

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF OSCAR CULLMANN AND ROMAN CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES

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The pagan doctrine of immortality of the soul has received scholarly consideration and attention for decades. Though much research has been written to refute the concept of life after death, the doctrine still remains a theological conundrum. The purpose of this research is to compare the views of the Roman Catholic Church and Oscar Cullmann's perspective on the doctrine of immortality of the soul within the context of the Bible. Against this background, the study shows that the body and the soul are not two distinct substances, one mortal and the other immortal surviving together into one human being, as believed by the Catholic Church. Rather, the body and the soul, together, represent components of the human person.

Consequently, neither the elements constituting man nor the procedure applied at creation, as depicted in Genesis 2:7 involves anything like a soul in the dualistic sense. This biblical teaching is in harmony with Oscar Cullmann's view on

immortality of the soul, which asserts that there is no distinction between a body and soul that comes separately at death.

Therefore, body and soul, are an indivisible unity, part of the human person that ceases to exist at death until the resurrection. In this vein, the study concludes that the doctrine of immortality of the soul is foreign to the Bible. It follows that the Catholic belief in the immortality of the soul, purgatory and the whole teaching of the intercessory role of Mary and the saints are biblically untrue. At best, it qualifies as a tactic to sustain the Edenic lie that humanity “shall not surely die” (Gen 3:4).

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IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF OSCAR CULLMANN AND ROMAN CATHOLIC
PERSPECTIVES

A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

Joseph Danquah

August 2016

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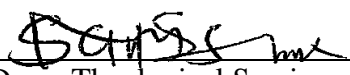
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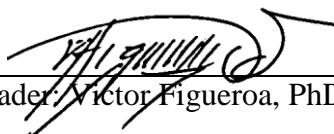
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Dedicated to my lovely wife, Mercy Danquah, and precious children, Reuben, Daniella, Irene, Josephine, and Boaz for their massive support and prayers to sail through this research successfully.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Justification of the Study	6
Delimitation	6
Methodology and Procedure	6
Organization of the Study	6
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	8
Biblical Perspective of Human Nature	8
The Concept of the Soul in the Old Testament.....	8
The State of the Dead in the Old Testament	15
The New Testament View of Human Nature	20
The Concept of the Soul in the New Testament	20
The State of the Dead in the New Testament	24
The Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul ..	28
The Origin of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul.....	28
The Early Church and the Immortality of the Soul.....	30
The Medieval Church and the Immortality of the Soul	35
The Reformation and the Concept of the Immortality of the Soul	37
The Modern Theologians and Immortality of the Soul	39
The Intermediate State of the Dead	45
Summary	48
3. ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND OSCAR CULLMANN'S VIEW ON IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.....	50
Catholic Church's View on the Nature of the Soul	51
Catholic Church's View on the State of the Soul after Death	54
The Intermediate State of the Dead	55
The Soul and the Resurrection.....	59
The Background of Oscar Cullmann	61
Oscar Cullmann's Concept of Immortality of the Soul	67
The Nature of the Soul	67
The State of the Soul after Death.....	68
The Soul and the Resurrection.....	69

Comparative Analysis of the Catholic and Cullmann's	71
Views on Immortality of the Soul.....	71
Summary	80
4. IMPLICATION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	81
Summary	80
Conclusion	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY	87
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	95

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul has received considerable scholarly attention throughout human history because of an interpretive enigma it presents. Many have refused to accept the finality and the biblical truth that death brings to life (Eccl 9:5).¹ They have attempted to refute the reality of death by teaching various forms of life after death.² A key element of this teaching has been the belief in the survival of the soul apart from the body at the time of death. In spite of the modern scientific advancement, the popularity of the belief in the immortality of the soul has not subsided and is spreading unabated.³

A study conducted in the United States of America indicates that 71 percent of Americans believe in some form of conscious life after death.⁴ They believe that everyone has a soul and that heaven and hell exist.⁵ It is universally believed that an average human being is composed of both body and soul. In addition, Catholics believe that the soul is the nonmaterial, immortal part that leaves the body at death

¹All the Bible references are from the King James Version, unless otherwise indicated.

²Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection* (Michigan, USA: Biblical Perspective, 1997), 1.

³Tony Walter, *The Eclipse of Eternity* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 32.

⁴*Ibid.*, 33.

⁵Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 171.

and lives on consciously forever in heaven, hell or purgatory.⁶ They assume that the belief in an afterlife is taught in the Bible. They based their argument on the text such as, Matt 5:25, 26; 12:31, 32; Luke 12:48; 1 Cor 3:10-15; 15:29; 2 Tim 1:16-18; 1Pet 3:18-20. However, history suggests that the concept of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul derives mostly from Greek pagan philosophies that gradually entered the Christian church.⁷

Further studies also show that the medieval theologians under the influence of Augustine's theology accepted the pagan doctrine of immortality of the soul taught by Plato. In his book, *The Phaedo*, Plato declares that death is the separation of the soul from the body in which it is enclosed.⁸ Plato held the view that, the soul resides in the body for a time and does not unite with it to form one substantial being. In view of this the soul preexists the body, is united to it for a certain time and then abandons it to pass into another body or to return to the world of ideas from which it came.⁹ Thomas Aquinas also argues that the soul of each person manages to survive in its own personal individuality without being absorbed into the whole.¹⁰

John Calvin, a Magisterial Reformer, also asserts that the human soul is something that is essentially separate from the body. Therefore, the soul survives the body at death, where in glad expectation it awaits the enjoyment of the promised

⁶Ibid., 172.

⁷Joachim Jeremias, "Hades," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 1: 147-148; See James Bonwick, *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought* (Indian Hills, CO: Falcon's Wing Press, 1956), 80.

⁸Walter, *The Eclipse of Eternity*, 32; See F. J. Church, *Plato's Phaedo* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1951), 7.

⁹Ibid., 8.

¹⁰Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles, on the truth of the Catholic Faith IV* (New York: Hanover House, 1955), 79.

glory.¹¹ Some modern theologians also postulate that the righteous dead go directly to the heavenly father or at least to a temporal heaven while those who die in their sins go straight to eternal hell fire.¹² Others subscribe to the concept of “soul sleep.”¹³ Under this concept, the dead person is believed to be in some sort of suspended state until the final Judgment.¹⁴ Conrad Bergendoff rightly notes that the Gospels offer no basis for a theory of redemption which saves souls apart from the bodies to which they belong.¹⁵ Thus the soul is simply the animating principle of the body.

On its part, the Catholic Church accedes to the concept of “purgatory,” that is a place where the souls of those who die in the state of grace, but not yet free from all imperfection, make transit for the expiation before entering into heaven.¹⁶ In other words, the pardonable souls can be purified in purgatory before ascending to Paradise.¹⁷ This doctrine of purgatory has been approved and reaffirmed by the Roman Catholic Church at several council meetings including; the first council of Lyons (1245), the Second Councils of Lyons (1274), the Council of Florence (1439–43) and the Council of Trent (1563) respectively.¹⁸ This Catholic belief has been

¹¹Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, “Death: Origin, nature and final eradication,” *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 314-344.

¹²Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 171.

¹³Andreasen, “Death: Origin, nature and final eradication,” 324.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 325.

¹⁵Conrad Bergendoff, “Body and Spirit in Christian Thought,” *The Lutheran Quarterly* 6 (August 1954), 188-189.

¹⁶Thomas Carson, “Purgatory,” *The New Catholic Encyclopedia (NCE)*, completely rev. and reset ed. (New York: R. Appleton Publication, 2003), 2: 835.

¹⁷*Catechism of the Church* (Washington D.C: Liquori Publication, 1994), 267-270.

¹⁸Krister Stendhal, “*Immortality of the soul or Resurrection of the dead*” (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 1.

almost accepted by the protestant Churches, philosophers, theologians, historians, anthropologists and linguists to formulate their views on this doctrine. The views of these scholars show the length and width of the spectrum.

In contrast, Oscar Cullmann, a New Testament scholar, holds a different view from that of Catholic Church. According to him, the physical death is also the death of the soul¹⁹ and therefore, in order for the soul to be able to return to life, a new creative act of God is necessary which recalls into life not only a part of man, but the whole man which God created and death destroyed.²⁰ Since this view stands in opposition to the Catholic teachings on immortality of the soul, this study examines the views of the Roman Catholic Church and Oscar Cullmann on the doctrine of the afterlife.

Statement of the Problem

The concept of the immortality of the soul is an essential belief of the Roman Catholic Church. It emanates from her teaching that salvation is a gradual process of sanctification that starts with the sacrament of baptism when sanctifying grace is initially infused in the new born baby, and continues throughout the present life and in most cases after death in purgatory.²¹ The growth of sanctification makes the soul holy and fundamentally pleasing to God. The sanctification of the soul is achieved

¹⁹Stendhal, "Immortality and Resurrection," 2.

²⁰Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead* (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 12. See also, John H. Leith, *Creeeds of the Churches* (Atlanta : John Knox Press, 1977), 228; K. Osis and E. Haraldsson, *At the Hour of Death* (New York : Avon, 1977), 13; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1940), 713-30; W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: P & R, 2003), 591-640; G. C. Berkouwer, *the Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 32-64.; Ray S. Anderson, *Theology, Death and Dying* (New York, USA: Blackwel, 1986), 104; Hans Schwarz, "Luther's Understanding of Heaven and Hell," *Interpreting Luther's Legacy*, ed. F. W. Meuser and S. D. Schneider (Minneapolis : Augsburg, 1969), 83-94; Robert Osei-Bonsu, "Purgatory: A Study of the Historical Development and Its Compatibility with the Biblical Teaching on the Afterlife," *Philosophy Study*, April 2012, 286-299.

²¹Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 173.

through prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimages to holy shrines, indulgences, and especially memorial masses. The purging fire of purgatory will last only until the general judgment to be executed at Christ's return. After the final judgment, purgatory will be shut down and there will be only heaven and hell.²²

Several theologians have underscored the non-biblical nature of this Catholic doctrine of immortality of the soul. For others, this teaching contradicts the fate of penitent sinners who die or will be alive when Christ comes to shut down purgatory. In the same vein, Oscar Cullmann states that the transformation of the body does not occur immediately after a person's death, rather at the time of Christ's return those who are then alive will have no advantage over those who have died in Christ. Therefore, the dead in Christ are still in time; they, too, are waiting.²³

Many scholars have come out with different views on the immortality of the soul. Martin Heinechen, one of the protestant scholars, for instance, opines that man has no life or immortality within himself.²⁴ These opposing views regarding the condition of man after death need to be considered. Thus, a salient question may be asked. How is the concept of the immortality of the soul understood by Oscar Cullmann and the Roman Catholic Church in relation to the biblical teaching on the state of the dead? The nature of the doctrine of immortality of the soul in the theology of these two opinions are preferred to show the impact of this doctrine on christianity.

²²Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 173.

²³Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*, 20.

²⁴Martin Heinechen, *Basic Christian Teachings* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949), 37.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to compare the views of the Roman Catholic Church and those of Oscar Cullmann's on the immortality of the soul, in relation to the biblical teachings on life after death.

Justification of the Study

The study seeks to understand and identify the similarities and differences between Roman Catholic and Cullmann's concept of life after death. It will help illuminate the essential problems which deal with life after death. This may also contribute to the existing knowledge on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

Delimitation

There are several issues pertaining to life after death that needs to be considered. However, this paper focuses primarily on a comparative analysis of the Roman Catholics' and Oscar Cullmann's position on the immortality of the soul that impinge on the biblical concept of life after death.

Methodology and Procedure

The study is done under comparative analysis basis to study the relationship between the views of Roman Catholic and Oscar Cullmann's theology on the immortality of the soul considering the biblical teachings on life after death. The information for this study is obtained from published works, such as books, articles, journals, periodicals, and other unpublished works from the internet and other sources. Pertinent information from related literature is examined.

Organization of the Study

The paper is arranged in four main chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction to the study. Chapter two considers the review of related literature. The

third chapter examines the Roman Catholic Church's concept of the immortality of the soul, Oscar Cullmann's position on the immortality of the soul and the comparison of their views on immortality of the soul. The fourth is the summary, conclusion and the implication of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The subject matter in the review of literature in this paper is “immortality of the soul.” It is a comparison of the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching on the immortality of the soul and that of Oscar Cullmann’s views. Therefore, the key area of study in this chapter would be the biblical perspective on life after death, the origin, the historical and theological development of the doctrine of immortality of the soul. To this effect, this section offers a platform to evaluate and glean prevailing ideas on the research problem and it elucidates how these ideas fit into this study.

Biblical Perspective of Human Nature

This section considers the biblical perspective of the nature of humans to help readers understand the concept of the immortality of the soul. This section aims at helping readers understand human nature and the relationship between the soul and the body, especially at death.

The Concept of the Soul in the Old Testament

The issue of human nature has been a consistent concern in the history of Christian thought.¹ The question posed by the Psalmist, “What is man that thou art

¹Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 33; See also, P. E. Hughes, *Hope for a Despairing World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wertheimer, 1997), 50; H. D. McDonald, *The Christian View of Man* (Westchester, Ill. : Crossway Books, 1981), 90; C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (London: Epworth ,1951), 29-30; R. Laird-Harris, *Man, God’s Eternal Creation: A Study of Old Testament Culture* (Chicago: Moody Press,1971), 24; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (London: James Clarke, 1949), 162; Paul Jewett, *Man: Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 33.

mindful of him?” (Ps 8:4), is the fundamental question that anyone could reflect on. The answer to this question determines the way we view ourselves, this world, redemption, and our ultimate destiny. In the past, the majority of Christians have described human nature dualistically, that it consists of a material, mortal body and an immaterial, immortal soul which survives the body at death.²

Dualism holds the view that, at death, a soul or spirit goes on functioning forever.³ The same term, soul or spirit is frequently applied to expressions of the internal life itself rather than to an independent entity in which they supposedly live. In contrast to dualism is biblical monism, a position which holds all expressions of the inner life depend wholly on human nature, including the organic system.⁴

In his excellent book, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Body*, Bacchiocchi observes that “the logical starting point for the study of the biblical concept of human soul is the account of the creation of man.”⁵ In Genesis 2:7 the text reads: “Then God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”

The phrase that captures the attention of this biblical text is the “living soul.” The word “soul” (*nephesh*) occurs in the Old Testament 755 times and is rendered in 45 different ways.⁶ “Nephesh” comes from the root “naphash”, a verb occurring only three times in the Old Testament (Ex. 23:12; 31:17; 2 Sam. 16:14), each time meaning

²Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 33.

³C. Johnsen, *Man, the Indivisible* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), 88.

⁴McDonald, *The Christian View of Man*, 90.

⁵Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection* 10.

⁶Basil F. C. Atkinson, *Life and Immortality* (London: Goodman, 1969), 3.

“to revive oneself” or “to refresh oneself.”⁷ It offers the only biblical account of how God created man. It is also the core of many thoughts regarding human nature.

However, the “living soul” which is in Hebrew *nephesh hayyah* is used for both man and animal (Gen. 1:20, 21, 24, 30). The adjective *hayyah* means “alive.”⁸ Though *nephesh* is often translated soul in our English version, its usage for both man and beast (Gen. 1: 20, 24-30; 2: 19; 7: 21) shows that there is nothing immortal or even pertaining to higher functions about.

