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A Comparative Study of the Conservative Evangelical View and the Seventh-Day Adventist View of the Doctrine of an Intermediate State

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL VIEW
AND THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST VIEW
OF THE DOCTRINE OF AN INTERMEDIATE STATE

A Thesis
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Bachelor of Divinity

by
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CHAPTER I

I. INTRODUCTION

Historical Thinking About the Intermediate State. Belief in an intermediate state has never been wholly absent from religious thought. One purpose of this investigation has been to examine data concerning an intermediate state, and what its nature is. By the expression, intermediate state, is meant the realm or condition in which the souls of men exist from the time of physical death to the resurrection of their bodies.

Thomas J. Bigham observed that, "Zoroastrians, late Hebrew religion, Stoicism, Christianity and Mohammedanism all have such a belief, as against Eastern religions generally."¹ Loraine Boettner said that such a belief is "never denied among those who believe in a resurrection and judgment."² John Miley felt that "there is no place for such a question as that of an intermediate state when men do not believe in the resurrection and the judgment."³

The Old Testament Scriptures were the doctrinal authority of the Hebrews, and they forbade their seeking after wizards and witches to contact the dead. This would indicate that they had a firm conviction of a

¹Virgilius Ferm, (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 337.

²Loraine Boettner, Immortality (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 59.

³John Miley, Systematic Theology (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1894), II, p. 430.

conscious existence after death. This Hebrew concept of soul-consciousness after death served to promote the thought of an intermediate state.

The early Church Fathers: Tertullian, Lactantius, Irenaeus, Origen, Hilary, Ambrose and Augustine all held firm convictions of an intermediate span before the resurrection. For example, Irenaeus said:

It is manifest that the souls of His disciples also upon whose account the Lord underwent these things, shall go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection, awaiting that event.¹

F. W. Farrar surveyed early opinions on the subject thus:

The ancient Fathers are nearly as unanimous in recognizing an intermediate state as popular teaching is unanimous in speaking of "dying and going straight to heaven or to hell." . . . To our own Reformers it seemed so clear that the entrance on the state of aeonian joy or sorrow was not decided till the resurrection, that, in the Fortieth Article of 1552, they imply their belief in the Intermediate State by their express condemnation of the fancy of psychopannychia, or the inanition of the soul between death and judgment.²

The Reformed position usually side-steps the issue of an intermediate state, lest they be felt to lean toward purgatorial ideas. However, Charles Hodge, a Reformed theologian said, "As all Christians believe in the resurrection of the body and a future judgment, they all believe in an intermediate state."³ But then he continued to insist that believers are admitted into the highest heaven immediately. John

¹Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), I, p. 560.

²F. W. Farrar, Mercy and Judgment (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1881), p. 68.

³Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), III, p. 724.

Calvin, the Reformer champion, was quick to brand the idea of an intermediate state as being frivolous:

Many persons exceedingly perplex themselves by discussing what place departed souls occupy, and whether they be now in the enjoyment of heavenly pleasure or not. But it is foolish and rash to enquire about the things unknown, more deeply than God permits us to know about them.¹

Professor Edgar Mullins, a Southern Baptist, testified: "Christians at death go directly into the presence of Christ and of God. There is not a long delay between the moment of death and some future time."² He said nothing at this point as to what happens to the unbelieving at the hour of death. Oswald J. Smith specifically pointed out, "that there are none in hell yet."³

Dr. John Miley stated that "since then [the Reformation] the Protestant churches have mostly rejected the doctrine of an intermediate state."⁴

There are those who believe that the righteous enter immediately into the presence of God in the highest heaven; and that the unbelieving are immediately thrust into the lake of fire. To them the problem of an intermediate state is non-existent in terms of a distinct place. The matter of a judgment in the future is quite overlooked by many who would usher both saint and sinner immediately into their eternal dwellings.

¹John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans., John Allen (Phila.: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1932), II, p. 208.

²Edgar Young Mullins, The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1917), p. 460.

³Oswald J. Smith, The Voice of Prophecy (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1954), p. 90.

⁴Miley, op. cit., p. 432.

It can be said that although comparatively little is said in the Bible about the intermediate state, this cannot force a conclusion of its non-existence. Even the Reformed thinkers are not in agreement as to its existence or non-existence. Since the Bible carries quite full description of events and settings of the ultimate state rather than that of an intermediate state, this accent seems to be the principle emphasis in most Christian thinking. However, representative theologians in all ages have said, that due to certain expressions of an eschatological nature in Scriptures, there must be an intermediate state, where the souls of the dead now dwell, awaiting another "fulness of time" event, the resurrection.

Any study of the intermediate state is open to various negative reactions. Jonathan Weaver, for example, has suggested:

If it were essential to our eternal salvation that we should know all the mysteries concerning the state and place of the soul between the death and resurrection of the body, God would have revealed it to us in His word.¹

Of much the same tenor are the words of Oscar Cullman:

For the New Testament resurrection faith it is sufficient to have concerning this intermediate state of the dead the one certainty on which alone everything depends, that he who believes in Christ, who is the Resurrection, "will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25).²

A treatise of this type has not been drawn up to establish the thought that this doctrine is essential to salvation at all. Rather the intent of the treatise has been to investigate the various pertinent

¹Johathan Weaver, Christian Theology (Dayton, Ohio: United Brethren Publishing House, 1900), p. 288.

²Oscar Cullman, Christ and Time (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), p. 241.

opinions that are held.

II. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of the study at hand has been twofold: (1) to examine the doctrine of the intermediate state as it is held by Conservative Evangelicals, and (2) by means of comparison and contrast, to exhibit the ways in which the Seventh-Day Adventist position agrees with or differs from the Conservative Evangelical position.

Importance of the problem. The problem is justified from the basic frustration which is general throughout Christendom, as to whether the Seventh-Day Adventist movement should be considered as a cult or not.

Walter R. Martin in the preface of his recent book, The Truth About Seventh-Day Adventism, has stated that,

While an undergraduate student in New York City in 1949, the writer extensively studied Seventh-Day Adventist history and theology, and concluded that "Adventists" were a cult of Christian extraction but with enough heretical error in their doctrine to exclude them from the body of Christ.¹

Donald Grey Barnhouse in writing the forward for Martin stated:

As a result of our studies in Seventh-Day Adventism, Walter Martin and I reached a conclusion that Seventh-Day Adventists are a truly Christian group, rather than an anti-Christian cult. . . . We did not, and do not, accept some of their theological positions which we consider to be extravagant, and other which we consider to be non-biblical.²

However, Barnhouse and Martin do not speak for all Evangelicals,

¹Walter R. Martin, The Truth About Seventh-Day Adventism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 7.

and the question of Seventh-Day Adventism being a non-Christian cult is still unanswered to many.

Herbert Bird gives an example of a typical Evangelical appraisal of Seventh-Day Adventism as follows:

A second deficiency is common to the large quantity of discussion of Seventh-Day Adventism that proceed from the Evangelical wing of Protestantism. Such writings, to be sure frequently contain material of substantial usefulness in assessing certain features of Seventh-Day Adventist doctrine. Nevertheless, most of these fall short of a satisfactory estimate of this movement to the degree that they consider "legalism" to be equivalent to a high view of the moral law as a standard of conduct for the Christian in this age, and condemn Seventh-Day Adventism for affirming the perpetual and universal validity of the ten commandments.¹

It is evident that the view held of the intermediate state will reveal certain basic presuppositions. As an example, the thought of probation is cited by Weaver:

The idea of an intermediate probation or an intermediate purgatorial state, may suggest to the mind the thought that if not saved at the end of the first probation, salvation may be obtained on second probation. In this sense it may become a vital question.²

Another important instance concerns the idea of the nature of man. A different idea on this doctrine is easily detected in one's idea of the intermediate state if it promotes annihilationism. This study has considered only the question as it relates to a few basic Bible doctrines. Although all areas of doctrine were not covered, sufficient consideration was given to the Seventh-Day Adventist position to show where it was

¹Herbert S. Bird, Theology of Seventh-Day Adventism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), p. 7.

²Weaver, op. cit., p. 278.

different from the Evangelical position.

Delimitation of the problem. A great number of Evangelical writers express the conviction that there is an intermediate state, although they may not clearly define it. Among those consulted in this thesis are the Reformers, John Calvin and James Arminius. Representative of today's Evangelicals, the writer has chosen the related works of Charles Hodge, Loraine Boettner, Oscar Cullman, Richard Trench, Marvin Vincent, James Orr, Carl Henry, Olin Curtis, Emery Bancroft, S. J. Gamertsfelder, Jonathan Weaver, George Osmun and John Miley. Many Evangelical writers handle the subject cautiously because of its being unsupported with a great body of Scriptural evidence, while others are dogmatic and build a great case on the evidence available.

The idea of a continued existence of the soul after death, however vague, is generally held by all Protestants. This investigation has sought to render a service to Evangelicals in summarizing a proper statement of their position regarding the intermediate state. The problem has centered upon the immediate effects of death upon man: where he goes at death and what he does as an immaterial being, together with his abilities or lack of abilities in responding to his new environment. The study has occupied itself with the theory of the immortality of the soul as a fundamental concern prerequisite to considering the problem. The matters of millennial theories, retribution of the wicked, and eternal rewards for the righteous do not fall within the scope of this consideration. Only such matters as will contribute specifically to the problem have been included.

III. PROCEDURE

Organization and procedure of study. The method of procedure has been first of all to be interrogative. The problems that underlie the study of the intermediate state are many and weighty. The nature of man is basic to all of them. Is man trichotomous or only dichotomous in being? Or is man monochotomous and absolutely indivisible? The fullest treatises on this great doctrine are usually verbose and opinionated. Studies in systematic theologies seem to give a full hearing; but often use a proof-text method. In conjunction with this investigation of the nature of man, the matter of immortality has been considered.

Linked with and springing from the nature of man and immortality, is the logical question of how death will effect his being. The basic Bible concept of death has been examined next, in order to tell its effect upon man. With this consideration given, the thesis then moved to the problem proper of an intermediate state.

In Chapter I an introduction to the problem was set forth. In Chapter II a comprehensive investigation of Evangelical sources was made. With considerable difficulty a summary statement regarding the intermediate state was established which would be agreeable to a majority of Evangelicals. In Chapter III the Seventh-Day Adventist view of an intermediate state was sought out and points of sufficient similarity were compared therein with the Evangelical position. Points of disagreement on the part of the Seventh-Day Adventists were contrasted then with the already established Evangelical position. Chapter IV presents a summary of

opinions from both groups relative to an intermediate state; and gives conclusions and suggestions for further study.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Throughout the thesis the term Evangelical will be used to denote that doctrinal position which is loyal to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in contrast to the rationalistic and legalistic positions. Further as used in this thesis, Evangelical will denote that which is of the Conservative type, as opposed to the rabid dogmatism of the Fundamental Evangelical the Evangelical claim of Neo-Orthodox, which is more correctly identified as being Neo-Liberal.

Liberalism in theology as defined by Lueker is "the tendency which refuses to accept orthodox creeds and Scriptural teachings, but allows wide latitude with regard to religious beliefs."¹ Again in another place he defines it more completely:

Since approximately 1875 an increasing number of theologians in reformed churches have challenged the old beliefs. Parading at first as liberal theology, this trend is now generally known as Modernism. Its premise is that there is no revealed and absolute truth and that man is constantly in search of religious truth. Modernism is a theological method rather than a system of beliefs. . . . Liberal theology claimed: the fatherhood of God, immanence of God, the brotherhood of man, the perfectibility of man.²

V. SOURCES

Source materials. The Holy Scriptures in the American Standard Edition of 1901, has been the final source of authority in the entire

¹Lueker, op. cit., p. 580.

²Ibid., p. 707.

investigation. Systematic theologies, commentaries, histories, encyclopedias, books and periodicals on the subject have been referred to. In each instance, where feasible, original writings were employed as primary sources. There were cultic writers and philosophers holding views pertinent to the problem, who were cited as points of reference.

CHAPTER II

THE CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL VIEW OF THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

I. MAN AND IMMORTALITY

A study of the intermediate state is meaningless without first ascertaining the type of being such a state would serve. Thus it is that this study has been prefaced with an investigation on the nature of man.

The nature of man and immortality of the soul. The question of immortality is involved basically in the nature of man. Is man body, soul and spirit,--three distinct entities within the one man? The immediate answer of some would be in the negative, in order to affirm that man is only a two-part being. Still others would say that his being is inseparably one entity. The trichotomous, or three entity view, is founded on certain Scriptures which speak of man's tri-partite functions: namely, I Thessalonians 5:23, "your whole spirit and soul and body," and Hebrews 4:12, "dividing . . . of soul and spirit." Rev. J. B. Heard in his book, The Tripartite Nature of Man, explains that "the body denotes sense-consciousness; soul, self-consciousness; and spirit, God-consciousness."¹ This trichotomous view is generally set aside because Scripture speaks the same things of the soul as it does of the spirit.

Dr. C. L. Ives in his book, Bible Doctrines of the Soul affirms

¹Charles M. Mead, The Soul Here and Hereafter (Boston: The Congregational Publishing Society, 1879), p. 46, (quote from Mr. J. B. Heard).

the monochotomous or single entity idea:

There is no real distinction between the body and the soul. The body is the soul, and the soul is the body. All that the Bible has to say of a soul, we say of an organism. It appertains to man and to animals. It is material: it is liable to death. Hence death is the end of human existence. . . . It must be inferred that the current notion of a soul surviving the body is opposed to the Bible.¹

Thus the theory of a single entity as seen from the above quote, readily reveals its fatalistic philosophy.

Dichotomous view. Out of the confusion of these two extreme views the voice of Protestants usually favors the dichotomous view. The soul and spirit are thus viewed as but different expressions of the same entity. Dr. Charles Hodge has expressed the dichotomous view thus:

The Scriptural doctrine of the nature of man as a created spirit in vital union with an organized body, consisting, therefore, of two, and only two, distinct elements or substances, matter and mind, (body and soul) is one of great importance.²

Immortality. Out of this understanding comes the assumption that when the body dies, the soul lives on. To be called immortal is understood as a condition rendered as imperishable. Thus Boettner has expressed that "immortality means the eternal, continuous, conscious existence of the soul after death of the body."³ This is the idea held by many Evangelical theologians regarding the soul of man. That the soul never dies,

¹Mead, op. cit., p. 12, (quote from Dr. C. L. Ives).

²Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), II, p. 46.

