaning of God's mystery."⁶

The Demythologizing of the Resurrection

How, then, does Bultmann treat the Biblical accounts of the resurrection of Jesus? -- for that is our major interest in this writing. Insofar as these accounts speak of the resurrection as a miraculous occurrence which took place in a certain place at a particular moment in history, he would regard them as "mythological," and as such a stumbling block to faith. It therefore becomes necessary to demythologize these accounts, by speaking of the resurrection, not as an historical occurrence, but as an event which has present significance for each succeeding genera-

tion of mankind. Through this process of demythologizing, Bultmann in effect discounts the historicity of the resurrection as a supernatural happening in the chain of historical occurrences. The accusation seems just, that through his hermeneutic method he has surrendered the fact of the resurrection and has reduced it to a mere symbol of general truth. For while his interpretation may not involve an outright denial of the objective reality of the resurrection, it surely does regard as wrong any assertion of such reality.

We note here that Bultmann for himself did deny the fact of the empty tomb and the true corporeality of the risen Jesus. Speaking of his fellow theologian, Karl Jaspers, he says: "He is as convinced as I am that a corpse cannot come back to life or rise from the grave, that there are no demons and no magic causality."⁷ And we have also this blunt statement from Bultmann's writings: "The resurrection itself is not an event of past history. All that historical criticism can establish is the fact that the first disciples came to believe in the resurrection."⁸

The Meaning of the Resurrection according to Bultmann

It remains to inquire into the meaning which Bultmann attached to the resurrection of Jesus. We must admit that in our reading of some of his writings on this subject we did not find it easy to recognize any such clear significance as we are accustomed to attach to it. Perhaps Bultmann himself recognizes a difficulty in arriving at the meaning of the resurrection within the framework of his theology, for he states: "The real problem, in other words, is the hermeneutic one, i. e., the problem of interpreting the Bible and the teachings of the Church in such a way that they may become understandable as a summons to man."⁹ After confessing his disbelief in the bodily resurrection, demons, and magic causality, he asks: "But how am I, in my capacity as pastor, to explain, in my sermons and classes, texts dealing with the Resurrection of Jesus in the flesh, with demons, or with magic causality? And how am

I, in my capacity as theological scholar, to guide the pastor in his task by my interpretations? ¹⁰

This much can be said, that Bultmann associates the resurrection very closely with the one great fact in Jesus' life which he admits as being historical, namely, the cross. In his Theology of the New Testament, he speaks of Christ's death and resurrection as a "salvation-occurrence": "But the death and the resurrection of Christ are bound together in the unity of one salvation-occurrence ... ¹¹ Let Bultmann speak for himself as to what he means by this term:

"It is clear that the salvation-occurrence, viz. Christ's death and resurrection, is the deed of the prevenient grace of God; and that the various expressions which describe this deed intend to express its unprecedented nature and its might which so radically transformed the human situation. It is an occurrence purely by God's initiative; for man, pure gift; by accepting it he is released from his perverse striving to achieve life or selfhood by his own efforts--in which he does the very opposite--only to be given it as a gift in the 'righteousness of God. '

"The question now is how can this occurrence be recognized and experienced by man as the deed of grace? For only then can it take effect as a compelling and transforming power, when it can be understood as directed at man, reaching him, happening to him--i. e. when the challenge to accept it as salvation-occurrence thrusts him into genuine decision. ¹²

After discussing the various ways in which the Apostle Paul describes the meaning of the cross, namely as a propitiatory offering, a vicarious sacrifice, and a ransom, Bultmann continues:

"Christ's death and resurrection, accordingly, are cosmic occurrences, not incidents that took place once upon a time in the past. By them the old aeon along with its powers [Law, Sin, and Death] has been basically stripped of power. Its powers are already 'destroyed' ... even though the life of the believer is not

yet visible in the present but is hidden under the mask of death."¹³

Toward the end of his discussion on the salvation-occurrence, Bultmann says concerning the resurrection:

