Luther on Justification
JOHN F. JOHNSON

Martin Luther's Views on the State of the Dead
PHILIP J. SECKER

"The Weapons of Their Warfare"
RICHARD P. JUNGKUNTZ

Changes in the Missouri Synod
ARTHUR C. REPP

Homiletics

Book Review
Martin Luther's Views on the State of the Dead

In 1765 the Anglican theologian Francis Blackburne asserted that Blessed Martin Luther espoused the doctrine of the sleep of the soul, upon a scriptural foundation, and then he made use of it as a confutation of purgatory and saint worship, and continued in that belief to the last moment of his life.1

Two hundred years later, in 1965, an

1 Francis Blackburne, A Short Historical View of the Controversy concerning an Intermediate State and the Separate Existence of the Soul between Death and the General Resurrection Deduced from the Beginning of the Protestant Reformation to the Present Time (London: printed for F. Field, 1765), p. 14. As cited in LeRoy Froom, The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers, II (Washington: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1965), 74. It was not possible in the present study to investigate the influence of Luther's rejection of purgatory and "saint worship" on his teaching about the state of the dead between death and the Last Day. For some of Luther's statements on purgatory, see: Luther's Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1883—), 1, 555 ff.; 7, 348 f., 454, 18—19; 12, 596, 33—39; 20, 162 f.; 30 II, 367—90; 31, 125 ff., 141, 130; 50, 204 ff. Hereafter this work will be cited as WA followed by the volume, page, and line number. See also Luther's Works, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, and Philadelphia: Muhlenberg/Fortress Press, 1955—), 31, 125 ff. 130. 141; 32, 31. 98; 35, 98, note 33. Hereafter this work will be cited as AE plus volume and page number.

The Rev. Philip J. Secker serves as the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Mo. In May of this year Concordia Seminary conferred on him the degree of master of sacred theology.

other book was published that makes a very similar statement about the Reformer:

He stated many times that the Christian dead are unaware of anything, for they see not, feel not, understand not. They are asleep, oblivious of all passing events. More than one hundred times, scattered over the years, Luther declared death to be a sleep, and repeatedly asserted that in death there is total unconsciousness, and consequent unawareness of the passage of time. He presses the point that death is a sound, sweet sleep. And furthermore, the dead will remain asleep until the day of resurrection, which resurrection embraces both body and soul, when both will be brought together again.2

In the intervening years statements at least partially in line with the above assertions have been made by Lutherans. For

2 Froom, pp. 76—77. Cf. also Froom's article, "The Mystery of Life," Signs of the Times, XCIII (February 1965), 18—20. The unpublished master of arts thesis that Froom cites in support of his assertions draws a conclusion which is quite different from Froom's: "Although Luther sometimes expressed opinions in favor of the unconscious state of the dead and placed their punishment or reward after the last judgment, the main bulk of his teaching indicates that he believed in the conscious state of the dead and its attendant immediate punishment or reward. As a rule, he considered the righteous dead as being in a place of reward and the ungodly dead as being in a place of punishment although he plainly taught that it can be neither real hell or [sic] purgatory" (Toivo Nikolai Kettola, A Study of Martin Luther's Teaching Concerning the State of the Dead [A master of arts thesis presented to the faculty of the Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary, Takoma Park, Washington, D. C., January 1956], p. 25; emphasis not original).
example, Francis Pieper wrote in his *Christliche Dogmatik*: "A sleep of the soul which includes enjoyment of God (thus Luther) cannot be called a false doctrine." ³

Another Lutheran, Taito Almar Kantonen, asserted in his book *The Christian Hope* that "in Luther's view, so far as the dead person himself is concerned, the intermediate state is reduced to an unconscious moment." ⁴ Other Lutherans, while presenting a more balanced assessment of Luther's position, still fail to do justice to the diversity of Luther's thought on the state of the dead.⁵

Did Luther teach that the dead sleep until the Last Day? This study seeks to answer that question on the basis of Luther's own statements made between 1517 and the year of his death. An attempt is made to present representative statements of Luther throughout those years, with additional references in the footnotes, so that the reader can evaluate for himself the conclusion of this study that Luther was not wholly consistent in his teachings about the state of the dead.⁶