In its most basic sense the Hebrew word *nephesh* means “throat, gullet,” from which the idea of “appetite” derives. Historically, Gen 2:7 has been read through the lenses of classical dualism.⁹ The dualistic interpretation of the phrase *man became a living soul* (Gen 2:7) has been wrongly translated to mean that “man obtained a living soul.” This wrong translation has been challenged by many scholars who are aware of the uncertainty regarding the difference between the Greek-dualistic and the biblical-holistic conception of human nature. Aubrey Johnson, for instance, opines that soul (*nephesh*) in Genesis 2:7 refers to the whole man, with an emphasis on his consciousness and vitality.¹⁰ In the same way, Johannes Pedersen posits that the basis of his essence was the weak bodily substance, but by the breath of God it was

⁷Basil F. C. Atkinson, *Life and Immortality* (London: Goodman, 1969), 4.

⁸Aecio E. Cairus, “The Doctrine of Man,” *Seventh Day Adventist Handbook of Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 213.

⁹Per Bacchiocchi, the classical dualism presupposes that the breath of life God breath into man’s nostril was simply an immaterial, immortal soul implanted into the material body. The cause of this erroneous interpretation is that the Hebrew word *nephesh*, translated “soul” in Genesis 2:7, has been understood per the standard Webster’s definition for soul. It defines soul as “the immaterial *essence*, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life, or the spiritual principle embodied in human beings.” This definition echoes the Platonic view of the soul as being an immaterial, immortal essence that abides in the body, though it is not part of it. This existing view causes people to interpret the Old Testament references to the soul in the light of platonic dualism rather than of biblical wholism. Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 10.

¹⁰Aubrey Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff, Wales: Wales Press, 1964), 16.

changed and became a soul. It is not said that man was supplied with a soul, and so the relation between body and soul is quite different from what it is to us. Such as he is, man in his total essence is a soul.¹¹

Pedersen further states that in the Old Testament we are always confronted with the fact that man, as such, is a soul.¹² For instance, Abraham started for Canaan with his property and all the souls he had gotten (Gen 12:5), and when Abraham had taken booty on his warlike expedition against the great kings, the King of Sodom exhorted him to yield the souls and keep the goods (Gen 14:21). Reference is also made of seventy souls of the house of Jacob who came to Egypt (Gen 46:27; Ex 1:5). Furthermore, whenever a census is taken, the question always is: How many souls are there? In these and in numerous other places we may substitute persons for souls. Similarly, Dom Wulstan Mork indicates that “It is soul that gives life to the body, but not as a distinct substance. Adam doesn’t have soul; he is soul, just as he is body. The body, far from being divided from its animating principle, is the visible soul.”¹³

From the biblical point of view, the body and the soul are not two distinct substances, one mortal and the other immortal surviving together into one human being, but two characteristics of the same person. Pedersen puts this in a proverbial way: “The body is the soul in its external form.”¹⁴ Moreover, Wheeler Robinson expresses the same view in an equally famous statement: “The Hebrew idea of personality is that of an animated body, not that of an incarnate soul.”¹⁵ In Gen. 2:7,

¹¹Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press 1926), 99.

¹²Ibid., 100.

¹³Dom Wulstan Mork, *The Biblical Meaning of Man* (Milwaukee: Wisconsin press, 1967), 34.

¹⁴Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 171.

¹⁵Henry Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man* (Edinburg: Clarendon Press, 1952), 27.

then, the overall sense of the combination *nephesh hayyah* is an animated “living being.”¹⁶ Therefore man is a soul rather than having a soul. Consequently, neither the elements constituting man nor the procedure applied at creation, as depicted in Gen. 2:7 involves anything like a soul in the dualistic sense.

The meaning of the word soul in the context of creation implies that it is used to designate the animating principle of life as present in both human beings and animals. The Old Testament further explores the broader use of soul that relate directly to the object of our investigation. For example, the soul in the Old Testament is perceived as a needy person, emotional life, and personality. In his book, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, Hans Walter Wolff captions the chapter on the soul as “needy man.”¹⁷ The reason for this characterization of soul as “needy man” is apparent since there are numerous texts which depict soul in dangerous situations of life and death proportions. An example could be seen in the following passages Psalms 57:1; Psalms 6:3-4; Job 19:2; Joshua 2:13.”

In addition, Wolff observes that the emotional content of the soul is equated with the self or the person and is not an independent entity. The soul is the self of the needy life, thirsting with desire.¹⁸ He alludes to Psalms 42:5, 11, and 43:5 in which the same song of lament and of self-exhortation is found. It is God who made man “a living soul” and who sustains the Hebrews when in danger appealed to God to deliver their soul, that is, their life. For instance, David prayed: “Deliver my soul from the wicked” (Ps 17:13). David further adds “For thy righteousness sake, O Lord, bring my soul out of trouble” (Ps. 143:11).

¹⁶Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Augsburg: Fortress, 1974), 10.

¹⁷Ibid., 125.

¹⁸Ibid., 10.

Moreover, Jeremiah says “the Lord deserves to be praised, for he has delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of the evildoers” (Jer 20:13). Additionally, Ezekiel states that “the soul that sin, it shall die” (Ezek 18:4, 20). Furthermore, Rahab asked the two Israelite spies to save her family and deliver their souls from death (Jos 2:13). There is nothing in these passages to suggest that the soul is an immaterial part of human nature that is equipped with personality and consciousness and is able to survive death but rather they are the evidence that the soul that was in danger and needed to be delivered was the life of the individual.

In the Old Testament perception, the soul being the animating principle of human life also functioned as the center of emotional activities. For instance, David cried to the Lord, in search of deliverance from his enemies saying, “my soul is in anguish. Return, O Lord, deliver my soul” (Ps 6:3-4). While the people were waiting for God's liberation, their soul was losing strength.

Tory Hoff observes that because the Psalmist often wrote from within this experience of danger, the Psalms take account of phrases such as their soul fainted in them (Ps 107:5), my soul melts for sorrow (Ps 119:28), my soul languishes for salvation (Ps 119:81), my soul longs, yea, faints for thy courts (Ps 84:2), and their soul melted away in their evil plight¹⁹ (Ps 107:26). Job inquired, “How long will you torment my soul” (Job 19:2). It was also the soul that would wait for deliverance. “For God does my soul wait in silence” (Ps 62:1). “I wait for the Lord; my soul waits and in his word, I hope” (Ps 130:5).

Since the Hebrew knew all deliverance came from God, his soul would take refuge in God (Ps 57:1) and thirst for him (Ps 42:2; 63:1). Once the danger had passed

¹⁹Tory Hoff, “Nephesh and the Fulfillment it Receives as Psyche,” in *Toward a Biblical View of Man* (Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 1978), 98.

and the intense, unsafe nature of the situation was over, the soul would praise God for freedom received. My soul makes its boast in the Lord, let the afflicted hear and be glad (Ps 34:2). Then my soul shall rejoice in the Lord, exulting in his deliverance (Ps 35:9).²⁰ Wolff truly observes that the emotional content of the soul is likened to self or the person and is not an independent entity.²¹

Again, in the Old Testament concept the soul is seen not only as the seat of emotions but also as the seat of personality. The soul is the person as a responsible individual. For instance, in Micah 6:7 we read: “Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, and the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” The Hebrew word translated here as “body” is *beten*, which means belly or womb.²²

The contrast here is not between body and soul. Commenting on this, Mork writes, the meaning is not that the soul is the human source of sin, with the body as the soul’s tool. Rather, the soul, the whole living person, is the cause of sin.²³ In this quote, Mork appears to establish that the responsibility for sin is attributed to the soul as the person who thinks, wills, and is answerable for his conduct. Thus, any act was the whole soul in action, hence, the whole person.

William Desmond Stacey rightly expresses that the soul sorrowed, hungered, and thought because each of these functions required the whole personality to perform it, and the difference between emotional, physical, and mental was not made.²⁴ The survival of the soul in the Old Testament is connected to the survival of the body

²⁰Tory Hoff, “Nephesh and the Fulfillment it Receives as Psyche,” in *Toward a Biblical View of Man* (Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 1978), 98.

²¹Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 10.

²²*Ibid.*, 11.

²³Mork, *The Biblical Meaning of Man*, 40.

²⁴David Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1956), 87.

because the body is an outward manifestation of the soul. That is why the death of a person is often described as the death of the soul. When death occurs, it is the soul that is deprived of life. Death cannot strike the body or any other parts of the soul without striking the entirety of the soul²⁵ (Num 31:19; 35:15, 30; Jos 20:3, 9).

To sum up, a study of the meaning of soul in the Old Testament has revealed that never once is the word used to express the idea of an immaterial, immortal entity capable of existing apart from the body. Conversely, the soul is the animating principle of life, the life-breath, which is present in both human beings and animals. At death, the soul ceases to function as the animating life-principle of the body. The fate of the soul is connected inextricably with the fate of the body because the body is the outer manifestation of the soul.

The State of the Dead in the Old Testament

Despite several attempts to prove conscious existence of the soul, it has explicitly been shown in the Bible that death is the cessation of life for the whole person, body and soul.²⁶ The two expressions to describe the dwelling place of the dead in the Bible are *sheol* in the Old Testament and *hades* in the New Testament. Frequently, they are interpreted to mean the place where disembodied souls continue to exist after the death and the place of punishment of the ungodly.²⁷ Thus, it is essential for us to study the biblical meaning and usage of these two terms which clearly teach the Old Testament and New Testament view of the condition of man after death.

²⁵Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 179.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷Walter, *The Eclipse of Eternity*, 32.

The word sheol appears 65 times in the Old Testament and is interpreted differently as “grave,” “hell,” “pit,” or “death.”²⁸ These varieties of interpretation make it difficult to understand the basic meaning of the word sheol. The *King James Version*, (KJV) for instance, renders sheol as “grave” 31 times, “hell” 31 times, and “pit” 3 times. This means that those who read the “King James Version” are frequently led to believe that the Old Testament teaches the existence of hell where the wicked are tormented for their sins.²⁹

Some scholars assert that sheol is exclusively the place of punishment of the ungodly and has the same meaning as the modern hell.³⁰ In his book *Death and the Afterlife*, Robert A. Morey states that sheol is recognized 66 times in the Old Testament. Although the Old Testament constantly refers to the body as going to the grave, it always refers to the soul or spirit of man as going to sheol.³¹ Similarly, Daniel J. Meeter, Warfield states that at death, the body is laid in the grave and the soul departs to sheol.³²

In addition, George Eldon Ladd posit that, in the Old Testament, man does not cease to exist at death, but his soul goes down to *sheol*.³³ In the same way, this view is

²⁸Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1949), 170-207.

²⁹Ibid., 188.

³⁰Desmond Alexander, “The Old Testament View of Life after Death,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch (DOTP)*, ed. David W. Baker (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 44.

³¹Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984), 72.

³²Daniel J. Meeter, *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Trenton, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1970), 339-345.

³³George Eldon Ladd, “Death,” *The New Bible Dictionary (NBD)*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 3:380.

expressed by John Thomson, who affirms that at death, the body remains on earth, the soul passes into sheol.³⁴

These interpretations of sheol as the dwelling place of souls or the place of punishment for the wicked rather than the resting place of the body in the grave is biblically untrue. On the contrary, The *New International Version* usually translates it as grave, and occasionally as death (Ps 16:10; 1 Sam 2:6). This translation suitably reflects the basic meaning of sheol as the grave or, even better, the collective realm of the dead.³⁵ This fact is recognized by John W. Cooper who states that sheol is the resting place of the dead irrespective of their religion during life.³⁶ In addition, Anthony Hoekema, a Calvinistic scholar, arrives at basically the same conclusion in his book *The Bible and the Future*. He states that the various figures which are applied to sheol can all be understood as referring to the realm of the dead.³⁷

The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* states more emphatically that nowhere in the Old Testament is the abode of the dead regarded as a place of punishment or torment. The concept of an infernal 'hell' developed in Israel only during the Hellenistic period.³⁸ The attempt made by some scholars to differentiate between sheol as the abode of the soul and the grave as the resting place of the body is based on a dualistic view of human nature which is foreign to the Bible. In his study

³⁴Carl F. H. Henry, "Death and the State of the Soul after Death," in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, ed. Oswald T. Allis (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 271.

³⁵Alexander, "The Old Testament View of Life after Death," 44.

³⁶John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 61.

³⁷Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 96.

³⁸Theodore H. Gaster, "Abode of the Dead," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (IDB)*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Peter Smith, 1962), 1: 88.

on *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, Johannes Pedersen explains that sheol is the collective realm of the dead where all the deceased go, whether buried or unburied.³⁹

Also, in his doctoral dissertation on “sheol in the Old Testament,” Ralph Walter Doermann arrives at the same conclusion that the dead were conceived as being in sheol and in the grave at the same time, yet not in two different places. All the deceased, because they were subject to the same conditions, were thought to be in a common realm.⁴⁰

The etymology of the word sheol is uncertain. It originates from such a root meaning as “to ask,” “to inquire,” and “to bury one’s self.”⁴¹ According to Doermann, the term derives from the stem *shilah*, which means “to be quiet,” “at ease.”⁴² The difference between the two words is relative. The fact is that sheol refers to a place where the dead are at rest. Sheol is located deep beneath the surface of the earth, because it is often mentioned in connection with heaven to denote the uttermost limits of the universe (Amos 9:2-3; Ps 139:7-8; cf. Job 11:7-9). For instance, when Jacob was informed about the death of his son Joseph, he said: “in mourning will I go down to the grave (Sheol) to my son.” (Gen 37:35). Also, Korah, Dathan, Abiram and all their belongings were swallowed by the earth when the ground under them split asunder after they have revolted against the authority of Moses. They went down alive to sheol; and the earth closed over them (Num 16:31-33). This evidently shows that the whole person, and not just the soul, goes down to sheol, to the realm of the dead.

³⁹Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 462.

⁴⁰Ralph Walter Doermann, “Sheol in the Old Testament” (Dissertation, Duke University, 1961), 191.

⁴¹Gaster, “Abode of the Dead,” *IDB*, 1:788.

⁴²Doermann, “Sheol in the Old Testament,” 37.

The characteristics of sheol are essentially those of the realm of the dead, or the grave. In numerous passages, sheol is found in parallelism with the Hebrew word *bor*, which denotes “a pit” or any kind of subterranean hole, such as a grave (Ps 88:3-4). Here the parallelism identifies sheol with the pit, that is, the burial place of the dead. Several times sheol appears together with *abaddon*, which means “destruction,” or “ruin.”⁴³ *Abaddon* appears in parallelism with the grave (Ps 88:12). This shows that the realm of the dead was seen to be the place of destruction, and not as the place of eternal suffering for the wicked. Sheol is also characterized as the land of deep darkness (Job 10:21), where the dead never see light again (Ps 49:20; 88:13). It is also the land of silence (Ps 94:17; cf. 115:17) and the land of no-return.