"Nothing preceding the faith which acknowledges the risen Christ can give insight into the reality of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection cannot--in spite of I Cor. 15:3-8--be demonstrated or made plausible as an objectively ascertainable fact on the basis of which one could believe. But insofar as it or the risen Christ is present in the proclaiming word, it can be believed--and only so can it be believed. Belief in the resurrection and the faith that Christ himself, yes God Himself, speaks in the proclaimed word (II Cor. 5:20) are identical. For in the proclamation Christ is not in the same way present as a great historical person is present in his work and its historical after-effects. For what is here involved is not an influence that takes effect in the history of the human mind; what does take place is that a historical person and his fate are raised to the rank of the eschatological event. The word which makes this proclamation is itself a part of this event; and this word, in contrast to all other historical tradition, accosts the hearer as personal challenge. If he heeds it as the word spoken to him, adjudicating to him death and thereby life, then he believes in the risen Christ."¹⁴

These and similar passages from Bultmann would indicate that in his theology the meaning of the resurrection is that the cross of Jesus has become more than the death of mere man, but rather "the divine disclosure of the possibility of a new self-understanding and hence of a new existence."¹⁵ Its significance for the believer is that it presents him "now with the opportunity of understanding himself as crucified and risen with Christ and of thus being freed from his own past and open for the future."¹⁶ Pre-
cisely what these phrases mean for us in our life and walk as Christians, we were unable to determine. It would be interesting to hear how Bultmann would comfort a sinner who is plagued by pangs of conscience, or who is face to face with death and eternity!

Bultmann's Attitude toward Scripture

At this point, many readers of this Journal no doubt have in mind a goodly number of Bible passages with which to prove the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus, together with the empty tomb and his true post-resurrection corporeality. But such a proof Bultmann would find quite unconvincing, for he does not share our belief in the verbal inspiration, inerrancy, and unity of Holy Scripture. He is quite aware of Jesus' repeated prediction that He would die on the cross and then rise again on the third day. So also does he recognize the clear meaning of the accounts of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus to His disciples. But all these passages from the New Testament he dismisses as later Hellenistic additions to the original Gospel tradition. We find, for example, this statement: "Moreover, Jesus did not speak of his death and resurrection and their redemptive significance. Some sayings of such a character are indeed attributed to him in the gospels, but they originated in the faith of the church--and none of them even in the primitive church, but in Hellenistic Christianity."¹⁷

The basic fault in Bultmann's theology is, then, a refusal on his part to recognize the Scriptural record of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as authentic. He indicates that he has been affected by Albert Schweitzer's "brilliantly written" Quest of the Historical Jesus, and concludes: "I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist."¹⁸

We confess, and not reluctantly, that we do not share Bultmann's low regard for the writings of the New Testament. For us they are, in all their words, the divinely inspired and therefore inerrant record of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. We realize that many theologians of note, Bultmann included, have charged the Biblical record with discrepancies, particularly in the account of the resurrec-

tion. How eager they seemingly are to charge the four evangelists with contradictions in their reports about the time when the women came to the tomb, the number of women involved, the number of angels at the tomb, etc. But we are not impressed by these charges. A careful, and unprejudiced, study of the texts indicates that such alleged discrepancies are only apparent, and not of necessity real.

We share, then, completely the attitude expressed by Johannes Ylvisaker in his valued book, The Gospels: "Very frequently the men who exert all their energy and shrewdness trying to cover up divergences in the realm of general history are just as eager to ferret them out in the Bible. This is very significant. Because our knowledge is imperfect, we shall encounter difficulties in the Gospels as elsewhere in the Bible, but real contradictions, never. And when obstacles sometimes arise, we should follow the example of Luther, remove our hat, go our way, and humbly admit that the Holy Ghost is wiser than we may ever hope to become. We must often be content when we can say: Thus it may be, even if we are unable to insist that it must be so."¹⁹