³ "Ein Seelenschlaf, der ein Geniessen Gottes einschliesst (so Luther), ist nicht als irrige Lehre zu bezeichnen." Franz Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, III (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), 575. In the footnote Pieper cites Luther's *Werke* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1881-1910), I, 1758 ff.; II, 215 ff. Hereafter this work will be cited as W² plus volume and page number. An investigation of these passages (WA 43, 359 ff./AE 4, 311-13; WA 43, 480 f.) indicates that Pieper is drawing a conclusion from Luther's statements rather than quoting or paraphrasing them.


⁶ Luther also says repeatedly that the dead are "alive." Cf. WA 17 II, 236, 1-2; 31, 151-57/AE 14, 86-88; WA 36, 259, 19/AE 51, 246; WA 38, 503, 29-34; 42, 633, 10/AE 3, 119; WA 42, 634, 3/AE 3, 120; WA 43, 221, 30-34/AE 4, 119 f.; WA 43, 222, 17-18/AE 4, 120; WA 43, 359, 37-38/AE 4, 312; WA 43, 362, 25-26/AE 4, 316; WA 43, 480 f.; WA 47, 435, 13-15; WA BR V, 273, 24/Martin Luther, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, edited and translated by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), "Library of Christian Classics," XVIII, 61 (hereafter this work will be cited LCC followed by the volume and page number); WA TR 1, No. 987, 500, 5, 2, No. 2491, 486, 14; 5, No. 5534, 219, 9-17; W² 8, 421; etc. Quistorp argues on the basis of WA TR 5, No. 5534, that Luther "does not mean that the soul lives while the body is dead" (pp. 100-101). Luther also frequently asserts that the dead are "resting" or in a state of "rest": WA 5, 309, 28-30; WA 17 I, 203, 17; WA 12, 456, 27-30; WA 36, 216, 37/AE 51, 248; WA 42, 67, 38-40/AE 1, 89; WA 42, 576, 17-18/AE 3, 39; WA 43, 277, 36-37/AE 4, 197; WA 43, 278, 7-13/AE 4, 197; WA 43, 359, 1-4/AE 4, 311; WA 43, 359, 42-360, 1/AE 4, 329; WA 44, 517, 23-25; 518, 9-11; 811, 23; WA BR 5, No. 1529, 240, 28-70; etc. As John Gerhard suggested (op. cit., p. 241), Luther's frequent reference to death as "sleep" may be largely due to the frequency with which this metaphor for death occurs in the Sacred
Many of these references contain indications that Luther may be using the word sleep in a euphemistic or metaphorical sense. Sometimes Luther as much as says that the description is euphemistic, as for example in his comment on Gen. 15:15:

Above all one should note the very pleasing description of death this passage contains. God does not use the term "death."
No, He tones down this name, so to speak, with pleasing words. "You will be gathered to your fathers," He says, "and will sleep with Noah and other heroes." 8

In a great many cases Luther uses the description of death as sleep in combination with other words which are clearly metaphorical. Perhaps the most famous illustration of this is his statement: "We shall sleep, until He comes and knocks on the little grave and says, Doctor Martin, get up! Then I shall rise in a moment and be happy with Him forever." 9 Other passages containing words that are clearly metaphorical include those in which Luther says that the dead sleep in their beds,10 in their sleeping chambers,11 in their dormitories,12 in their sepulchers,13 in their graves,14 in a cradle,15 in God's hand,16


10 Cubile, lectulus, stratus, Kemerlein, Paul, Ragedette, Sanftbetten, Operationes in Psalmos, 1519—21, WA 5, 89, 30—32; Predigt (Cruciger's Sommerpostille of 1544), 1535, WA 22, 102, 1—2; Annotationes in aliquot capita Matthaei, 1538, WA 38, 498, 15; Anton Lauterbach's Tagebuch aufs Jahre 1539, TR 4, No. 449, 318, 6—14; recorder unknown, 1540, TR 5, No. 5356a, 84, 12; 85, 14; 16; No. 5356b, 86, 4, 9; Die Vorrede zu der Sammlung der Begräbnislieder, 1542, WA 35, 478, 12—18/AE 53, 326; Genesis Vorlesung, on 42:38, 1544, WA 44, 517, 20—22, 28—30/AE 7, 293—99.


