

What Happens to the Soul After Death?

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When I was assigned the topic, “What happens to the Soul after Death?” and then told that this was a topic that was going to be discussed Synod-wide, I must say that I was shocked that this should be necessary. As any good pastor would, I asked my wife what she thought was going to happen to her soul when she died. She simply replied, “My soul is going to go to heaven.” I then asked her to give me a Bible passage on which she based that belief. Her quick reply was, “Jesus said to the thief on the cross, ‘Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.’” I would have expected that answer from any WELS Christian and most certainly from every WELS pastor.

In order to discover whether or not there was a problem in this area and to discover to what extent there might be a problem, I asked my twelfth grade religion class at the Academy to write a paragraph on what they believed happened to their souls at the times of their deaths. I asked them to write anonymously and to honestly express what they personally believed. Of the twenty students, nineteen gave me answers similar to the one I received from my good wife. The one other paper told me, “I believe it will remain dead or dormant (sic) like until Christ comes to judge us. On the day of judgment we will all arise, both Christian and non-Christian to be judged.” In my research I discovered that this is just one of the many heresies that surround this vital topic. I do not know who that person is, but it would be interesting to know whether he; received that from his pastor’s instruction class or whether it is a private misconception.

In my research I also discovered that one of our Seminary professors, Dr. Siegbert W. Becker wrote an all-encompassing paper on this subject and delivered it on May 3, 1957. It was reprinted in the Christian News on March 8, 1965 and reprinted again in A Christian Handbook of Vital Issues. I did not feel that I could improve upon his excellent work, and, therefore, I have reproduced his paper and included it as an addendum to my paper. Since you will have this now for further private study if you so desire, I am going to confine myself to examining only that narrow subject of what happens to the soul immediately after death until the time of Judgment Day. We will examine what the Scripture has to say, what the church fathers and orthodox theologians have to say, and then examine some of the modern heresies that may be of current interest.

In taking this direction, I have made some very basic assumptions that one cannot always make when talking to theological men. I am assuming that you all believe that man is made up of two parts, body and soul. I am also assuming that when we speak of the soul that we are using that word in the sense of the person, the ego, the “I” that goes to live with Christ after death. There is also another basic assumption and that is that we all believe that the soul is immortal i.e. the soul has unending existence and is not subject to death. To me it seems so very basic that an individual should know and believe these things, but I am sure that one could debate for hours and waste reams of paper discussing this with unbelieving “theologians.”

There are really very few Bible passages that speak about the condition of the soul after death. The reason for that is that the Scripture primarily directs the attention of the Christian to the Day of Judgment and to the eternal bliss of salvation that follows it rather than to the bliss and joy that they enjoy immediately after death. 2 Cor 5:1-8 is not only the sedes doctrinae of the immortality of the soul, but it also implies that life after death will be better than life on this side of death.

1. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heaven.
2. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:
3. If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.
4. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

5. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7. (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Professor Meyer in his commentary on this epistle helps us to understand these verses.¹ Paul does not use the tabernacle, or tent, (σκηνον) as a figurative expression for our body, but rather to show our restless mode of living. Even though our present unsteady life will soon be ended, this should not worry us, for we have a permanent residence with God in heaven. We moan and groan in our unstable, tentlike life with its tribulations, but since we fix our attention on the glory which awaits us in heaven we are not impatient in waiting for our departure. In other words, the point is not that we are so eager to get rid of this present life, but that we always have our eye set on the heavenly life which daily sustains us.

Another Bible passage that should be considered is the passage that speaks about the stoning of Stephen. Luke reports: "And they atoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'" And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

Lenski comments,²

That prayer was heard. Stephen's spirit, the immaterial part of his being, left his body and was received by Jesus into the glory and the bliss of heaven, there to await the last day when his body would be raised up to be again united with his soul and to participate in its heavenly joys.... And so Stephen "fell asleep." Although he experienced a violent and terrible form of death, Stephen "fell asleep." This is not a euphemism which would hide the fearful reality but literal truth. This expression is regularly used in the New Testament with reference to the dying of believers. By the use of this very word for death, the resurrection is implied. But only the body falls asleep; the soul does not sleep but is with the Lord, awaiting the awakening of the body."