The Testimony of Scripture

From Scripture we have the confidence that the resurrection of Christ is a real, historical, occurrence, which took place on the Sunday after His crucifixion and death. (Mark 16:6, 8; 1 Cor. 15:3-8.) From Scripture we have the confidence that the grave was indeed empty when the angel rolled away the stone. (Matt. 28:2, 5f.; John 20:1-8.) And from Scripture we have the confidence that the resurrection of Christ was truly physical. We are told, not only that the body of Christ did not see corruption (Acts 2:31), but also that the risen Lord repeatedly showed Himself alive to His disciples in connection with many convincing proofs (Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:3-8), permitting them to view and handle His body and the still evident marks of the crucifixion (Luke 24:38-40; John 20:20, 27; 1 John 1:1), and even eating food before them (Luke 24:41-43; Acts 10:41) --

all in an effort to convince them of His bodily resurrection from the dead. While we cannot share these experiences with our physical eyes, we believe them nonetheless, for Scripture itself has given us the faith to accept them as true. And we remember the comforting words of Christ: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," (John 20:29.)

We are reminded here of a widely-read book which, in a lucid and compelling fashion, lays out a proof for the fact of Christ's physical resurrection. We have reference to Frank Morison's Who Moved the Stone? Morison had originally set out to prove that the story of the resurrection was nothing but a myth. But the evidences which he explored, most of them from the Bible, led him to the point where he was compelled to state: "There may be, and, as the writer thinks, there certainly is, a deep and profoundly historical basis for that much disputed sentence in the Apostles' Creed--'The third day he rose again from the dead.'"²⁰

This conclusion Morison reached in spite of the fact that he does not accept the Gospel record as verbally inspired and finds discrepancies in the Biblical accounts of the resurrection.²¹ Of great significance to him is the fact that no one in Jerusalem, not even the most bitter enemies of Christ, sought to disprove the resurrection by investigating the grave. All without exception clearly accepted the empty grave as an unquestionable fact. He writes:

"... throughout the four years when Christianity was growing to really formidable dimensions in Jerusalem, neither Caiaphas, nor Annas, nor any recognized member of the Sadducean camarilla, whose prestige and personal repute was so deeply affronted and outraged by the new doctrine, ever took the obvious short cut out of their difficulties.

"If the body of Jesus still lay in the tomb where Joseph had deposited it, why did they not say so? A cold and dispassionate statement of the real facts, issued by someone in authority, and publicly exhibited in the Temple precincts, would have been like a douche of

water upon the kindling fire of the Christian heresy. It would have steadied the situation in their favour. It would have impeded immensely, if not destroyed, the growing daily stream of new converts.

"Apparently they did nothing of the kind, for the reason that they could not. In all the fragments and echoes of this far-off controversy which have come down to us we are nowhere told that any responsible person asserted that the body of Jesus was still in the tomb. We are only given reasons why it was not there. Running all through these ancient documents is the persistent assumption that the tomb of Christ was vacant."²²

We find ourselves in complete agreement with Morison's conclusion, even though he apparently arrived at it through the use of logic and reason, rather than through the testimony of the Holy Spirit in Scripture.²³ Our major regret is that in his book he seems to view the resurrection as little more than an historical fact, a profound fact indeed, but one which has little soteriological significance for people of our own generation.

The Scriptural Meaning of the Resurrection

Bultmann disparages the fact of the resurrection, and emphasizes the importance of its meaning. From the Bible we recognize that faith involves both an acceptance of the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead, and a trust in the meaning of this fact. (John 20:29; Romans 10:9; Hebrews 11:1.) What is its meaning? Fortunately, Scripture gives us an answer to this vital question, an answer which is far more lucid than the vague and nebulous statements of Bultmann cited above. The resurrection sets Jesus forth as "the Son of God with power" (Rom. 1:4), so that we, like Thomas, can confess Him as "my Lord and my God." (John 20:28.) The resurrection attests the truthfulness of Jesus' words (John 2:19; Matt. 12:38-40), so that we, like Peter, can respond with confidence: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John 6:68.) The resurrection proclaims that the Father has accepted

the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, for our justification (Rom. 4:25), so that we, like the man sick of the palsy, can rejoice in the Word of forgiveness: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." (Matt. 9:2.) And, finally, the resurrection assures us believers that we too shall rise unto eternal life (John 14:19; 11:25f.; 1 Peter 1:3-5), so that we, like Paul, can look with eagerness to that day when "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Cor. 15:53.)