³Loraine Boettner, Immortality (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 59.

or will live forever, when in its immortal condition freed from the body, is seldom contested theologically, as far as the righteous dead are concerned. Some have the idea that immortality designates a condition of deity and godlikeness. In this regard Jaroslav Pelikan notes that, "Luther used immortality as a synonym for resurrection."¹

One might consider it to be a universal belief held by man, that man is immortal. This is not the case, however, as is shown in the July, 1959, New York Herald Tribune report:

The World Poll regarding the belief of immortality [shows] . . . of the nine countries surveyed, Italy had the highest percentage of people believing in life after death, 51%; with 28% believing it likely, and only 21% considering it unlikely or indicating they did not know. In France, only 31% believe in life after death, and in Germany, to my surprise, only 28%, with 19% thinking it likely, and 53% saying "no." The most tragic report came from Japan, where only 9% believed in life after death, 21% thought it likely, and 70% said "no."²

Aphthartos and athanatos. The English word "mortal" carries the idea of being subject to death or destined to die. The word "immortal" is from the Latin immortalis, meaning deathlessness. Immortal, ἀφθάρτος (aphthartos) in the Greek text, is understood as that which is incorrupted or incorruptible. This is the thought conveyed to readers in I Timothy 1:7, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible." In keeping with this meaning Richard Trench says:

¹Jaroslav Pelikan, Companion Volume, Luther the Expositor (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 188.

²Wilbur M. Smith, "World Poll on Immortality," Sunday School Times, July 11, 1959, p. 42, (data from New York Herald Tribune).

The word predicates of God that He is exempt from that wear and waste and final perishing; that phthora [destruction, ruin, mortality, death] which time and sin working in time, bring about in all which is outside of Him, and to which He has not communicated of his own aphtharsia.¹

In Paul, this expression and condition is usually predicated of God, as is seen in Romans 1:23: "And changed the glory of the incorruptible God." He also uses the word to describe the inheritance of the faithful, thus Romans 2:7: "To them that by patience in well doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life." He uses the word again in II Timothy 1:10 to denote how the condition is transmitted: "Jesus Christ . . . hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." Hence it is considered that men, through the Gospel partake of this nature of God.

Such is the thought of F. W. Farrar when he stated: "The simple and unmistakable words immortal and immortality are never predicated of sinners."² However, in emphasizing this position he tries to establish the principle that sinners are not immortal. Marvin Vincent carries this idea of immortality still further: "The word aphthartos is a compound of a-, not, and phtheirō, to destroy or corrupt . . . and emphasizes the indestructibility of substance."³ It is therefore a condition which corruption and decay cannot touch. Thus Trench concludes, "Properly speaking, God

¹Richard Chenevix Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 254.

²F. W. Farrar, Mercy and Judgment (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1881), p. 387.

³Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), I, p. 630.

only is aphthartos, the heathen theology recognizing this not less clearly than the Biblical."¹

A kindred word to ἀφθάρτος (aphthartos) is ἀθάνατος (athanatos), from ἀ- (a-), not, and θνήσκω (thnēskō), to die. Translated as immortality in I Corinthians 15:53 and 54, it appears with ἀφθάρτος (aphthartos), each of them bearing what is their distinctive meaning: "For this corruptible [φθαρτὸν (phtharton)] must put on incorruption [ἀφθαρσίαν (aphtharsian)], and this mortal [θνητὸν (thnēton)], must put on immortality [ἀθανασίαν (athanasian)], etc.." Paul also uses the word in I Timothy 6:14,16: " . . . our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who only hath immortality [ἀθανασίαν (athanasian)]." It is characteristic of Jesus Christ that He was not subject to death or destined to die. On this verse John Calvin has commented:

Paul now says that God alone is immortal in order to inform us, that we and all the creatures do not, strictly speaking, live, but only borrow life from Him. . . . When it is said, that God alone possesses immortality, it is not denied that He bestows it, as He pleases, on any of His creatures. . . . If you take away the power of God which is connected to the soul of man, it will instantly fade away. Strictly speaking, therefore, immortality does not subsist in the nature of souls or of angels, but comes from another source, namely, from the secret inspiration of God.²

Entrance upon immortality. There is yet another question to be raised as to the activity of the soul in immortality. When does the soul enter into this state of immortality? Three positions are found in the

¹Trench, op. cit., p. 254.

²John Calvin, Commentary on Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), p. 167.

Christian world: (1) at the time of conception, (2) at the time of conversion, and (3) at the time of the resurrection. The first position is staunchly defended by Tertullian:

We indeed maintain that both (body and soul) are conceived, and formed, and perfectly simultaneously, as well as born together; and that not a moment's interval occurs in their conception, so that a prior place can be assigned to either. . . . As death is defined to be nothing else than the separation of the body and the soul, life which is the opposite of death, is susceptible of no other definition than the conjunction of body and soul.¹

Heinrich Heppe, a Reformed theologian had this to say:

Souls of children are not begotten by the parents and are not transmitted by generation. . . . If God alone is the Father of spirits or souls, then they are not generated by parents. Whatever is propagated by the parents dies with the flesh.²

Tertullian would not disagree with this, but he would yet affirm that the soul enters the egg at the time of fertilization by the sperm. Also the courts of our land that judge abortion cases, view the aborted fetus as a life that has been murdered.

Augustine exemplifies a dual position, perhaps that in agreement with Tertullian, and that of coming into immortality at the time of the resurrection:

The soul is said to be immortal, and immortal it is according to a certain manner of its own, for it is a kind of life which is able to give life to the body by its presence. For by the soul doth the body live. This life cannot die, and therefore is the soul immortal. . . . There is a kind of immortality, an entire unchangeableness,

¹Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), III, p. 207.

²Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, trans., G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1950), p. 229.

that is, which God only hath, of whom it is said, "Who only hath immortality."¹

In another place he wrote of the soul at the resurrection:

If then all men have not faith, all men do not rise again in soul. When thy hour of the resurrection of the body shall come, all shall rise again; be they good or bad, all shall rise again. But who first riseth in soul, to his blessedness riseth again his body, whoso doth first not rise again in soul, riseth again in body to his curse.²

By this it would be understood that the resurrection, which reunites the body with the soul, will lead the soul into an immortality never before experienced.

James Orr is more specific when he said: "The soul, indeed, survives the body, but this disembodied state is never viewed as one of complete life . . . the immortality of the Bible is an immortality of the whole person, body and soul together."³ W. R. Martin puts it this way: "The Christian is . . . provisionally immortal awaiting the resurrection body."⁴

The second position, that of immortality coming at the time of conversion, has been accepted from the vital truth that life is vested in God. A man may be quite alive physically, while being yet "dead" in his sinful condition. It is true that eternal life in the absolute sense, is

¹Philip Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), III, p. 307.

²Ibid., p. 457.

³James Orr (ed.), International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), p. 1459.

⁴W. R. Martin, "The Christian and Soul Sleep," Eternity Magazine, April, 1958, p. 27.

found only in God, as Paul said: "Who only hath immortality."¹ However, there is more to the term immortality than the simple definition of physical life. This does not say that man's soul is not immortal because he is yet in his sin, though this position is often taken. The soul of saint or sinner continues to live on after his physical body is dead. The logic of immortality coming at conversion is quite difficult to maintain when the idea is placed against the scheme of redemption. If a sinner were without an immortal soul and hence subject to death as though he were an animal, what then were the need of the death of Christ in behalf of the sinner, or yet the propagating of the Gospel message?

W. E. Hocking in his book, The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience, does not exhibit a Christian premise for the Evangelical thinker. Philip Phenix reviewed his position as follows:

Hocking thinks the self possesses not inherent immortality but "immortality." The soul may freely choose the finite span as final, and thus die with the body; or it may elect to create new embodiments and continue to grow in degrees of reality in ever deeper and fuller realization of the values and meanings of personal existence.²

Charles M. Mead, in refuting the idea that the spirit does not belong to the natural man, but only to the regenerate man, says:

Regeneration is not the creation or supernatural impartation of new powers: it is a change in the direction and use of the powers already ours. If we cannot be converted without receiving a new mental outfit then we can hardly be blamed for being wicked. It is the perversion

¹I Timothy 6:16.

²Philip H. Phenix, review of Wm. Ernest Hocking, "The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience," Christian Century, December 18, 1957, p. 1512.

not the non-possession, of a spiritual nature, that sinners are to blame for.¹

The Reformed position, as given by J. H. Heidigger, is quite representative of the Evangelical thought:

Sane reason confirms the immortality of the soul. If it is spiritual, as earlier we said that it testified, it must also be immortal. Neither has spirit in itself any principle of division or dissolution; much less can it be destroyed by others who are not its creators. . . . Since it is a substance bound to have an existence; and since it is a non-material substance, its existence can neither be produced nor propped up by a material body.²

George King takes the position that "immortality is not revealed . . . [it] is everywhere assumed in the Scriptures, as is the existence of God."³

Still another position is held by John Bloore and F. W. Grant as follows:

We contend that the race is mortal, and that immortality innate and essential belongs to no creature, fallen or unfallen. . . . But this no more proves that the soul dies, than that angels die. Dependent, derived immortality it [the human race] may have equally with them, and in that sense its immortality is affirmed: for they that kill the body cannot kill the soul.⁴

Summary. The Evangelical concept of the soul could best be given as follows: The soul of man is said to be the Hebrew נֶפֶשׁ (nēh'fēsh),

¹Mead, op. cit., p. 41.

²Heppe, op. cit., p. 225, (quote from J. H. Heidigger, Corpus Theologia, Zuerich, 1700, VI, p. 92.)

³George W. King, Future Retribution (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1892), p. 240.

⁴John Bloore, Man and the Future State (New York: Loizeaux Bros., Publishers, n.d.), p. 100.

from the Scripture, Genesis 2:7, "God breathed [נְפֹשׁ (nēh' fěsh)] into his nostrils the breath [נִשְׁמָת (nīsh' mǎth)] of life." According to Samuel Fallows, who quotes from Delitzsch, this represents "a self-living nature by the power of the Spirit that proceeds from God, and is in the form of God, and is therefore personal, the operation of which spirit is his endowment with soul."¹

The nature of man thus is foundational to considering what may happen to the soul at the time of death. Evangelicals have unanimous agreement that the soul of man is indestructible and will live on, even after the body is perished. The "mortal" of which Paul speaks in I Corinthians 15:53 is always considered as a human physical or fleshly body form. It is this body that "must put on immortality." As Walter Wessel has said,

There is more than one kind of body. Although the resurrection body has a certain continuity with the earthly body . . . yet there is a vast difference between the present body and the resurrection body. . . . Corruptibility, dishonor, weakness, and a psychical (A. V. "natural") nature are all ascribed to our earthly body. In contrast, incorruptibility, glory, power and spirituality are ascribed to the resurrection body.²

Dr. C. H. Irwin in commenting on II Corinthians 5:6, "Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord," said that

"Emboldened" by expecting this result, we would gladly rather "be exiled from the body" by death, knowing that then we shall be "at home with the Lord." This language shows that the disembodied spirits

¹Samuel Fallows (ed.), The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia, (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1909), III, p. 1606.

²Carl F. H. Henry (ed.), Basic Christian Doctrines (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 286.

of the saints enter into bliss immediately after death; although the resurrection of the body is necessary to complete their redemption.¹

Dr. J. G. S. S. Thompson says of the hope of immortality:

Yet there is no scientific "proof" or material knowledge of immortality. The belief cannot be based upon scientific discovery or philosophical conclusions. Life after death belongs to a realm of experience of which science knows nothing. . . . If, then, memory does not survive death, the hope of immortality is groundless. . . . But since memory is closely connected with the brain, memory should disappear when the brain disintegrates; hence belief in immortality has no scientific basis. . . . At best, scientific evidence against immortality is negative, in that the evidence against it is not forthcoming. . . . Since the source and satisfaction of moral principles transcend this time-space world, they commit men to living as if they were immortal. Morality means that if man is not immortal, then he ought to be. Morality is a guarantee that life is worth living. But this also means that religious faith is an indispensable factor in the hope of immortality. Faith in God commits one to the belief that the universe is rational and moral; that it is on the side of justice and truth; and that in a life beyond death, evil and good shall receive their just reward.²

With having concluded that man's soul lives on forever comes the validity of the consideration of an intermediate state, of life eternal, of judgment and of final rewards as well.

II. DEATH

To discern how the intermediate state may be entered upon, a study of the service that death may render is vital. Death is the door that leads into the intermediate state.

The nature and purpose of death. From the writings of Plato and others of his day, the Greek notion of death is often that of seeing it as

¹C. H. Irwin (ed.), Irwin's Bible Commentary (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1928), p. 503.

²Henry, op. cit., pp. 270-271.

a friend. This understanding is utterly foreign to that of the Christian. Death is not a friend, rather yet, it is an enemy, and the last one that shall be destroyed. Olin Curtis speaks to this point: "Bodily death is not regarded as a friendly or useful event, as a normal feature in a beneficial process of nature: but is regarded as abnormal and hostile and terrible."¹

James Arminius is just as pointed:

I cannot with an unwavering conscience assert, and therefore, dare not do it as if it were an object of certain knowledge, that temporal death, which is imposed or inflicted on the saints, is not a punishment, or has no regard to punishment, when it is styled "an ENEMY that is to be destroyed" by the Omnipotence of Christ.²

Boettner asserts: "The Bible makes it clear that death is a penal evil, that is, an evil inflicted in accordance with law and as a penalty."³ As death "passed upon all men,"⁴ even the believer whose sins are blotted out, finds that this grim reaper will meet him at the end of this life. Boettner continues: "Even infants . . . must, as the Scripture says, be guilty of Adam's sin,"⁵ and thus would merit death. Thompson stated:

Death remains an ineffaceably solemn fact. Why? Because of the relation between death and sin. Men die because of sin. Man's creation in the imago Dei probably implies a relation between God and man in which death had no part. . . . death . . . was probably inoperative in man's original perfection. . . . Death is inevitable not because man is a creature of nature but because he is a sinner. . . . Sin gives (death) its painful power and penal character.⁶

¹Olin Alfred Curtis, The Christian Faith (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1905), p. 287.

²James Nichols, The Writings of James Arminius (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), I, p. 301.

³Boettner, op. cit., p. 12.

⁴Romans 5:12.

⁵Boettner, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶Henry, op. cit., p. 270.

Natural death is to be distinguished from "the second death" of Revelation 21:8, which is distinctly a spiritual death. The material death, or the first death, is a separation of the body from the soul and spirit, and is the result of the physical organs ceasing to function.

