

THE SPRINGFIELDER

Vol. XXX

Summer, 1966

No. 2

THE SPRINGFIELDER is published quarterly by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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Indexed in INDEX TO RELIGIOUS PERIODICAL LITERATURE, published by the American Theological Library Association, Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.

Clergy changes of address reported to Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, will also cover mailing change of *The Springfielder*. Other changes of address should be sent to the Business Manager of *The Springfielder*, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Address communications to the Editor, Erich H. Heintzen, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Problems in Eschatology: The Second Coming of Christ and The Resurrection of the Body.

HOWARD W. TEPKER

The first part of this essay appeared in THE SPRINGFIELDER, XXIX, Summer 1965, pp. 8-29. Following is the second, and concluding, portion of the essay.

III. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

WITHIN the last fifty to sixty years, as interest in eschatology increased, debate has become more vigorous regarding the meaning of the *Parousia*, i.e. the second advent of Christ. Sharp differences of opinion existed both in liberal and in conservative circles.

One of the principal issues being debated concerns the question: "Is the second advent of Christ, which describes the Lord as coming visibly in the clouds of heaven with the holy angels, to be interpreted literally, or does the Bible here employ figurative, symbolic language? Are such passages as Matthew 24 and 25 clothed in Jewish apocalyptic language which we must strip away in order to get at the underlying truth, or will these things happen, literally as they are recorded in Scripture? Do these Bible stories need "demythologizing?" Numerous answers have been given. We mention only a few.

A. Views of Liberal Theology. Modernism has gone on record as denying that there will be a personal return of Christ. Douglas C. Macintosh claimed that the return of Christ is taking place now in "the progressive domination of individuals and society by the moral and religious principles of essential Christianity, i.e. by the Spirit of Christ."¹

William Newton Clarke said:

No visible return of Christ is to be expected, but rather the long and steady advance of His spiritual kingdom. . . . If our Lord will but complete the spiritual coming that He has begun, there will be no need of a visible advent to make perfect his glory on earth.²

According to William Adams Brown:

Not through an abrupt catastrophe, it may be, as in the early Christian hope, but by the slower and surer method of spiritual conquest, the ideal of Jesus shall yet win the universal assent which it deserves and his spirit dominate the world. This is the truth for which the doctrine of the second advent stands.³

It will be noted that all of these men, including others such as Walter Rauschenbusch and Shailer Mathews, interpret the vivid descriptions of the second coming of Christ as "figurative representations of the idea that the spirit of Christ will be an ever-increasing, pervasive influence in the life of the world."⁴ Such a view, however, hardly does justice to those very vivid descriptions of the second coming of Christ which are found in such clear passages as Acts 1:11; Matt. 24:3, 27, 30-31, 44; 26:64; Luke 9:26 and especially 1 Thess. 4:15-16. We read only the last Bible reference:

This we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall be with the Lord.

You will note that there is nothing in these verses themselves nor in the context to indicate that this passage should be taken figuratively. Therefore, Lutheran hermeneutical practice suggests that even though it contains miraculous features, it must be interpreted in a literal sense.

Of course, Modernism as such has faded somewhat from the scene; nevertheless it is quite evident that the modernistic conception that there will be no personal, physical return of Christ still persists among the Neo-Orthodox. The current view of these theologians is expressed rather clearly by Walter Marshall Horton in his book, *Christian Theology: An Ecumenical Approach*, where he writes:

When we try to imagine in detail how things were in the beginning, or shall be in the end, thought and language break down, and we are forced to think and speak in consciously symbolic terms, or else fall into a literalism which implies that we know more than a human being can know.⁵

In this quotation Horton implies that we must not interpret the account of Christ's second coming in a literal sense. The implication is that when Scripture speaks of Jesus returning visibly in the clouds of heaven, and the Christians meeting him in the air for judgment, it is employing figurative language; this is part of the apocalyptic mode of speaking which was so prevalent at the time of Christ.