Do those who reject the reality of Christ's physical resurrection realize the full implications of their denial? The Apostle Paul addresses himself specifically to that question in this same fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians:

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (vv. 12-19.)

If Christ did not rise from the dead, empty then is the Gospel proclamation -- utterly lacking in any saving value! If Christ did not rise from the dead, empty then is our faith -- without any solid truth to which it can cling! If Christ did not rise from the dead, we are found also false witnesses of God -- we have then been testifying lies concerning Him! If Christ did not rise from the dead, useless is our faith -- completely incapable of getting us anything! If Christ did not rise from the dead, we are still in our sins -- with an eternity of woe lying beyond our graves! If Christ did not rise from the dead, then perished are those who have fallen asleep in Christ -- separated forever from God in the bitter torments of hell! If Christ

did not rise from the dead, most pitiable are we of all men -- we have then been clinging to and living for a hope that in the end will turn out to be nothing but an empty dream!

An Evaluation and Conclusion

In the light of these passages of Scripture we can rightly evaluate Bultmann's program of demythologizing the resurrection. By emptying Easter of the fact of the empty tomb, he has emptied his proclamation of any saving value. If he is right, then might we well pack away our Bibles and lock up our churches. Then might we well give up our faith in Christ and write "Lost Eternally" upon the tombs of our loved ones who have died in Him. Then might we well curse God and die!

What a price has not Bultmann paid in his probably well-intended, but horribly misdirected, attempt to make the resurrection palatable to the perverted tastes of modern-day skeptics. His glowing expressions about one's being freed from his own past and open for the future, in the cross and resurrection of Christ, are found to be so much empty verbiage, yea more, the good words and fair speeches of the deceiver. A harsh judgment this is, but one that God Himself makes in His Word!

But to all who long for an answer to those huge problems of human existence, sin, death, judgment, eternity, there remains this victorious and victory-giving truth of the ages: "BUT NOW IS CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD, AND BECOME THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THEM THAT SLEPT." (1 Cor. 15:20.) With confidence and joy we can therefore take upon our lips the song of triumph:

"Thou hast died for my transgression,
All my sins on Thee were laid;
Thou hast won for me salvation,
On the cross my debt was paid.
From the grave I shall arise
And shall meet Thee in the skies.
Death itself is transitory;
I shall lift my head in glory!"²⁴

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1. Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (London: SCM Press, 1960), pp. 36-38.
 2. Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth (London: S. P. C. K., 1953), p. 10 footnote.
 3. Jesus Christ and Mythology, p. 19.
 4. Ibid., p. 61.
 5. Ibid., p. 18.
 6. Ibid., p. 43.
 7. Rudolf Bultmann, "The Case for Demythologization," Myth and Christianity (New York: Noonday Press, 1958), p. 60.
 8. "New Testament and Mythology," p. 42.
 9. "The Case for Demythologization," p. 60.
 10. Ibid., p. 60f.
 11. Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (London: SCM Press, 1952), vol. 1, p. 293.
 12. Ibid., p. 294f.
 13. Ibid., p. 299.
 14. Ibid., p. 305f.
 15. Roy A. Harrisville, "Resurrection and Historical Method," Dialog, vol. 1, Spring 1962, p. 31f.
 16. Robert Scharlemann, "Shadow on the Tomb: Motifs in German Theology of the Resurrection," Dialog, vol. 1, Spring 1962, p. 24.
 17. Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 8.
 18. Ibid., p. 8.
 19. Johannes Ylvisaker, The Gospels (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1932), p. 4.
 20. Frank Morison (pseudonym for Albert Henry Ross), Who Moved the Stone? (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), p. 192.
 21. In various places he questions the trustworthiness of the sacred record (cf. pp. 35, 64, 151), and speaks of St. Luke and St. Matthew's versions as "divergent and developed accounts" (p. 182, cf. p. 184).