There is the thought that the believer, through Christ's work, welcomes death, not as a friend; but rather knowing that it opens to him a spiritual life,--literally "with Christ." Patterson considers that,

There is no more hazard in death to a Christian than in sound sleep to a healthy man. . . . For his saved people Jesus has abolished death. Their bodies fall asleep in Him, and rest in the bed which He has sanctified.¹

Numerous testimonials could be brought together of believers who have enjoyed bliss at death, along with some who had agony and apprehensiveness at the time of death. Despite the happy exodus the believer may have from this life, the mystery connected with the death of the departed often distresses those yet living. This is why Paul found it necessary to charge believers to "sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope."²

J. A. Motyer gives the Old Testament idea of survival after death in these words:

The Old Testament insists on the fact of human survival of death. This is asserted as true of godly and ungodly alike. . . . It is widely urged by the advocates of conditional immortality and of annihilation that death may be defined as "the loss of life or existence." . . . The question is: May we define death as "loss of life"? Clearly not! The Old Testament shows us that death is rather to be seen as an alteration of place, from earth to Sheol; and of state, from the body-soul unity of life on earth to the separate life of the soul.³

¹Robert M. Patterson, Paradise, the Place and State of Saved Souls (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1874), p. 135.

²1 Thessalonians 4:13.

³Henry, op. cit., p. 291.

Manner of entrance into the intermediate state. The actual departing of the soul from the body may take some little time as the rigors of death begin to besiege the life of man. Yet it cannot be said that the man is dead until his soul is completely fled from his body; nor can it be said that the soul is only partly gone. The soul is an entity and indivisible in its make-up. It will attend the body until the body ceases to function. Thus Tertullian has said, "If any fraction of the soul remains it makes a living state. . . . the soul is not severed in fractions: it is slowly drawn out."¹ Even as the body and the soul are brought into being simultaneously, so the soul attends the body as long as its organs function and it is living. At death the body returns to the thirty-some chemical elements from whence it is made. The soul of man at that time takes its flight to the place of its prepared abode.

Separation. For the Christian, Emery Bancroft says that death "becomes a means of discipline and of entrance into larger life."² The believer at death is separated from his earthly body and from the unbeliever as well. In the Old Testament, as brought out by Thompson,

The body at death remained on earth; the nephesh passed into Sheol; but the breath, spirit, or ruach, returned to God, not Sheol. But in Sheol, a place of darkness, silence and forgetfulness, life was foreboding and shadowy. In spite of consciousness, activity, and memory, the "dead" subsisted rather than existed. Death was a passing beyond Jehovah's hand forever, hence the despair in Psalm 88:10-12 and the not very bright hope in Job 7:9. Sheol had little religious significance. The prophets are all but silent on the subject, although

¹Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), III, p. 288.

²Emery H. Bancroft, Christian Theology (Johnson City, N. Y.: Johnson City Publishing Company, 1946), p. 258.

when the hope of individual immortality clarified, the prophetic insistence on the value of the individual contributed to the hope. But through the dark despair attaching to life in Sheol gleams of hope appear. God's presence, providence, and guidance throughout life guarantees that death is not extinction. "Afterward thou wilt receive me into glory." Belief in immortality springs from faith in God, from the nature and fidelity of the God with whom one fellowships daily.¹

He continues later to say that in the New Testament,

Christ says two significant things [to the Sadducees]: (a) Life after death is different from life in this world. . . . To reject belief in this new mode of existence is "not to know the power of God." (b) The Sadducean rejection also revealed ignorance of "the Scriptures." The real presumptions from which belief in immortality springs have been present from the patriarchal period. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God of the living, which includes the "dead" patriarchs. God called them into fellowship with Himself; therefore, they were dear to him, and He could not possibly leave them in the dust. That is, Christ based belief in immortality upon God's faithfulness, the only finally valid argument for life after death. The only alternative is to deny its premises.²

The confession of the Freewill Baptists, 1834, speaks to this point also: "The soul does not die with the body; but immediately after death enters into a conscious state of happiness or misery, according to the moral character here possessed."³

Place of no return. Save for a few dead who were raised to life as recorded in the Scriptures, the usual Bible teaching is that death is a one-way passage. David exhibits this as he laments his son's passing: "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."⁴

From the parable of the rich man in Luke sixteen, it may be noted that Dives knew he had no power of return; hence he requested Abraham to

¹Henry, op. cit., p. 271.

²Ibid., p. 272.

³Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1919), III, p. 756.

⁴II Samuel 12:23.

send Lazarus back to earth. As far as the believer is concerned, it is a thing not desirable to return from being "with Christ." Indeed, Paul spoke of his desire to depart from the body to be "present with the Lord."¹ The Evangelical position is that of a hope of rest after crossing the river of death. When this rest is reached and the believer is at home with the Lord, his desire is fulfilled and he would not care to return to the body of corruption were he able to do so.

III. CONDITION OF THE SOUL IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

The question arises as to what impressions the soul may feel after death and what responses it may be capable of displaying. To answer this it was necessary to entertain the theory of the soul being capable of conscious responses even after the event of death.

Consciousness. The first thing in general agreement concerning the condition of the soul after death amongst Evangelicals, is that it is in a state of consciousness. S. J. Gamertsfelder represented this position well in the following manner:

That the intermediate state is one of conscious existence is the common faith of the Christian Church. . . . (Revelation 14:13): the departed spirits could not be said to be blessed, if they were not alive and conscious. The wicked are in a state of conscious suffering. . . . (Luke 23:24). Although this be a parable, if it teaches anything concerning the future state, it teaches that the wicked are in conscious suffering.²

¹Philippians 1:23.

²S. J. Gamertsfelder, Systematic Theology (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Evangelical Publishing House, 1938), p. 556.

Geerhardus Vos wrote in this same vein:

Because the dead are asleep to our earthly life, which is mediated through the body, it does not follow that they are asleep in every other relation, asleep to the life of the other world, that their spirits are unconscious.¹

Jonathan Weaver, a United Brethren theologian, summed it up that

The common Christian faith is, and always has been, that of the conscious existence of the soul after the death of the body. . . . In what sense would it be very far better to depart and be with Christ if the soul is unconscious and inactive? . . . If the soul has no conscious existence after death of the body, then to kill the body means the death of the soul.²

It must be noted that Christ spoke to the thief that He would be with him, which would imply a living and conscious response to experience. With regard to the wicked of I Peter 3:19 whose "spirits" are "in prison," the setting indicates a needed restraint against definite consciousness. What would be the purpose of putting unconscious spirits under guard? In their consciousness it is quite evident also that they will be aware of their final destiny and of the fact that they cannot alter it at all. To the inhabitants of earth, the bodies of the deceased appear much as though they were in a profound and deep sleep; but their soul is even more sensitized because of release from the flesh and its old surroundings.

Edgar Mullins gave the Southern Baptist position thus:

Nowhere is it said that the "soul" sleeps. The reference is to the personality as a whole . . . death is a sleep in the sense that men

¹James Orr (ed), International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), II, p. 991.

²Jonathan Weaver, Christian Theology (Dayton, Ohio: United Brethren Publishing House, 1900), p. 283.

become alive to a new set of surroundings and cut off from those of the present life.¹

Nakedness. The human spirit is capable of maintaining itself apart from the body, as has been shown. The denial of this fact has led some into error. The spirit indeed is released without a natural body, but this is not to say that it has no body. Life in the intermediate world is represented as one of incompleteness and imperfection as it awaits the redemption of the human body to be reunited with the soul. Vos has expressed it thus:

Although there is no warrant for affirming that the state of death is regarded as for believers a positively painful condition, . . . nevertheless Paul shrinks from it as a relatively undesirable state, since it involves "nakedness" for the soul, which condition, however, does not exclude a relatively high degree of blessedness in fellowship with Christ.²

Gamertsfelder maintained this position: "between death and the resurrection the departed spirits are not clothed with a body."³

That the soul is capable of acting by itself is affirmed by Tertullian as follows:

The body and the soul grow in conjunction, only each in a different manner suited to the diversity of their nature--the flesh in magnitude, the soul in intelligence--the flesh in material condition, the soul in sensibility. We are, however, forbidden to suppose that the soul increases in substance, lest it should be said also to be capable of diminution in substance, and so its extinction even should be believed to be possible. . . . The growth and development of the soul are to be estimated, not as enlarging its substance, but as calling forth its powers.⁴

¹Edgar Young Mullins, The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1917), p. 460.

²Orr, op. cit., II, p. 991. ³Gamertsfelder, op. cit., p. 856.

⁴Roberts and Donaldson, op. cit., III, p. 218.

It is often maintained that heaven is not thought of as a place for dis-embodied spirits, but rather a place for the rest of the whole man,--the soul with its glorified body. II Corinthians 5:1-8 is the classic description of Paul regarding "our earthly house" and its being "dissolved." George Osmun deduces from this Scripture, seven statements which point to the life of a disembodied spirit in the intermediate state:

1. Paul is without an eternal, or spiritual body, but has the earthly body. 2. The breaking up of the earthly body is a possibility. 3. In that case he has the eternal body in prospect. 4. But he shrinks from the bodiless condition which will follow the breaking up of the earthly body. 5. He knows, however, that so long as he remains in this earthly body he is separated from Christ. 6. On the other hand, he is equally confident that to depart from the earthly body is to be at home with Christ. 7. Therefore he is willing to depart and exist in the bodiless condition in order to be at home with Christ. . . . from a purely selfish point of view, much preferable to the highest Christian life in the flesh.¹

Vincent concurs in this that the "building of God" refers to the resurrection body, and that the "naked" condition is the divesting of the mortal body to become disembodied. He said:

The oppression of soul (groan) is not from pains and afflictions of the body, nor from the fear of death, but from the natural shrinking from death, especially if death is to deprive him of the body (unclothe) only to leave him without a new and higher organism. Therefore he desires, instead of dying, to have the new being come down to him while still alive, investing him with the new spiritual organism (clothed upon), as a new garment is thrown over an old one, and absorbing (swallowed up) the old sensuous one.²

¹George W. Osmun, The Undiscovered Country (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1916), p. 99.

²Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), I, p. 630.

Imperfections. With the corruption that is in the nature of man it is evident that when death calls, he may yet lack much of the perfection which God desires. Jesus clearly taught that the holiness God requires comes about by an abiding in the vine, and a "Christ in you" proposition. Scripture does teach of a time when regenerated men shall be completely divested of the inherent corruption of their nature, namely, at the resurrection, when the body "is raised in incorruption."¹

Some commentators have forwarded the idea that the intermediate state will be a time for correction of our mental deficiencies and spiritual maladjustments. Olin Curtis, generally quite soundly Evangelical, is a good example when he said:

If the intermediate state is not a second or continued probation, if it makes no change whatever in moral intention or bearing, what, then, is it for? . . . Our relation to truth and reality is to be fully cleared up. No longer will a perfect purpose be held back by an imperfect judgment. . . . This clearing up of the mental life may result in a new formal adjustment to Jesus Christ. If a man in his earthly probation has really come to a spirit of repentance and faith; if he passes out of his probation longing for all Christ Jesus is, although he has never known him, then, in the intermediate state, the formal adjustment to his Saviour will be instant and complete. . . . every man who is in harmony with Christ's nature will accept him. . . . children apprehend and freely accept their Saviour; and, in companionship with him, they achieve, in the intermediate state, the full equivalent of a perfect Christian experience. Thus, they are saved under a personal and moral test, but not in a formal probation. . . . In the unbroken quiet of the intermediate state, with no body, no objective demand, no social distraction, the man can enter the recesses of his individuality and can find self-personalization. Thus, we have in the intermediate state the last triumph of personality in the completed personal individual. . . . the intermediate state is the only period when the redeemed man is altogether alone with his Saviour. . . . The introspection is with the presence and help of Christ.²

¹1 Corinthians 15:42.

²Curtis, op. cit., pp. 402-207.

This opinion of Curtis does not represent the Evangelical opinion as it is usually found. The matter of possible change from an imperfect state has been considered more fully in a later section.

Saints in heaven. Some of the early Church Fathers held that none entered heaven itself, except through the prerogative of martyrdom. The basis of the discussion is Revelation 6:9, of the "souls under the altar." Of this Tertullian speaks that there are "no other souls in it (heaven) besides the souls of the martyrs."¹ Further on he said: "No one, on becoming absent from the body, is at once a dweller in the presence of the Lord, except by the prerogative of martyrdom, he gains a lodging in Paradise, not in the lower regions."²

Another idea fully held by some of the Fathers was that all believers prior to Christ were taken to Heaven when Christ returned in the ascension. Osmun has commented that: "In his "Dialogue" with the Jew, Trypho, about A. D. 150, Justin Martyr, . . . denied the right to be reckoned as Christians to any who admitted the dead to a full reward of Heaven before the last day."³ However, the idea of the full reward of heaven for those prior to Christ did not find full support. Arminius carefully speculated that,

After this life, a state of felicity or of misery is opened for all men. The souls of the Fathers, who passed their days of sojourning on earth in faith and in waiting for the Redeemer, departed into a place of quiet, joy and blessedness, and began to enjoy the blissful presence of God, as soon as they escaped out of the body. I dare not venture to determine where that place of quiet is.⁴

¹Roberts & Donaldson, op. cit., III, p. 230. ²Ibid., p. 576.

³Osmun, op. cit., p. 31

⁴Nichols, op. cit., p. 302.

In another place Arminius picks up the same thought again:

Yet I am condemned, or at least accused, because I dare not positively affirm "that the souls of the Fathers before Christ, were in Heaven, properly so called." Peter Martyr asserts on II Kings 2:13 "that the souls of the Fathers before Christ, were not in Heaven 'properly so called.' . . . Now I am asked, to what place Enoch and Elijah were conducted . . . I do not know . . . the probable analogy is . . . Abraham's bosom, that they might there pass their time with the blessed Patriarchs in expectation of the resurrection of Christ, and that they might afterwards be elevated above the Heavens with him when He was raised up again." Martyr here doubts of Enoch and Elijah, but speaks decisively about the Fathers "that they were raised up above the heavens with Christ at his resurrection." No one enjoyed that sublime ascension before Christ.¹

Enoch and Elijah represent the exception to the rule due to their physical departure from this life. The Scripture indicates that both were taken directly into the presence of God. However, this is not to say that God must be localized in the highest heaven, for He is everywhere present. Nor does the Scripture say that they even went into heaven.

From the words of Jesus in John 14:2, the "places" in the "mansions" that He went to prepare, were for those He would later come back to "receive" unto Himself. On this subject Arminius has written thus:

These examples are out of common order . . . [it] does not follow that Enoch was taken to God, he was translated into the highest of heaven . . . heaven is very wide in its signification. Christ the first-fruits of them that slept, I Corinthians 15:20 is not correct if Enoch and Elijah ascended into Heaven, clothed in bodies with immortality.²

There is great mystery about their ascent into heaven, still clothed, from all appearances with their physical bodies. Tertullian and others feel that these men are destined to return in the Apocalyptic setting as the two witnesses, there to suffer death in the physical manner. After

¹Nichols, op. cit., p. 310.