13 Sepulcrum. Predigt, Röter's Nachschrift, 1545, WA 49, 732, 6–733, 1.


15 Wigit, Wiegin. Anton Lauterbach, date unknown, WA B5 5, No. 6445, 666, 6; Predigt (Cruciger's Sommerpostille of 1544), 1535, WA 22, 102, 1—2.

16 Anton Lauterbach's Tagebuch aufs Jahre 1539, TR 4, No. 4449, 318, 6—14; Anton Lauterbach, date unknown, TR 5, No. 6445, 666, 6; Compare Tischbrede (recorder not known), 1540, TR 5, No. 5356a, 85, 14.
In Abraham's bosom,17 or in Christ's bosom.18

In a great number of cases Luther does not say that death "is" sleep but, rather, that death "is called" sleep. In some of these passages he gives no further explanation.19 In others Luther goes on to explain that death is called sleep for believers because believers do not experience the terrors of death when they die20 or because death has been overcome for them and has no power21 or because they will rise from the dead.22

In many cases it is simply impossible to say whether Luther is using the term  


22 "Er ist versammt zu seinem volck . . . ist ein Ebreische weise zu reden und soviel gesagt, nicht wo er hin gefaren sei, sondern er ist komen zu den todten, da sie begraben sind, wie wir auff unsere weise sagen: Er ist auff den todten, da sie begraben sind, wie ein schlaff; mehr lohnt, das sie Gott widerinm wolfe aufferwecken, Daher die schriift den tod auch einen schlaff heisset, Den die da schlaffen, haben die hoffnung, das sie in einem schlaff dahin faren, und nit mehr haissen: Ich sterbe, sonder: Ich muss schlaffen. Aber wer sich ausser dem wort finden lest, der muss mit engsten ster-
"sleep" as a euphemism for death or whether he means that the dead are literally "asleep" until the resurrection. For example, Luther frequently referred to the death of a Christian by saying that the person in question had "fallen asleep" or "is asleep." 23

II

There are passages, however, in which Luther does seem to be saying that Christians who have died really and literally sleep until the Last Day. In a sermon preached in 1525 at the funeral of Elector Frederick of Saxony, Luther stated:

(Spalatin's printed edition of 1525), 1525, WA 17 I, 205, 2-4; 206, 7-10 (see the Wittenberg edition of 1539, WA 17 I, 205, 20-23); Predigt (Röer's Nachschrift), 1532, WA 36, 547, 7-10 (see Cruciger's 1534 edition, lines 25-33); Predigt (Cruciger's Sommerpostille), 1544, WA 22, 402, 28-31/Lenker 14, 359; Predigt (Dietrich's edition of the 1544 Hauspostille), W² 13A, 1328. See Operationes in Psalmo, 1519-21, WA 5, 89, 29-35. See also Quistorp's comment: "Because the resurrection . . . occupies the central place in Luther's hope, the state of souls after death is for him of no importance. Hence he affirms with scripture that death has become a mere sleep." Op. cit., pp. 98-99.

23 Predigt (printed edition), 1523, WA 12, 457, 7-13; Predigt (printed edition), 1525, WA 17 I, 207, 36; 209; 211, 30, 36; 212, 6, 11; Letter, 1530, BR 5, No. 1584, 351, 24 to 25; Predigt (Röer's Nachschrift), 1532, WA 36, 248, 10-11/AF 51, 239; Letter to Philip Gülerspies, 1538, WA BR 8, No. 3255, 280, 6-7; Tischreden, 1539, W² 22, Cap. 48, No. 11, 1307; Letter to Philip Melanchthon, 1541, WA BR 9, No. 3592, 358, 20-21; Tischreden, no date, WA TR 6, No. 6541, 31, 12-13; Tischrede, after Sept. 20, 1542, W² 22, Cap. 48, No. 9, 1304; Letter to Jacob Probst, 1542, WA BR 10, No. 3797, 156, 17-18; Letter to Anton Lauterbach, 1542, WA BR 10, No. 3807, 176, 7; Predigt (Cruciger's Sommerpostille), 1544, WA 22, 402, 25/Lenker 14, 359; Genesis Vorlesung, on 48:21; 1545, WA 44, 719, 15 to 16/AF 8, 192; Letter to Catharine Metzler, 1539, WR BR 8, No. 3354, 485, 26-27/LCC 18, 73; Letter to Justus Jonas, 1542, WA BR 10, No. 3829, 227, 24/LCC 18, 76.