22. Who Moved the Stone?, p. 115.
23. Cf. the expression "logic of that conclusion," p. 24,
and similar expressions on pp. 103, 111, 173.
24. Lutheran Hymnal, hymn 207, verse 4.

C. Kuehne



The JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY is published at
Eau Claire, Wisconsin, by authorization of the
Church of the Lutheran Confession.

Subscriptions: \$3.00 per year, \$5.50 for 2 years,
payable in advance. The month of subscription
expiration is indicated on the address label.

Issues are dated: March, June, September,
December.

Editor-in-chief: Prof. C.M. Gullerud, Immanuel
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All correspondence regarding subscriptions,
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addressed to the Editor-in-Chief.

== PANORAMA ==

CONCERNING THE FIRST "LITTLE" ERROR It is common knowledge that in things of this lifetime a little error in the beginning can lead to a large fault in the end. The first small hole in the dike soon grows into a massive rupture. A slight error in laying the foundation can throw an entire structure out of line. A slip in logic at the beginning of a mathematical proof destroys the validity of all that follows. Or, as Luther once pointed out, in philosophy a small fault in the beginning is a great and foul fault in the end.

The same principle holds true, of course, in theology. We say "of course," because it should be evident to anyone who has studied either the Bible or history. The pervading and pernicious effect of religious error is described by Paul in so telling a fashion that none of us should ever forget: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"; "their word will eat as doth a canker (a malignant cancer!)." Gal. 5:9; 2 Tim. 2:17. Yet men do forget, and heedlessly involve themselves in fellowships which foolishly permit error to stand alongside the truth.

And what are the lessons of history? In every period of the church's existence we find illustrations of how one "small" departure from Scripture has opened the door to a whole range of soul-destroying errors. Yet men do not learn, even as someone once put it: "The only lesson that we can learn from history is that men do not learn from history."

"Honest to Jesus"

How far the leaven and canker of error can spread through the body of truth appears in two contributions of the magazine, The Christian Century, to the Easter season of 1972. The first of the articles, entitled "Honest to Jesus," appeared in the issue of March 22. Its author is Deane

William Ferm, dean of the chapel at Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts. After reviewing trends in Christology among theologians and laymen during the past 20 years, Dr. Ferm encourages us "to examine our traditional Christology critically and to develop an interpretation of Jesus that is consistent with today's world view." He pleads that we "be 'honest to Jesus' about our christological affirmations."

The author suggests several points as essential in making Jesus "relevant" for our day. First, we must "demythologize" the dualistic formulas about Jesus which, he believes, originated in the Hellenistic Christianity of the fourth and fifth centuries. (Echoes of Bultmann?) We are to feel liberated from the creeds of Nicea (325) and Chalcedon (451), which present Jesus as both true God and true man, and which support a two-world cosmology which is foreign to the thinking of modern man. "The walls of the two-storied universe have tumbled down, and so should the hellenized Jesus."

Secondly, we should be ready to throw overboard any or all of the specific teachings about Jesus which in some way presuppose this dualism. For example, we must give up the story of the virgin birth, and proclaim rather that Jesus was conceived "in sin" like the rest of us. Other things that must go are the miracles of Jesus, as the injection of the supernatural into the natural order, and the doctrine of His second coming. For these teachings are no longer palatable, nor do they possess any truth value for most Christians. Even the resurrection must be radically reinterpreted. While it does have symbolic value in that it emphasizes newness and spiritual rebirth, it has become excess baggage as far as its having literal historical significance is concerned.

Third, we should play down the exclusiveness of the Christian faith, and no longer claim to see in Jesus something absolute which no other prophet or religion possesses. "We should be honest to Jesus, end the double talk, and discard any notion of Christianity that hinges on the uniqueness of Jesus."