The condition of the dead in sheol is weakness and inactivity. One destiny comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean (Eccl 9:2). They all go to the same place, sheol, the realm of the dead. The wise man Solomon presents a realistic description of the state of the dead in sheol: “There is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in sheol, to which you are going” (Eccl 9:10). It is evident that sheol, the realm of the dead, is the place of unconscious non-existence. Death puts an abrupt end to all activity under the sun (Eccl 9:10-11). Norman Henry Snaith emphatically stated that a dead body, whether of man, or bird, or beast is without soul. In sheol, the abode of the dead, there is no soul.⁴⁴

⁴³Doermann, “Sheol in the Old Testament,” 37.

⁴⁴Norman H. Snaith, *Life after Death* (London: Epworth Press, 1947), 322.

The New Testament View of Human Nature

This section explores human nature from the New Testament point of view to help the readers appreciate the biblical teachings on the soul and body. It also discusses the condition of the soul after death.

The Concept of the Soul in the New Testament

The New Testament elucidates an exact continuity with the Old Testament wholistic view of human nature.⁴⁵ The study of Old Testament view of human nature has underscored the fact that body and soul constitute the whole person, not two different entities. Though many people continue to hold on to the idea of the immortality of the soul at the time the New Testament was written, however, the concept is out of the writings of the New Testament because its writers were true to the teachings of the Old Testament. The writers used the important Greek words of human nature in accordance with their original equivalents in the Old Testament, where the ideas originated, and not according to the meanings prevailing in Hellenistic society.

The Greek word *psyche* (soul) is used in the New Testament in concurrence with the basic meanings of the Hebrew *nephesh* (soul) found in the Old Testament.⁴⁶ The word “soul” is translated from the Greek word “psyche,” with the meanings “life,” “breathe,” or “soul.” *Psyche* is translated forty times in the New Testament as “life” or “lives,” clearly with the meaning commonly attributed to the word “life” (Matt. 2:20; 6:25; 16: 25).⁴⁷ It is rendered fifty-eight times as “soul” or “souls” (Matt.

⁴⁵Bachiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 17.

⁴⁶Henry Wheeler Robinson, *Hebrew Psychology* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1956), 112.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 67.

10:28; 11:29; 12:18).⁴⁸ In some of these instances, it means simply “people” (Acts 7:14; 27: 37; 1 Peter 3:20). In other instances, it is translated as, or equivalent to some personal pronouns (Matt. 12:18; 2 Cor. 12:15). At times, it refers to the emotions (Mark 14:34; Luke 2:35), to the natural appetites (Rev. 18:14), to the mind (Acts 14:2; Phil. 1:27), or to the heart (Eph. 6:6).

There is nothing in the word *psyche* itself that even remotely implies a conscious entity that can survive the death of the body. And there is nothing in the Bible use of the word indicating that the Bible writers held any such belief. It encompasses the whole person in the same sense as *nephesh* in the Old Testament.⁴⁹ The example could be seen in Stephen’s defense before the Sanhedrin. He affirms that seventy-five souls of Jacob's family set off to Egypt, a figure and practice established in the Old Testament (Gen 46:26-27; Ex 1:5; Deut 10:22). Also, on the day of Pentecost, three thousand souls (Acts 2:41) were baptized and fear came upon every soul (Acts 2:43). In his statement on Noah's family, Peter declares that eight souls were saved by water (1 Pet 3:20). It is evident that in texts such as these the soul is used as a synonym for person.

In Matthew 11:28, we mention Christ's eminent promise of rest to the souls of those who accept His yoke. The expression “rest for your souls” comes from Jeremiah 6:16, where rest for the soul is promised to people who walk according to God's commandments.⁵⁰ The rest which Christ gives to the soul is not achieved, as in Platonic dualism, when the soul is liberated from the body, but when a believer

⁴⁸Robinson, *Hebrew Psychology*, 88.

⁴⁹Atkinson, *Life and Immortality*, 14.

⁵⁰Hoff, *Toward a Biblical View of Man*, 98.

accepts His gracious provision of salvation and lives in accordance with the principles of life He teaches and exemplified.

The word soul could also be frequently used in the New Testament to mean “life.” It is translated life 46 times in the New Testament.⁵¹ In these occurrences, life offers an appropriate translation of the Greek soul because it is used in allusion to physical life. Paul assured the members of the ship that “there will be no loss of souls among you, but only of the ship” (Acts 27:22; cf. 27:10). In this context, the Greek *psyche* (soul) is correctly translated “life” because Paul is talking about the loss of lives. In addition, an angel advises Joseph to take the child and his mother to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s soul are dead (Matt 2:20). This reference to the seeking, killing, and saving of the soul suggest that the soul is not an immortal part of human nature, but the physical life itself which can be in danger. In accordance with the Old Testament, the soul is put to death when the body dies.

Jesus associated the soul with food and drink (Matt 6:25). Christ shows that the soul is the physical aspect of our existence and not an immaterial component of our nature. Also, in Matthew 10: 28, Christ expands the meaning of the term “soul” to help us understand a well-known, but much misconstrued saying of Christ: “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul but fear him who can destroy both the soul and the body in hell” (Matt 10:28; cf. Luke 12:4). Dualists who believe in life after death find in this text support for the concept that the soul is an immaterial substance that is kept safe and survives the death of the body.

This interpretation echoes the Greek dualistic understanding of human nature and not the biblical wholistic view. The mention of God's power to destroy the soul

⁵¹Atkinson, Life and Immortality, 14.

and the body in hell overturn the conception of an immaterial, immortal soul. The soul cannot be immortal if God destroys it with the body in the case of unrepentant sinners. Consequently, Jesus declares in Matthew 10:28 that the soul can be killed. The soul is not immortal.⁵² Bacchiocchi shares the same view that Christ's warning scarcely teaches the immortality of the soul. Rather it teaches that God can destroy the soul as well as the body.⁵³

The use of the term soul in Paul's writings is uncommon in comparison with the Old Testament, or even the Gospels. He uses the term "soul" only 13 times⁵⁴ including quotations from the Old Testament to refer to physical life (Rom 11:3; Phil 2:30; 1 Thes 2:8), a person (Rom 2:9; 13:1), and the seat of emotional life (Phil 1:27; Col 3:23; Eph 6:6). Paul never uses the term "soul" to denote the life that survives death, conversely, he identifies the soul with our physical being which is subject to the law of sin and death⁵⁵ (1 Cor 15:44). Paul uses the term "spirit" (*pneuma*) to portray the new life in Christ which the believer receives wholly as a gift of God's spirit both now and at the resurrection.

The apostle distinguishes the link between the present life and the resurrection life, but since he sees it as God's gift and not something found in human nature, he used "spirit" instead.⁵⁶ The Christian hope is found not on the immortality of the soul

⁵²Krister Stendahl, *Death in the Western World: Two Conflicting Currents of Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 36-37.

⁵³Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 19.

⁵⁴Edward Schweitzer, "Psyche," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:648.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, 34; The same view is expressed by Russell Foster Aldwinckle, *Death in the Secular City: life after death in contemporary theology and philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 82.

but on the resurrection of the body. It is the resurrection that gives the gift of immortality on the body, that is, on the whole person of the believer.⁵⁷

In summary, a study of the New Testament use of the term soul shows that there is no support for the idea of the soul as an immaterial and immortal being that endures the death of the body. This wholistic view of human nature eliminates the basis for the belief in the survival of the soul at the death of the body.⁵⁸

The State of the Dead in the New Testament

The New Testament does not say much about the state of the dead especially the intermediate state between the falling asleep and the awakening on the day of the resurrection.⁵⁹ The prime concern of the New Testament is with the procedures that mark the swing from this age to the age to come, thus the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. The New Testament basis of information for the state of the dead are the eleven references to hades which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew sheol and five passages which is frequently mentioned in support of the belief in the conscious existence of the soul after death (Lk 16:19-31; Luke 23:42-43; Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:1-10; Rev 6:9-11).

The Greek word *hades* was used biblically when the translators of the Septuagint opted it to render the Hebrew sheol. The problem is that the Greek understanding of hades was different from the Hebrew understanding of sheol. While sheol in the Old Testament is the realm of the dead, where the deceased are in an unconscious state, hades in Greek myths is the underworld, where the conscious souls

⁵⁷Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 21.

⁵⁸Schweitzer, "Psyche," *TDNT*, 1:648.

⁵⁹Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 22.

of the dead are divided into two major regions, one a place of torment and the other of blessedness.⁶⁰

In Greek mythology, Hades was the god of the underworld, and then the name of the nether world itself.⁶¹ This Greek notion of Hades had a great impact on Hellenistic Jews, during the Inter-Testamental period, to accept the belief in the immortality of the soul and the idea of a spatial partition in the underworld between the righteous and the godless. The souls of the righteous continued instantly after death to heavenly felicity, there to anticipate the resurrection, while the souls of the godless departed to a place of torment in Hades.⁶² This view eventually entered the Christian church and influenced even Bible translators.

It is remarkable that the word Hades, which appears 11 times in the New Testament, is translated in the KJV 10 times as “hell” and 1 time as “grave.”⁶³ The RSV transliterates the word as “Hades.” The interpretation of Hades as “hell” is erroneous and deceptive, because, apart from Luke 16:23, the expression refers to the grave or the realm of the dead, not to a place of punishment.

The use of Hades in the New Testament appears as standing equivalent of Sheol, the realm of the dead or the grave. Jesus referred to Hades three times in the gospels. The first use of Hades is found in Matthew 11:23, where Jesus rebukes Capernaum (cf. Luke 10:15). Here Hades, like Sheol in the Old Testament (Amos 9:2-3; Job 11:7-9), signify the deepest place in the universe, just as the heaven is the

⁶⁰Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes. A Biblical and Historical Study of the Final Punishment* (Houston: Paternoster Press, 1989), 205.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Jeremias, “Hades,” *TDNT*, 1: 148.

⁶³Ibid.

highest. This means that Capernaum will be humiliated by being brought down to the realm of the dead, the deepest place in the universe.

Secondly, the use of hades in the teaching of Jesus occurs in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23). In this parable, Jesus met people on their own ground. The story employed what was familiar to them to teach them vital truths.⁶⁴ During the time of Jesus, many of His hearers had come to believe in a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection, though such a belief is foreign to Scripture. This erroneous belief was adopted during the inter-testamental period as part of the process of Hellenization of Judaism and had become a part of Judaism by the time of Jesus. In this parable, Jesus made use of a popular belief, not to endorse it, but to impress upon the minds of His hearers an important spiritual lesson.⁶⁵

The third use is found in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus expresses His confidence that the gates of hades shall not prevail against His church. The meaning of the phrase the gates of “hades” is illustrated using the same expression in the Old Testament and Jewish literature (3 Macc 5:51; Wis. of Sol 16:13) as a synonym for death. For example, Job asks rhetorically: “Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?” (Job 38:17; cf. Is 38:18). The underworld was depicted as enclosed with cliffs, where the dead were locked in. Thus, what Jesus meant by the gates of hade is that death shall not prevail against His church, evidently because He had gained the victory over death.

Similarly, Jesus went to hades, that is, to the grave, but unlike the rest, He was victorious over death (Acts 2:27; cf. 2:31). Here hades is the grave where Christ's

⁶⁴For a brief survey of the inter-testamental Jewish literature on the condition of the dead in hades, see Karel Hanhart, “The Intermediate State in the New Testament,” (Doctoral dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1966), 18-31.

⁶⁵Karel Hanhart, “The Intermediate State in the New Testament,” 19.

body rested for three days and, therefore, did not see corruption, the decay process resulting from a prolonged interment. Because of His victory over death, Hades the grave is a defeated enemy. Accordingly, Paul exclaims: O death, where is thy sting? O graves where is thy victory? (1 Cor 15:55). Here Hades is correctly translated “grave” in the KJV since it is in parallel with death. Christ now holds the keys to “death and Hades” (Rev 1:18), He has power over death and the grave. This enables Him to unlock the graves and call forth the saints to everlasting life at His coming. The same is true in Revelation 6:8, where the pale horse has a rider whose name was Death, and Hades followed him.

The reason Hades follows death is obviously because Hades, like the grave, receives the dead. In all these passages, Hades is consistently associated with death, because it is the resting place of the dead, the grave. At the end of the millennium, “Death and Hades” will give up their dead (Rev 20:13) and then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). This is the second death. These two verses are noteworthy. First, because they tell us that eventually Hades will give up the dead, which indicates again that Hades is the realm of the dead. Second, they inform us that at the end, Hades itself will be thrown into the lake of fire. By means of this colorful imagery, the Bible reassures us that at the end, both death and the grave will be eliminated. This will be the death of death, or as Revelation puts it, “the second death.” This brief survey of the use of Hades in the New Testament clearly shows that its meaning and usage is consistent with that of Sheol in the Old Testament. Both terms denote the grave or the realm of the dead and not the place of punishment of the ungodly.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Ibid., 44.

The Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul

The view that man lives again when he dies has been subsisted throughout human history. It is held in virtually every society. The need for hope and certainty in the light of the challenge that death causes to human life has led people in every culture to formulate beliefs in some forms of afterlife. Such beliefs reflect a human attempt to achieve immortality through human thought, rather than divine revelation. Some scholars argue that purgatory is not mentioned in either the Catholic or the protestant Bible. There is no reference to it in any version of the Bible.⁶⁷ However, historical records reveal that this doctrine can be traced to the Church Fathers who were also influenced by the Greek ideas of the immortality of the souls.

Therefore, this section takes into consideration the history of life after death by tracing its origin and focusing essentially on the concepts of early, medieval, reformation, and modern theologians on the immortality of the soul and its effects on the biblical teaching on the nature of man. It will also reflect on the intermediate state of the soul on the subject under discussion.

The Origin of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul

The term immortality of the soul is not clearly stated in the Bible; the concept was derived from the Greek pagan philosophers.⁶⁸ Immortality of the soul is defined by theologians as the believe that human nature is dualistic, that is consisting of a material, mortal body and the spiritual, immortal soul, generally envisioned a

⁶⁷Jacob Haydn Meier, *What Catholics and Protestants should know* (Ukiah, CA: Orion, 1999), 105.

⁶⁸Clark H. Pinnock, "The Conditional View" in *Four Views on Hell*, ed. William Crockett (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 161.

destination where their immortal soul will survive the death of their body and will spend eternity either in the bliss of paradise or in the torment of hell.⁶⁹ In other words, it is the belief that human beings possess an immortal soul that lives forever.

This concept originated from the ancient civilizations that held to some forms of conscious life after death. The Greek historian Herodotus, who lived in the fifth century before Christ, tells us in his history that the ancient Egyptians were the first to teach that the soul of man is immortal and separable from the body.⁷⁰ At death, the soul passes through a variety of animals before being reborn in human form.⁷¹ There was nowhere in the ancient world where the concern for the afterlife so deeply felt as in Egypt. The numerous tombs, the practiced of elaborate ceremonies to prepare the pharaohs for their next life, the construction of massive pyramids and other complex tombs,⁷² bear witness their passion for the afterlife. It is evident that the Egyptians were the first to emphasize the doctrine that the soul of man is immortal.⁷³

History has it that the Greek philosopher Socrates (470-399 BC) traveled to Egypt to consult the Egyptians on their teachings on the immortality of the soul. Upon his return to Greece, he imparted this teaching to his most famous pupil, Plato (428-348 BC). Thus Philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle (384-322 BC) and the Jewish Philo (20 BC-AD 42), believed that human souls are immortal and that death

⁶⁹Pinnock, "The Conditional View," in *Four Views on Hell*, 62.