On the subject of the soul sleeping after death, I will have more to say later.

That very same desire that Stephen had to be with the Lord is expressed by the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Philippians 1:23: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ: which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." To be with the Lord was to have a better life, to have a much better existence.

The Apostle Peter expresses much the same thing in 2 Peter 1:13-15: I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." Peter soon would be moving out of his temporary quarters. He would be moving out of his body into his permanent home in heaven. That is where his soul would be going upon the moment of his death. To him death was "moving day." He was going to be moving in with the Lord.

St John confirms the joys of those who die in the Lord when he writes in Revelation 14:13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth."

¹ J.P. Meyer, *Ministers of Christ* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1963) pp. 81-84.

² R.C: Lenski, *Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles*. Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 19 . pp. 309-10.

Perhaps the most convincing of all the passages that we have concerning the state of those who have died in the Lord are Jesus' words from the cross to the malefactor, Luke 23:46: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Of very special note is the *αὐτὴν* at the very beginning of Jesus' statement. That always marks a very special pronouncement. In the synoptic Gospels *αὐτὴν* is used no less than fifty times in that very way by the Lord. Also worthy of special consideration to our topic is the word *σήμερον*. That word always means "today." One of the suggested translation in this Bible passage is "before today is over."³ The dying thief had less than eight hours more to live; and, because he was a believer in the Savior, he was going to be with the Lord in Paradise that very day. A believer goes to his eternal rest immediately upon death.

From the Old Testament we can draw another truth concerning those who have died in the Lord. Isaiah 63:16 reads: "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." When a person leaves this earth it is as if he pulls up the curtain that leads into eternal life, and he pulls down a curtain on the life that is on earth behind him. Pieper states about this particular passage: "There is no Scripture warrant for attributing to the souls of the departed a direct knowledge of particular things and happenings on earth."⁴

There is perhaps one more Bible passage that we should survey before we move on, and that is the Bible passage that has to do with the souls of unbelievers who have died. From St. Peter we read in 1 Peter 3: 19,20: "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." These were individuals who had perished some 2500 years before in the flood. In order to understand Christ's preaching, which was a pronouncement of his victory over Satan and his kingdom, the spirit must have a measure of understanding and thinking ability. They are not in a deathlike or dormant state. Secondly, they are in prison. They too have immediately gone to their judgment on the other side of life. From the story of the rich man and Lazarus, we might add that their condition in prison is far different from those who have gone to eternal bliss. They are suffering extreme pain and torment in their punishment.

Martin Luther was fond of referring to the rest of the soul as a sleep. Certainly this conforms to many references in the Scripture. Jesus often referred to the dead as sleeping. Paul, when writing to the Thessalonians says: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep." Consequently, one of our funeral hymns begins each verse with the words, "Asleep in Jesus."

We might, however, ask what is this sleep? Is the body or the soul asleep? Are both asleep? It was stated by Lenski that only the body sleeps. Another states that a dead body can no more be said to sleep than a stone.⁵ A dead body does resemble a person sleeping. To say that this sleep refers to the souls, or to both body and soul, seems to cause conflict with the spirits in hell whom we could assume were not sleeping when Jesus preached to them in His victorious descent. Yet, it would seem that this term is more than a euphemism as it is given in Scripture. Luther in his customary way, held this idea of sleeping to be a paradox. The dead are asleep in such a way that they are awake at the same time so that they can serve God. I will let Luther enlighten you on what he thinks.

It is certain that to this day Abraham is serving God, just as Abel, Noah are serving God. And this we should carefully note; for it is divine truth that Abraham is living, serving God, and ruling with Him. But what sort of life that may be, whether he is asleep or awake, is another question. How the soul is resting we are not to know, but it is certain that it is living.⁶

But the soul does not sleep in the same manner (like a person on earth.) It is awake. It experiences visions and the discourses of the angels and of God. Therefore the sleep in the future

³ W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952. p. 756.

⁴ F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* Vol. III. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953. P. 512.

⁵ C. Hodge. *Systematic Theology*, V&1. 3. New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Company, 1 73. p.33.

⁶ E.M. Plass. *What Luther Says*, Vol. 1. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950. P. 385.