After having rid ourselves of these historical trappings of Christology, we should, according to Dr. Ferm, begin to underscore those universal qualities which Jesus holds in common with the prophets of all traditions. The basic assumption will be that Jesus was first and foremost a man. The goal should be to open the way for a new era of ecumenical cooperation, first with the Jews, and perhaps some day with the Hindus and Buddhists. The concept of Jesus that is to be stressed, according to the author, is His way of living, the way of sacrificial love -- a concept which is found also in the moral convictions of the world's other major religions.

In closing, Dr. Ferm insists again that we ought not try to find in Jesus certain characteristics which put Him above other great men. One reason for this insistence is his belief that it is impossible to disentangle the "historical Jesus" from the myths and legends which also are found in the Gospel accounts. Some people may indeed find it necessary to eliminate the historical Jesus entirely. Let them take a Buber or a Martin Luther King as an alternative model of sacrificial love for our day. This suggestion the author makes in all seriousness. He later adds, half seriously, that we stop using Jesus' name for a generation. "Perhaps such a step would help us develop a proper Christology for our day."

All this Dr. Ferm suggests as necessary in order to be "honest to Jesus." We would affirm in reply that he is thereby being utterly dishonest to Jesus. But he would probably neither understand nor accept this charge, for he has obviously not come to be honest to the Bible as God's Word. And there can be no honesty to Jesus without honesty to His Word, for they are One! Until a person has through the Gospel of Christ been given the faith to accept the Bible as verbally inspired and inerrant, he will, like Dr. Ferm, choose from Scripture only those things which are acceptable to his theological ego. And much indeed then is in danger of being thrown out, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2:14.

"Is the Resurrection an Offense to Faith?"

One week later, on March 29, The Christian Century published under the above title an article written by Theodore J. Weeden, associate professor of New Testament at Colgate Rochester. Dr. Weeden believes that the first century world view of traditional Christianity, namely, that the world is an evil habitation from which man needs deliverance, is no longer adequate for contemporary man. This world view fails, he believes, on three counts: 1) empirically it cannot stand the test of the best evidence available to us; 2) theologically it is unsound; and 3) ecologically it is destructive of the best interests of man's life and other life on this planet.

In the article Dr. Weeden indicates that he has been influenced by the theology of Rudolf Bultmann. He labels the empty-grave tradition, the creedal statement about Jesus' being raised on the third day, and the appearance narratives as given in the Gospels as later interpretations of the original phenomenon. The reality of the resurrection lies rather in the claim which the proclamation of Jesus has on the lives of succeeding generations of Christians. And what is the nature of that claim? This, that every person assume a "cruciform" or servanthood style of life, in which he seeks through self-giving love to reconcile himself to his fellowmen, to creation, and to God.

The author has clearly rejected any belief in a heaven or hell, and he deems Christianity's chief goal to be the improvement of life on this planet. He concludes: "... it may well be that the contemporary plight of man will force us to recognize that the servanthood life style offers the only hope of survival ... It requires no great insight to recognize that we find ourselves in a struggle for survival of life on this planet because man has destroyed rather than created community, by setting himself over against his fellow man and his environment in the pursuit of self-serving interests. The cruciform life style may finally make its full claim on man as he comes to recognize that there is no other path to salvation -- that is, to the survival of life as we know it."

The Danger of the First Error

These articles in The Christian Century were not the first in which we have found a wholesale denial of the central truths of Scripture concerning sin and grace, death and life, time and eternity, heaven and hell. But our reaction in reading them is still one of shock, to see how extensively the lies of Satan can intrude into people's beliefs and confession. And we do well to remember how such departures from the truth begin -- with the first seemingly small denial of some word of Holy Scripture. Unless that error is promptly and effectively removed, it will in time undermine faith in almost every other portion of God's saving revelation.