⁷⁰Bonwick, *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, 80.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³Herodotus, *Euterpe*, (London: D. Nutt, 1888), 4.

is another place of existence.⁷⁴ They maintained the idea of immortality as an inherent human possession, and not the gift of eternal life given at the resurrection.⁷⁵

Progressively the idea of the immortality of the soul crept into the Christian Church by the influence of Platonism.⁷⁶

Christ and the apostles recognized and elucidated the Old Testament wholistic view of human nature, by teaching that immortality is not an innate human possession, but a gift reserved for the righteous and confer at the resurrection. Unrepentant sinners will be ultimately destroyed. This view continued unbroken throughout the writings of the apostolic fathers such as Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, the Didache, Barnabas of Alexandria, Hermas of Rome, and Polycarp of Smyrna and in a conspicuous line of later writers such as Justin, Irenaeus, Novatian, Arnobius and Lactantius.⁷⁷

The Early Church and the Immortality of the Soul

Some early Church Fathers who lived during the end of the first century and the second century have written immensely about the subject immortality of the soul. Clement of Rome (AD 30-97) never uses the terms “immortal soul” or “immortality of the soul, ” and neither does he speaks of a process of punishment which goes on

⁷⁴Colleen McDonnell and Bernard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Heaven: Yale UP, 1988), 17, 23; see Krister, Stendhal. *Immortality and Resurrection* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 1.

⁷⁵Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1966), 632-755.

⁷⁶Ibid., 638.

⁷⁷McDonnell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 23.

and on throughout eternity.⁷⁸ He assumes that immortality was conditional to be bestowed on the righteous only.⁷⁹

According to him, all the generations from Adam even unto this day have passed away; but those who, through the grace of God, have been made perfect in love, now possess a place among the godly, and shall be made manifest at the revelation of the kingdom of Christ.⁸⁰ He believes there is no distinction between the body and soul and that the place of the departed godly to be their graves until the revelation of the kingdom occurs.⁸¹ Thus, he did not believe that the righteous go to heaven when they die.

Polycarp of Smyrna (AD 69-155) also taught that the body and soul were to be resurrected. Hence he teaches against the doctrine of immortality of the soul. In his book *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Holmes quoted Polycarp saying: “I bless you for because you have considered me worthy of this day and hour, that I might receive a place among the number of martyrs in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and of body, in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit.”⁸² He argues that both the soul and the body are of the same substance (human being) and hence the righteous will receive resurrection to eternal life when Christ returns.

Ignatius Theophorus wrote many epistles and these contain many references to immortality and the final destiny of the unsaved. In his epistle on immortality, Ignatius contrasts immortality and living forever with dying and not undergoing

⁷⁸Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, 768.

⁷⁹Constable Henry, *The Duration and Nature of Future Punishment* (New Haven: Chatfield, 1871), 168.

⁸⁰Constable Henry, *The Duration and Nature of Future Punishment*, 169.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 170.

⁸²Polycarp, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 239.

eternal torment.⁸³ According to him, immortality and eternal life is a “prize.”⁸⁴ It is not something all human beings naturally possess. He posits that if our souls must be freed from death, they certainly cannot be immortal.⁸⁵ In all his epistles, Ignatius is utterly silent about any innate immortality of the soul or anything akin thereto. If this is his argument, then he would be classified as a conditionalist. In reference to *Didache*, a “catechetical handbook or a manual,” Le Roy Froom observed that, the manual presents the moral standards of Christianity as the way of life and sin as the way of death.⁸⁶ In other words, immortality was not a natural attribute of the human soul or spirit. And that the unsaved did not naturally possess eternal life.

Moreover, Hermas expressed the doctrine of conditional immortality in his classic *Shepherd Epistle*. He argues that those who fear the Lord and keep His commandments have life with God; but as to those who keep not His commandments, there is no life in them.⁸⁷ It seems that Hermas clearly does not hold to inherent, indefeasible immortality for the wicked. He does not believe in the concepts of the soul going to heaven or hell at death, the eternal torment of the damned, an “immortal soul,” or an “undying spirit.”⁸⁸

It appears that the above-mentioned church fathers objected to the teachings of the immortality of the soul. However, other church fathers seem to hold onto the teachings of the afterlife. Tertullian, for instance, was the first to initiate discussion on

⁸³Henry, *The Duration and Nature of Future Punishment*, 167.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 168.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 169.

⁸⁶Froom, “The Conditionalist Faith of Our Father,” 787.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 788.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

the endless torment for the wicked, by applying the concept of the immortality of the soul to the saved and unsaved. He explicitly taught that the torments of the lost will be co-eternal with the happiness of the saved.⁸⁹

Tertullian rejected Plato's teaching on the pre-existence of the souls, but he embraced his teachings that every soul is immortal.⁹⁰ He wrote: For some, things are known even by nature: the immortality of the soul, for instance, is held by many. He stated that "I may use, therefore, the opinion of Plato when he declares: "Every soul is immortal."⁹¹ Note that this opinion of Plato is cited by Tertullian to support the belief in the immortality of the soul.

There is no attempt made to authenticate such doctrine by the authority of Scripture. Obviously, the Bible teaches that the soul does not exist apart from the body (Gen 15:15; 25:8; Jude 8:32; 1 Chr 29:28). The influence of Platonic dualism is not only evident in the view of Tertullian but also manifests especially in the writings of Origen (ca. 185-254), a man who came to be accredited as the most proficient scholar of his generation. He discarded Tertullian's teaching of eternal torment, promoting instead the universal restoration of even the most hopeless sinners, including the demons and Satan himself. Origen posits that after a period of corrective punishment, all sinners will be brought again into ultimate subjection to Christ. Origen's teaching derives largely from Plato's idea that the soul is an immaterial and immortal substance.

⁸⁹C. F. Hudson, *Debt and Grace as Related to the Doctrine of a Future Life* (Boston: Jewett, 1857), 326.

⁹⁰Tertullian, *On the Exhortation to Chastity*, Trans. Sidney Thelwall (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger, 2004), 11.

⁹¹Tertullian *On the Resurrection*, 8 (ANF, 3. 547, trans. Alexander Roberts).

In his *De Principiis* (On the Principle), Origen repeatedly refers to the soul as a “substance” which partakes of the eternal nature and lasts forever.⁹² Each body which partakes of that eternal nature should last forever, and be incorruptible and eternal. Since the soul partakes of the divine nature and cannot be destroyed, Origen reasoned that the only way moral evil can finally eradicate is for God to restore even the incorrigibly wicked after His consuming fire, thoroughly cleanses away the evil.⁹³

Both Tertullian's eternal torment and Origen's cleansing fire, are unbiblical and fatal to true Christian faith. One threatens an eternal punishment that God never decreed and the other promises a universal salvation that God never authorized. In Scripture, evil is a reality of this present time, not an inevitable part of eternity. By allowing their mind to be guided by pagan philosophy rather than Scriptural teachings, brilliant men like Tertullian and Origen developed heresies that have undermined Christian beliefs and practices to date.

Moreover, Augustine (AD 354-430) the Bishop of Hippo, is also considered as the most dominant theologian among the Latin Fathers. His impact on theology was enormous, particularly up to the thirteenth century. Augustine was so influential that he held the supremacy for centuries over the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul and the eternal torment of the wicked. Augustine held the view that death meant the destruction of the body, which enables the immortal soul to continue to live in either the beatitude of paradise or in the eternal torment of hell. In his book *The City of God*, Augustine wrote that “the soul is termed immortal, because, in a sense, it does not cease to live and to feel; while the body is called mortal because it can be deserted

⁹²Origen *De Principiis* 4 (ANF, 1.381, trans. Alexander Roberts and W.H. Rambaut).

⁹³Origen *Against Celsus* 2 (ANF, 1. 502 ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson).

of all life, and cannot by itself live at all.”⁹⁴ Augustine modifies the Platonic notion of the soul by teaching that a human being is a rational soul that uses a mortal, material body, but the soul is not imprisoned in the body. He taught that the soul does not pre-exist eternally, as maintained by Plato, but comes into existence when incarnated in a body.⁹⁵

From the study of the Early Church Fathers, it seems that while some taught against immortality of the soul, others still hold onto the platonic teaching on afterlife. Hence James K. Brandyberry’s conclusion that, the apostolic Fathers do not hold a similar view on afterlife is noteworthy.⁹⁶

The Medieval Church and the Immortality of the Soul

The Medieval Christians, who lived from the sixth to the fifteenth century attempted to merge the Platonic idea of the immortality of the soul with the biblical teachings on the resurrection of the dead. Gregory the Great (590-604) contributed to the doctrine of immortality of the soul by asserting that before the day of judgment there is a purgatorial fire for certain minor sins which implies that some sins will be forgiven in the next world.⁹⁷ Therefore for one to benefit from this purification, one ought to deserve it by virtuous works in one’s life time. He believed in the efficacy of the Eucharist for releasing souls from purgatory.⁹⁸

⁹⁴Augustine, *The City of God*. Trans. Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth Penguin Books, 1972), 24.

⁹⁵Augustine, *The City of God*, 245.

⁹⁶James Brandyberry, *Development of the Doctrine of Immortality from the Apostolic Fathers to Augustine* (Lenox, MA: Berkshire Christian College, 1983), 4.

⁹⁷Robert Ombres, *Theology Today No. 24: The Theology of Purgatory*. ed. Edward Yarnorl (Butler, Wisconsin: Clergy, 1978), 31.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 44.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is believed to have been a prominent Catholic theologian among the medieval church. Regarding the nature of man, he developed a less radical dualism, by highlighting the harmony that exists between the body and the soul. Contrary to the Platonic-Augustinian view in which the soul dwells in the body for a time without forming one substantial being.⁹⁹ Thomas Aquinas considers the soul as the “form of the body.” He was influenced by Aristotle who viewed the soul primarily as a life principle. However, Aquinas departed from Aristotle by claiming independent existence for the soul.

According to Aquinas, a substantial unity exists between the soul and the body, or more exactly, the spiritual principle and the material principle, which are united as “form” and “matter” in order to form one complete being. It is obvious that the soul is unified to the body by nature because by its essence it is the form of the body. Therefore, it is contrary to the nature of the soul to be deprived of the body.¹⁰⁰ Aquinas defended the immortality of the soul by arguing that it is a “substantial form” that exists independently of the body but desires to be joined together again to its own body at the resurrection. He strongly opposed those who held to the biblical view that the soul is the animating principle of the body, which is mortal until God bestows upon it the gift of immortality at the resurrection.

Aquinas’ definition of the immortal soul as the *form of the body* has become the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church that is still the prevailing belief even today. Aquinas’ language is replicated in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which affirms: “The harmony of the soul and body is so profound that one must

⁹⁹Ombres, *Theology Today*, 48.

¹⁰⁰Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, on the truth of the Catholic Faith, 9.

consider the soul to be the “form of the body.”¹⁰¹ The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God. It is not produced by the parents and that it is immortal. It does not die when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final resurrection.¹⁰²

In summary, it seems that the medieval church fathers were influenced by the Greek concept of the immortality of the soul. The medieval fathers such as Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas believed that “human souls are immortal, death is a mere passage into another more glorious existence, because, in this life, the body confines, imprisons, and binds the immortal soul.”¹⁰³

The Reformation and the Concept of the Immortality of the Soul

The protestant reformation introduced what would become a turning point in Christian teaching. This movement attempted to resolve some theological controversies within Catholic Church. Central among the theological crises of the Protestant Reformation movement were the doctrines of the authority of Scripture and justification by faith alone.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, there were several less visible theological crises during the same period that were possibly obscured by the priority of the more central doctrines. One such crisis involved the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

¹⁰¹Catechism of the Catholic Church, 93.

¹⁰²Catechism of the Catholic Church, 93.

¹⁰³Colleen McDannell and Bernard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Heaven: Yale UP, 1988), 17.

¹⁰⁴Hans J. Hillerbrand, *The Protestant Reformation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 27, 35; see also, Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 104-125.

The idea that the real human person inhabits the physical body and lives on after death.¹⁰⁵

In his work, “Death: origin, nature, and final eradication,” Andreasen pointed out that Martin Luther was not consistent about the immortality of the soul because at times he affirmed the teachings of medieval theologians that the soul enjoys the separate existence from the body.¹⁰⁶ But when describing the condition of the soul between death and the resurrection, he occasionally accepted the concept of the “soul sleep,” as follows: “For the human soul sleeps with all senses buried, and our bed is like a sepulcher. Yet in it there is nothing troublesome or burdensome.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the place of the dead has no torments.

The Lutherans did not follow Luther’s inconsistent lead on conditional immortality, essentially reverted to the medieval traditions.¹⁰⁸ In this sense, George Henri Tavad argued that Luther’s inconsistency was because his understanding of Scripture regarding afterlife was not entirely clear.¹⁰⁹ John Calvin (1509 – 1564) was another Reformer who became active in Geneva. He was instrumental in writing against the doctrine of soul sleep. In his work “*Psychopannychia*,” translated “On Soul Sleep,”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵David Daniel, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (London: Continuum, 1994), 325.

¹⁰⁶Andreasen, “Death: Origin, nature and final eradication,” 339.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷George H. Tavad, *The Starting Point of Calvin’s Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 31.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 385.

¹¹⁰George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 589.

Calvin asserted that “the human soul is something essential separate from the body, therefore, the soul survives the body at death, where in glad expectation they await the enjoyment of promise glory.”¹¹¹ George Huntston states that, Calvin, at this point in company with the Catholics, became prominently involved in opposing the soul-sleepers.¹¹² Interestingly, John Wycliffe, the forerunner of the reformation and the English reformer Tyndale opposed the Catholic doctrine of immortality of the soul and held that the soul, rather than being immortal, sleeps at the death of the body until the final day when all will be physically resurrected.¹¹³ There is a marked contrast between the pre-reformers taught and the magisterial reformers taught.

The Modern Theologians and Immortality of the Soul

Several doctrines have been propounded in the theological arena on the concept of life after death. Leading scholars of different religious influence have expressed their views on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. William Temple (1881– 1944), Archbishop of Canterbury, affirms the biblical, holistic view of human nature.¹¹⁴ In his view, man is not immortal by nature or of right; but he is capable of immortality, and there is offered to him resurrection from the dead and life eternal if he will receive it from God and on God’s terms.”¹¹⁵

In his book, *Basic Christian Teachings*, Lutheran theologian Martin Heinechen rejects immortality of the soul as a false doctrine. According to him, man

¹¹¹Andreasen, “Death: Origin, nature and final eradication,” 338-339.

¹¹²Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 591.

¹¹³William R. Estep, *Renaissance & Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 243.

¹¹⁴William Temple, *Christian Faith and Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954), 81.