Taito Kantonen points out that one of the most prominent features in evidence at the meeting of the World Council of Churches in Evanston in 1954 was the "reluctance of many American theo-

logians to take the second coming seriously."⁶ He calls attention to an article which appeared in the *Christian Century*, January 14, 1953, on the subject "Progress in Eschatology." In this article the following statement was made:

Few American Christians will dispute the truth and supreme importance of Christ's "first and continual coming." But many are obliged to doubt that a 'second' coming—whether conceived naively or in sophisticated terms—is essential to the Christian hope of Christ's final triumph.⁷

Of course, at this point we are inclined to ask the reason why modern theology is so ready to sacrifice the visible, physical return of Christ despite the fact that the Scripture speaks so clearly in this matter. The answer is not hard to find. As we have noted earlier, modern scholarship assumes without any question that the Bible represents an "outmoded world-view," which has been superseded by science. Kantonen claims that many theologians in Protestantism today

seek to eliminate any reference to "clouds" whatever else might suggest a visible return of Christ to the earth as belonging to an obsolete and mistaken apocalyptic, and to confine Christ's coming to a gradual spiritual process leavening the present world.⁷

Emil Brunner, who is regarded by some as a moderate or even a conservative theologian, makes an even blunter statement when he explains:

The pronouncements of the New Testament . . . are clearly mythological, in the sense that they are in fact unacceptable to us who no longer have the world picture of the ancients and the apostle: 'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven at the voice of an archangel and at the blast of the trumpet of God, and the dead will first be raised, then we the living will at the same time be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the clouds (1 Thess. 4:17).' If we ask whether the apostle who thus writes meant his words to be taken literally, we can answer neither with a simple yes or no . . . The modern reader demythologizes it, whether he will or not, whether he is conscious of his thought-processes or not. . . . The only questionable point is the extent of the demythologization. We feel immediately that just here the world-picture of the Bible clashes with our own. At the same time everyone who has understood the central significance of the Parousia expectation realizes that here there is no other possibility of expressing the matter except the symbolic one. . . . It is of the essence of the ultimate event that its character as an event is unimaginable. For that reason it will be better to remain loyal to the New Testament symbols, conscious both that they are

symbols and that we need symbols. We shall constantly attempt in our theological reflection to express in abstract language what we say symbolically in prayer and worship. . . . But we shall be under no illusion that this language is not symbolical—for what is the concept of transcendence if not a symbol”⁸

This lengthy discussion by Brunner adds up to the simple fact that he does not take the Scriptural accounts of the second advent of Christ literally; he de-mythologizes them, although he does not want to go quite as far as Rudolf Bultmann does. However, it is evident that both of these men have one thing in common. They share the presupposition mentioned earlier that “The science of the Bible is the science of those men who wrote it, and we should not expect that the Biblical authors should have more insight into the processes of nature than did their contemporaries.”⁹ Both Bultmann and Brunner would agree that the Bible cannot be considered authoritative in these matters; consequently the interpreter today, living as he does in an advanced scientific age, must first strip away the mythological trimmings from these Bible stories and seek to discover the basic truth which these narratives contain.

This is one of the major issues confronting Christendom today. How shall we evaluate this “new” methodology in Biblical interpretation? Time will not permit us to discuss this subject in the detail that it deserves, but mention should be made of a few of the basic principles which have a bearing on the subject. 1) Scripture does indeed employ figurative, symbolic language at times to communicate its message to man. While both Luther and Lutheran exegetes have always strongly emphasized the literal interpretation of the Bible, they have also recognized that the real sense of a passage is frequently to be found in the figurative meaning of the words. For example, when Scripture speaks of God’s arm (Ps. 77:15, etc.), His hands (Heb. 1:10), His ears (Daniel 9:18), these must be understood as anthropomorphisms; they are figures of speech. Or, when Jesus says: “I am the vine, ye are the branches . . .” (John 15:1), we readily understand without explanation that these words do not mean that He is a woody growth. Or when Jesus speaks of Herod as a fox (Luke 13:32), He uses this word in a figurative sense. In these cases the figurative meaning is the true sense of the text. But having granted this, we must immediately emphasize a second basic principle namely, 2) it is not the task of the human exegete to determine whether a given passage is to be understood in the literal or figurative sense. It is not the purpose of the interpreter to say when a text or story must be “de-mythologized.” That prerogative rests with God’s Word alone. The divine Author Himself must indicate this. Therefore, Lutheran dogmatists and exegetes in the past have always operated with this basic rule: “We dare not depart from the literal sense of any word or sentence unless Scripture itself compels us to do so. Such compelling

reasons are: circumstances of the text itself, parallel passages, and the analogy of faith."¹⁰

Regarding this important point, Martin Luther has written: If everyone were allowed, according to his own wishes, to invent conclusions and tropes in the Scriptures, what would the Scriptures be but a reed shaken by the wind, or a kind of Vertumnus? Then, in truth, no article of faith could be determined or proved with any degree of certainty, and all of them could be called into question by means of some trope.¹¹ Luther concludes his remarks with this pertinent advice to the interpreter: "Every trope which is not absolutely required by Scripture itself ought to be avoided as the most deadly poison."