²Ibid., p. 302.

this they will be clothed upon with immortality as will be all others who have died in the Lord.

Final rewards. Some have felt that rewards for works done in the flesh are received immediately upon death, along with Heaven itself. In this plan the judgment scene is cancelled. The chronology of Scripture puts the judgment as the last event of the soul before final closing of the record books of the activities of the flesh. On the basis of this judgment "if any man's work shall abide . . . he shall receive a reward."¹ Bancroft stated:

That the righteous do not receive their permanent glorified bodies at death, is plain from I Thessalonians 4:16,17 and I Corinthians 15:51, where an interval is intimated between Paul's time and the raising of those who slept.²

He further stated that regarding rewards: "In the intermediate state, the soul is without its permanent body, yet this state is for the righteous, one of conscious joy, and for the wicked, one of conscious suffering."³ While this state prior to the parousia is never defined in degrees of joy, it is represented in the New Testament as more rewarding than life on earth in Christ, and less rewarding than the ultimate condition in Heaven. An example of this is found in Romans 8:18-23, where the redemption of men and the release of creation from the curse is not made complete until the redemption of the body. J. A. Motyer has commented in a similar vein:

¹I Corinthians 3:4

²Bancroft, op. cit., p. 258.

³Ibid..

But even this blissful enjoyment of the Lord [after decease] does not exhaust God's purposed blessing of His people. The redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus was total in its efficacy, the redemption of the whole man. Therefore, the New Testament holds before us the prospect of "the redemption of the body," the consummation of glorification, when we shall see Him and be like Him.¹

Tertullian expressed it this way:

Although it [the intermediate state] is not in heaven, it is yet higher than hell, and it is appointed to afford an interval of rest to the souls of the righteous, until the consummation of all things shall complete the resurrection of all men with the "full recompense of their reward."²

Gamertsfelder commented on the same subject that:

It follows from the teaching of God's Word that the intermediate state must be a state of at least partial retribution. The fact of conscious existence signifies as much. . . . There must be some realization of either happiness or sorrow. To have a conscious life and be in the presence of the Lord must occasion felicity. On the other hand, to be banished from the Lord into outer darkness must also occasion some sorrowful reflection in a conscious being. . . . However, . . . neither reward nor punishment is fully meted out in the intermediate state.³

Osmun definitely identifies rewards and punishments in the intermediate state, but defines them as "relative, not absolute."⁴ These rewards and punishments are but the natural reaping,--the "consequential" for a life of sowing as suggested by L. T. Townsend.⁵ The final judgment will be the occasion for the judicial distributions; but they will follow in the wake of those rewards and punishments inherent in the intermediate state. Professor Townsend stated it in this manner:

¹Carl F. H. Henry (ed.), Basic Christian Doctrines (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 295.

²Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), III, p. 406.

³Gamertsfelder, op. cit., p. 857. ⁴Osmun, op. cit., p. 148.

⁵L. T. Townsend, The Intermediate World (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1878), p. 243.

The intermediate world, with reference to the righteous, is not, strictly speaking, a place of judicial rewards, but is rather a temporary resting-place, which, however, happily anticipates the rewards to be bestowed at a later period. With reference to the unrighteous . . . it is a place of temporary confinement, which sorrowfully prefigures, however, the gloom of a later and a judicial retribution.¹

Walter Wessel put forth the idea of the final rewards, that "in this judgment, Christ's verdict of blame or praise is itself the punishment or reward."² This line of thinking would seem to undo much of the reality of punishment and rewards mentioned beforehand, even in their lesser intensity of the intermediate state.

Prayers for the dead and intercommunication. The practice of praying for the dead was first hinted by Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (345-430 A. D.). Gregory, Bishop of Rome (590-604 A. D.) carried the idea yet further. From this beginning developed the Roman purgatorial system with prayers for the dead and such like. The time supposedly spent in purgatory was shortened by the "assistance of the living," according to Lueker.³

In Protestant circles there has been much reaction against the doctrine of purgatory. The Reformed Episcopal Articles of Religion of 1875 is one example: "Article XXI . . . Praying for the dead is man's tradition, vainly invented, and is in violation of the express warnings of Almighty God to the careless and unconverted."²

Thompson concluded that, "Neither the Roman doctrine of purgatory nor intercession for the dead has any biblical foundation."

¹Townsend, op. cit., p. 175.

²Henry, op. cit., p. 288.

³Erwin L. Lueker (ed.), Lutheran Cyclopedia (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 5.

⁴Schaff, Creeds, op. cit., III, p. 825. ⁵Henry, op. cit., p. 273.

The Old Testament Scripture, Leviticus 20:6, expressly forbade the Hebrews from trying to contact the spirits of the departed. They gave strict commandment to "suffer not a sorceress to live."¹

The New Testament gives one allusion to the practice of "baptism for the dead," namely, I Corinthians 15:29. Vincent explains: "Concerning this expression, of which some thirty different explanations are given, it is best to admit frankly that we lack the facts for a decisive interpretation."² Suffice it to note, that if the practice of remembering the dead in this manner or any other, could augment their departed state, there would have been more than this one vague New Testament reference.

As regards the matter of intercommunication, Luke's parable of Dives and Lazarus in the sixteenth chapter, would indicate a possible communication between their two realms. It is most certain, however, that Dives would have spoken out to his own brethren who were yet back on earth if he had been able to do so, rather than to call for Lazarus to go to warn them of their inevitable fate.

Spiritism. The classic Spiritist passage where Saul tries to contact Samuel through the witch of Endor, does not conclude the Spiritist doctrine that the dead can be conversed with by men on earth. J. K. VanBaalen described it thus:

That Spiritualists cannot appeal to I Samuel 28 to support the view that the Old Testament sanctions communication with the dead, forbidding only iniquitous practices attending Spiritism in its decadent

¹Exodus 22:18.

²Vincent, op. cit., III, p. 276.

form, is evident from I Chronicles 10:13, 14. Even if Samuel did appear, this passage would only mean that God upset the seance and intervened.¹

Without question the very fact that the witch expressed such surprise indicates that she was not in the habit of seeing any dead raised; but rather that of an illusory product of mind and deception. John Gerstner concludes on this instance that, "the matter [communication with departed spirits] seems no closer to demonstration now than ever."²

IV. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE, A PLACE OR A CONDITION

Dual world concept. Sheol is the Old Testament Hebrew term which simply indicated an invisible state, or "that which is in darkness."³ It is possible that it is called this from its devouring and craving nature expressed in Isaiah 5:14, "Sheol hath enlarged its desire, and opened its mouth without measure." Or the meaning may come from the root word שָׁאֵל (shā'āl), to be hollow. The Septuagint ordinarily translated this word with the Greek form ᾍδης (hādēs).

The Reformed position, as given in the Lutheran Encyclopaedia holds that Hades is "not a neutral state between heaven and hell, . . . [and that] the immediate and remote context must determine the exact meaning in each instance."⁴

¹Jan Karel Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 40.

²John H. Gerstner, The Theology of the Major Sects (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 88.

³Samuel Fallows (ed.), The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1909), II, p. 747.

⁴Lueker, op. cit., p. 460.

Some theologians have endeavored to establish that the intermediate state is not a place, or materially located sphere, since a spirit without a body would not need a place. They would describe it simply as a condition in which the spirit or soul would exist.

In the Apocalyptic book of Enoch (B. C. 170), Sheol is represented as a place: "the spirits of the souls of the dead are located in the hollow places."¹ Some ideas of the literature of the first century on the subject as given by Osmun are as follows:

Heaven for the first time becomes the final abode of the good, following the last judgment. Paradise--the "garden of righteousness," from which the elect rise to enter heaven, the spiritual home of the blessed--is a department of Sheol, which is regarded as an intermediate region, whence all rise to the Judgment. . . . With the dawn of the first century A. D., we arrive at the third period of Apocalyptic writings. Here again we note a contrariety of conceptions. This is accounted for by the difference in outlook on the part of the Jews of Alexandria, who were deeply influenced by the Greek philosophy, and thought of souls as receiving their final awards, whether of blessedness or torment, immediately after death. There was no intermediate state and no distant judgment scene. But the Judaism of Palestine taught without variation the doctrine of an intermediate abode.²

Thompson is more explicit yet:

Judaism teaches that the dead are in Sheol awaiting resurrection, or are in an intermediate state of imperfect bliss, or are already in the Kingdom, though not till the Last Day do they attain perfect bliss.³

The view held today by Evangelicals is, "that Sheol of the Old Testament was a place without moral distinctions, . . . a dreamy sort of under-world of comparative inaction, darkness and silence."⁴ This position

¹Osmun, op. cit., p. 79.

²Ibid.

³Henry, op. cit., p. 273.

⁴Lorraine Boettner, Immortality (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 99.

is explained by Miley thus:

It need not be questioned that the Old Testament contains the idea of a higher place of destiny for the good than Sheol represents . . . but such a fact is entirely consistent with an intermediate place, and therefore means nothing against it.¹

His conclusion, however, leaves the matter entirely undecided and to quote further from him on the idea, it is "without practical interest."²

Osmun gives his judgment that: "Our Lord's use of the Jewish terms, "Hades" or "Abraham's Bosom," was certainly not a condescension to the superstitions of his hearers."³

E. S. Williams suggests the logic of a two-part Hades:

If we believe Sheol, or Hades, was divided into two parts, the one in which the righteous were at rest, the other in which the unrighteous were, it becomes easy to understand that both the place of the righteous and the place of the unrighteous were in proximity to each other, so separated, however, as to make it impossible for passage from the one place to the other.⁴

Grave. At death the body is laid in a grave, buried at sea, cremated or otherwise "put out of sight," as Abraham expressed it.⁵ The words designating grave are explicit; namely, the Hebrew word, קֶבֶר (qēbēr), and the Greek word, μνημείον (mnēmēion). In Scripture it speaks of both good and bad entering this abode; and so it would seem that the old interpretation of a two-compartment place, one of remorse and sadness for the sinner, and the other of joy and rest for the saint, would be as tenable as any other. Hades must be recognized even yet as being a

¹John Miley, Systematic Theology (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1894), II, p. 431.

²Ibid.

³Osmun, op. cit., p. 80.

⁴Ernest S. Williams, Systematic Theology (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1953), III, p. 191.

⁵Genesis 23:4.

definite place or state, for just prior to judgment, death and Hades must give "up the dead."¹ Hades also is distinguished from heaven and from Gehenna (hell), which are the final resting places of the good and the bad respectively. The grave is for the body only and the soul is never spoken of as being in the grave.

Because Jesus spoke to the thief on the cross, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise,"² it has been supposed by some authors that the happier region of Sheol has been raised from beneath the earth. Vincent writes that "In Jewish theology [paradise is] the department of Hades where the blessed souls await the resurrection; and therefore equivalent to Abraham's bosom."³ Boettner affirms: "For a believer to be in the intermediate state is to be with Christ in Paradise."⁴

Perhaps the one greatest influence upon the Christian Church against the thought of an intermediate state has been the Westminster Confession of 1646. It reads as follows:

After death . . . the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scriptures acknowledgeth none.⁵

Not all of the Reformers have adopted the Confession in its entirety, or with no reservations. Professor Shedd seems to be in partial

¹Luke 23:43.

²Revelation 20:13.

³Vincent, op. cit., I, p. 431.

⁴Boettner, op. cit., p. 92. ⁵Osmun, op. cit., p. 40.

agreement, thus: "There is no essential difference between paradise and heaven, nor between Hades and hell."¹ This is usual with the Reformers to make these terms synonymous. In this manner Sheol or Hades is never entered by the righteous, but by the wicked only.

Patterson interpreted II Corinthians 12:14 for Paul:

As if he said: I call this place, first, the third heaven, the highest heaven, and I also call it paradise, to guard against the notion that paradise is a separate place from heaven, and therefore I throw my most rapturous terms when I use that word. The third heaven and the paradise to which I was taken up are the same.²

Hodge is more cautious as he quotes from Archibald Campbell with approval of his opinion:

Those who call the state into which the righteous enter, heaven; and that into which the wicked are introduced when they die, hell, may continue to do so, provided they mean by heaven a state which is less perfect than that which awaits them after the coming of Christ; and by hell, a condition less miserable than that which will be assigned to the wicked.³

There arises a confusion in the ranks of the Reformed in the matter of final rewards and the time of the judgment. By conveying the departed into the highest heaven or into hell, they have already allotted to these souls the principle phase of the final rewards of judgment. Only the variations of personal deeds or works to be judged later will alter their situation at the final judgment. One further difficulty enters into this swift ushering of souls into the final abode. In the New Testament,

¹Osmun, op. cit., p. 41.

²Robert M. Patterson, Paradise, the Place and State of Saved Souls (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1874), p. 40.

³Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), III, p. 743.

heaven is not presented as a place for disembodied spirits; but rather for spirits with their glorified bodies, which will not be received until the resurrection day. It appears significantly as a bias, that the departed believers are said not to be "with Christ" unless they are taken immediately to heaven. Besides the fallacy of positioning God and Christ on thrones in the highest heaven with no ability to remove from thence, there is the lack of reckoning with the power of the Spirit of God. Who can say how far a man caught up in the Spirit can see or go? Stephen, at the time of his martyrdom looked clear through the heavens and "saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand."¹ Paul was caught up "even to the third heaven."² John, "in the Spirit, on the Lord's day,"³ saw things of the heavenlies and of the end time, which theologies cannot solve.

The Reformers are quick to state that the Scriptures acknowledge only "two places" for the souls departed at death; but in the end they virtually undo the whole assertion. Thus Hodge's summary statement is, "there is therefore, little difference between the advocates of an intermediate state and those who are regarded as rejecting that doctrine."⁴

In reality, the difference is quite extensive with regard to the place, although there is some agreement on the matter of state.

Methodist view. The Methodists, under the leadership of Wesley, were opposed to the ideas of purgatory or second proagation; but yet found room for the doctrine of the intermediate state. To use the words of John Wesley in his comment on Revelation 20:13: "And death and Hades gave

¹Acts 7:55.

²II Corinthians 12:2.

³Revelation 1:10.