¹¹⁵William Temple, *Man, Nature and God* (London: Churchill, 1953), 472.

must be considered a unity. Thus, Christian dualism is not that of soul and body, eternal mind and passing things, but the dualism of Creator and creature. Man, is a person, a unified being, a center of responsibility, standing over against his Creator and Judge. He has no life or immortality within himself.¹¹⁶ In *The Pocket Commentary of the Bible*, Basil F. C. Atkinson, explains by saying this in relation to Genesis 2:7 that, the impartation of the life principle, as it is brought before us in this verse, entails immortality of the spirit or soul. It has been said that to be made in the image of God involves immortality. The Scripture never says so. If it involves immortality, why does it not also involve omniscience or omnipresence, or any other quality or attribute of the infinite?¹¹⁷

Reinhold Niebuhr contrasts the biblical wholistic view of human nature with the classical dualistic view by observing that all the reasonable and implausible proofs for the immortality of the soul are efforts or means on the part of the human mind to master and control the consummation of life.¹¹⁸ In other words, the concept of life after death is a way or another that an eternal element in the nature of man is worthy and capable of survival beyond death.

In his book *The Christian Hope*, Lutheran theologian T. A. Kantonen notes that it has been characteristic of Western thought, ever since Plato, to distinguish sharply between the soul and the body. The body is supposed to be composed of matter, and the soul of spirit. The body is a prison from which the soul is liberated at

¹¹⁶Heinechen, *Basic Christian Teachings*, 37.

¹¹⁷Basil F. C. Atkinson, *The Pocket Commentary of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), 32.

¹¹⁸Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1964), 295.

death to carry on its own proper nonphysical existence.¹¹⁹ Hence the question of life after death has been the question of demonstrating the immortality, the death-defying capacity, of the soul. The body is of little consequence. This way of thinking is entirely foreign to the Bible. True to the Scripture and rejecting the Greek view, the apostle's creed says, "not I believe in the immortality of the soul but, believe in the resurrection of the body."¹²⁰

In his impressive study on the biblical view of human nature titled *Body and Soul*, Derwyn Randolph Grier Owen offers a penetrating analysis of the contrast between the Greek dualistic view and the biblical wholistic view of human nature. Owens finds that man in the Bible is a "unified psychosomatic whole" and that there can be no detachable part of man that survives physical death.¹²¹ The Bible, he writes, "assumes that human nature is a unity, in the New Testament it teaches that man's ultimate destiny involves the resurrection of the body."¹²² Owen proposes that the old doctrine of the immortality of the separated soul must now be ushered into the place of departed spirits.¹²³

Emil Brunner, a well-known Swiss theologian, finds the dualistic view of human nature conflicting with the biblical wholistic view. He is of the view that, it is God alone who possesses immortality. The opinion that humans are immortal because the soul is of an indestructible, divine essence is, once for all, contradictory with the

¹¹⁹A. Kantonen, *The Christian Hope* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954), 28.

¹²⁰Kantonen, *The Christian Hope*, 29.

¹²¹Derwyn Randolph Grier Owen, *Body and Soul: A Study of the Christian View of Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 27.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 29.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 98.

biblical view of God and man.¹²⁴ Stephen H. Travis, a respected British theologian, acknowledges that if he were pressed to choose between “eternal punishment” and “conditional immortality,” he would opt for the latter. The first reason he gives is that the immortality of the soul is a non-biblical doctrine derived from Greek philosophy.¹²⁵ In biblical teaching man is conditionally immortal that is, he has the possibility of becoming immortal if he receives resurrection or immortality as a gift from God. This would imply that God grants resurrection to those who loves him, but those who resist him go out of existence.¹²⁶

Stephen H. Travis further notes, man’s nature is thought of as a unity. Man, does not consist of two parts, a physical body which dies and a soul which lives on forever. His soul or self or personality is simply a function of the brain. So, when the brain dies, the person dies, and there is nothing left to enter upon another life.¹²⁷

Bruce Reichenbach, an American philosopher, probes into human nature in his book *Is Man the Phoenix?* He concludes that each of us, as a person, must die. There is no hint that the only thing spoken about is the destruction of the physical organism, and that the real person, the soul, does not die but lives on.¹²⁸ Donald Bloesch, a leading evangelical theologian, underscores the same conclusion, saying, there is no innate immortality of the soul. The person, who dies, even the one who dies in Christ,

¹²⁴Emil Brunner, *Eternal Hope* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 106.

¹²⁵Stephen H. Travis, *I Believe in the Second Coming of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1982), 198.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 198.

¹²⁷Travis, *I Believe in the Second Coming of Jesus*, 163.

¹²⁸Bruce R. Reichenbach, *Is Man the Phoenix? A Study of Immortality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian University Press, 1978), 54, 67.

experiences the death of both body and soul.¹²⁹ Anthony Hoekema, a Calvinistic theologian, agrees: “We cannot point to any inherent quality in man or in any aspect of man which makes him indestructible.”¹³⁰ Additionally, Murray Harris, concludes his article on “Resurrection and Immortality” saying, man is not immortal because he possesses or is a soul. He becomes immortal because God transforms him by raising him from the dead.¹³¹ He explains that while Platonic thought made immortality an inalienable attribute of the soul. The Bible contains no definition of the soul’s constitution that implies its indestructibility.¹³²

In his doctoral dissertation on sheol in the Old Testament, Ralph Walter Doermann concludes his analysis of the Old Testament view of human nature by saying that, it is clear from the Hebrew view of the psychosomatic unity of man that there was little room for the belief in the immortality of the soul. Either the whole person lived or the whole person went down to death. There was no independent existence for the spirit or the soul apart from the body.¹³³ He further argues that the death of the body the impersonal spirit returned to God who gave it (Eccl 12:7) and the *nephesh* (soul) was destroyed, though it was still present, in a very weak sense, in the bones and the blood.¹³⁴

¹²⁹Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 188.

¹³⁰Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 90.

¹³¹Murray Harris, “Resurrection and Immortality: Eight Theses.” *Themelios*, May 2006, 52-53.

¹³²*Ibid.*, 54.

¹³³Harris, “Resurrection and Immortality,” 54.

¹³⁴Doermann, “Sheol in the Old Testament,” 205.

According to Gerrit Cornelis Berkouwer, Herman Dooyeweerd, a Dutch Calvinistic philosopher, sharply criticizes the dualistic view of human nature. He rejects such a view not only because the idea of a substance centered in human reason (i.e., the soul) conflicts with the confession of the radical corruption of human nature, but also because the separability of the soul from the body raises various problems. One of the problems he mentions is the impossibility for the soul to carry out activities once it is separated from the body because psychic functions are indissolubly connected with the total temporal relationship and functions of the body.¹³⁵

Noted evangelical theologians such as John Walter Scott, Clark H. Pinnock, and Hamilton Wenham, along with Oscar Cullmann, have argued in favor of conditional immortality.¹³⁶ They call upon all Christians to reject the catholic doctrine of life after death.¹³⁷

The survey conducted on the writings of the early and medieval theologians appear that there is not a word said of that immortality of the soul which is so prominent in the writings of later fathers. To them, Immortality is acknowledged to be peculiar to the redeemed. Not one stray expression of theirs can be interpreted as giving any countenance to the theory of restoration after purgatorial suffering.¹³⁸ This teaching of immortality of the soul found its way into Hellenistic Judaism through the influence of Philo Judaeus and was adopted by Christian writers beginning from the

¹³⁵G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 255-256.

¹³⁶Andreasen, "Death: Origin, nature and final eradication," 339.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, 801.

latter part of the second century and continued especially through the influence of the medieval church theologians.¹³⁹

Though the reformers challenged and rejected the teaching on soul purification in purgatory, the concept of soul immortality, however, survived the reformation and remained a permanent fixture in much of popular Christianity.¹⁴⁰ While some scholars in modern theology believe in immortality of the soul, others still hold the position that this doctrine is basically unbiblical. In other words, modern theologians do not hold a similar view on the concept of immortality of the soul.

The Intermediate State of the Dead

The “intermediate state,” in relation to the immortality of the soul is a fulcrum of biblical faith, though it has occasioned a considerable scholarly discussion because of an interpretive enigma it presents. According to Erickson, this belief has been described as both significant and problematic in theological arena.¹⁴¹ The intermediate state refers to the condition of the dead during the period between death and the resurrection.¹⁴² In other words, it refers to the belief in the survival of the soul after the death of the body. The term has been expressed in various ways and given rise to various doctrines such as prayer for the dead, indulgences, purgatory, intercession of the saints, and the eternal torment of hell.¹⁴³

In the history of Christianity, death has been commonly defined as the disconnection of the immortal soul from the mortal body. Since the time of early

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Andreasen, *Death: Origin, nature and final eradication*,” 339.

¹⁴¹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 1179.

¹⁴²Ibid., 1180.

¹⁴³Ibid., 1179.

church Fathers, Christians had the notion that between death and resurrection, there is a period known as “the intermediate state,” the souls of the dead either benefit from the beatitude of paradise or suffer the affliction of purgatory or hell.¹⁴⁴ The disembodied condition of the soul is supposed to continue until the resurrection of the body which will bring completion to the salvation of the saints and to the damnation of the wicked.

Orthodox Christians held the view that death consists in the separation of the soul from the body.¹⁴⁵ The immaterial soul lives on in a conscious personal existence while the body decomposes. At Christ’s second coming, there will be a resurrection of a renewed or transformed body, which will be reunited with the soul.¹⁴⁶ Liberalism, however, rejected the resurrection of the body and considered it to be mythological and scientifically impossible. They believed that the body may die and decompose, the soul, being immortal lives on. In accentuation to this, Fosdick Harry asserts that this doctrine is “grossly materialistic.”¹⁴⁷ Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church accedes that immediately upon death, the individual’s eternal status is determined. The soul becomes aware of God’s judgment upon it. The soul is then “moved of its own accord to hasten either to heaven, hell, or purgatory according to its rewards.”¹⁴⁸

Conversely, Seventh-day Adventists subscribe to the concept of “soul sleep.” The idea that during the period between death and resurrection, the soul remains in a

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 1180.

¹⁴⁵James Addison, *Life beyond Death in the Beliefs of Mankind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 202.

¹⁴⁶Stanley Harakas, *The Orthodox Church: 455 Questions and Answers* (Minneapolis: Light & Life, 1988), 97.

¹⁴⁷Harry E. Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 98-104.

¹⁴⁸Joseph Pohle, *Eschatology; or the Catholic Doctrine of the Last Things: A Dogmatic Treatise* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1917), 18.

state of unconsciousness¹⁴⁹ (Acts 13:36; 1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4:13-15; Jn 11:11). They opine that man is not body and soul but one entity. Therefore, when the body ceases to function, the soul does likewise. Nothing survives physical death, and the entire person awaits resurrection.¹⁵⁰

The Scripture says very little about the state of the dead during the intermediate period between the falling asleep and the awakening on the day of the resurrection.¹⁵¹ However, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-23), the conversation between Jesus and the thief on the cross (Luke 23:42-43), Paul's desire to depart and be with Christ (Philippians 1:23), and his usage of the imagery of the earthly and heavenly houses (2 Corinthians 5:1-10) and the souls of the martyrs under the altar (Revelation 6:9-11) have been wrongly used by dualists as a major proof for the conscious existence of the faithful dead in paradise before the resurrection.

Nevertheless, the Scripture clearly teaches that the rewards and punishments of righteous and ungodly, as well as the separation between the saved and the unsaved will take place on the day of Christ's coming and both lie silent and unconscious in death until the resurrection day (Eccl 9:5-6; Job 14:12-15; Ps 6:5; Matt 25:31-32; Rev 22:12).¹⁵²

The eschatological hope of being with Christ is not an individualistic hope realized at death by disembodied souls, but a corporate hope realized at Christ's

¹⁴⁹Seventh-day Adventists Answer Question on Doctrine (Washington: Review & Herald, 1957), 13.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Seventh-day Adventists Answer Question on Doctrine, 15.

¹⁵²Cooper, Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate, 39.

coming through the resurrection, or translation, of the whole person and of all the believers (I Cor 15:51-58).¹⁵³ The analysis of the usage of the word *sheol* in the Old Testament and of *hades* in the New Testament has shown that both terms denote the grave or the realm of the dead and not the place of punishment for the ungodly.¹⁵⁴

There is no bliss or punishment immediately after death, but an unconscious rest until resurrection morning.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, the notion of the intermediate state in which the souls of the saved enjoy the bliss of paradise, while those of the unsaved suffer the torments of hell derives not from Scripture, but from Greek dualism.¹⁵⁶

To sum up, it is most unfortunate that during much of its history, Christianity by and large has been influenced by the Greek dualistic view of human nature, according to which the body is mortal and the soul immortal. The acceptance of this deadly heresy has conditioned the interpretation of Scripture and given rise to a host of other heresies such as purgatory, eternal torment in hell, prayer for the dead, and intercession of the saints, indulgences, and ethereal view of paradise. We can only hope that this study will contribute to recovering the biblical wholistic view of human nature and destiny, and accordingly disperse the spiritual darkness perpetrated by centuries of superstitious beliefs.

Summary

Our study of the Old Testament view of human nature rules out the distinction between body and soul of two completely different realms of reality. The word “soul”

¹⁵³Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 611.

¹⁵⁴Helmut Thielicke, *Living with Death* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 177.

¹⁵⁵Morey, *Death and the Afterlife*, 211-212.

¹⁵⁶Morey, *Death and the Afterlife*, 177.

or “spirit” depicts intellectual, effective manifestation of the personality. In the Hebrew concept, man is viewed as an animated body, not as an incarnated soul.¹⁵⁷ All occurrences of the words “soul” and “spirit” in the Bible can be understood, in the context, as referring to functions of the individual soul or the activity of the whole person.

This is factual both in the Old Testament use of the terms *nephes or ruah*, and in the New Testament of the corresponding terms *psyche and pneuma*, which are translated “soul” or “spirit.” There is no separable soul or spirit capable of conscious existence apart from the body. Therefore, it appears that the concept of soul in the Old Testament and New Testament remove the basis for the belief in the survival of the soul after death.

While some early church fathers and other theologians feel that dualistic view of human nature is unbiblical and lead to evil practices, medieval church theologians and other biblical scholars think that Christians believe in the dualistic view and immortality of the soul could be regulated to achieve the best achievable results. Whereas the reformers appear to challenge the teaching regarding soul purification in purgatory; the concept of soul immortality survived the reformation and remained a permanent theological controversy in Christianity, yet some modern theologians have argued convincingly in support of conditional immortality

¹⁵⁷Mark A. Myers, *The Human puzzle* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 46.

CHAPTER 3

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND OSCAR CULLMANN'S VIEW ON IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

This section of the paper takes a careful look at the concept of immortality of the soul in the theology of Oscar Cullmann and the Catholic Church. It goes further to compare their views to source the similarities and dissimilarities in their thoughts on the nature of the soul after death.

The Roman Catholic Church traces its origin from Jesus Christ and the apostolic period in the first century AD in the province of Judea of the Roman Empire. According to *Catholic "News Service,"* the church is the continuation of the early Christian Community.¹ The apostolate was established in Rome, the world's capital when the church was inaugurated; it was there that the universality of the Christian teaching most obviously took its central directive. By the end of the 2nd century, bishops began congregating in regional synods to resolve doctrinal and policy issues.²

Among all the doctrines of Catholic Church, immortality of the soul has rapt scholarly attention among Protestants and some Catholic theologians. The belief that at death the souls of the saints ascend to the beatitude of paradise has fostered the

¹Edward R. Norman, *The Roman Catholic Church an Illustrated History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 11, 14; Susan Tyler Hitchcock, *Geography of Religion* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2004), 281; Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* (London: Westminster Press, 1962), 234. See also Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 18.