It is a comfort, that those who have acknowledged Christ here [on earth] are now sleeping. It is a sleep. Do not worry then, whether he [Frederick] also suffers pains or grieves as you do, for he rests and is quiet. 24

A year later Luther asserted about the dead: "I think that they are in such a sleep that they neither feel nor see anything." 25

In 1532 Luther declared that death is a sleep so deep that the dead do not even dream. 26 Three years later he said: "In the case of the godly a sweet sleep follows this disintegration of the body until we awake in a new and eternal life." 27

In 1537 Luther wrote: "It belongs to

24 "Das ist ein trost, das die ihnenigen, die da Christum erkant haben . . . schlaffen itzt. Es ist ein schlaffen, darfest nicht sorgen, das er auch schmerzt trage odder sich bekumere wie du, sondern ruget und schweigt." Predigt (Spalatin's printed edition), 1525, WA 17 I, 205, 13-17. (See the Wittenberg edition of 1539, WA 17 I, 204, 21-26.)

25 "Ich aber wil hiie lassen Lasarum und ander toden faren und bei der schrift bieben, die do sagt, sie schlaffen. Denn mich diinckt, das solcher schlaff habe sie so gar innen, das die nichts fülen noch sehen, viel weniger denn man im natüren schlaffe füleit; Und wenn sie auff­erwerckt werden, geschehe ihn, da sie nicht wissen, wo sie gewest sind." Der Prophet Jona ausgelegt, 1526, WA 19, 221, 24-28.

26 "Sic cum omnibus, qui manent in filio: resurgent et vivent. Ideo non sollen heissen mortui, sed tantum obdormientes, und so tieff, ut non traum, das ein wahr­ther Schafft, da sie schlaffen." Predigt (Röer's notes), 1532, WA 36, 252, 8-9 (printed edition, lines 31-32)/AE 51, 241 to 242. See Letter to Luther's father, 1530, WA BR 5, No. 1529, 240, 64-70/LCC 18, 32; Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Matthias Knudsen, 1531, WA BR 6, No. 1876, 213, 14-16/LCC 18, 61; Annotationes in Ecclesiasten, 1532, WA 20, 162, 27-163, 3.

27 "Nunc mortem patitur corrupta haec natura. Eam corporis dissolutionem sequitur in piis suavisissimis somnis, donec evigilabimus in novam et aeternam vitam." Genesis Vorlesung, on 2:21, 1535, WA 42, 98, 1-3/AF 1, 130.
Christ’s office to make light of death.” Therefore He “lulls death to sleep” and “calls it sleep” and “wants us to know that for all who believe in Him death has really been changed and transformed into sleep.”

The year before his own death, the account of Jacob’s death in Genesis 49 elicited this comment:

I have often tried to observe the moment of time at which I either fall asleep or awaken, but I have never been able to detect it or to prevent sleep from coming upon me unexpectedly and before I thought it would. Our death and resurrection will also be like this. We depart, and we return on the Last Day, before we are aware of it. Nor do we know how long we have been away.

In regard to the statement of Gen. 49:33 that “Jacob... was gathered to his people,” Luther said that “the people of God is without the suffering caused by longing, and sleeps in most peaceful sleep and rest.”

According to the 1539 Wittenberg edition of a sermon that Luther had preached in 1525, Luther asserted that the damned “fall asleep not through, but against Jesus.” A 1525 edition of the same sermon, however, does not contain that phrase. Otherwise Luther does not appear to have taught that the damned fall asleep when they die nor to have asserted, without qualification, that they sleep until the Day of Judgment.