⁴Hodge, loc. cit..

up the dead that were in them: death gave up all the bodies of men, and Hades, the receptacle of separate souls, gave them up to be reunited to their bodies."¹

The idea of a dual-compartment Hades is purported to be a product of Greek philosophy, especially of Plato. Other authors are equally as certain that the idea of an immediate transport of souls into heaven is a corruption of Jewish thought, by the Alexandrian influence on the Septuagint translators. In the view of the Old Testament Sheol, it is to be remembered that it was understood as a dark underworld to the Jewish mind. John Miley commented on this idea that,

In the popular thought of the Jews it was located somewhere in or under the earth, and was the common receptacle of the dead without respect to any distinction of character, but divided into two compartments: one, a place of happiness for the good; the other, a place of misery for the evil. It is not clear that in the popular thought of the Jews, particularly in their earlier history, there was any other place of future destiny. However, such a fact could have no doctrinal significance, for they were not an inspired people, and hence could err just as Christian people do, and even more readily, as they had a less perfect revelation.²

This discussion saw full debate very early in the history of the church. Tertullian answered some of the objections thus:

By ourselves the lower regions (of Hades) are not supposed to be a bare cavity, nor some subterranean sewer of the world, but a vast deep space in the interior of the earth, and a concealed recess in its very bowels . . . thus you must suppose Hades to be a subterranean region, and keep at arms' length those who are too proud to believe that the souls of the faithful deserve a place in the lower regions . . . you will say, it is all the wicked souls that are banished in Hades. (Not so fast is my answer.) I must compel you to determine (what you mean by Hades,) which of its two regions, the region of the good or of the bad. If you mean the good why should you judge to be unworthy of such a resting-place the souls of infants and of virgins, and those

¹Osmun, op. cit., p. 47.

²Miley, op. cit., II, p. 430.

which, by reason of their condition in life were pure and innocent? Ass souls, therefore are shut up within Hades.¹

Tertullian's editors, Roberts and Donaldson, explained that he may have apparent inconsistencies in locating paradise, yet he is quite uniform in contending for it, thus:

Not in the regions beneath paradise but in paradise itself, seems to be the idea; paradise being included in the world of Hades, indeed, but in a lofty region, far enough removed from the Inferi, and refreshed by light from the third heaven and the throne itself, immensely distant though it be from the final abode of the redeemed.²

Mullins, a Southern Baptist, gives his position thus: "Hades is not paradise; neither is it Gehenna. It may be either, but it is not to be identified with either."³

Arminius is very cautious in speaking of the intermediate state so as not to be counted as believing in purgatory. He said:

With St. Augustin, therefore, "I prefer doubting about secret things, to litigation about those which are uncertain." . . . I believe . . . after this life, a state of felicity or of misery is opened for all men, into the one or the other of which they enter immediately on their departure out of this world. That the souls of the Fathers . . . departed out of here to a place of quiet . . . whether in Heaven, properly so called, into which Christ ascended, or somewhere out of it, I dare not venture to determine. If any other person be more adventurous on this subject, I think he ought to be required to produce reasons for his opinion, or be enjoined to keep silence.⁴

Arminius then continues to name four pertinent conclusions of his own, of

¹Roberts and Donaldson, op. cit., III, p. 230.

²Ibid., p. 576.

³Edgar Young Mullins, The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1917), p. 460.

⁴James Nichols, The Writings of James Arminius (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), I, p. 302.

this essence: (1) It does not follow that the Fathers are in heaven proper to be seated there before the Gentile saints could join them. (2) Of the two places for departed souls, the place of the pious has not necessarily always been Heaven supreme. (3) It does not follow that after death the pious necessarily must be translated instantly into supreme heaven. (4) Not necessarily is paradise the same as the third heaven, nor is it necessarily heaven supreme either.¹

Outlined in popular language by Professor Townsend is this view of Scripture held by Jewish people:

First, Hades, in which are temporary abodes for all the dead, including the righteous and the unrighteous. Second, Paradise-Hades, in which are the temporary resting-places of the righteous. Third Gehenna-Hades, in which are the temporary prisons of the unrighteous. Fourth, Paradise Proper, or the Heaven of heavens, in which will be the royal homes of all righteous after the Judgment. Fifth, Gehenna-Proper, or Hell, into which are cast the unrighteous after the Judgment.²

Lazarus and Dives. Before leaving this discussion, the parable of Lazarus and Dives should be given treatment. It is on the features revealed in this parable that the bulk of the intermediate doctrine finds its best footing. Objections are often voiced by virtue of the fact that it is a parable. Usually the objections are advanced by those who would do away with any concept of eternal retribution to the wicked. Hence many reject the evidences of the parable as being fictitious. This is not the place to contend for the validity of a parable; but suffice it to say that there is a vast difference between the fable, which is fictitious, and the parable, a comparison "which always embodies a hidden truth."³

¹Ibid., p. 309.

²Townsend, op. cit., p. 50.

³Fallows, op. cit., III, p. 1284.

Luke 16:19-31 reads in part:

. . . the beggar died, and . . . was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.

Here is pictured the two-division after-world, in a language that men would understand. Vincent gives some interesting points on the peculiar words used in the parable by the Lord Jesus:

Abraham's bosom. A Rabbinical phrase equivalent to being with Abraham in Paradise. "To the Israelite Abraham seems the personal centre and meeting-point of Paradise." (Goebel) . . .

Tormented. Tormented is too strong. The word is used of the sorrow of Joseph and Mary when the child Jesus was missing; and of the grief of the Ephesian elders on parting with Paul. . . .

Gulf. . . . In medical language, of the cavities in a wound or ulcer. Transcribed into the English chasm [Greek ~~χάσμα~~ (chasma)].

Is Fixed. The word implies fixedness. [used in I Peter 5:10 concerning the work of Christ, who will "establish" the suffering believer.].¹

Vincent picks up the thought of "tormented" being too strong. The word in question is ὀδυνᾶμαι (odunōmai), and is better interpreted "to be pained." The word used consistently for "torments of hell" or Gehenna, the place of the damned, is βασανίζω (basanízō). This word has varying meanings of "trial, testing, and torment," and is never mentioned in the parable at hand. This would give validity to the contention, that the condition entered into immediately upon death is not as full or intense as it will be after the judgment.

There are certain things that the parable does teach: (1) a place for the righteous; (2) a separate place for the unrighteous; (3) either

¹Vincent, op. cit., I, p. 399.

close proximity of the two realms or a sharpening of the extra-sensory faculties of the soul, to allow conversing between the two realms; and (4) a conscious condition. It may not teach anything of description which is to be taken factually or in a literal manner, due to its being a parable.

To be in Abraham's Bosom literally would be to press someone else out, hence, it can only mean to be in his presence. To be in "torment" of the "flame" has often been used to preach the fire of hell upon the unbelieving. A closer look at the words involved signifies this to be an unwarranted position. The word used in the setting of the parable is from **φλέγω** (phléō), meaning initially to burn or burn up, hence, flame. Used metaphorically, it simply means "to inflame" as of a passion. Examples are easily found: Hebrews 1:7, "He maketh . . . his ministers a flame of fire." Revelation 1:14, 19:12, "His eyes (were) as a flame of fire." In contrast to this, the word used to represent the fires of eternally damned souls is **πῦρ** (pur), which has only the one meaning of fire,--literal fire. The word used for flame in the other five New Testament appearances is **φλόξ** (phlox), and is always used figuratively. Hence, the very word that has been misused in preaching of hell-fire, really lends support to the doctrine of a separate region in the intermediate state, where the wicked will be figuratively and yet truly "inflamed" in sorrow. The original meaning of the word "to burn or burn up" would be impossible in that even most annihilationists will delay such consummation until after the final judgment.

The non-existence of an intermediate place. This is the position

of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Millennial Dawnists, Seventh-Day Adventists, as well as some of the Reformed churches. The cultists feel that in practice, there is no such thing as an intermediate position, because time ends at death and only begins again at the resurrection. This position has been dealt with fully in a later chapter under the heading of soul sleep.

Intermediate place for the wicked only. It is not often that any writer will affirm this position in word; but in practice it is quite common. Very often it is a point of preaching that the saved are taken directly to heaven at death, while the sinner goes to the regions of the damned which may be on the border of hell, if not hell itself. It is sure, however, that the judgment day will make it even harder for the sinner than any experience he may have between death and that time. Patterson exhibits this attitude when he said: "There is no intermediate place that holds any of the redeemed. The only other place is the abode of the lost. . . . The idea of an intermediate place . . . is essentially of heathen origin."¹

Intermediate state as a condition only. The idea that a body of some type must be had for the soul to keep it in existence is maintained by some. Since the soul is dis-embodied such a logic indicates that no place is needed. The soul simply exists, and as it is body-less, it needs no place in which to dwell. Thus all the discussion of an intermediate place, two caverns, up or down, is regarded as irrelevant.

¹Patterson, op. cit., p. 42.

V. FIXEDNESS OR CHANGE IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

Many ideas have been forwarded as to how the soul will conduct itself when it is freed from the body. It is possible that joy may be heightened in the believer and sorrow may become more intense for the unbeliever. Because of this possibility some have held out for changes in the soul, even in its relationship to God.

Effects of the new environment on the soul. Many things have been conjectured about the departed dead, and especially of the good. Many writers propose the new environment to have glory, beauty, progress and such like that has been unattainable down here, to come with little effort over there. Professor Townsend is a good example:

Perfect consciousness; perfect recognition; delights adapted to childhood, for children; restorations of old acquaintances; introductions to Abraham and Moses, David and Elijah, John and Paul, Luther and Wesley, and to the saints who died but yesterday; the formation of pleasant and lasting alliances; plans for the endless future, -- are not impossible in that resting-place which we call the Intermediate Paradise. Songs of praise, such as souls can sing and hear; adorations and thanksgivings, such as souls can offer, will doubtless be expressed.¹

Olin Curtis feels that the intermediate state is a work of personal adjustment to fit the individual for heaven. This is done, he says, by means of (1) revelation, (2) perfect introspection, and (3) companionship with Christ.² Evangelicals generally feel that if a person is right with God he is ready for heaven without further preparation.

Boettner feels it is a "state of rest and happiness," which though

¹Townsend, op. cit., p. 74.

²Curtis, op. cit., p. 406.

a rest is not "inactivity."¹ It is satisfaction in labor and freedom from all evil, together with earth's cares and sorrows. He says that,

At death the Christian drops entirely out of the world of sense, and shall belong to it no more until the day of the resurrection, at which time he shall find that the world of sense also has been "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the children of God," Romans 8:21-23. He is no longer saddened and wearied at heart by the injustices, violence, opposition and ill-will of evil men. There is no more pain nor sorrow.²

In another section he continues along the same thought:

The Scriptures teach that the state into which the righteous enter at death is one of consciousness, holiness and happiness, which the resurrection and judgment only augment and make permanent. The mind loses none of its power or knowledge at the death of the body. On the contrary, it enters on a much higher plane of existence. The first and immediate result is that the soul, freed from the limitations of earth and cleansed of the last vestiges of sin, finds its mental and spiritual faculties heightened and is more alive and active than it ever was before.³

These are the descriptions of a Reformed theologian, and would answer well to the Evangelical understanding of heaven. This, of course, is what Boettner thinks of, since the Reformed position is that the saints go directly to heaven when they die.

In the Old Testament the idea of Sheol is that "the existence is neither bliss nor misery. It is without moral color," so says Osmun.⁴ But the New Testament concept is well illustrated in the parable of Lazarus and Dives. To Trench, the intermediate state is: "The state of painless expectation intervening between the death of the righteous and their perfect bliss at the Saviour's coming in his kingdom--blessedness, but not glory."⁵

¹Boettner, op. cit., p. 92.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 94.

⁴Osmun, op. cit., p. 59.

⁵Ibid., p. 90.

Emery Bancroft explained his position as a Baptist: "In the intermediate position, the soul is without its permanent body, yet this state is for the righteous one of continuous joy, and for the wicked, one of conscious suffering."¹ Scripture is lacking at this point to describe in full what takes place in the intermediate world.

Oscar Cullman gives this analogy and possible answer:

As to just how this intermediate state is to be conceived the New Testament nowhere speculates. Where the fact of the resurrection, anticipated upon the basis of having already occurred in the resurrection of Christ and the present possession of the Spirit, is an object of such powerful faith and hope as is the case in the New Testament, there no longer remains any room for speculations concerning the "How." . . . concerning the intermediate state of the dead the one certainty on which alone everything else depends, that he who believes in Christ, who is the Resurrection, "will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25).²

Gordon James has a bright and logical outlook, although it is not one that is Evangelical:

Moral purification after death is by no means a wrong idea. There is much to be said for it. Even in the case of the saints some cleansing is necessary before they are fit for perfect communion with God. We must accept progress in the hereafter as a part of the divine plan, just as we accept it for this life. . . . It may not be wise to dogmatise but it cannot be wrong to hope.³

Some secrets of this intermediate state that our inquiring minds seek to pry into will need be left with Almighty God for the answers.

Development theory. The treatment of this idea and its rejection

¹Bancroft, op. cit., p. 258.

²Oscar Cullman, Christ and Time (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), p. 241.

³A. Gordon James, Personal Immortality (London: Student Christian Movement, 1922), p. 51.

will be quoted here from James Strong:

The soul is imagined to escape from the body at death not absolutely nude, but with a certain kind of "enswathement," or at least as a germ, which eventually reproduces a body by taking on particles or matter and assimilating them to itself as a fresh vital form at the resurrection. The whole notion is false: 1. it assumes the body not wholly dead, 2. it materializes the soul, 3. it confounds reproduction with de cease and growth with dissolution.¹

Conditional Immortality. This is the notion that immortality for the soul is not innate in man, but rather is received at the resurrection. The doctrine as held by the Seventh-Day Adventists has been discussed in the following chapter. Evangelicals generally reject this teaching.

Second Probation. The "second chance" theory holds that those who die without an experience of regeneration in Christ, will yet have another opportunity. It is not the same as the universal proposition that will be handled later in this sequence. Olin Curtis explained their position:

Rejecting the idea of coercion, they demand a fair, full probation for every responsible person, but they can discover no way to provide such a probation for every person in this life. Hence there must be a probation for all beyond the grave, who have not had their opportunity of test here. . . . They do condition personal salvation upon actual acceptance of the historical Christ. This sounds intensely Christian; but it is essentially false to Christianity, for it turns salvation from a moral thing to a mental thing.²

Boettner described their position in a like manner:

Support for the theory of second probation is based more on general humanitarian conjectures or surmises of what God in His love and

¹James Strong, The Doctrine of a Future Life (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1891), p. 39.

²Olin Alfred Curtis, The Christian Faith (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1905), p. 287.

goodness might be expected to do, and on an easily understood desire to extend the atonement as far as possible, rather than on any solid Scriptural foundation.¹

Evangelicals stand firmly against any opportunity for forgiveness of sins beyond the pale of death. Scripture supports the premise that the state of both the righteous and the wicked is fixed at death. If this were not the case, all of the Biblical warnings to watchfulness and preparedness for the parousia or death would be rather meaningless words.