²Edward R. Norman, *The Roman Catholic Church an Illustrated History*, 37.

Catholic and orthodox belief in the intercessory role of Mary and of the saints. Progressively, the idea of the immortality of the soul crept into the Catholic Church and were adopted by Christian writers beginning from the latter part of the second century especially through the influence of Tertullian (ca. 155-230), Origen (ca. 185-254), Augustine (354-430), and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).³ These writers attempted to merge the Platonic idea of the immortality of the soul with the biblical teachings on the resurrection of the body.

Catholic Church's View on the Nature of the Soul

There are two views regarding the nature of man. Thus, dualism and holism view of human nature. Per the holistic perspective, human body and soul constitute the same being. On the other hand, dualism considers the soul and body as different entities. Roman Catholics who subscribe to the dualistic view of human nature, hold that the soul and body are not essentially one.⁴ Each has a different origin and role in human existence on earth and beyond.⁵

As the *Catechism* puts it: “The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God it is not produced by the parents and it is immortal, it does not perish when it separates from the body at death.”⁶ This traditional Catholic teaching is contrary to the fundamental biblical, holistic view of human nature. Thus, man is a unity composed of an immortal soul and a mortal body which together constitute the whole of his humanity.

³Ibid.

⁴Heinrich Joseph Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*. Trans, Roy J. Deferrari (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2004), 237.

⁵Ibid., 238.

⁶Catechism of the Catholic Church, 93.

This concept of human nature by Roman Catholicism originated from the teachings of the early church fathers, especially the theology of Augustine.⁷ Later in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas helped to shape Roman Catholic teaching on the nature of man. He developed a less radical dualism, by highlighting the harmony that exists between the body and the soul. He considers the soul as “the form of the body.”⁸

According to Aquinas, a substantial unity exists between the soul and the body, or more exactly, the spiritual principle and the material principle, which are united as “form” and “matter” in order to form one complete being. It is obvious that the soul is unified to the body by nature because by its essence it is the form of the body. Therefore, it is contrary to the nature of the soul to be deprived of the body.⁹ He views the spiritual life of the soul as more important than the physical life of the body. In addition, Origen repeatedly refers to the soul as a “substance” which partakes of the eternal nature and lasts forever.¹⁰

In view of this, Samuele Bacchiocchi, an Adventist theologian, who studied at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, witnessed his classmates, mostly Catholic monks and priest going to the chapel to cultivate their souls through prayer and meditation, and then going to the bar at the end of the hallway to intoxicate their bodies by partaking of alcoholic beverages and smoking cigarettes. They saw no conflict between the two activities, because, per their dualistic mentality, what they

⁷Joseph Ratzinger, “Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life.” Trans. Michael Waldstein (Washington, DC: The Catholic U of America, 1988), 189.

⁸Thomas Aquinas, *Catechism of the Summa Theologica*, ed. Thomas Pegues (New York, Cincinnati: Benziger Brothers, 1922), 79.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Origen, *De Principiis* 4 (ANF, 1.381).

did to their bodies did not affect the salvation of their soul.¹¹ Hence redemption is largely associated with the salvation of the soul, rather than caring for the body. They make salvation an internal experience of the soul rather than a total transformation of the whole person.

Even though the Catholic Church champions the dualistic view of human nature, some Catholic theologians object to this view of human nature. In his book, *the biblical view of man*, Catholic scholar Dom Wulstam Mork writing on Genesis 2:7 indicates that it is “nephesh” (soul) that give life to Bashar (body), but not a distinct substance. Adam does not have nephesh (soul) he is soul, just as he is basher (body). The body, far from being divided from its animating principle, is the visible nephesh (soul).¹² In a similar vein, Hans Walter Wolff states that man does not have a soul, he is soul, and he lives as soul.¹³

In conclusion, while the Catholic Church believes that the body is a different entity from the soul (dualism), some of her theologians still uphold the holistic view of man which underscore that man does not have a soul, he is soul, he lives as soul.

¹¹Historically, this dualistic view of human nature in Catholicism has envisioned the saints as persons who devote themselves from the “vita contemplative” (Contemplative life), detaching themselves from the “vita active” (secular life). Since cultivating the soul is more important than caring for the body, the physical wellbeing of the body often intentionally has been ignored or even suppressed. Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 2.

¹²Mork, *The Biblical Meaning of Man*, 73.

¹³Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 66.

Catholic Church's View on the State of the Soul after Death

Divergent views have been expressed about the condition of the soul after death. Some protestants such as Seventh-day Adventists subscribe to a concept known as “soul sleep,” a condition, in which the dead person is believed to be in a suspended state until the final judgment. Catholicism on the other hand, according to a catholic theologian Joseph Denzinger, has a general conviction that there is a particular judgment for each soul immediately after death.¹⁴ According to their “dogma”, the departed souls go forthwith after death into heaven, hell or purgatory.¹⁵ Additionally, Augustine is of the view that death meant the destruction of the body, which enables the immortal soul to continue to live in either the beatitude of paradise or in the eternal torment of hell.¹⁶

The Union Council of Lyons (1245-1247) and of Florence (1439-1443) declared that the souls of the just, free from all sin and punishment, are immediately assumed into heaven and that the souls of those who die in mortal sin or merely in venial sin descend immediately into hell.¹⁷ In his teachings on the state of the soul after death, Pope Benedict XII (1280-1342), argued that, the souls of the just immediately after death, or after their purification enter heaven, become partakers in the immediate vision of the divine essence and are truly blessed, while the souls in mortal sin immediately enter hell and are subject to the torments of hell.¹⁸

¹⁴Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 530.

¹⁵Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1980), 29.

¹⁶Augustine, (ANF, 2.245).

¹⁷Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Rockford, ILL: Tan Books, 1960), 475.

¹⁸Pope Benedict XII, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Document of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 1336), 954-1472. See also, Robert Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books, 1986). 162.

Pope John X XII (1249-1334), on the other hand, contends that while it is true that pure souls immediately enter into heaven before the resurrection do not immediately enjoy the vision of the divine essence, but only the vision of the transfigured humanity of Christ.¹⁹ The Catholic Catechism resolves for itself the condition of the soul after death pointing out the soul of the unjust who die with the stains of saints is cleansed by expiation before they admitted to heaven.²⁰ An Adventist theologian, Robert Osei Bonsu, posits that this doctrine has been criticized extensively both by Catholics and Evangelicals in spite of its massive defense by the holy office.²¹ According to him, the criticism has to do with whether the doctrine is biblical or only based on church tradition.²²

The Intermediate State of the Dead

Generally, the word “intermediate state” refers to the condition of the dead during the period between death and the resurrection.²³ It is regarded as primarily a state of rest and refreshment and of closer union with Christ preliminary to the resurrection.²⁴ The term intermediate state is popularly known in Catholicism as purgatory.²⁵ The term is derived from the Latin “purgare” which denotes a “state,” a

¹⁹Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History* 163.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Osei- Bonsu, “Purgatory”: A Study of the Historical and Its Compatibility with the Biblical Teaching on Afterlife 286.

²²Ibid.

²³F. X. Schouppe, *The Dogma of Purgatory* (London: Burns and Oates, 1953), 6. See also, John Salza, *Biblical Basis for purgatory* (Charlotte, North Carolina: Saint Benedict Press, 2009), 23; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 304.

²⁴Edward J. Bicknell, *Church Authority in Doctrine* (New York: Longmans, 1955), 279.

²⁵James Ryan, “Purgatory in Theology,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia (NCE)*, ed. John P. Whalens (Washington, DC: The Catholic U of America, 1967), 11: 1034-39.

“place” or “condition” in the next world between heaven and hell; a state of purifying suffering for those who have died and are still in need of purification.²⁶

The duration, as well as the intensity of their sufferings of those in purgatory, varies according to the degree of purification that one needs.²⁷ The period of stay can be shortened and alleviated by the prayers and the good works of the faithful on earth, and especially by the sacrifice of the mass. The Pope is supposed to have jurisdiction over purgatory. It is his peculiar prerogative to grant indulgences, lightening the purgatorial sufferings or even terminating them.²⁸ The Catholic Church doctrine of purgatory is based on both tradition and Scripture. A clear statement of the doctrine in the decree of union adopted at the Council of Florence, in 1439, says that: “souls are cleansed by purgatorial pains after death, and in order that they may be rescued from these pains, they are benefitted by the suffrage of the living faith, the sacrifice of the mass, prayers, alms giving and other works of piety.”²⁹

At the Council of Trent, the belief in purgatory was recapitulated pointing to various church fathers and “synod” as authority for it.³⁰ On this account, Tertullian mentions “anniversary Masses” for the dead, a practice that suggests belief in purgatory.³¹ He explicitly taught that the torments of the lost would be co-eternal with the happiness of the saved.³² Similarly, Thomas Aquinas traces the origin of purgatory

²⁶Aidan Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: An Introductory Study* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 189.

²⁷Ibid, 100.

²⁸Ibid., 189.

²⁹Pohle, *Eschatology; or, The Catholic Doctrine of the Last Things: A Dogmatic Treatise*, 78.

³⁰Ibid., 79.

³¹Tertullian, *On Monogamy* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1951), 10.

³² Tertullian *On the Resurrection*, (3.547).

to an ancient tradition of praying, offering of the Mass, and giving alms for the benefit of the dead.³³ The Catholic Church adopted this concept not from the Scriptures, but in the writings of the Apocrypha.³⁴ The primary text used in this regard, 2 Maccabees 12:42-45, reads:

Judas Maccabeus, the leader of the Jewish forces also took a collection, man by man, to the amount of 2,000 drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, considering the resurrection. For if he were not experiencing that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who falls asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore, he made atonement for the dead that they might be delivered from their sin.³⁵

The Church believes that this text is evident of the fact that prayer for the dead is endorsed and making an offering to God to deliver the dead from their sin is possible. According to Ludwig Ott, this contradicts the explicit teaching of the New Testament that Christ alone had made atonement for us (John 3:16).³⁶ Another passage Catholics used in support of the doctrine of purgatory is Matthew 12:32; Jesus says: “Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” Ott, a catholic theologian, has commented that this sentence leaves open the possibility that sins are forgiven not only in this world but in

³³ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 91.

³⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 57-59.

³⁵ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 353.

³⁶ Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 483.

the world to come.³⁷ However, this is simply an error in reasoning, for to say that something will not happen in the age to come does not imply that it might happen in the age to come. He opines that what is needed to prove the doctrine of purgatory is not a negative statement such as this but a positive statement that says that people suffer for purification after they die which is not biblical.³⁸

Some Catholics also refer to 1 Corinthians 3:15: “if any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only through fire.” Ott further explains that Paul’s statement on 1 Corinthians does not speak of a person being burned or suffering punishment, but simply of his work as being tested by fire. That which is good will be like gold, silver and precious stones that will last forever. This is something that occurs not during this age, but during the day of “the general judgment,” and this further indicates that it can hardly be used as a convincing argument for purgatory.³⁹

Under Catholicism, there are two intermediate holding places: *limbus patrum* and *limbus infantium*. *Limbus patrum* was the abode of dead saints prior to the time of Christ.⁴⁰ Catholics believe that when Christ had accomplished his atoning work on the cross, he descended into sheol, where the Old Testament believers had gone, and delivered them from their captivity. Since that time *limbus patrum* has been empty.

According to Cardinal John Henry Newman, *Limbus infantium* is for unbaptized infants.⁴¹ Because of original sin, which can be removed only by the

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 483.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 77.

⁴¹John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1960), 21.

sacrament of baptism, they may not go into the presence of the Lord. They suffer the punishment for original sin, which is the loss of the beatific vision or the presence of God.⁴² They do not, however, experience the punishment for actual sin, which is the suffering referred to above. It is purgatory that constitutes the most unusual and most interesting feature of the traditional Roman Catholic teaching regarding the intermediate state.⁴³

The Soul and the Resurrection

The belief in the resurrection of the dead has been an essential element of the Christian faith from its beginnings.⁴⁴ According to *Catechism*, of the Catholic Church, this doctrine has met with incomprehension and opposition.⁴⁵ One Catholic scholar has admitted that no doctrine in Catholicism has encountered more opposition than on the resurrection of the body.⁴⁶ The basis of such opposition lies in the catholic thought that, the life of the human person continues in a spiritual fashion after death.⁴⁷ From the Catholic perspective, a human being is a union of body and soul, so death is just the momentary separation of body and soul until the end of the world, the second coming of Christ, the general judgment, and the resurrection of the dead.⁴⁸

They believe that the departed souls and bodies at death will be reunited, the dead bodies of the souls in heaven will be resurrected and then be glorified and taken

⁴²Ibid., 390.

⁴³Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 21.

⁴⁴Catechism of the Catholic Church, 991.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Laura Sheahen, "The resurrection of the Body" accessed 28 May 2016, <http://americamagazine.org/issue609faith-focus/resurrection-body>

⁴⁷Ibid., 609.

⁴⁸Ibid.

into heaven.⁴⁹ They argue that the damned will get their bodies back, but they will not be glorified. The souls in purgatory will be released and get glorified bodies, which will enter heaven.⁵⁰ The purification of the soul through penance suggest that the Roman Catholic Church imposed upon contrite sinners an obligation or satisfaction to purify them in preparation for receiving God's ultimate reward at the resurrection.⁵¹

According to Catholicism, the unfinished works of satisfaction in this life would be completed after death as follows: "The punishment of purgatory is intended to supplement the satisfaction which was not fully completed in the body."⁵² The ultimate expression of this view attributes to the incorporeal soul all the faculties of the body with its accompanying shift of attention away from the resurrection to the determinative period between death and resurrection. As a result, the resurrection was reduced in importance to merely confirming the outcome of the temporary purgation.⁵³

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) infallibly defined that at the second coming, Jesus will judge the living and the dead, to render to every person according to his works, both to the reprobate and to the elect.⁵⁴ All of them will rise with their own bodies, which they now wear, so as to receive according to their rewards,

⁴⁹John Trigilio, and Kenneth Brighenti, *Catholicism for Dummies* (NJ: Wiley and Sons, 1965), 46. See also, Schreck Alan, *Catholic and Christian: An Explanation of Commonly Misunderstood Catholic Beliefs*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1984), 165-166.

⁵⁰Trigilio, and Brighenti, *Catholicism for Dummies*, 46.

⁵¹Ibid., 47.

⁵²Aquinas, Catechism of the Summa Theologica, 194.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Christopher J.H. Wright, "Death (Theology of)." *New Catholic Encyclopedia (NCE)*, ed. John P. Whalens (Washington, DC: The Catholic U of America 1967), 4:687-695.

whether these be good or bad (Rom. 2:6–11).⁵⁵ The modified recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reiterates this long-defined teaching stating, “We believe in the true resurrection of this flesh that we now possess. We sow a corruptible body in the tomb, but he rises up an incorruptible body, a spiritual body”⁵⁶ (1 Cor 15:42–44).