Luther knew both his Bible and history, and it was this knowledge that led him to warn in a sermon on Ephesians 6:10-17:

"We must be able to 'stand against the wiles of the devil,' for the devil does not come in a gruesome black garb and say: I am the devil, beware of me! No, he slinks like a serpent and adorns himself with high sounding words from the Bible and the name of God. He quotes the Scriptures and Bible verses which we love and upon which we base our faith; he feigns piety and devotion and appears like a faithful and god-fearing preacher, who seeks nothing else than God's honor and the salvation of souls. He asks only that we grant him his own opinion in a little word and unimportant doctrine here and there....

"If we grant him but one doctrine, he has then gained the victory. It is as though we have granted him a right to change every doctrine, and we have lost Christ. For all (doctrines) are bound together like a golden chain where, if one link is broken, the entire chain is torn and everything falls apart."

May God impress upon us the danger that lies in that first "little" error, and then graciously preserve us from it!

C. Kuehne

**A JOLT TO
DEMYTHOLOGIZERS**

Demythologizers and proponents of the so-called "Form Criticism" have set for themselves a prodigious, impossible, and wholly unnecessary task. Many of them believe that the Scriptural accounts of the life of Christ have simply drawn their material from the church's preaching and message (kerygma) which in their view is often but an interpretation of what was believed to be historical events. It then becomes the task of the form critic to determine the source (oral or written) and the credibility to get at the facticity of historical events, if this be at all possible. As a result such doctrines as that of the physical resurrection of Christ have been called into question. Along with that the facticity of other events suffers the same fate.

But now comes along the account of a find by a Spanish scholar, Prof. Jose O'Callaghan, who has discovered a number of tiny scraps of papyrus among the Dead Sea Scrolls which have been identified as fragments of the Gospel according to Mark. By scientific methods it has been estimated from this find that this Gospel could well have been in existence as early as a dozen years after the time of Jesus. If this is true, then the form critics who have spent so much time seeking to determine the oral and written traditions which Mark is said to have drawn upon, is shown to have been so much wasted effort. It must indeed be a jolt to them.

For us it doesn't matter if the Gospel according to Mark is dated earlier or later, for it is our faith and conviction that this Gospel and all the other books of the Bible were written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost and are their own interpreters. Thankfully, we don't get involved with what is popularly called "Form Criticism." We don't need any finds to bolster our faith in the authority and character of the Holy Bible. Faith in the integrity and inerrancy of the Scripture is a creation of the Holy Ghost and needs no scientific evidence to make the heart more sure.

C. M. G.

ANOTHER JOLT

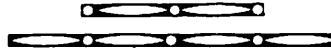
This time we are referring to the jolt given to the debunkers of Josephus's remarks about Jesus. The credibility of the reference to Jesus in the traditional Greek text of Josephus's "Antiquities of the Jews" was called into question by scholars who regarded the reference as the product of a re-editing by some "pious" Christian who was over-anxious for a testimony to Jesus from a non-Christian historical writing.

Now comes the find of Prof. Shlomo Pine of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem who has discovered an Arabic version of Josephus's history which could hardly be open to the same objection. The Arabic version reads in our vernacular as follows: "Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders." For those who wish to make a comparison we here give the version contained in the traditional Greek text: "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day." Josephus's Antiquities of the Jews. Book XVIII, C. III, par. 3.

As may be seen from a comparison, the Arabic version is a watering down of the traditional Greek text, but the testimony of the historicity of the events still stands. If anything we might conclude that the Arabic translators re-edited and watered down the original text and thus to a

certain extent emasculated the testimony. As before stated we do not need the testimony of any non-Christian historian to bolster our faith in the Messiah. However, it is clear and certain that the so-called scholarship of those who cast doubts upon the facticity of certain events in the life of Jesus is considerably shaken and we may be warned against letting their work cause us any concern in connection with our commitment to the authority of the Holy Bible.

C. M. G.



BOOK Examination of the Council of Trent,
REVIEW Part I, by Martin Chemnitz. Translated
 by Fred Kramer. St. Louis, Missouri:
 Concordia Publishing House, 1971.
 706 pages. Cloth. \$12.00.