Strangely enough, Curtis, though quite opposed to this doctrinal position, has his own which is a close counterpart:

If a man in his earthly probation has really come to a spirit of repentance and faith; if he passes out of his probation longing for all Christ Jesus is, although he has never known him, then in the intermediate state, the normal adjustment to his Saviour will be instant and complete. . . . In the intermediate state every man must see Jesus Christ as he really is; and seeing him as he is, every man who is in harmony with Christ's nature will accept him; while every man who is not in harmony with Christ's nature will reject him.²

He has done what Boettner has suggested, surmising "of what God in His love and goodness might be expected to do."³ If his premise were a valid one, the "gulf" that is "fixed" between the righteous and the unrighteous, must by now have had a bridge constructed over it.

Strong discusses the problem rationally:

If there were to be another probation and not an empty mockery there must be still a possibility of failure to meet its terms and a consequent contingency of final rejection and condemnation again, and this would be enhanced by the repeated and more aggravated delinquency; so that, after all there remains the necessity of punishment, or else

¹Loraine Boettner, Immortality (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 99.

²Curtis, op. cit., p. 402-403.

³Boettner, op. cit., p. 105.

of a third or fourth probation, and so on ad infinitum. The whole scheme practically breaks down.¹

It is the general consensus of most Evangelicals that the moral condition of the individual upon passing from this life is such that it predicts unerringly which side of the separation he will proceed to for all eternity.

Purgatory. The doctrine of purgatory as held by the Roman Catholic church teaches that all who do not die immediately after baptism, except for martyrs, must go to a place of cleansing where the penalty for sins committed after baptism must be paid. F. J. Sheed, a Roman Catholic author explains the doctrine thus:

He who dies loving God . . . yet with some small element of self left unsundered--venial sins not taken seriously enough for serious repentance, or mortal sins repented with genuine sorrow yet with something lacking to the intensity of the sorrow, or it may be sins of omission . . . these lightless lifeless elements hinder the movement. It is for them that Purgatory exists. . . . It is the place of waiting where, by suffering lovingly accepted, the soul is cleansed of all these smaller defilements. . . . What the suffering is by which the soul is brought to perfection in Purgatory, we do not know.²

It is generally understood that gifts of money, prayers by the priests, masses and such like, which the living may perform for the dead, may shorten the time in Purgatory. This is in contrast to the doctrine of Evangelicals, where the Lord Jesus is seen to welcome his weary child home, rather than consign him to a further period of suffering and probation. The whole system encroaches on the justice of God, making Him to be a

¹Strong, op. cit., p. 103.

²F. J. Sheed, Theology and Sanity (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), p. 294.

respector of persons. The man with money may purchase release for his loved ones from Purgatory, while the poor cannot buy enough prayers or have enough masses said. It is in direct opposition to Christ's plan of redemption; for can it be possible that suffering can do a cleansing that the blood of Christ cannot? It was in utter revulsion to the whole idea, that most of the Reformers retreated so far as to almost eliminate any idea of an intermediate state, lest they should be thought to condone purgatorial ideas.

Annihilationism. This is the theory that the unrighteous pass out of existence after death. Some of its proponents lost sight of the judgment completely, and since they are condemned as lost already, these wicked simply pass out of existence without a judgment. Others will bring the wicked back to the judgment; and after being banished from God they will then suffer annihilation. The doctrine has been discussed in full in a later chapter. Evangelicals generally reject the teaching.

Universalism. The doctrine is the outgrowth of logic and not of Scripture. Since God is all-powerful, they reason that He will therefore, have all men yield to Himself. Since truth is superior to error, right to wrong, justice to injustice, good to evil, and so on and on; therefore, those superior forces will at last conquer. Universalists hold to the universal fatherhood of God, the universal brotherhood of all men, a "just" retribution for sins, and the future harmony of all souls in God. Fallows quotes a short poem suggesting their belief: "Not one life shall be destroyed, or cast as rubbish to the void, when God hath made the pile

complete."¹

Concerning their attitude as it touches upon the intermediate state, Professor Townsend states correctly:

Universalists and Unitarians who give any thought to the subject fully believe in a place of imprisonment or punishment after death, prepared for such as deserve it; when suitably punished there will follow according to the theories of these denominations, a restoration of the wicked to the place in which have been the righteous; but the preliminary separation is believed, nevertheless, to be inevitable.²

The adopted report of the executive committee of the American Unitarian Association employs the following language, which, to the Bible believer quite nullifies their presuppositions:

It is our firm conviction that the final restoration of all is not revealed in the Scriptures. . . . and while we do generally hold to the doctrine of the final universality of salvation, as a consistent speculation of the reason and a strong belief of the heart, yet we deem it to be in each case a matter of contingency, always depending on conditions freely accepted or rejected.³

With this last statement it must be allowed that there may yet be some who would resist all gestures of grace leading to restoration with God. In this the whole "speculation" crumbles as a non-Scriptural device. Its fabrication serves the purpose of softening the just dealings of God with godless and sinful men who will not repent.

VI. DURATION

Duration of the intermediate state. From the vantage point of time, the intermediate state extends from the day of one's death until either the first or the second resurrection, whichever may summon him. According to

¹Fallows, op. cit., III, p. 1690.

²Townsend, op. cit., p. 61.

³Ibid., p. 232.

Scripture the redeemed have precedence over the sinful; but all must wait until their respective day. The first resurrection of dead is for the redeemed, and the second resurrection is for the sinners. From our chronology, Moses, Abraham and others have been there a long time. From God's side of the picture six thousand years may be but six days. It is of little value to conjecture in this matter, for the span, whether brief or extended, in a timeless situation is a mere confusion of words.

Strong has this pertinent estimation:

There will be no outward idea of time, no lapse of events, historical succession or change . . . No sense of delay will detract from the joy of actual salvation experienced by them during that interim, but it will seem brief and be occupied with unalloyed delights of a spiritual nature, heightened rather than dampened by the hope of a still more exalted state of rapture speedily to be realized on the reunion of the soul and the body in heaven.¹

It is agreed to be a temporary and not an eternal state. This is thought both for the good and for the evil alike to be but temporary. They will be in their respective places until the Resurrection. Revelation 20:13, 14 speaking to the termination of the realm of Hades, affirms its usefulness and work have been fulfilled:

And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire.

To this we would add Osmun's interpretation: "This final passage is descriptive of the resurrection. The souls in Hades are released, and Hades, as a temporary abode, comes to an end before the consummation of the final universe."²

¹Strong, op. cit., p. 66.

²Osmun, op. cit., p. 86.

Concerning the descent of Christ. The words in the Apostles Creed, "He descended into Hell," have been provocative of great discussions and dissensions. The texts surrounding this expression are found in I Peter 3:18-20, 4:6, as follows:

Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God: being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water . . . For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

"It is only in First Peter that there is any reference to the preaching of Christ to the dead . . . The natural sense . . . is that which the early church imputed to them," so says Henry Sheldon.¹ A little history as to how the expression came into the Creed is worthwhile, before entering into the investigation of its meaning.

Osmun traces its formulation thus: Not being found as yet by 451 A. D., it did not come into any of the first four ecumenical councils: Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus, or Chalcedon. Rufinus testifies it was not present in any written form by the end of the fourth century. The Church of Aquileia included it about 374 A. D., then travelling west the Creed of the Bishop of Gaul contained it. "Thus the article was neither Roman nor Eastern, but established in the Creed of Western Christendom through the influence of a remote church."²

The dissent from this portion of the Creed began with Augustine, in that he was unable to distinguish between Hades and Gehenna. "He

¹Osmun, op. cit., p. 102.

²Ibid., p. 125-129.

feared the clause was tending to weaken the motive for the propagation of the gospel in this world."¹ Most of the Reformed Churches ignored the expression, simply interpreting it to be His subjection to death for three days. Osmun noted that Professor F. Loofs admits that:

The conception of the descent must be recognized as a specifically Christian idea, which goes back to the later decades of the primitive church, and as such has a strong claim on our interest. But he adds, "The modern mind cannot accept it as a part of our faith." He recommends that Evangelicals omit the article from their programs of instruction in Christian doctrine and worship.²

Objections to the expression have been summarized by Osmun as: (1) preaching in Hades is found nowhere else in the Bible; (2) the historical elements take us back to Noah's day; (3) the preaching was simultaneous with the disobedience; and (4) the preaching was "in the spirit," therefore it was not post mortem.³ He then gives the ideas in favor as advanced by such men as Ellicott, Alford, Meyer, Robertson and others: (1) "It is grammatically untenable to turn around the meaning of Christ's preaching into a preaching of Noah in the spirit of Christ" (Dr. Dorner). (2) Christ went and preached. (3) Christ preached to the formerly disobedient, not formerly preached to the disobedient. (4) The verbs express this preaching as part of His mediatorial work. (5) The context which speaks of exposure to persecution and death teaches that death can only bring triumph to those armed with the mind of Christ.⁴

¹George W. Osmun, The Undiscovered Country (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1916), p. 129.

²Ibid., p. 131.

³Ibid., (gleanings) pp. 113-117.

⁴Ibid..

The importance to this treatise in considering this matter was to find light which was present concerning activities in the intermediate world. Certain facts inherent here are basic: (1) the 'disobedient in Noah's day are not by themselves, but with the other dead of like character. (2) Christ is said to have preached in Hades, not Gehenna. (3) The subject of his preaching could only be the same as his earthly ministry, that of the Gospel. Why He preached was no doubt, out of His heart, to continue to do that which was "good."¹ The results of his preaching could be nothing more than speculative from this human side. Especially is this so, in that probation is understood to be for this life only. (4) The meaning of φυλάκη (phulákē), "prison," (I Peter 3:19) is interpreted by Vincent as being used in a "metaphorical sense" in this setting.² Some interpret it as a final abode of the dead, and others as Hades, the kingdom of the dead generally. Osmun remarked that,

We cannot accept the idea of the Reformation theology, that Christ descended into the realm of the lost. This was a doctrine of men who were afraid to recognize an intermediate state, lest they should seem to sanction the Catholic purgatory, and who therefore made only one distinction, that between eternal life and eternal fire.³

(5) To those who would object to the descent and to the intermediate state, it is valid to ask how Christ could have been in Paradise with the thief; and preached in Hades at the same time, had the two not been in at least close proximity.

¹Acts 10:38.

²Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), I, p. 657.

³Osmun, op. cit., p. 118.

Also in the same strain it is of concern that we note that upon yielding up of the ghost by Christ, the graves of many saints were opened. A natural conclusion is that the One who has power over death, namely, Jesus Christ, was then in the intermediate state. (6) In the Psalms, David spoke of Christ, "that neither was He left unto Hades," as given by Peter in Acts 2:30, 31. (7) That the realm of Hades is not under the rule of Satan as some suppose; but the "prison" is God's place for the disobedient, as paradise is His place for the children of the kingdom. (8) If death and the intermediate state be thought of as the ultimate reaping of the souls of men because of sin; then Christ as the God-man "must undergo the common experience of man by descending into the valley of the shadow of death."¹

Bishop J. Pearson is cited by Osmun as summarizing in this way:

When all the sufferings of Christ were finished on the cross, and his soul was separated from his body, though his body were dead, yet his soul died not, and though it died not, yet it underwent the condition of the souls of such as die, and being he died in the similitude of a sinner, his soul went to the place where the souls of men are kept who die for their sins, and so did wholly undergo the law of death. In this sense . . . I believe Christ descended into Hades.²

While it is agreed that the Lord Jesus Christ was in the intermediate state at His death, it ought not be difficult to follow that He entered into that place to comfort the saints until the resurrection day. Certainly Christ is not only in Heaven supreme, but also "with" his own saints, who are spoken of as being in Hades and Paradise as well.

¹Ibid., p. 120.

²Ibid., p. 132.

VII. SUMMARY

Certain vital points of agreement are found in the writings of such Evangelicals as Hodge, Boettner, Cullman, Orr, Henry, Curtis, Bancroft, Gamertsfelder, Weaver, Osmun, Miley and others. Although they are not agreed on every detail, the following points of full accord give a reliable basis for a statement of Evangelical belief concerning the interim span:

- (1) The dead in Christ are "with" the Lord.
- (2) The intermediate state is one of conscious joy or of sorrow.
- (3) The place of the dead in Christ is Paradise.
- (4) The intermediate state is not the final state.

A summary discussion of the four points of agreement follows:

(1) The statement, the dead in Christ are with the Lord, is in full approval amongst the Evangelicals; but there are a few differences in opinion as to where that association would take them. It is with difficulty that our natural and earth-bound thinking, even with the aid of the Holy Spirit, can discern the abode of spirits. We are pressed to think of a materially located place. Jesus in his resurrection body demonstrated that he had an awareness of physical things, such as the room where the disciples were gathered, and as food to eat. Yet in no way did He seem to be bound or circumscribed by these things, identifying himself with "flesh and bones" and as not being a "spirit," (Luke 24:39). This does not help much in considering how a dis-embodied spirit may be effected or respond.

In Luke's parable of Lazarus and Dives, Jesus envisions before his hearers a dual-compartment intermediate place, described in material terms to appeal to their understanding. The mysteries of Hades are best

understood if this description is taken quite literally. Since Hades is yet in operation until the day of the dead being raised for judgment, it no doubt has also a Paradise which is operative as well. Many Evangelicals finding no other way to explain the present life of the departed give approval to this idea, in that the fulness of joy in heaven is yet to come; and that to the soul with its glorified body.

However, as representing many, Thompson says, "In orthodox Christianity, the dead, redeemed, and unredeemed are in their final abode, and are disincarnate until the general resurrection, when their mortal shall put on immortality."¹ This idea would be questioned however, as the final abode of the unredeemed is taught in Scripture to be *γέεννα* (Gehenna), the lake of fire, into which the devil, the beast and the false prophet are cast prior to the judgment, and the unbelievers after the judgment (Revelation 20:10-15).

(2) There is no conflict of opinion that the just enter immediately into the joy of the next world, where Christ is there in essence before them. Likewise, the unregenerate are immediately thought to be filled with sorrow and pain and such soul agonies as would be due them at this point for their rejection of God's salvation.

(3) The premise that the place of the dead in Christ is Paradise is also quite well agreed upon by Evangelicals; but again differences are present as to where this paradise may be. The parable just cited would seem to indicate the place to be with the righteous of the Old Testament.

¹Henry, op. cit., p. 273.