This view appears on the surface that the Catholic Church has a similar belief to most Protestants regarding the resurrection of the dead. However, the practice of purgatory among other things in Catholicism contradicts such belief. In other words, their belief when it comes to the doctrine of the resurrection of dead does not reflect in their teachings in relation to purgatory.

In summing up, this study has shown that the Roman Church teaches that man is a unity composed of an immortal soul and a mortal body which together constitute the whole of his humanity. The “soul or life” of the human person continues in a spiritual fashion after death. Thus, the dead bodies of the souls in heaven will be resurrected and then be glorified and taken into heaven. The sinners will get their bodies back, but they will not be glorified. The souls in purgatory will be released and receive glorified bodies, which will enter heaven.

The Background of Oscar Cullmann

In allusion to the initial portion of this review, clearly, the focus of this paper is embedded in the immortality of the soul and how that concept affects Christianity. For this reason, the concept of immortality of the soul is not at all a new subject of study among scholars, theologians, philosophers and historians. Literature has it that, the theologians such as Albert Schweitzer, Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Barth, and

⁵⁵Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1017.

⁵⁶Ibid.

philosophers such as Plato, and Aristotle, had become major influencers on the doctrine of immortality of the soul.⁵⁷ However, Oscar Cullmann was a theologian whose contribution on the concept of immortality of the soul has attracted scholarly attention, which is believed to have sparked an unprecedented debate in the theological realm.⁵⁸ For this reason, a review of literature on the subject of immortality of the soul without designating a portion to Oscar Cullmann and his view on immortality of the soul will certainly render the study deficient.

Oscar Cullmann (1902-1999) was born in Strausburg, Germany.⁵⁹ He studied Classical Philology and Theology at Strassburg seminary. He became an assistant professor at Strausburg Thomasstift in 1926 which is believed to have been a position previously held by Albert Schweitzer.⁶⁰ According to his biography, he was awarded a full professorship of New Testament in 1930 and began to teach the history of the primitive church in 1936 respectively.⁶¹ An offer from the world-famous Basel Reformed Seminary in 1938 gave him the opportunity to combine those two fields of interests more closely.

History has it that, in 1948, he accepted to teach theology in Paris while he continued at Basel. He retired from both in 1972, becoming a member of the Institute of France, where he continued to be a prolific theological writer. Cullmann published

⁵⁷Rudolf Bultmann, "Thanatos," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromily (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 1:7.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 1:10.

⁵⁹S. C. Guthrie, Jr., "Oscar Cullmann," in *A Handbook of Christian Theologians*, ed. M. Marty and D. Peerman (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1965), 338.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 25.

on New Testament Exegesis, Systematic Theology and Ecumenism.⁶² Among Cullmann's important works includes: *The Immortality of the Soul or the Resurrection of the Body: The Witness of the New Testament*; *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr*; *Christ and Time*; *Salvation in History*; *Baptism in the New Testament*; *The Christology of the New Testament*.

Cullmann's legacy will be his role as a leading figure for the cause of ecumenicity. He was influential in opening and establishing dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans long before the time of popular ecumenical movements. He presided over several ecumenical discourses and participated in several others. Without compromising his Lutheran heritage, Cullmann opened lines of dialogue long closed by centuries of malice and misunderstanding.⁶³ A winsome personality and a charismatic speaker, Cullmann used his theology and his gifts for the sake of the church.⁶⁴ He was invited as an observer by Cardinal Beas to the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965). He debated with famous theologians like Albert Schweitzer, Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth.

The close associate of Cullmann Karl Barth described him as the most non-reformed theologian of the twentieth century, and who stands out as the most influential in reformed biblical theology.⁶⁵ His studies on New Testament eschatology and Christology according to Barth drove him to propose a third position over against the popular positions of Charles Harold Dodd and Albert Schweitzer known as

⁶²F. L Cross. ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (ODCC)* (1974), s.v. "Cullmann Oscar."

⁶³Guthrie, *Handbook of Christian Theologians*, 338; see also, C. Marvin Pate, *The End of the Age Has Come: The Theology of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 33.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

“redemptive history” or “inaugurated eschatology.”⁶⁶ In view of this, he wrote that Jesus Christ was the midpoint of sacred history, which informs general history and runs linearly from creation to consummation. Cullmann in his work “In Christ et le Temps” (1947) defended the position that the New Testament only refers to linear time, yesterday, today and tomorrow; and that any philosophy that tries to mix other metaphysical concepts of time is inimical to the teachings of the New Testament.⁶⁷

This position led him to write a paper on “Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?” This remarkable agreement (among his opponents) seems to demonstrate how widespread the error of attributing to primitive Christianity the Greek belief in the immortality of the soul.⁶⁸

At the 1955 Ingersoll lecture on the immortality of man delivered at the Andover chapel of Harvard University, Cullmann stressed the fundamental difference between the Christian doctrine of the resurrection and the Greek concept of the immortality of the soul. He said that the soul is not immortal. There must be a resurrection of both body and soul; for since the fall the whole man is sown corruptible.⁶⁹ This famous lecture rekindled theologians of his time the need to reexamine the concept of an afterlife. He was encouraged to publish his lecture in a book form hence his work, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*.

⁶⁶Ibid., 35.

⁶⁷Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: the Primitive Christian Concept of Time and history* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 147.

⁶⁸Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: the Primitive Christian Concept of Time and history*, 147.

⁶⁹Oscar Cullmann, “Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?” in *Immortality and Resurrection Death in the Western World: Two Conflicting Currents of Thought*, ed. Krister Stendahl (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 36-37.

This book provoked violent hostility on the part of some who accused Cullmann of being a monster who delight in causing spiritual distress.⁷⁰ He received several rebukes and attack across the scholarly world. One writer described him as “the French people, dying for the lack of the Bread of life, have been offered instead of bread, stones, if not serpent.”⁷¹ Such violent reactions exemplify how difficult it is for people to reexamine their long-cherished belief.⁷²

However, theologians of past and recent generation admit that the contribution of Oscar Cullmann on the wholistic view of human nature and immortality of the soul is beyond measures. Several Protestants and Catholic theologians have changed their dualistic perspective to a wholistic view of human nature and its related concept ever since Oscar Cullmann’s publication. For instance, Claude Tresmontant, a French catholic Dominican scholar, agreed with Cullmann and later wrote against his Catholic dualistic view. In his thesis, he underscores that the Judeo-Christian teaching on the resurrection is quite a different matter. It does not intend that a part of man-his soul will be freed by discarding the other part his material body; biblical teaching implies that the whole man will be saved.⁷³

Similarly, Don Wulstan Monk, another Catholic scholar, through Cullmann’s work challenges the traditional dualistic view of human nature and encourages the readers to recover the biblical wholistic view. According to him, man, as he is

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Cullmann, “Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? 38.

⁷²Ibid., 39.

⁷³Claude Tremontant, *St. Paul and the Mystery of Christ* (New York: Herder, 1957), 132-133.

revealed in the Bible, is a unity of flesh, soul, and spirit, not a trichotomy, nor a dichotomy of body and soul.⁷⁴

He goes on to note that the Bible considers man holistically; a health viewpoint for balanced, integral living, and radically related both to God, mankind, and all of creation. This viewpoint is needed today, to counteract a still-lurking platonic attitude, and to correct a too natural, secularized, acceptance of the human situation.⁷⁵ Mork came to believe that recovery of the biblical wholistic view of human nature would contribute to a healthier attitude toward the person, and indeed, towards matter in general.⁷⁶

The work of Cullmann has not only influenced Catholics but changed the thought of some Protestants. Taito A. Kantonen noted for instance that it had been characteristics of western thought ever since Plato distinguished sharply between the soul and the body. The body is supposed to be composed of matter, and the soul of spirit. The body is a person from which the soul is liberated at death to carry on its own proper nonphysical existence.⁷⁷ Hence the question of life after death has been the question that demonstrates the immortality, and the death-defying capacity, of the soul. The body is of little consequence. This way of thinking is entirely foreign to the Bible.⁷⁸

Cullmann's rewarding books on immortality of the soul has led to deep controversy in some protestant reformed denominations; for example, in the

⁷⁴Mork, *The Biblical Meaning of Man*, 10.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁷T. A. Kantonen, *The Christian Hope* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954), 28.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 29.

Netherlands. The book was an unexpected support from the academic world for those Christian denominations that subscribe to the doctrine of the conditional immortality. These include Seventh-Day Adventists, Advent Christians, and the Churches of Christ, Life and Advent.⁷⁹ For this reason, research on the subject of immortality of the soul without analyses Oscar Cullmann and his view on immortality of the soul will certainly render the study deficient.

Oscar Cullmann's Concept of Immortality of the Soul

The doctrine of immortality of the soul and destiny is one of the controversial issues among theologians. Leading scholars of different religious persuasion have addressed this in articles and books. However, Oscar Cullmann's work seems to supersede that of other scholars. Therefore, this section considers Oscar Cullmann's thought on the nature of the soul, the state of the soul after death, the intermediate state, and the resurrection of the dead.

The Nature of the Soul

In his book, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*, Oscar Cullmann notes that there is no dichotomy between a mortal body and immortal soul that comes apart at death.⁸⁰ Body and soul, flesh and spirit are an indivisible unity, part of the same person who ceases to exist at death until the resurrection. He opposed the dualistic perspective of human nature and believed in the wholistic view of human

⁷⁹Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 147.

⁸⁰Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*, 15.

nature. In Cullmann's view, soul in Genesis 2:7 denote the whole man, with an emphasis on his consciousness and vitality.⁸¹

In speaking of the creation of man, Cullmann stresses that the basis of his essence was the fragile corporeal substance, but by the breath of God it was transformed and became a soul. It is not said that man was supplied with the soul and so the relation between body and soul is quite different from what it is to us. Such as he is, man in his total essence is a soul.⁸² From a biblical perspective, Cullmann summarizes his argument on the nature of soul pointing out that, the body and the soul are not two different substances, one mortal, and another immortal abiding together within one human being, but two characteristics of the same person.⁸³

The State of the Soul after Death

Since Oscar Cullmann believes that the body and the soul are not two different substance but one characteristic of the same person, he maintains that death is the cessation of life and vitality, the state of the dead in sheol is described in terms adversative to the concept of life on earth. Life means vitality and activity; death means inactivity.⁸⁴ In other words, the inbreathing of the breath of life resulted in man becoming a living soul, a breathing organism. The departing of life results in a person becoming a dead soul. He noted that the departure of soul is the metaphor of death; a dead man is one who has ceased to breath. He concludes that at death, the soul ceases

⁸¹Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*, 16.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 17.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

to function as connected inextricably with the fate of the body because the body is the outward manifestation of the soul.⁸⁵

Oscar Cullmann questions the immortality of the soul because he believes that all knowledge comes from the sensory perception of the body.⁸⁶ Since the death of the body marks the end of all sensory perception, it is impossible for the soul to have conscious existence after the death of the body. Cullmann pointed out that the belief in the ascension of souls to heaven can obscure and eclipse the expectation of the Second Advent.⁸⁷ He argues that if at death the soul of the believer goes up immediately to the beatitude of Paradise to be with the Lord, one hardly can have any real sense of expectation for Christ to come down to resurrect the sleeping saints.⁸⁸ Cullmann contests against the belief of the transition of the soul to paradise, hell, or purgatory at the time of death, because, there is no conscious life after death.

The Soul and the Resurrection

The discussion of the second advent of Christ naturally leads on to a consideration of its concomitant. Foremost among these is the resurrection of the dead or, as it is sometimes called, the resurrection of the flesh.⁸⁹ At the beginning of his book, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*, Cullmann introduces his theory of Christianity truly being about the resurrection of the human body, rather than the immortality of the soul. He asserts that it is extensively misunderstood concept that the soul is immortal instead of having a resurrected body, just like Christ

⁸⁵Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*, 15.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1958), 720.

did.⁹⁰ He opines that, since Christ was resurrected from the dead, Christians will inevitably follow in his wake in due course.⁹¹

According to him, the widespread misunderstanding that the New Testament teaches the immortality of the soul was actually encouraged by the rock-like *post-Easter* conviction of the first disciples that the bodily resurrection of Christ had robbed death of all its horror, and that from the moment of Easter onward, the Holy Spirit had awakened the souls of believers into the life of the resurrection.⁹²

On the contrary, Cullmann argues that the soul is not inherently immortal, but rather became so only through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and through faith in Him.⁹³ Therefore, Christ's sacrifice saved our souls, but it did not guarantee humanity freedom from death. Only through faith in Jesus can one achieve this end. Yet, the true ascent to heaven will not come for anyone until the last day.⁹⁴

It becomes clear that the resurrection already accomplished is not the state of fulfillment, for that remains in the future until the body is also resurrected, which will not occur until the last day.⁹⁵ Resurrection is a positive assertion: the whole man, who has really died, is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God. Therefore, there is no biblical link between the resurrection of the body and the soul's immortality.⁹⁶

⁹⁰Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*, 21.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 25.

⁹²*Ibid.*, 27.

⁹³Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the*, 30.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 18.

In summary, contrary to the Catholic view of immortality of the soul, Oscar Cullmann is of the view that there is no division between a body and soul that comes separately at death.⁹⁷ Therefore, body and soul, flesh and spirit are an indivisible unity, part of the same person who ceases to exist at death until the resurrection. At death, the soul ceases to function as connected indivisibly with the fate of the body because the body is the outward manifestation of the soul. Thus, the true ascent to heaven will not come for anyone until the last day.

Comparative Analysis of the Catholic and Cullmann's Views on Immortality of the Soul

The study conducted so far concerning the views of Catholic Church and Cullmann on immortality of the soul is quite erudite. The arguments from the two views have engaged scholarly attention and support. This section, therefore, gives a thorough analysis of both views and compare the two opposing views and determine how they fit into the biblical teachings of the study under consideration.

In catholic perspective, the “soul” and the “body” are not essentially one; each has a different origin and role in human existence on earth and beyond.⁹⁸ Hence every spiritual soul is created immediately by God it is not produced by the parents, and it is immortal. It does not perish when it separates from the body at death.⁹⁹ Thus, man is a unity composed of an immortal soul and a mortal body which together constitute the

⁹⁷Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the*, 19.

⁹⁸Augustine, (ANF, 2.245).

⁹⁹Ibid.

whole of his humanity.¹⁰⁰ This view is supported by Origen, who refers to the soul as a “substance” which partakes of the eternal nature and lasts forever.¹⁰¹

Similarly, Augustus Strong states: “Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. We distinguish it from spiritual death, or the separation of the soul from God.”¹⁰² Nevertheless, Oscar Cullmann sees no dichotomy between a mortal body and immortal soul.¹⁰³ Body and soul, flesh and spirit are, according to him, an indivisible unity, part of the same person who ceases to exist at death until the resurrection. Cullmann holds that man in his total essence is a soul.¹⁰⁴

This view seems to be in harmony with the biblical teaching on the nature of soul. In Genesis 2:7 the text reads: “Then God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul.”¹⁰⁵ Genesis 2:7 spells out that human was formed by two elements which holistically constitute a living soul. This implies that the dust alone cannot constitute human, neither the breath of life alone can live as human.