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.⁷

Francis Pieper says this: “A soul sleep which excludes a blessed enjoyment of God (psychopannychism) must be definitely rejected on the basis of Phil. 1:23 and Luke 23:43. Asleep of the soul which includes enjoyment of God (says Luther) cannot be called a false doctrine.⁸ Exactly what state the individual is in when asleep with Jesus is a question that is too difficult to answer.

There are two other questions that often come up in discussions of our topic and they are, Is there a double judgment and what about the matter of time in eternity. For answers to these I am going to quote what Dr. Becker has to say about these subjects.

A question that always causes trouble and which sometimes leads some people to say things which they ought not to say if they want to remain theologians bound in Scripture, is the question of the interval between death and the day of judgment. Men often speculate in this matter and hold that since the soul, as they say, enters into timeless eternity at death, therefore, for the soul there can be no interval of time between death and the resurrection and final judgment. Moreover, if the soul is judged immediately after death, and if there is another judgment at the end of the world, this would mean that there is a twofold judgment.

Why the question of a twofold judgment should trouble men is difficult to understand. If God tells us over and over again that we are forgiven, why can He not twice tell those who believe that they have been given eternal life, especially when the body is not present at the first judgment? If it pleases Him to do it in that way and hold two court sessions as it were, the one private, and the other public, why should this trouble?

The other question of the time that elapses between death and the final judgment involves the whole question of time and eternity. And when men speculate about the nature of eternity, they are speaking of something that we know nothing about. If eternity is timelessness, which it certainly is, it involves also the cessation of space as we know it, and it makes all change impossible. Change as we know it requires time. If we are to judge then, on the basis of our limited experience and our finite intelligence, we might judge also that there can be no resurrection of the dead, for this would involve a change in the status of the soul. There could be no singing as we know it, for time and intervals are a part of the essence of music. All this ought to convince us that it would be best for us not to speculate about these matters at all.

We do not know anything about it, and we have no way of finding out. When men insist, however, that there can be no consciousness of time for the souls of the dead, they do not speak as the Bible speaks. In the sixth chapter of Revelation, for example, we read, “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, doest thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. Rev. 6:9-11.” It is clear that the souls are here depicted as being conscious of the time that is passing, and it seems long to them. And surely we can do no better than simply to speak of these things as the Scriptures speak of them.⁹

⁷ J Pelikan, ed. *Luther's Works*, Vol. 4. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964. p. 313.

⁸ Pieper, loc. cit.

⁹ S. W. Becker, “The status of the Soul after Death,” *A Christian Handbook on Vital Issues*. New Haven, Missouri: 1973 P 46.

To sum up, then, there really is not very much that the Bible does tell us about the state of the soul after death. We know that when death occurs that the individual immediately goes either to heaven or to hell. We know that the souls of, the godly are in God's hands, that they are with Christ in Paradise, that they are supremely happy, that they are so far removed from all earthly trouble and sorrow that they are altogether ignorant of those who live upon earth, and that their needs no longer concern them.

Prof. H.J. Vogel states:

Nothing definite is revealed about the state of departed souls between the moment of death and the final judgment.

Note: In this world we are governed by the categories of space, time and causality; but we know nothing about the forms of extramundane life.¹⁰

I might add that in view of this statement, he then goes on to list all of the Bible passages that I have cited so far in discussing this topic.

I would now like to turn to some of the heresies that have arisen in the not-too-distant past concerning this topic. In the case of most, it is not a question of what happens to the soul between the time of death and Judgment Day, but, rather, is the soul immortal. I will let a few of the neo-orthodox theologians speak for themselves:

Neo-orthodox theologians say: "man is not soul and body." They deny the immortality of the soul. They say that death ends all except for those who have the resurrection experience—and then it is not man that lives on, but, just an idea. As one writer put it "while in man's continuation beyond the grave the body $\Sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ continues in the resurrection experience, apart from the flesh; flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God on resurrection day." Thus corrupting altogether the meaning of this word of God which speaks of the unregenerate man not inheriting the Kingdom of God. Anders Nygren writes: "One who believes in the immortality of the soul shows thereby that he is not a Christian."- . . .