A number of Luther’s other statements about the state of the dead harmonize with the teaching that the dead sleep until the Last Day. Thus he repeatedly said that the dead do not experience time, hours, days, or years. He frequently asserted that the time between a person’s death and resurrection would be a peaceful sleep for the saved and a tormented sleep for the damned.

---


30 Sed populus ille Dei est sine passione desiderii, et dormit placidissimo somno et quiete, sicut Christus inquit: ‘Non est mortua puella ista, vivit, quiescit, etc.’

31 Unbelievers “entschlaffen nicht durch, sondern, wider Jhesus und sind verdampt.” Predigt (Wittenberg edition of 1539), 1525, WA 17 I, 211, 36. (Spalatin’s 1525 printed edition is printed above the Wittenberg edition.)

32 Predigt (Luther’s edition), 1523, WA 10 III, 194, 17/Lenker 13, 29; Predigt (Röser’s Nachschrift), 1523, WA 11, 130, 25–29 (see the printed edition, WA 12, 596, 26–31); Annotationes in Ecclesiasten, 1532, WA 20, 162, 27–163, 3; Annotationes in aliquot capita Matthaei, 1538, WA 38, 653, 38–653, 2; Predigt (Dietrich’s Hauspostille), 1544, WA 52, 372, 3–7. Cf. WA 42, 370, 23–24/AE 2, 155; WA 45, 499, 3–4/AE 24, 42.
rection would appear to pass as quickly as a moment, a half hour, an hour, or a night of sleep. On at least one occasion Luther said that the dead "know nothing." On several occasions he said that the dead do not praise God.

In some of the quotations cited above, Luther's assertion that the dead are asleep appears to be unqualified. On occasion, however, he added some very important qualifications to this assertion. In a letter written Jan. 13, 1522, to Nicholas von Amsdorf, Luther wrote:

I am inclined to agree with your opinion that the souls of the just are asleep and that they do not know where they are up to the Day of Judgment. But I do not dare to affirm that this is true for all souls in general, because of the taking up of Paul, of Elijah, and of Moses (who certainly did not appear as phantoms on Mount Tabor). Who knows how God deals with the separated souls? Can He just as well make them sleep on and off or for as long as He wished, just as he overcomes with sleep those who live in the flesh? And that passage in Luke 16 about Abraham and Lazarus—although it does not attribute sensation to all of the departed, yet it does attribute sensation to Abraham and Lazarus, and it is hard to twist this passage to refer to the Day of Judgment.

I think the same about those condemned; some may feel punishments immediately after death, but others may be spared until that Day. For the rich man confesses that he is tortured; and the Psalm says, "Evil will catch up with the unjust man when he perishes." You perhaps also refer this either to the Day of Judgment or to the passing anguish of physical death. Therefore, it is my opinion that these things are uncertain. It is most probable, however, that with few exceptions, all of the departed sleep without possessing any capacity of feeling. Consider now, who were the spirits in prison to whom (as St. Peter writes) Christ preached? Were they not...
able to sleep in Him until the [Last] Day? 36

In his comment on Gen. 25:7-10 in the Genesis lectures Luther said that the dead sleep in such a way that they are "awake":

Nevertheless, there is a difference between the sleep or rest of this life and that of the future life. For toward night a person who has become exhausted by his daily labor in this life enters into his chamber in peace, as it were, to sleep there; and during this night he enjoys rest and has no knowledge whatever of any evil caused either by fire or by murder. But the soul does not sleep in the same manner. It is awake. It experiences visions and the discourses of the angels and of God. Therefore the sleep in the future life is deeper than it is in this life. Nevertheless, the soul lives before God. With this analogy, which I have from the sleep of a living

person, I am satisfied; for in him there is peace and quiet. He thinks that he has slept barely one or two hours, and yet he sees that the soul sleeps in such a manner that it also is awake. 37

A number of times in his life Luther qualified the assertion that the dead are asleep by saying that this is not true of all of the dead. In the Genesis lectures he said that God is able to awaken the dead "whenever it is His good pleasure to do so" 38 and "so to control them that they live." 39