The reformer pointed out the dangers involved in permitting interpreters to depart from the literal sense of a Scripture passage, on the basis of their own reason and inclination, when he made this reply to Erasmus:

Heresies and errors have not always arisen from the simplicity of the words in Scripture . . . but from men who have not attended to the simplicity of the words and from hatching tropes and conclusions out of their own brain.¹²

As we turn our attention to the current situation and observe that the trend in much of modern theology is in the direction of demythologization, in the direction of departing more and more from the literal interpretation when miracles are involved, we recognize that we are engaged in the same battle that Luther fought so valiantly and with such serious determination against such men as Erasmus and Zwingli—the battle of the literal interpretation versus the symbolic. The trend of modern theology is, strictly speaking, nothing new to Christendom; these are not new insights; they are as old as Origen who was born about 185 A.D. in the philosophically oriented city of Alexandria. And Lutheran theologians, following the leadership of the great reformer himself, have always sensed the danger and withstood the temptation of "troping" the Bible to death.

If time permitted us to make a careful study of the pertinent passages of Scripture which deal with Christ's second coming, it would become clear that in by far the majority of cases there is nothing in these passages nor in their contexts which would indicate that the holy writers intended their messages to be interpreted symbolically. Beginning with the statements of Jesus Himself in Matthew 24 and 25, continuing with the many other references in the Gospel, and concluding with the clear passages in the epistles of Paul, these accounts of the second coming of Christ are related as truths to be taken literally. It is only when extra-Biblical arguments are presented from science, philosophy, etc., that the suggestion is made that these stories should be interpreted figuratively.

May God grant us the guidance of His Holy Spirit, together with the wisdom, the courage, and faith to take the Scripture seriously whenever it speaks, to avoid any methodology, any interpretation, that would deprive God's Word of the message which the Lord intends it to have; to avoid at all costs the natural tendency of the human mind to read into the Bible a subjective opinion based upon reason, science, and philosophy. Let God be God also in the area of Biblical interpretation. Say with the ancient man of God, "Speak for thy servant heareth."

IV. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

It has frequently been said that one who believes in the immortality of the soul, must of necessity reject the resurrection of the dead. Operating on this premise, modern theologians have published books under such titles as: *The Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*. James Burtness, an assistant professor of systematic theology at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., writing in *Dialog* magazine, presents this argument:

If a poll were taken asking the question, "Do you believe in immortality or resurrection?" there is little question but that an overwhelming majority of Christian people would answer, "Why, both, of course". One glance at these words, however, shows not only that they are not synonymous, but that they are absolutely contradictory. How can one be raised, if he never died? And how can he die if he is immortal? Resurrection assumes death. Immortality rules out death. The two terms are mutually exclusive.¹³

In order to see this question in its proper perspective, one must note that in the past, the Christian Church has never regarded this as a problem. Throughout history, the Church has accepted both the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. It has become a problem only in the last fifty years, and in this period of time it is a problem only to those who interpret Scripture on the basis of the presupposition that man is an indivisible unit who dies in his entirety, according to both body and soul.¹⁴ If one feels himself constrained to accept this philosophical-psychological premise then, it is true, this unit which we call man cannot at one and the same time be immortal and also look forward to a resurrection. But when one believes, as we do, that death consists in the separation of body and soul, with the soul or spirit going into the presence of God and the mortal body returning to the dust, then the resurrection occupies a central position in our faith, for it gives divine promise that not only will our souls enjoy communion with God, but even these mortal bodies of ours will be raised from the dust, glorified, reunited with the soul and together live in God's blessed presence. This is a doctrine which, I believe, is correctly understood not only

by the laymen of our church but also by the children, for the Synodical Catechism makes this clear statement in Question 195.