Many a Lutheran pastor has a dusty volume on his shelves entitled Examen Concilii Tridentini per Martinum Chemnicium; and every Lutheran pastor is aware of the fact that the "second Martin," Martin Chemnitz, has earned the undying gratitude of the members of the Church of the Reformation as one of the writers of the Formula of Concord; and as the author of lectures on Melancthon's Loci, of a monumental work entitled De Duabus Naturis in Christo, and of the unfinished Harmony of the Gospels, in addition to the afore-mentioned Examen. However, having the book on one's shelves and being aware of Chemnitz's authorship of other writings is one thing; reading and appreciating these works is quite another! Although most Lutheran pastors of our circles have had a minimum of six years of training in the Latin language, most of those were spent in study of the classics. Very little time, if any, was spent in the study of what may be termed ecclesiastical or patristic Latin. Even in our Seminary days our use of Latin was generally

confined to the translation of what we rather inelegantly termed "Latin slugs" in reviewing our notes for the courses in Dogmatics. It would be an extremely rare occurrence for the busy pastor to feel the deep appreciation for the work of Chemnitz that was evidently felt by Dr. Henry Hassold, a Lutheran pastor of Adelaide, South Australia, who spent thirty years (1933-1963) in preparing a hand-written English translation of the Examen.

Until 1971, no translation of the Examen into English had been published, with the exception of a translation of the portion on traditions that was produced in 1582, only nine years after the original was completed in 1573. Now, however, a translation of the first volume of the original four-volume work has been published by Concordia Publishing House, as a production of The Committee for Research of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The translation is the work of Dr. Fred Kramer, professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. This first part, completed in 1968, contains the following subjects, in the same order as the original Loci in the Latin: 1. Sacred Scripture; 2. Traditions; 3. Original Sin; 4. The remnants of original sin after Baptism, evil desire (concupiscence) which remains in the baptized or regenerate, in this life; 5. Whether the Blessed Virgin was conceived without original sin; 6. The works of unbelievers, or of the unregenerate; 7. Free will; 8. Justification; 9. Faith; and 10. Good works.

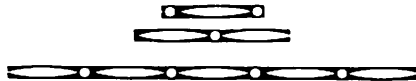
Chemnitz had originally written a critique of the then new Jesuit order which brought about a brief correspondence with a defender of the order, Johannes Alber, whom Chemnitz dismissed as an Ecebolus (translated by Kramer with the term "hotshot"). A more skillful antagonist, Jacob Payva de Andrada, a Portuguese, then entered upon the arena of debate with Chemnitz. Ostensibly seeking to persuade his readers of the fallacies of Chemnitz' comments regarding the Jesuits, Andrada was actually presenting an apology and defense of the decrees of the Council of Trent. His presentation, in turn, provided Chemnitz with the basis of his examination of the canons and decrees of the Council.

He analyzed the theology presented by this historically important synod, and thoroughly disproved it both on the basis of Scripture and the church fathers. He demonstrated a formidable grasp of the writings of past ages as well as those of more recent origin and quotes from them at length. The chief contribution of the first sections of Chemnitz' work, on Scriptures and tradition, not to be lightly dismissed in our times, is that it demonstrates that Scripture alone, not in combination with tradition, is the sole source of all Christian doctrine.

The present reviewer grants that he has not as yet completed the task of reading this new translation alongside the 1861 Preuss edition of the Examen, although he hopes to do this eventually. However, it is his judgment, based on the portions he has completed, that the translation is very readable and does fairly carry into English certain idiomatic expressions of the Latin. The Latin of Chemnitz presents problems of syntax common to the ecclesiastical Latin of his time, but is not difficult, other than being phrased in rather long and involved sentences. Dr. Kramer has not hesitated to couch his translation in much shorter sentences, as the occasion demands. This may present an impression of terseness not to be found in the original, but makes it eminently more readable.

There appears to be an error in the 1972 Concordia Publishing House catalog, where this volume is identified as a translation by Henry Hassold. However, the order number listed in the catalog for Hassold's translation is the identical number printed on the jacket of the Kramer translation.

John Lau



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