On at least three occasions Luther im-

---

36 "Proclive mihi est concedere tecum in eam sententiam, iustorum animas dormire ac usque ad iudicii diem nescire, ubi sint . . . . Sed an universale hoc sit omnibus animabus, non audeo asserere, propter raptum Pauli, Eliae et Moysi, qui utique non ficti apparuerunt in monte Tabor. Quis enim novit, quomodo Deus agat cum animabus separatis? Nonae potest esse acque sopire alternis vel quamdiu voluerit, atque viventes in carne sopit? Lam illud Lucae 16. de Abraham et Lasaro, etsi non urget universalem, tamen sensum tribuir Abrahae et Lasaro, et durum est hoc ad iudicii diem torquere."


plied that the saints who rose with Christ are still in their resurrected state.40

IV

A strong case can also be made for the contention that Luther did not teach that the dead sleep until Judgment Day. This is particularly true in the case of the ungodly but also in the case of believers.

Luther said a number of times that we do not know if the ungodly who die sleep until the Last Day.41 On several occasions he said that the rich man of Luke 16 suffered “in his conscience” after death and “had no rest.”42 In 1538 Luther wrote


42 Predigt (Luther’s edition), 1522, WA 10 III, 192, 12—18, 28—29/Lenker 13, 27; Predigt (Rörer’s Handschrift), 1523, WA 11, 130, 13—17 (cf. WA 12, 596, 10—16). See Tessaradecas controllataria pro laboratoribus et oneratis, 1520, WA 6, 122, 30—32; Predigt (Fastenpostille), 1525, WA 17 II, 235, 14; Genesis Vorlesung, on 10:8-9, 1536/37?, WA 42, 400, 16—18/AE 2, 196; Annotationes in aliquot capitia Matthaei, 1538, WA 38, 653, 34—654, 3; Genesis Vorlesung, on 42:38, 1544; WA 44, 517, 31—36/AE 7, 294; Predigt (Dietrich’s 1544 Hauspostille), WA 52, 372, 3—7. But for a different interpretation see Tischrede (Dietrich’s Nachschriften), 1533, WA TR 1, No. 591, 280, 35—36; Tischrede (Anton Lauterbach’s Tagebuch aus Jahre 1538), WA TR 3, No. 5904, 062, 21—25.

43 “Mors non est mors, sed dormitio apud Christianos, Imo locus sepulturae Christianorum vocatur θανατόθητος, id est, dormitorium. Sic non possunt gentes appellare sua sepulchra. Soli Christiani dicunt: Sepulchrum meum est meus lectorus, meus dormitum, Non morior, sed dormio.” Annotationes in aliquot capitia Matthaei, 1538, WA 38, 489, 12—16.

44 “Denn schlaffen heisset man die, die da ligen, das sie widder erwachen und auferstehen sollen, nicht die, die so ligen, das kein heffnung ist, das sie widder auferstehen werden, welche heisset man nicht schlaffen, sondern todtle leichnam. Also das eben inn dem wort ‘schlaffen’ in der schrift die zukunftige auferstehung angeben ist.” Predigt (Cruciger’s edition of 1534), 1532, WA 36, 547, 29—32. (This writer did not find a corresponding statement in Rörer’s Nachschrift, WA 36, 547.)

that only Christians can say, “My sepulcher is my bed, my dormitory; I do not die, but sleep.”48 In the 1534 printed edition of a sermon preached 2 years earlier, Luther is reported to have said that those who lie in the earth without the hope of the resurrection are not called “sleepers,” as departed Christians are called, but “dead bodies.”44

A case can also be made that Luther was not consistent in teaching that believers who have departed from this life sleep until the Last Day. In his comment on Gen. 26:24 in the Genesis lectures, Luther observed:

These things must be carefully noted: because it is divine truth that Abraham lives, serves, and reigns with God. But what sort of life that is, whether he is asleep or
awake, that is another question. How the soul rests, we are not to know.\textsuperscript{46}

A number of times between 1523 and the closing years of his life Luther stated that death is sleep to God but not to us\textsuperscript{46} or that it is sleep to the eyes of faith.\textsuperscript{47} His frequent statement that death is "like"