Paul Tillich writes: "In order to overcome the anxiety of fate and death man has invented a theory or doctrine called the immortality of the soul. In this frame of reference death becomes a kind of friend, the door to heaven. Death loses its sting, because we are told that though we die we go on living anyhow in a better world. How did we ever get the presumptuous idea that death is not the end, that we are immortal?" . . .

Thomas S. Kepler, expressing the neo-orthodox view, states: Paul does not believe in the resurrection of the flesh, though he does believe in the resurrection of the body."¹¹

A man, perhaps much closer to our circles, should also be quoted. In June of 1957, Gilbert Thiele presented a paper to the English District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod entitled "The Resurrection of the Body and the Immortality of the Soul." His paper was "a reworking of the 1955 Ingersoll (!) Lecture at Harvard University." A few quotes, taken from various parts of the paper will quickly reveal his thinking on this subject.

Death, furthermore, is final. This is the most gloomy of all aspects of death - it is the end. When you die, "You've had it." There is "no remembrance" - of God, of yourself, the few passages that seem to indicate a measure of hope notwithstanding. We think it is consequently fair to say, to put it very bluntly, that when a man dies, he is dead. The Bible, in its length and breadth, knows of no disembodied condition, in which man lives, temporarily, and certainly not

¹⁰ H.J. Vogel. *Seminary Dogmatic Notes*, p. 3.

¹¹ H.A Theiste "The Scriptural Doctrine of Body and Soul with Special Reference to Death and Resurrection." *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, March, 1964.

permanently, knows therefore, neither a temporary or permanent human immortality as such. The mortality of flesh, and soul, or nephesh which we should not really translate soul at all, is clearly and unbrokenly carried through the entire Old Testament.”¹²

It is Thiele’s contention that Christians have adopted a Platonic idea of the soul and that the belief in immortality is nothing more than adopted Greek philosophy. This leads Thiele to say:

What a tragedy that this perversion, understandable and explicable from the Socratic view and on 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 of theology known to us! When we so speak: You have an immortal soul, for which Christ died, to save it, and when we die, our soul(s) go to God and to heaven. Is that not comforting? - When we so speak, we are speaking the language of Plato, of Lessing, of the English and Continental Enlightenment thinkers, of Masonry, of the worst of all early - Church heresies, Gnosticism, of Docetism, we are speaking with John Haynes Holmes (*The Affirmation of Immortality*, 1947).¹³

It should also be stated that Thiele does not go along with many of the neo-orthodox theologians as to the final outcome on Judgment Day. He believes on that day God will raise both our dead bodies and our dead souls. In his words this will be “the greatest collective creative event and work of God through the Holy Ghost on the bodies of men since the creation of all things.”¹⁴

I would also for a few moments direct your attention to another related subject, the book *Life after Life* by Raymond A. Moody, Jr, M.D. The book is a study of experiences of people who have had near-death experiences. The book has gone through many reprintings, was condensed in *Readers’ Digest*, a movie was produced on similar experiences, and has caused a big stir so that people express a belief in life after death based on human experiences. It is interesting to note that the book has a forward written by Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross who is convinced that life continues after death. She is to have said that if reports on the experiences of the dying are “factual, verified and scientific, it would prove more than many Christians have been able to do over the centuries.”¹⁵

It is also more than a passing interest to note Dr. Moody’s religious background. In the “Introduction” he says:

My religious upbringing deserves some comment. My family attended the Presbyterian Church, yet my parents never tried to impose their religious beliefs or concepts upon their children. They generally tried, as I was growing up, to encourage whatever interests I developed on my own and provided the opportunity for me to pursue them. So, I have grown up having a “religion” not as a set of fixed doctrines, but rather as a concern with spiritual and religious doctrines, teachings, and questions. I believe that all the great religions of man have many truths to tell us, and I believe that no one of us has all the answers to the deep and fundamental truths with which religion deals. In organizational terms, I am a member of the Methodist Church.¹⁶

In his book he makes a study of about 50 individuals who have had near death experiences. He also reconstructs such an experience. The experience that he tells about is a composite of the many he has heard. No one experienced all of the things mentioned. He says that very many have reported most of them (that is eight or more of the fifteen or so) and a few have reported up to twelve.” This is what is supposed to happen to a person when he dies.