What do the Scriptures teach of the resurrection of the body? The Scriptures teach that at the Last Day God will raise up me and all the dead, so that our bodies, the same bodies that have died, shall be made made alive.¹⁵

Equally important for our discussion is Question 197, where we read:

What do the Scriptures teach of eternal life? The Scriptures teach—A. That at the time of death the *soul* of the believer is at once received into the presence of Christ; B. That at the last day the believer will live with Christ, according to both body and soul.¹⁶

Thus our beloved Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been on record for many years as believing in both the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. This fact could also be supported by numerous statements in our Synod's literature, its books published by Concordia Publishing House and especially in its conference essays which have been endorsed by District and Synod conventions and therefore stands as *publica doctrina*.

Furthermore, J. L. Neve in his *History of Christian Thought*, gives this as the teaching of the early Christian Church. He notes: "The apologists . . . looked for an immortality of the body along with that of the soul."¹⁷ Many clear statements to this effect are also found in J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*,¹⁸ and especially in a recent publication by J. A. Schep, *The Nature of the Resurrection Body*. Thus it seems clear that the Christian Church of the past never considered it a great problem, whether one could believe in the immortality of the soul and at the same time in the resurrection of the body. It simply accepted both. This doctrine is deeply rooted in the minds and hearts of the people.

But the real, live issues confronting Christendom today center in two questions: 1) Did the Old Testament believer know of a resurrection of the dead, or was this doctrine introduced to the Israelites only after the exile in the sixth century, being borrowed from the Persians? 2) Granted that we shall rise from the dead, with what body shall we come forth?

A. The view of contemporary Theology concerning the origin of the resurrection doctrine. In recent years it has become more and more common for theologians simply to take for granted that the people of God in the Old Testament had little or no eschatology in the strictest sense of the word, and that the only doctrine of the future life known to Israel centered in a dark and gloomy existence in sheol. It is said that, prior to the exile in Babylonia, the faith of God's people did not include the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The conclusion is then drawn that this doctrine was evidently borrowed from the Persians, and is not truly Christian in its origin.

Pieper complains that Luthardt taught this view in his day; and Louis Berkhof, the Reformed theologian, points out that the Modernists in their prime embraced the same opinion; but most significant of all is the fact that in recent years, even after Modernism began to fade and the Neo-orthodox school of thought came into prominence, this strange view still persisted, so that in 1949 Harris Birkeland, professor of Semitic languages in Oslo, stated: "The resurrection of the dead is a religious idea springing from foreign, chiefly Iranian influence."¹⁹

Emil Brunner writes:

It is hardly questionable that the conception of a resurrection of the dead was the result of Persian influence upon Judaism from whence it penetrated into the New Testament. No doubt that there are hints of it in the Old Testament but they all belong to the exilic and post-exilic strata of the Old Testament.

Finally, he concludes with this very strong statement:

We must accept the fact that the Old Testament, even the prophetic message is not concerned about the fate of the individual after death . . .²⁰

B. An evaluation of this position. How shall we evaluate these opinions that are current in present-day Christendom? Of course, these views are totally foreign to the doctrines which the Lutheran Church has always taught. They are diametrically opposed to the Biblical exegesis of such great scholars of the past as Franz Delitzsch. We refer to them at this time only because of the frequency with which they are held and propagated by some theologians, both in Europe and in America. These opinions are appearing in popular periodicals and in paper back books that are easily available to both pastors and people. They are certain to have an influence. It is my conviction that as pastors we ought to acquaint ourselves at least to some extent with these current trends in theology in order that we might be better prepared to give sound reasons for the views which we embrace.

But again, how shall we evaluate these opinions? In the first place, it should be noted that these views are based on the so-called development of doctrine. It is assumed that as God brought man into existence through a long evolutionary process so he also progressively revealed himself to man. This method of interpretation, as we noted, is a natural outgrowth of the evolutionary theory. It simply applies the fundamental principles of evolution to the religion of God's people in the Old Testament.

In the second place, these views do not take into account sufficiently the evidence presented by Scripture itself. There are numerous passages in the Old Testament which reveal a definite hope on the part of Israel with respect to a life after death. We shall quote a few of the more pertinent examples:

Ps. 16:9-11. "Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure. For thou dost not give me up to sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit. Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Ps. 17:15. "As for men, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." (RSV: I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form).