\textsuperscript{46} "Et diligenter ista sunt observanda: quia divina veritas est, quod Abraham vivit, servit et regnat cum Deo. Qualis vero illa vita sit, dormitiae, an vigiliet, alia quaesitio est: Quomodo quiescat anima, nos non debemus scire." (Cruciger's edition of 1534), WA 35, 205, 9-14. See also Predigt (Cruciger's edition of 1534), 1532, WA 36, 544, 32-36 (this writer did not find a corresponding statement in Röör's Nachschrift printed on the same page); Tischrede, Bindseil and Chumer, 1538, WA 44, 518, 12-519, 2; Additio in locum Hoseae cap. 13 (printed edition), 1545, WA 40 III, 765, 14-16.


\textsuperscript{48} "Credentibus enim mors non est mors, sed somnus quidam. Nam cum terror, stimulus et vis illa mortis abest, non potest dici mors. Quanto igitur maior fides est, tanto mors est imbecillior; Quanto autem fides minor est, tanto mors est acerbior." (see note 36); Predigt, 1523, WA 5, 130, 30-32 (see the printed edition, WA 12, 596, 36-38); Annotationes in aliquot capita Matthaei, 1538, WA 38, 505, 29-34; Anton Lauterbach's Tagebuch aufs Hausjahr, 1338, WA TR 3, No. 3695, 540, 2-4; Tischrede (Heidenreich's Nachschriften), 1542/43, WA TR 5, No. 5534, 219, 3-8; Genesis Vorlesung, 1540-45, WA 45, 360, 17-23; 480, 13-15, 38; WA 44, 518, 12-519, 2; Additio in locum Hoseae cap. 13 (printed edition), 1545, WA 40 III, 765, 14-16.

\textsuperscript{49} "Ein schlafender Mensch ist einem Todten sehr ahnlich, darum hat man fein erdacht, der Schlaf sei ein Bruder des Todes, und selbst in Tag und Nacht ist das Bild des Lebens und des Todes abgemalt." Tischrede (Cordatus), date uncertain. See also Predigt (Hauspostille), 1525, WA 17 II, 235, 17 ff.; Letter to Luther's father, 1530, WA BR 5, No. 1529, 241, 82-87/LCC 18, 32; Predigt (Röör's Nachschrift and printed editions), 1531, WA 34 II, 277, 5-7, 13-17, 23-26; Predigt (Cruiger's edition of 1534), 1532, WA 36, 544, 32-36 (this writer did not find a corresponding statement in Röör's Nachschrift printed on the same page); Tischrede, Bindseil and Chumer, 1538, WA TR 4, No. 4203, 200, 9-201, 1; Bibel- und Bucheinverzeichnungen, on John 8:51, 1541, WA 48, No. 205, 157, 3-7; Predigt (Röör's Hauspostille), date uncertain, WA 13B, 1740-41; Predigt (Röör's 1559 edition), WA 13, 2263.

\textsuperscript{50} "Heisset [Paulus in I Thessalonicher 4:13-14] unsern tod nicht ein tod, sondern ein schlaff, und Christus tod heisset er ein rechten tod, Da mit gibt er dem tod Christi solche treffliche macht, das wir da gegen unsern tod sollen fur einen Schlaff achtten." Predigt (printed edition), 1532, WA 36, 240, 32-35 (see 24-25)/AE 51, 233-34. See also in the work just cited, WA 36, 252, 30-32/AE 51, 242; Predigt (printed edition of 1534), 1532, WA 36, 547, 34-39, 548, 13-25 (this writer did not find a similar phrase in Röör's Nachschrift, WA 36, 547-48); Die Vorrede zu der Sammlung der Begräbnisreden, 1542, WA 35, 478, 12-18/AE 53, 326; Predigt (Nachtrag zu Cruiger's Sommerpostille), 1545, WA 22, 440, 9-13. (This writer did not find a similar statement in Röör's or Stolz's Nachschriften, WA 49, 694-701.)