¹² G. Thiele. *The Resurrection of the Body and the Immortality of the Soul*, Unpublished paper, 1957.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁵ E. Kübler-Ross. “Dr. Kubler-Ross says Her Research Convinces Her of Life After Death.” *Christian News*, August 29, 1975.

¹⁶ R.A. Moody. *Life after Life*. New York: Bantam Books, Inc. 1975. pp. 4.

A man is dying and, as he reaches the point of greatest physical distress, he hears himself pronounced dead by his doctor. He begins to hear an uncomfortable noise, a loud ringing or buzzing, and at the same time feels himself moving very rapidly through a long dark tunnel. After this, he suddenly finds himself outside of his own physical body, but still in the immediate physical environment, and he sees his own body from a distance, as though he is a spectator. He watches the resuscitation attempt from this unusual vantage point and is in a state of emotional upheaval.

After a while, he collects himself and becomes more accustomed to his odd condition. He notices that he still has a “body,” but one of a very different nature and with very different powers from the physical body he has left behind. Soon other things begin to happen. Others come to meet and to help him. He glimpses the spirits of relatives and friends who have already died, and a loving warm spirit of a kind he has never encountered before - a being of light - appears before him. This being asks him a question, nonverbally, to make him evaluate his life and helps him along by showing him a panoramic, instantaneous playback of the major events of his life. At some point he finds himself approaching some sort of barrier or border, apparently representing the limit between earthly life and the next life. Yet, he finds that he must go back to the earth, that the time for his death has not yet come. At this point he resists, for by now he is taken up with his experiences in the afterlife and does not want to return. He is overwhelmed by intense feelings of joy, love, and peace. Despite his attitude, though, he is somehow reunited with his physical body and lives.

Later he tries to tell others, but he has trouble doing so. In the first place, he can find no human words adequate to describe these unearthly episodes. He also finds that others scoff, so he stops telling other people. Still, the experience affects his life profoundly, especially his views about death and its relationship to life.¹⁷

Near the end of his book he finds parallels that occur “in ancient and/or highly esoteric writings from the literature of several very diverse civilizations, cultures, and eras.” One of the pieces of literature that he goes to is, of course, the Bible. The parallels that he finds are St. Paul’s conversion and 1 Cor. 15:35 ff. which speaks of the resurrection of the body. Other parallels are found in Plato, in the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*, and in the writings of Swedenborg.

I know that you must have received questions and comments from members in your congregations concerning Dr. Moody’s book or situations similar to the ones that he details. What shall you answer them?

I believe that it is fair to say that Moody is trying to prove that life after death exists by proving it from human experience. In the same way, some try to prove the validity of the Bible through scientific method and exploration. The Bible, however, is not made reliable because of an archeological find. I think that even Christians sometimes would like to find some extra “proof” what the Bible has to say about life after death, and many have been drawn to Moody’s conclusions. The very sad thing in this is that some of the inferences and conclusions made by Moody and others have no Scriptural basis and are actually contradictory to what the Bible has to say.

None of the cases cited has actually come back from the dead to tell us what is on the other side. In Moody’s own words, there are three definitions of death: (1) Death as the absence of clinically detectable signs, such as the heart stopping, blood pressure so low as to be unreadable, body temperature dropping. (2) The absence of brain wave activity, a criterion impossible to apply in these reported cases, since there is not enough time to do the complicated test under emergency conditions. Moody also points out that “flat EEG tracings have been obtained in persons who were later resuscitated” indicating that the test, even if it could have been used, would have been inconclusive in proving that death occurred. (3) The most restricted definition of death is that it is the irreversible loss of vital functions. Using this last definition, none of the cases would have applied.

¹⁷ R.A. Moody. *Life after Life*. New York: Bantam Books, Inc. 1975. pp.21-23.

Some of the cases were persons who only had close brushes with death like the truck driver who went into a bad skid, had an accident but was totally uninjured. Out-of-the-body experiences can be produced in normal healthy human beings.

Another researcher in this field, Robert Monroe, has not only had out-of-body experiences but also runs an organization to teach (for \$175) others how to have them. Monroe even reports having had a “spiritual-sexual” experience with a woman in another room while lying in bed with his own wife. The point is this: experiences like those which dying patients have are being induced in perfectly healthy people, entirely unrelated to an after-death state.¹⁸

It is also interesting to note that some of the facets of out-of-body experiences can be produced with drugs.