Ps. 14-15. "Like sheep they (the wicked) are appointed for sheol; death shall be their shepherd; straight to the grave they descend; and their form shall waste away; sheol shall be their home. But God will ransom my soul from the power of sheol, for he shall receive me."

Ps. 73:24f. "Thou dost guide me with thy counsel, and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides thee."

Prov. 11:7-8. "When the wicked dies, his hope perishes, and the expectations of the godless come to nought. The righteous is delivered from trouble, and the wicked get into it instead."

Job 19:25-27. "I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side; and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

Among all the passages of the Old Testament, perhaps the strongest and clearest on the doctrine of the resurrection is the marvelous statement in Isaiah 26:19 where the prophet exults: "Thy dead shall live; their bodies shall rise; O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy. For thy dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the shades, thou will let it fall."

Similar in excellence is Daniel 12:2, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

It should be noted that some contemporary theologians claim that these passages which do refer to a resurrection are post-exilic, meaning that they were written after Israel had spent 70 years in captivity, and had "borrowed" the doctrine of the resurrection from the Persians. Such assertions seem quite arbitrary and subjective however since Scripture itself dates some of these psalms in the time of David, in the 10th century before Christ. Another of these passages was written by Isaiah who lived in the 8th century before Christ.

It is significant that Otto Procksch, professor of Old Testament at the University of Erlangen, sees foregleams of the resurrection very early in the Old Testament. He maintains that faith in an afterlife can be traced back to the Garden of Eden, and adds "When this blessedness was forfeited by sin, faith in an afterlife was nevertheless kept alive by means of the narrative of Enoch (Gen. 5:21ff) and Elijah (2 King 2)."²¹

Regarding foreign influence in the development of Israel's resurrection faith, Procksch claims that "the frequently quoted teachings of Zoroaster could not have affected pre-exilic eschatology." Instead, "The post-exilic expectation of the resurrection is firmly founded on the Old Testament prophecies, chiefly on that of Daniel."²²

In view of the evidence, it appears certain that God's people in the Old Testament era did not find it necessary to depend on Zoroaster, nor on Persian mythology, nor on Platonism for the doctrine of the resurrection, for they received it by revelation from God Himself as both the Old and the New Testaments clearly testify.²³

But there is another important issue in contemporary theology that claims attention; namely, the question: "Granted that we shall rise from the dead, with what body shall we come forth?"

A. The view of classic Lutheranism. Traditional theology expresses the conviction that the same bodies which die shall again be made alive. Dr. Pieper presents the view of classic Protestantism in these clear Biblical terms:

The identity of these bodies with those which men had here on earth is implicit in the very term "resurrection." What had died, decayed rises and becomes alive. . . . He who denies the numerical identity of the deceased and the risen bodies is *eo ipso* denying the resurrection of the dead.²⁴

To this Edward Koehler in his *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, adds the comment:

The identity of person will . . . be fully preserved in the resurrection. Job says: "In my flesh shall I see God (Job 19:25-27). Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration were the same persons as the Moses and Elias we read of in the Old Testament (Matt. 17:2-4). The resurrected Savior was the identical person that died on the cross (Luke 24:39). The identity of persons is also taught in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-21)."²⁵

Heinrich Schmid, in his *Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* says concerning the resurrection body: "This will be in substance the same body with which the soul was united in this life."²⁶

In an excellent essay which Prof. A. H. Schwermann delivered before a district convention in 1954 on the subject of "The Last Things," we read this very pointed and Scripturally oriented statement:

As to the question what rises on Judgment Day, we have the plain words of Scripture: "All that are in the *graves* shall hear his voice," whatever of men is "in the graves," hence the bodies.

The bodies which will rise on the day of the resurrection will be the identical bodies which existed in this world. What had died and decayed, rises and becomes alive. He who denies this denies the very term resurrection". Our Lord says: "All that are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that *have done good*, unto the resurrection of life, and they that *have done evil* unto the resurrection of damnation." If entirely different bodies and souls were created, the words of our Lord: "have done good," and "have done evil," would be meaningless.²⁷

This is also the position taken by the Lutheran confessions. In the *Formula of Concord*, Solid Declaration, Article I, we confess

concerning the doctrine of the resurrection Scripture testifies that precisely the substance of this our flesh, but without sin, shall arise, and that in eternal life we shall have and keep precisely this soul, although without sin."²⁸

Still it is apparent that many contemporary theologians hesitate to confess this article of the Christian faith.