"Morte, quae tamen ipsi [Deo] non mors est, sed somnus, qui est quasi frater et consanguineus mortis. Quando enim homo sepeli-
In a sermon preached in 1532 Luther said that in death it is only the five senses which die.\(^{51}\) He affirmed that “God talks with the dead”;\(^ {52}\) that the dead “hear,” “think,” and “see”:\(^ {53}\) that they “experience visions and the discourses of the angels and of God”:\(^ {54}\) that God opens the eyes of the dead,\(^ {55}\) and they “see with spiritual eyes after death.”\(^ {56}\)

Luther felt compelled by God's reference to the deceased Abraham as “My servant” (Gen. 26:24) to affirm that Abraham “lives, serves, and reigns with God” (see note 45 above). Several times Luther asserted on the basis of the First Epistle of Peter that Christ preached to the dead.\(^ {57}\) The great Reformer also taught that on the Last Day believers who had died would hear the voice of the archangel and of Christ.\(^ {58}\)

Luther also spoke of the joy and peace experienced by departed believers. According to him they “enjoy everlasting peace and safety,”\(^ {59}\) embrace death as “the most joyous peace,”\(^ {60}\) and “take delight in Christ's embrace.”\(^ {61}\)
In 1544 George Hoessel's son died. Luther consoled the bereaved father with these words:

Inasmuch as Christ . . . indicates that “in heaven their angels always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven” [Matt. 18:10], you must have no doubt that your son is rejoicing with our Savior, Christ, and with all the saints.62

In 1542 Luther wrote to Justus Jonas:

After mourning for a season, we shall enter into joy unspeakable, where your Cathy and my Magdalene, together with many others, have preceded us and daily call, admonish, and beckon us to follow.63

In the same year Luther wrote about the deceased Urbanus Rhegius:

We know that he is blessed and has life and eternal joy in fellowship with Christ and the heavenly church, in which he now personally learns, sees, and hears of those things which he proclaimed here in the church in accordance with the Word of God.64

Luther also spoke of God's care and preservation of the dead. In the Genesis lectures he concluded from Matt. 22:3265 that “the dead, too, live and have a God who cares for them and preserves them in a life that is different from this physical one in which the saints are afflicted.”66 In 1532 he asserted that angels wait on a Christian after he has died.67

Luther also taught that it is permissible to pray for the dead.68 He was willing to
grant that the saints in light pray for us. Although he rejected the ritual invocation of the saints as practiced by the medieval church (see note 69 above), he did not reject an evangelical invocation of the saints but as late as 1521 practiced such an invocation himself. 70

The conclusion of this study is that Blessed Luther was less than wholly consistent in his teaching about the state of the dead between death and the Day of Resurrection. 71 This inconsistency can be documented from the early years of his life as a Reformer until the closing years of his life. 72

Grover, Mo.


71 See also Quistorp: “Luther’s teaching about the sleep of death and the state of the departed is by no means consistent. How sleep is to be conceived, whether unconscious or in some way consciously expectant, remains vague in his writings; likewise it is not clear whether the souls of the pious sleep in the grave with the body or whether carried aloft by angels they already rest in the bosom of God in heaven.” (P. 100)

72 I am deeply indebted to Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn who provided me with invaluable guidance in the preparation of this paper.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


——. “Die Unsterblichkeit der Seele bei Luther,” Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie, III (1926), 725–34.

Blackburne, Francis. A Short Historical View of the Controversy concerning an Intermediate State and the Separate Existence of the Soul between Death and the General Resurrection Deduced from the Beginning of the Protestant Reformation to the Present Times. With some Thoughts, in a Prefatory Discourse, on the Use and Importance of Theological Controversy and an appendix containing an inquiry into the sentiments of Martin Luther, concerning the state of the soul, between death and the resurrection. London: Printed for F. Field, 1765. British Museum.


——. “The Mystery of Life,” Signs of the
MARTIN LUTHER'S VIEWS ON THE STATE OF THE DEAD

Times, XCIII (February 1965), pp. 18—20.


—. Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Weimar: Herman Böhlau, 1883—


Scharlemann, Martin Henry. "'He Descended into Hell': An Interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18-20," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXVII (1956), 81—94.