It would also indicate that it was separated by a "great gulf" from the place of the wicked dead. Little injustice, if any, is done to the basic premise if a literal place were thought of. This is not to say, however, that an intermediate state implies a separate intermediate place; but such may be the case. Who is to say that a spirit being needs a material place such as is commonly envisioned? However, in the parable of Lazarus and Dives, their dis-embodied spirits are represented as being in a place.

(4) All Evangelicals are soundly united that the resurrection of the body and the judgment must precede the entrance of the soul upon its final state. Some feel that violence is done to the soul of the saint if he is not immediately in the presence of God in the highest heaven. In worship to God on earth the saints sing, "Where Jesus is 'Tis Heaven there," and in faith sense themselves to be with Him. Yet, when the thought comes of leaving the sensory body as a naked soul, the faith wavers unless they can be assured of the highest heaven. The failure is that of stationing God and Christ in the highest heaven as immoveable, rather than being omnipresent. Another lack is the understanding as to the powers of the soul, which may be turned loose when the flesh is left behind. Without physical limitations, the soul may well be in Christ's immediate fellowship with Him being in another realm than the highest heaven. This is seen from Dives and Abraham as they watched and conversed with each other with a "great gulf" fixed between them.

Summary. Popular Evangelical thought, in good harmony with Scriptures, asserts heaven to be a literal place for the "glorious" body

together with the soul, but this literalness may be different than it is for a body of flesh. For the disembodied spirit Scripture only presents the fact that the senses and mentality of the soul are alert to its surroundings. The place of the dwelling of the soul in all of its alertness is designated as a place of waiting for the time of the resurrection of the body and the day of judgment. For the believer it is a place of rest and blessing in the presence of Christ; whereas for the unbeliever it is one of unrest, torment of mind and absence from Christ. Although Evangelicals are not agreed as to there being a specific place for this waiting, they are uniform in feeling that the best is yet to come for those who have left this veil of tears and troubles and are even today in the very presence of Christ. In this situation they are yet without the glorified body and they have yet to be judged and receive the rewards of the deeds done in the body while on earth.

CHAPTER III

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST VIEW OF THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

COMPARED AND CONTRASTED WITH THE EVANGELICAL VIEW

The doctrinal position of an intermediate state, as such, is not discussed by the Seventh-Day Adventists. Their opinions relating to the idea have been drawn together out of many areas. To the Seventh-Day Adventist, consciousness ceases at the moment of death, and therefore the time of waiting for the resurrection is not time at all, hence, there is no intermediate state. This investigation has concerned itself with the points held by the Seventh-Day Adventists which differ from those of the Evangelicals. The reason for this procedure is that the only points of sufficient similarity between the two which would lend to comparison are those of the certainty of death, the resurrection of the dead, and the separation of the wicked from the righteous.

I. THE CONCEPT OF IMMORTALITY

Mortal soul. The common understanding of this group is that men are not innately immortal at all. Their founder, Ellen G. White, put it in these words:

Immortality was promised them [Adam and Eve] on condition of obedience; by transgression they would forfeit eternal life. That very day they would be doomed to death. In order to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life.¹

¹Ellen G. White, The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, California, 1913), p. 60.

LeRoy Froom, their theological spokesman, is more specific:

According to the canonical Old Testament it is quite clear that body and soul form a unit; in Genesis 2:7 we are not told that man received a living soul, but that, after God breathed into him the breath of life, man became a living soul. . . . There is nothing to be found in the Bible of the Greek conception which splits man into two distinctive and separate parts: the mortal body and the immortal soul. (NOTE: Man is considered a living soul during his lifetime; in death the soul ceases to have life. The dying of the soul is mentioned in Numbers 23:10. According to the Old Testament, death strikes body and soul alike.)¹

From this evaluation the soul is seen not only to lose consciousness; but also to lose life and die. These statements stand in contradiction to the understanding of all Protestant theologians, Evangelical and Reformed alike. James Orr is in harmony with the Protestant voice as he remarks of Genesis 2:7, that, "Man becomes a "living (immortal) soul" through a unique act of Divine inbreathing, the soul in man originates in a Divine inspiration, and is at once the animating principle of the body."² As considered earlier in this treatise, the make-up of man is generally understood by Evangelicals as being two-fold. In this it is recognized that death speaks of the body as dying physically, but not of the soul dying. The soul is understood as being immortal and will at time for dying either enter upon eternal life or eternal death.

Conditional immortality. William Newton Clarke states the doctrine of conditional immortality equitably when he said:

The doctrine of conditional immortality . . . holds that man was

¹LeRoy Edwin Froom, The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1950), I, 184.

²James Orr (ed.), International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), II, 974.

created not immortal, but capable of receiving immortality as a gift. Left alone, he would become extinct, at death or later; immortality is a gift of God, conferred only through Christ and received only in the Christian experience.¹

From "A Statement" by a Seventh-Day Adventist, H. W. Lowe, in the forward pages of W. R. Martin's book, The Truth About Seventh-Day Adventism, the following short statement is emphatic: "We believe that immortality, or that quality of being that makes death impossible, is something bestowed on the believer at the resurrection when our Lord returns."²

Froom traces the history of the doctrine from Jewish scholars and theologians and quotes approvingly that, "immortality is acquired, not inherent."³ The Seventh-Day Adventists point out also that "soul" is present in the animal realm as it is in the human. They do not note that the animals are never spoken of as becoming "living souls." Boettner gives a thoughtful statement on the immortality of man:

In His Word much is presented by definite statement; much also is assumed as undeniably true and not needing proof. In general the Bible treats the subject of the immortality of the soul in much the same way that it treats the existence of God,--such belief is assumed as an undeniable postulate. It takes for granted that the characteristics of our nature are permanent, that we shall continue to possess intelligence, affection, conscience and will. Every passage dealing with the future life assumes that we shall be then as we are now, reverential and social beings, loving God and one another, This necessarily includes recognition, communion with Christ and with the angels and the redeemed.⁴

W. C. Fisher, a Nazarene writer, expressed it thus:

¹William Newton Clarke, An Outline of Christian Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), p. 450.

²Walter R. Martin, The Truth About Seventh-Day Adventism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 15.

³Froom, op. cit., II, p. 215. ⁴Boettner, op. cit., p. 78.

The theory of soul sleep is another outgrowth of the Adventist doctrine of conditional immortality--the idea that those only who are found righteous at the final judgment will be granted immortality. . . . Man . . . is not immortal; he only has the right to earn immortality by a righteous life.¹

The condition of fallen man, depraved in mind and heart makes him at enmity with God. In this condition, he naturally would like to rid himself of any idea of dying eternally as a consequence of his rebellion. Besides this factor, there is the natural instinct in man that will say he continues to exist, though he were to die. Hence, Evangelicals maintain that the doctrine of conditional immortality is the product of reason and not of Scripture.

Immortal sinners. The idea of immortal sinners is scoffed at by the Seventh-Day Adventists. To the Evangelical world, it is not possible for the damned to be sent into everlasting fire, unless they are living or immortal. The idea has its roots in their concept of the soul as being only mortal. In one of her early visions, Ellen G. White reported:

I heard an angel ask, "Who of the family of Adam have passed the flaming sword, and have partaken of the tree of life?" I heard another angel answer, "Not one of Adam's family have passed that flaming sword and partaken of that tree; therefore there is not an immortal sinner."²

Much of the Seventh-Day Adventist concept of the soul is found in the visions of Mrs. White. Evangelicals feel that Scripture teaches all men are conceived as immortal, with that living, never-dying part being supplied by Divine power. The body is subject to death and hence is mortal; but the soul is immortal. Further, in the case of the righteous

¹William C. Fisher, Why I Am a Nazarene (Kansas City, Mo.: Nazarene Publishing House, 1958), p. 123.

²White, op. cit., p. 51.

the mortal body will one day take on immortality as well.

Annihilationism. This is the belief that the unrighteous pass out of existence after death. The origination of the system undoubtedly is from the horror that men naturally feel in facing the death punishment for their sins. There is difference of opinion as to when this annihilation is accomplished. Some hold it to be instantaneous at death, and others consider it but the natural outworking of sin. Clarke explains:

The less intelligent view has been that God by power and fiat will annihilate the wicked, inflicting the penalty himself by direct judicial action. The more thoughtful view has been that extinction of being, or loss of personal existence, is the natural end of a life of sin which runs its full course and brings forth its full fruit: a man sins on, and gradually reduces himself, by the disuse and extinguishment of power after power, to nonentity.¹

Mead mentions those who leave the annihilation deed to God's decree, but who place it at different times:

Mr. Constable and Dr. Ives hold the materialistic view that the soul perishes at death, being in fact only a physical thing or phenomenon; but others, as Mr. Hudson and Mr. White, hold that the soul survives the death of the body, but afterwards is destroyed.²

The Seventh-Day Adventists avidly hold to annihilationism along with many individuals who claim Protestant affiliation. Arthur Lickey, a Seventh-Day Adventist writer gives their position thus:

The righteous dead will be resurrected at the beginning of the Millennial period, whereas the wicked will be raised at the close. Since the righteous are raised at Christ's coming, therefore Christ comes at the beginning of the millennium. The wicked dead remain in their graves. The living wicked are destroyed. The righteous

¹Clarke, op. cit., p. 450.

²Charles M. Mead, The Soul Here and Hereafter (Boston: The Congregational Publishing Society, 1879), p. 77.

all go to heaven.¹

Mrs. White gives her impression of people who dare to reject the view of annihilationism in insinuating terms:

It was a marvel to me that Satan could succeed so well in making men believe that the words of God, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," mean that the soul that sinneth it shall not die, but live eternally in misery. Said the angel, "Life is life, whether it is in pain or happiness. Death is without pain, without joy, without hatred." Satan told his angels to make a special effort to spread the lie first repeated to Eve in Eden, "Thou shalt not surely die." And as the error was received by the people, and they were led to believe that man was immortal, Satan led them on to believe that the sinner would live in eternal misery. Then the way was prepared for Satan to work through his representatives, and hold up God before the people as a revengeful tyrant.²

In this section she has presented her logic of why annihilation is the proper interpretation. Now she speaks as to "how" this annihilation shall be consummated:

The soul that sinneth it shall die an everlasting death,--a death that will last forever, from which there will be no hope of a resurrection; and then the wrath of God will be appeased. . . . Fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them [the wicked],--burn them up root and branch.³

In another place she acclaimed the second death as follows:

Fire from God out of heaven is rained upon them, and the great men, and mighty men, the noble, the poor and miserable, are all consumed together. I saw that some were quickly destroyed, while others suffered longer. They were punished according to the deeds done in the body. Some were many days consuming, and just as long as there was a portion of them unconsumed, all the sense of suffering remained. Said the angel, "The worm of life shall not die; their fire shall not be quenched as long as there is the least particle for it to prey upon." Satan and his angels suffered long. Satan bore not only the weight and punishment of his own sins, but also the sins of the redeemed

¹Arthur E. Lickey, Fundamentals of the Everlasting Gospel (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn.), p. 41.

²White, op. cit., p. 218.

³Ibid., p. 51.

host, which had been placed upon him; and he must also suffer for the ruin of souls which he had caused. Then I saw that Satan and all the wicked host were consumed, and the justice of God was satisfied; and all the angelic host, and all the redeemed saints, with a loud voice said, "Amen!" Said the angel, "Satan is the root, his children are the branches. They are now consumed root and branch. They have died an everlasting death. They are never to have a resurrection, and God will have a clean universe."¹

In the book, Questions on Doctrine, the Seventh-Day Adventists have stated: (1) the wicked will die, (2) be cut off, (3) perish, (4) be burned up, and (5) be destroyed.² Each of these divisions is treated with biblical references to substantiate their assertions. Van Baalen quotes from the Seventh-Day Adventist, Spicer, that "The positive teaching of Holy Scripture is that sin and sinners will be blotted out of existence. There will be a clean universe again when the great controversy between Christ and Satan is ended."³

Consistently a very literal method of treatment of Scripture is used, which seems to favor their position. The same literalness, however, is lacking completely when they consider the matter of duration, as found in the word "eternal." Boettner cites this thought:

Endlessness is said to be "eternal," "everlasting." These words are the strongest of any in the Greek language. These same words are used to express the eternity of God, and to describe the duration of the blessed condition of the righteous in heaven. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever," I Tim. 1:17. . . . "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life," Matt. 25:41,

¹Ibid., p. 295.

²Representative Group of Seventh-Day Adventist Leaders, Questions on Doctrine (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), p. 517.

³Jan Karel Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 207.

46. In this latter verse the same Greek word is used in both clauses. The wicked are to go "eis kolasin aionion," and the righteous "eis zoen aionion;" hence the meaning must be the same in both cases.¹

Clarke summarizes "why" the idea of annihilation originated, saying that it "entered into Christian thought as an object of hope rather than of fear, and has been welcomed for the relief that it offers from the thought of endless punishment."² Although in point of chronology, this annihilation is perhaps subsequent to the intermediate state, it is pertinent to this treatise as indicative of what is supposed to happen at that time. To the Seventh-Day Adventist, the wicked die to enter upon "soul sleep" or unconsciousness, then later are resurrected, only to be annihilated. Thus annihilationism is actually part of their philosophy of an intermediate state, though they affirm there is no intermediate state.

Tertullian showed complete disgust about the idea of annihilation: "A pretty paradox, to be sure, that an essence must be refitted with life, in order that it may receive that annihilation which has already in fact accrued to it!"³

It cannot be said that the voice of Protestants is as soundly united in the condemnation of annihilationism as they are of some other Seventh-Day Adventists tenets. The position of many is expressed by Gordon James, when he says:

¹Loraine Boettner, Immortality (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 118.

²Clarke, op. cit., p. 452.

³Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), III, p. 571.

For if God be the father of all men, it is an inconceivable thing to suppose that in the hour and article of death He will fling away those personalities that He has created, nurtured and loved. A God such as Jesus revealed, a God like Jesus, could not allow men to perish. . . . Surely it would be more Christian, so to speak, to allow that man to perish [who had failed in this life].¹

Hence, it is concluded by many that eternal punishment is not consistent with God's justice or goodness. Olin Curtis raises two objections to the theory of annihilationism:

First, it is entirely lacking in that ethical quality which belongs to every truly Christian doctrine. . . . this view is worse than mitigation. Preach annihilation to a sinner, and you preach with his own inclination. . . . Second, the theory of annihilation is impossible in theodicy. That God in his omniscience would create men only to throw them away at last, a useless waste, "as rubbish in the void," is to me inconceivable from any standpoint possible in theodicy. The harsh theory of an eternity of torture in physical flame was surely hard enough to deal with in theodicy. But one could discover at least the possibility of a moral value in the torture.²

II. SLEEP OF THE SOUL

Soul Sleep. Martin explains this position to be held by the "Advent Christian Church, Seventh-Day Adventists, and the non-Christian cults: Christadelphians, The Dawn Bible Students and the Laymens Home Missionary Movement."³ The theories of the sleep of the soul, or the insensibility of the soul, or the unconsciousness of the soul, have been otherwise identified as Psychopannychism. The theory holds that at death the state of

¹A. Gordon James, Personal Immortality (London: Student Christian Movement, 1922), p. 47.