B. The view of contemporary theology. On this point of doctrine many modern scholars hesitate to express agreement chiefly on the ground that science claims that a resurrection such as this is an utter impossibility. The spurious argument is advanced

that the human body undergoes a constant change of new particles of matter and that the old particles may enter another body, or that the elements of the body turned to dust have been assimilated by other bodies, and the like, and hence our bodies cannot arise.²⁹

Despite the fact that Jesus Himself took great pains to convince his doubting disciples of the identity of His risen body with His former self, and showed Thomas the very wounds of His crucifixion (John 20:27), this is a part of theology which is frequently surrendered in our day. Kantonen, for example, declares:

Paul condemns the simple Jewish faith according to which the body buried in the grave will rise. In the Syrian Apocalypse of Baruch it is explicitly taught that the old body will rise, otherwise there could be no recognition. Against such teaching (says Kantonen) Paul thunders forth: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."³⁰

C. An evaluation of the modern view. Dr. Pieper in his *Christian Dogmatics* gives what is perhaps the simplest and yet the most obvious answer to all those who surrender the resurrection of the body on scientific grounds. He quoted the words of Jesus: "Ye know not the power of God."³¹ If science is granted the right

to modify the teachings of Scripture regarding the resurrection of the body; if we concede that for reasons of science we can no longer hold that these bodies which we now have will rise on the last day, then we will already have taken the first step in the direction of adopting Origen's teaching that the resurrection will furnish us with an entirely new body, different in substance from the one we now have. Origen and after him the Socinians and the Russellites claimed that there will not be a resurrection of this mortal body, but instead, in the case of the righteous, God will simply create for them a new body to take the place of the old. This position, however, is at variance with the conception of the resurrection. According to the Scripture, there will not be a new creation but a resurrection, so that the body which shall be raised will be in a fundamental sense identical with our present body. This is implied not only in the term resurrection itself, which indicates a return to life of something which was dead, but it is specifically stated in passages such as Romans 8:11, "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your *mortal bodies* by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." This is evident also from 1 Cor. 15:53: "This corruptible (body) must put on incorruption, and this *mortal* must put on immortality." These passages indicate that our bodies on resurrection day will be the same bodies that we have now, only that they will be clothed in immortality. They will be changed. 2 Cor. 5:10 points to the same fact: "We must all appear before the seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body." If there is no immortality of the soul and if the body returns to the dust, never to be restored, then where is the continuity between this life and the next. If man goes into the grave in his entirety and if his body is never again reconstructed, then what is it that shall stand before God's judgment seat on the last day?

One final passage. In 1 Cor. 15:51-54 the apostle Paul describes the day of Christ's second coming which will also bring our resurrection, and he explains the events in these words:

Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.

Twice in this passage the holy writer mentions that those who have not died when Christ comes again will be changed; the change will consist in this that they shall put off their perishable nature and put on an imperishable. Does this imply that their bodies will not be the same which they had in this life but will be altogether differ-

ent? Or, does it mean that they will possess the same bodies which they had, only that these bodies will be glorified; these mortal bodies will have taken on immortality. The word "change" refers not to a change in substance but in condition. And if that is true of those who are alive at the Lord's coming, will it not be true also of those who lie in the grave, especially in view of the clear passages of Scripture?

May the Lord grant unto us an abundant measure of His Spirit that we may not be led astray by mere human understanding as we probe deeper and deeper into God's Word of truth. The Lord has assured us that His Word is a lamp unto our path and a light unto our feet. May nothing obscure that divine light, neither science, nor philosophy, nor psychology nor any other form of man's reason. Jesus has promised, "if ye continue in my word, ye shall know the truth."

NOTES

1. Douglas C. Macintosh, *Theology as an Empirical Science* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), p. 213.
2. William Newton Clarke, *Outline of Christian Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1898), p. 444.
3. William Adams Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline* (New York: Scribner, 1934), p. 373.
4. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. 705.
5. Walter M. Horton, *Christian Theology: An Ecumenical Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 263.
6. Taito Kantonen, *The Christian Hope* (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1954), p. 72.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Emil Brunner, *Eternal Hope* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), p. 139.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
10. Theodore Laetsch, editor, *The Abiding Word* (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), II, 56.
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