Some of the conclusions drawn by Moody furnish false information about “the other side.”

The light which some saw was variously identified, and the identifications were conditioned by the person’s religious upbringing.

There was a cultural stamp to the visions. Most Americans saw loved ones, most Indians saw religious figures. Religion determined the identity of the figure; no Christian patient saw a Hindu deity, and no Hindu saw Jesus.

Furthermore, the reports almost universally eliminate any references to torment or hell. Moody does report experiences of an “unpleasant limbo state” in some attempted suicide cases; but generally the reports promote universalism; i.e. God will eventually save everyone. For example, Dr. George Ritchie, a psychiatrist and a Presbyterian who had an out-of-body experience reported that it changed his conventional views on heaven and hell. “I saw no hellfire, no heads rolling in the streets. I know beyond a doubt that the Christ I saw will accept everyone, good or bad, even those who didn’t believe in him.” Dr. Kübler-Ross also reported that her research never included “a judgmental God.”

Once again the monster of experience-creating-truth rears its ugly head in open defiance of the truth of God’s Word.¹⁹

This very same article lists seven points in which Moody and his conclusions are out of step with the Bible:

1. God will accept everyone, good and bad.
2. “No judgmental God.”
3. No subsequent fear of dying.
4. Satan would not promote love and forgiveness.
5. Little difference in the reports of Christians and unbelievers.
6. Cannot prove there is life after death.
7. ‘We hope this will bring us all to one religion.’²⁰

I have not delved into the refutation of the Roman Catholic teaching of purgatory because you have all done that before and the answer seems to be obvious that there is no Scriptural basis whatsoever for this false doctrine. It should, however, be noted that there are some Protestants who believe in something similar to purgatory. For this I will again turn to Dr. Becker.

¹⁸ C.C. Ryrie. “To Be Absent from the Body.” *Kindredspirit*, 1977, Vol.1, No.3 p.6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

We should perhaps also take note of the fact that some conservative modern Protestants, and also some of the Lutheran theologians of Germany hold that there is a place of cleansing for the soul after death, very similar to the Roman purgatory. This place they call Hades. Some of them hold that this place is for those who were believers on this earth, but who did not reach an adequate level of Christian sanctification in this life. Others hold that it is a place where those who have not heard the Gospel on this earth will have a second opportunity to be converted. The first is a denial of a clear teaching of Scripture, which tells us that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, and which therefore makes it plain that we are clean and holy through the righteousness of Christ and the forgiveness of sins. The second lacks any kind of Scriptural warrant and also denies the truth that it is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment. (Heb. 9:27)²¹

There may be another area in which the state of the soul after death may be an issue in future years and that is in the field of psychology. I found an article in a *Christianity Today* which had this to say:

But with the springing up of the new “past-lives therapy,” whether in group sessions or in expensive personal sessions with the therapist, people are being told that they need to search back to discover who they were in previous existences The spread of this acceptance of reincarnation will add another question to, “who am I?”, making another puzzle more complicated with, “who was I?” Reincarnation is taken in this new form of psychoanalysis and made to be a reasonable probability, divorced from religious connections, so that Presbyterians, or Methodists, or people of any kind of religious affiliation are told that this won’t interfere with their beliefs. It is just something that takes place, and we need to recognize it in order to become “better adjusted,” and overcome our “depressions and tensions.”²²

It is another indication of how the Devil will use whatever is available to him. I did not have the resources available to research this subject farther. I hope that you will accept my apologies for being extremely brief on this subject, but it may be a while until the psychiatrist in your community latches onto this new wrinkle.

Our own and our members’ souls are of extreme importance. They are the reason that the Lord has called you to be a pastor. What God has revealed about this particular subject is extremely limited. Let us be sure to know what He has revealed. Let us be just as sure to avoid all speculation and heresy based on such speculation.

²¹ Becker, op. cit., p.46.

²² E Schaeffer. “One Personality, One Life, One Death.” *Christianity Today*. Dec. 9, 1977, p. 36.

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