²Olin Alfred Curtis, The Christian Faith (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1905), p. 460.

³Martin, op. cit., p. 15.

the soul becomes insensible or unconscious and remains in this state as long as the body lies in the grave. It is carefully interwoven with the theory of conditional immortality. A portion of Ecclesiastes 9:5 is the stock proof-text used by the proponents of this doctrine, namely, "the dead know not anything."

The presentation of the Seventh-Day Adventist defense in Questions on Doctrine mentions the following men as holding to this view: Tyndale, John Firth, George Wishart, John Milton, Archdeacon Francis Blackburne, and many others.¹ They claim as being representative of this view more than fifty "champions." Listed as sects are: Unitarians, Christadelphians, and as denominations: Baptist, Anglican, Congregational, Wesleyan, Lutheran, and Neo-Orthodox, while these vocations are represented: physicians, math professors, theology professors, language professors, and a poet.²

A summary of their position is incorporated into their book from a Lutheran professor, Dr. T. A. Kantonen as follows:

There is no immortality of the soul but a resurrection of the whole person, body and soul, from death. The only immortality which the Bible recognizes is the immortality of a personal relationship with God in Christ. . . . The soul has no existence apart from the body. The whole man, body and soul dies, and the whole man, body and soul is resurrected on the last day. At death man proceeds directly to the final resurrection and judgment. There is no period of waiting for waiting implies time, and beyond death time no longer has any significance.³

It should be said in all fairness that not a few Lutherans would vigorously disagree with him. Francis Pieper, a Lutheran dogmatician says:

¹Representative Group, op. cit., pp. 567-609.

²Loc. cit..

³Ibid., pp. 605-606.

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. A sleep of the soul which includes enjoyment of God (says Luther) cannot be called a false doctrine. . . . (note:) Luther: "It is divine truth that Abraham (after death) lives with God, serves Him, and also rules with Him. But what sort of life that is, whether he be asleep or awake, that is another question. How the soul rests we are not to know; it is certain, however, that it lives."¹

Froom, the Adventist theologian, stated the doctrine accurately:

It is impossible to find in the Old Testament that hope for eternal life was based on the innate immortality of the soul, but rather on the resurrection as a reawakening from death as from a sleep, a sleep of complete unconsciousness.²

The parable of Luke sixteen concerning Lazarus and Dives is explained by the Seventh-Day Adventists as follows:

a. The dialog . . . was wholly imaginary . . . never could happen,
b. the time is fictitious . . . men are not to be rewarded until the resurrection, c. it is the only place where Hades is a place of torment.³

Evangelicals answer to the assertion of soul sleep with a number of good common-sense statements, besides many Scriptures which discredit the Seventh-Day Adventist claims. Calvin in speaking on John 11:12, about "sleep" has this to say:

Since this word denotes only the sleep of the body, it is prodigiously absurd to apply it--as some fanatics have done--to souls, as if, by being deprived of understanding, they were subject to death.⁴

Martin writes, that "soul sleepers affirm conscious life is ever

¹Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, p. 512.

²Froom, op. cit., I, p. 184.

³Representative Group, op. cit., p. 560.

⁴John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel of John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), I, p. 430.

dependent upon the unity of body and soul; apart from the combination of the two, human consciousness is impossible."¹ He further says, "the stock reference in Eccl. 9:5-10 . . . is contextually limited by verse 6: The dead "know not anything . . . that is done under the sun!"²

Tertullian speaks to this point: "Souls do not sleep even when men are alive: it is indeed the business of bodies to sleep, to which also belong death itself."³

In this same vein Osmun quotes from Professor Delitzsch:

[Scripture] calls death a sleep, so far as the disappearance of a dying person out of the body resembles the retreat of the soul of a person falling asleep out of corporeally evidenced external life; but it nowhere says that souls vanishing out of their bodies sleep.⁴

Osmun then continued that, "apart from the body the soul is not able to sleep. Sleep is a thing of nerves. . . . even our bodily sleep is not one of suspended consciousness."⁵

How much "better" can it be conceived, of St. Paul to be "absent from the body and present with the Lord," if he were to be unconscious? Of what comfort were the words of Jesus about Paradise to the dying thief if the man were to be unconscious? How can one explain the appearance of Moses and Elijah with Christ on the mount of transfiguration if they were soul sleeping and unconscious? These and many other questions are raised by Evangelicals as being unharmonious with the doctrine of soul sleep. Evangelicals insist that the Bible teaches the resurrection of the body

¹Martin, op. cit., p. 15.

²Ibid.

³Roberts and Donaldson, op. cit., III, p. 235.

⁴Osmun, op. cit., p. 144.

⁵Ibid.

from death and the grave, but the soul having never died is in no need of resurrection.

IV. SUMMARY

The Seventh-Day Adventist position relative to an intermediate state falls under four basic ideas:

(1) Man does not possess an immortal soul. At death the soul ceases to have life along with the body.

(2) Immortality is bestowed on the believer at the resurrection when Christ returns. The soul can only receive life after the death of the body, if the person has lived righteously, and this will be awarded at the resurrection. Ultimately the state of immortality is bestowed for having lived a righteous life.

(3) There has never been an immortal sinner. Because of the wicked life of the sinner he will be given everlasting death. This is not an unending punishment but rather annihilation. It is an eternal death, one never to be recalled; but not one to be an eternally living in misery.

(4) The doctrine most pertinent to this thesis is that of soul sleep or psychopannychism. Seventh-Day Adventists hold that the soul becomes completely insensible and unconscious at death of the physical body. The soul actually is dead and receives life only at the resurrection of the body.

(5) In this condition of sleep, time and sense are non-existent. According to this reasoning there can be no such thing as an intermediate state, at least not one of which the soul could consciously know about.

V. EVALUATION

The Seventh-Day Adventists push aside the idea of an intermediate state because according to them it is "found to have expression in the pseudepigraphal writings."¹ If such a position were to be granted to them as valid, this premise would yet have as much validity as the "visions" of Mrs. White, which underlie their philosophy of the soul. The entire system of soul sleep and annihilation is founded on the view of the mortal nature of man, revealed to Mrs. White by vision and conversation with the angels. Correct the basic error of the make-up of man by returning to Scripture from these "visions," give to man the dual-nature of Evangelical faith, and their entire concept of the soul will crumble.

In leaving this section it is proper to reflect that if the Seventh-Day Adventist premise were valid, why then should there be any urgency to preach the Gospel? If the wicked are to be annihilated and not have to suffer for their wrong doing, what is their need to repent and be converted? Ellen G. White has said, "And where are the voices of warning and entreaty to bid the sinner flee from this fearful doom?"² It may well be asked, "What doom? Annihilation?" Obvious to any observer, the suicide rate speaks of how well the wicked would like to "end it all." No other motive but concern that all might make the abode of the blessed could be urged as any reason for going with the message. Certainly, even this concern, would not urge the necessity of preaching to those who wickedly revile God, his message and messengers.

¹Froom, op. cit., I, p. 184.

²White, op. cit., p. 140.

Equally as perplexing is the blasting of the hope to be "with the Lord" which is held dear to Evangelicals. Even though the jolt may be tempered with the thought that time does not exist between death and the resurrection; common sense teaches that our grandmothers may have been in the grave longer than we are old. However, according to the Adventist teaching they are not yet "with the Lord," as far as any consciousness can advise them. In their efforts to make it easier to the transgressor, the Adventists have wrought confusion in the hope of God's redeemed, and given the sinner what he desires,--that to "end it all."

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It was the purpose of this study to examine and discuss the position of Evangelical believers concerning the nature of an intermediate state. This having been ascertained, the Seventh-Day Adventist position was compared and contrasted to it. Finding of truly Evangelical voices who considered it enough to establish a position was difficult. It was a general opinion, that since the doctrine is not essential to salvation, it is of little worth to discuss or study it. In spite of the lack of volumes of material, certain concrete and reliable judgments have been raised which enabled the writer to formulate a statement. Ramifications of the subject are many, but the three principle areas of discussion are: (1) Immortality of the soul; (2) The response of the soul in the intermediate state; and (3) Whether this state is a place or a condition. A summary treatment of these three areas follows.

(1) Immortality of the soul. It is the Evangelical position of the authorities cited in this thesis, that every soul of man is created by God in a divine act, and that as such, it is living and always will be. The position of the Seventh-Day Adventists in supporting conditional immortality, is Scripturally unthinkable to Evangelicals. The Adventists feel that their doctrine is most soundly attested by men of note in most every generation, beginning with Tyndale. From the time of the early Fathers, however, this idea has been refuted. They cannot claim the solid

endorsement of any leader of movements within Protestantism: Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Wesley, or Knox. The Adventists do cite a papal charge against Wishart, the forerunner of Knox, "for promulgating the doctrine of the sleep of the soul."¹ Martin feels that "conditional immortality was taught by Martin Luther, William Tyndale, John Wycliffe and other great figures of church history."² Adventists do claim Luther's endorsement, but recognize that he was not consistent.³ The Lutherans of today cannot find this intention of soul sleep in his writings.

Since the Adventist position is supported and undergirded mainly by extra-Biblical sources, namely, the visions of their founder, it becomes untenable and most contradictory to Scripture in the judgment of most Evangelicals.

(2) Response of the soul in the intermediate state. This summary and that of the next section must have application only to the Evangelical position. The Seventh-Day Adventists do not believe in an intermediate state or place, because the soul is held to be in an unconscious state. They would not believe it possible therefore, for the soul to respond at all. The general consensus of opinion of the Evangelicals cited is that the believer will have happiness and immediate joy in the presence of his Lord. Agreement is also given for the most part that the wicked will have absence of joy in being estranged forever from the Lord in remorse and tormenting sadness.

¹Representative Group, op. cit., p. 576. ²Martin, op. cit., p. 236.

²Representative Group, op. cit., p. 572.

The Evangelicals view man as being fully conscious and alert while in this state. It is not agreed that there can be any measure of growth possible for the soul; but very likely there will be a full adjustment in being with the Lord and absent from the body of flesh with its perverse tendencies. This adjustment is thought to be a momentary one, effected by Divine grace. It is condemned as impossible and un-Scriptural that the soul of any man could make a decision for the acceptance of Christ's salvation in the intermediate state. In this is condemned the thought of a "second probation." Further, the general Evangelical position understands the wicked are reserved in the intermediate state in a sort of imprisonment of torment. This is a prison of lesser extent of punishment and severity than the sinner will actually receive after the judgment. From the intermediate state of both righteous and wicked the souls of all will be resurrected,--the just to be rewarded with heaven and such other rewards as their "deeds" may merit.¹ The wicked will be condemned to "eternal fire,"² and not to annihilation, as the Seventh-Day Adventists maintain.

(3) The intermediate state as a place. The majority of Evangelicals cited do believe that the intermediate state calls for a place. The type of place needed for dis-embodied souls is not known or conjectured. The parable of Luke sixteen speaking of Lazarus and Dives, is generally accepted by Evangelicals as a reliable description of a place where the dead retire from the earth. The righteous are seen to be comforted in the presence of the old patriarchs, and the unrighteous are seen separated

¹Romans 2:6.

²Matthew 25:41.

from them in a place where they are in torment. Whether the parable should be interpreted in a literal manner is a matter not agreed upon. The believer is always seen in the New Testament as being with Christ, at the time of death, while the unbeliever is away from Christ. Both of the states seem to imply that this mode of being implies a place as well, for Christ is in a place we call heaven. It is not necessary to press the believer into the highest heaven immediately at the death of the body, for Christ is everywhere present. To do this complicates the matter of rewards, which will be settled only after the judgment. The same must be said about sending the sinner into the flames of Gehenna prior to the judgment.

CONCLUSIONS

The fact of an intermediate state is believed by a majority of Evangelicals to be a true and Biblical doctrine, therefore, there can be considerable benefit from its being preached.

1. Considering that Evangelicals believe the intermediate state is a time-experience, as viewed from this human side, we can therefore believe that deceased believers are spending time with Christ in enjoyment, rest and waiting. Although it may not be viewed as a time-experience by the conscious soul therein, we can be assured those in Paradise are well aware of Christ's presence and that of other believers as well. We can also be assured that those in sin's prison are waiting in conscious torment for the resurrection and the final judgment which will

consign them to Gehenna forever.

2. Evangelicals likewise are agreed that the intermediate state is a place-experience as entered into by the soul. Its make-up need not be a material one, and thus the human mind does not understand what sort of place it may be. Because of this, the believer must at death have faith in God that He will take his soul to the place of waiting where he can be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Evangelical opinion also affirms that there is a division in the intermediate state,--the righteous dead are with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the wicked dead are separated from the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is concluded that death forever separates the just from the unjust, the righteous from the unrighteous. They will never dwell together again.

4. The intermediate place does not represent the final place is also a proper conclusion for Evangelicals. Thus the intermediate place is not the saints' heaven or the sinners' hell. Therefore, we must preach that the best is yet to come for deceased saints; and this will come at the parousia, when the mortal body will be immortalized and reunited with its eternal soul. Conversely, we must preach that the worst is yet to come to the wicked after the second resurrection and the final judgment. The wicked are to be kept in "prison,"¹ away from the righteous. There he will be in a state of consciousness with regret, sorrow, pain and torment. Their souls with their resurrected bodies will stand in the

¹I Peter 3:19.

great judgment and will then be consigned to Gehenna. It is hardly consistent with Scripture to have them sent directly from earth to Gehenna, the final abode of the damned, with no trial and judgment beforehand.

Other problem areas.

1. A full investigation of the revolt of the Reformers against the purgatorial claims of the Roman Church, would be worthy of further study.

2. The matter of the make-up of man and the immortality of the soul would present a challenge for a full investigative study.

3. The effects of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the doctrine of an intermediate state would be of definite interest to a further study of the intermediate state.

4. From the Seventh-Day Adventist view, it would be most profitable to investigate the extent of reliability that has been placed in extra-Biblical sources in determining their total doctrinal position. Some of these sources could be: the early visions of Mrs. White, the Millerite doctrines which were established prior to and somewhat basic to Adventist doctrines, the Jehovah's Witness beliefs which also stem from the Millerites, and the Christadelphian doctrines concerning the nature of man and the life after death.

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