Though the Hebrew word *nepes* is often translated soul in the English version, its usage for both man and beast (Gen. 1: 20, 24-30; 2: 19; 7: 21) shows that there is nothing immortal or even pertaining to higher functions about it. In Genesis 1:7 the text seems to suggest that man was composed of dust and breath of life, the result of it is living soul or human being. Hence there cannot be separation between both.

¹⁰⁰Augustine, (ANF, 2.245).

¹⁰¹Origen, *De Principiis* (ANF, 1.381).

¹⁰²Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Old Tappan, NJ: Griffith & Rowland, 1970), 982.

¹⁰³Cullmann, *Death in the Western World*, 28..

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵Cullmann, *Death in the Western World*, 28.

Regarding the state of the dead, the Catholic Church holds a general conviction that there is a judgment for each soul immediately after death. According to this “dogma,” the departed souls go forthwith after death into heaven or into hell or into purgatory.¹⁰⁶ Several scholars seem to subscribe to the view of the Catholic Church. In *The New Bible Dictionary*, George Eldon Ladd States that “man does not cease to exist at death, but his soul descends to the grave.”¹⁰⁷ The same view is expressed by John Thomson and Morey who write: At death, the body remains on earth; the soul passes into the grave; but the breath or spirit, returned to God, not to the grave.¹⁰⁸

Conversely, Cullmann opines that since the death of the body marks the end of all sensory perception, it is impossible for the soul to have conscious existence after the death of the body. He argues that the belief in the ascension of souls to heaven can obscure and eclipse the expectation of the Second Advent.¹⁰⁹ He believes that if at death the soul of the believer goes up immediately to the beatitude of paradise to be with the Lord, one hardly can have any real sense of expectation for Christ to come down to resurrect the sleeping saints.¹¹⁰ He disputes the belief of the transition of the soul to paradise, hell, or purgatory at the time of death.

According to the Bible, “the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten” (Eccl 9:5; 12:7; Job 27:3, 14:10-13, 17:13; Ps 146:3-4, 155:17). This interpretation is best

¹⁰⁶Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 530, see also, McBrien, *Catholicism*, 29.

¹⁰⁷Ladd, “Death,” *NBD*, 3:380.

¹⁰⁸J. G. S. Thomson, “Death and the State of the Soul after Death,” in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (New York: Wiley, 1962), 271.

¹⁰⁹Cullmann, *Death in the Western World*, 19.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

explained by the terms *sheol* and *hades* in the Old Testament and New Testament view of the condition of man after death. These words denote that the survival of the soul is connected to the survival of the body because the body is an outward manifestation of the soul (Gen 2:7). For this reason, the death of a person is often described as the death of the soul. When death occurs, it is the soul that is deprived of life. Death cannot strike the body or any other parts of the soul without striking the entirety of the body.¹¹¹

In his dissertation on “Sheol in the Old Testament,” Ralph Walter Doermann adds that, the dead were conceived as being in grave and in these interpretations of grave as the dwelling place of souls (rather than the resting place of the body in the grave) or the place of punishment for the wicked, known as hell, do not stand up under the light of the biblical usage of grave.¹¹²

This fact is recognized by John W. Cooper who has attempted to salvage the traditional dualistic view of human nature from the massive attacks of modern scholarship against it. Cooper states: “Perhaps most interesting for traditional Christians to note is the fact that “grave” is the resting place of the dead irrespective of their religion during life. Grave is not the ‘hell’ to which the wicked are condemned and from which the Lord’s faithful are spared in glory.”¹¹³

The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible states explicitly that “Nowhere in the Old Testament is the abode of the dead regarded as a place of punishment or torment. The concept of an infernal hell developed in Israel only during the Hellenistic

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Doermann, “Sheol in the Old Testament,” 191.

¹¹³Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 61.

period.”¹¹⁴ The attempt of Catholics and scholars such as Morey, Thompson and others to differentiate between sheol as the abode of the soul and the grave as the resting place of the body is based on a dualistic view of human nature which is foreign to the Bible.

In his classic study on *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, Johannes Pedersen flatly indicates that sheol is the collective realm of the dead where all the deceased go, whether buried or unburied.¹¹⁵ All the deceased, because they were subject to the same conditions, were thought to be in a common realm.¹¹⁶ In other words, according to Pederson at death, the deceased remains in the grave until the resurrection (Eccl 9:5; 12:7; Job 27:3, 14:10-13, 17:13; Ps 146:3-4, 155:17).

Every Christian’s hope for the future is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the promise that His resurrection assures resurrections and eternal life for those who believe in Him.¹¹⁷ Such belief is prevalent in the Catholic Church. The church sees a human being as a union of body and soul, so death is just the momentary separation of body and soul until the resurrection of the dead. They believe that bodies and souls will be reunited.¹¹⁸ The dead bodies of the souls in heaven will be resurrected and then be glorified and taken into heaven. “The lost will get their bodies back, but they will not be glorified. The souls in purgatory will be released and get glorified bodies, which will enter heaven.”¹¹⁹ As *New Catechism of*

¹¹⁴Gaster, “Abode of the Dead,” *IDB*, 1:788.

¹¹⁵Pedersen, *Israel: Its life and Culture*, 462.

¹¹⁶Doermann, “Sheol in the Old Testament.” 191.

¹¹⁷Cairus, “The Doctrine of Man,” *Seventh Day Adventist Handbook of Theology*, 213.

¹¹⁸Trigilio and Brighenti, *Catholicism for Dummies*, 46.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

the Catholic Church states: “By death the soul is separated from the body, but in the resurrection God will give incorruptible life to our body, transformed by reunion with our soul.”¹²⁰ Thus Roman Catholic tradition continues to see the resurrection as the reuniting of the body and soul and continues to emphasize the immortality of the soul. It still gives place to a doctrine of purgatory, though with less elaboration than was once the case.

This teaching seems to be adopted from the teachings of the early Church Fathers. For instance, Tertullian wrote that the soul is not only immortal but corporeal, possessing a peculiar kind of solidarity that enables it to be perceived and suffer. But since the soul cannot fully function without the body, body and soul must be reunited in a resurrection of the body before a person can face either eternal torment or eternal salvation.¹²¹

Origen presents a similar view of death and of the reuniting of body and soul, but he argues that since the immortal cannot cease to be and since God will restore all things, everyone will eventually be saved even if for some this only comes after death.¹²² In his view, the resurrection occurs when all rational souls are restored and received a spiritual body. Thomas Aquinas in the middle ages carried further this speculation about the nature of the soul by arguing that the resurrection means the reuniting of the body and soul.¹²³

¹²⁰Mangasar MagurditchMangasarian, *New Catechism of Catholic Church* (Chicago: Open Court, 1902). 991.

¹²¹Tertullian, *On the Resurrection*, (ANF, 3.549).

¹²²Origen, *De Principiis* (ANF, 1. 388).

¹²³Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 99.

On the other hand, Cullmann's thought on the resurrection seems to differ from that of Catholic. In Cullmann's view, it is widely misinterpreted that the soul is immortal instead of having a resurrected body, just like Christ did. He argues that the soul is not intrinsically immortal, but rather became so only through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and through faith in Him.¹²⁴ He further stipulates that Christ's sacrifice saved the souls, but it did not guarantee humanity freedom from death.

Therefore, only through faith in Jesus can one achieve this end, and that the true ascent to heaven will not come for anyone until the last day.¹²⁵ In other words, resurrection is the equivalent of the transformation of the fleshly body into a spiritual body.¹²⁶ Because resurrection of the body is a new act of creation which embraces everything, it is not an event which begins with each individual death but only at the end.¹²⁷ Cullmann argues that "resurrection is a positive assertion: the whole man, who has really died, is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God."¹²⁸

In the context of the Neo-orthodox debate, Oscar Cullmann has raised questions about the immortality of the soul. He attempts to show that the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is incompatible with believe in the immortality of the soul.¹²⁹ In the interim between death and resurrection at the last day, one is in a state of anticipation that shares the tension of the interim period.¹³⁰ In

¹²⁴Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*, 17.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 18.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 35.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 38.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 27.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 17.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*

accentuation to Cullmann's position, the evangelical scholars, John Stott and Clark Pinnock have more recently criticized the doctrine of immortality of the soul as giving an incomplete hope for the future in contrast with the body resurrection of Christ, which point to a total salvation, not only of human spiritual life, but all creation, including the physical.¹³¹

Biblically, both Testaments contribute to the teaching on the resurrection. However, resurrection is clearly infiltrated throughout the New Testament materials than that of the Old Testament. All New Testament thought about the resurrection of the believer grows out of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 11:25). Christ resurrection is already the beginning of the final resurrection. It is an eschatological event.¹³²

The Christian hope is found in Christ's resurrection. According to the Bible, human beings have no natural immortality. God alone has immortality (1 Timothy 6:15-16). Death is an unconscious sleep (John 11:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13) rather than being a transition to another kind of life, is simply the negation of life. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, this resurrection coincides with the second coming of Christ, an event which is universally visible and is accompanied by the call of the Archangel and the sound of the trumpet. At that point, those who have died in Christ will be resurrected, and those believers who are alive and remain will be transformed giving immortality and caught up with the resurrected ones to meet the Lord and to be with Him forever.¹³³

¹³¹John Stott and D.L. Edwards, *Essentials: A Liberal/Evangelical Dialogue* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), 313-320; See, Clark Pinnock, "The Incredible Resurrection: A Mandate for Faith," 16.

¹³²Brunt, "Resurrection and Glorification," 369.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 271.

In this new state of immortality and eternal fellowship with God, believers do not shed their material bodies but enjoy the kind of bodily existence God originally intended before the entrance of sin into the world (1 Cor 15:51-55; Dan 12:2 John 5:28-29, 11:11-15). Paul affirms that this new glorified, or spiritual, body is not an immaterial body but a recognizable body with continuity and identity from earthly life. It is spiritual, not in the sense that it is not physical, but that it is no longer subject to death. Both believers who have died and those alive at the return of Christ receive the same imperishable body. It differs from the present body only because it is perfect, free of all imperfections caused by sin in the world, and in that it is no longer subject to death (1Corinthians 15:35-46).

This biblical position on the resurrection has long been supported by Seventh-day Adventist church. Adventists have consistently affirmed that Christians can look forward to the resurrection of the just at the second advent of Christ and that those who die before Christ's return, wait in unconscious sleep until the whole person is resurrected.¹³⁴ The consistency of this position can be seen in the various statement of belief that the church has adopted.

The most recent statement of belief in resurrection reads "the wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to his redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people."¹³⁵ When Christ, the source of life appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet Him in the air. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous will take place a thousand years later (Rom 6:23; 1 Tim 6:15-16; Eccl 9:5-6; Ps 146:3-4).

¹³⁴Ibid., 370.

¹³⁵Brunt, "Resurrection and Glorification," 371.

Summary

In summing up, a careful analysis of the argument between Cullmann and Catholic Church indicate that both believe in the resurrection, but while Catholic believe that the body and the soul will be reunited at the resurrection, Cullmann held that the whole man, who has really died, is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God.¹³⁶ In other words, Cullmann did not agree that body and the soul are separate entities which later unite at the resurrection.

Additionally, it has been observed that Catholic Church's belief in the resurrection, nonetheless, they continue to give place to the doctrine of purgatory seem to suggest that their position on the resurrection is questionable. Thus, doctrinally their belief in the resurrection is incongruent to their practice.

According to Cullmann, the Catholic doctrine of resurrection is incompatible with the biblical teaching on the resurrection. This view is supported by many protestant churches, especially Adventist who teaches that those who die before Christ's return wait in unconscious sleep until the whole person is resurrected at the second coming of Christ while the unrighteousness remains until after a thousand years.¹³⁷

¹³⁶Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead*, 27.

¹³⁷Brunt, "Resurrection and Glorification," 373.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the popular Christian notion of immortality of the soul has been severely influenced by the dualistic, unbiblical understanding of human nature. The far-reaching practical and doctrinal implications of the doctrine of immortality of the soul for Christian beliefs and practices are immeasurable.

Doctrinally, a host of beliefs has emanated from the doctrine of immortality of the soul. For instance, the belief in the transition of the soul at the time of death to paradise, hell, or purgatory rests on the belief that the soul is immortal by nature and survives the body at death. This teaching has fostered the Catholic and Orthodox belief in the intercessory role of Mary and of the saints. If the souls of the saints are in heaven, it is feasible to assume that they can intercede on behalf of needy sinners on this earth.

Thus, devout Christians pray to Mary and the saints to intercede on their behalf. Such a practice runs contrary to the biblical teaching that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1Tim 2:5). This means that, if inherent immortality of the soul should prove to be an unbiblical conception, then popular beliefs about paradise, purgatory and hell, must be completely rejected. More importantly, if the soul does not survive and cannot function apart from the body, then the whole teaching of the intercessory role of Mary and the saints must be rejected as an ecclesiastical fabrication.

In the same way, the belief that at death the souls of those who are pardonable transport to purgatory, have led to the teaching that the church on earth has the jurisdiction to apply the merits of Christ and of the saints to souls suffering in purgatory. This is accomplished through the granting of indulgences, that is, the remission of the temporal punishment due to forgiven sin. Such a belief led to the scandalous sale of indulgences which in the history of Christianity sparked the Protestant Reformation.

The Reformers eliminated the doctrine of purgatory as unbiblical; however, they retained the doctrine of the immediate transit after death of individual souls to a state of perfect blessedness (heaven) or to a state of continuous punishment (hell). Since this is proven to be unbiblical, popular beliefs about purgatory, indulgences, and transit of the souls to heaven or to hell must also be rejected as fallacious doctrine. The work that the reformers initiated in eliminating purgatory would have to be fulfilled by redefining paradise and hell according to Scripture and not ecclesiastical traditions. It is unlikely that such a huge task can be undertaken by any protestant church today. Any attempt to modify or reject traditional doctrines is often interpreted as a betrayal of the faith and can cause division and schism within the church. This is a very high price that most churches are not willing to pay.

Furthermore, the belief in the immortality of the soul has contributed to weakening the hope Christians have in the second coming of Christ. The belief that a soul ascends to heaven immediately after death complicates and obscures the expectation of the Second Advent, because hardly can one have any real sense of expectation for Christ to come down to resurrect the sleeping saints. The primary concern of these Christians is to reach paradise immediately, though as a disembodied

soul. This concern leaves barely any interest in the coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the body.

In other words, the individualistic hope for immediate immortality overrides the biblical corporate hope for an ultimate restoration of this creation and its creatures (Rom 8:19-23; 1 Cor 15:24-28). When the only future that really counts is the individual soul's survival after death, the suffering of mankind can have only a trivial interest and the value of God's redemption for this whole world is largely ignored. The ultimate result of the doctrine of immortality of the soul according to Abraham Kuyper will let the majority of Christians not to think much beyond their own death.

At a more practical level, the belief in immortality of the soul has promoted the cultivation of the soul in detachment from the body and the restraint of physical appetites and healthy natural desires. Contrary to the biblical view of the goodness of God's creation, including the physical pleasures of the body, medieval spirituality promoted the mortification of the flesh to achieve the divine goal of holiness. The salvation of the soul was more important than the preservation of the body. The physical needs of the body often intentionally were neglected or even suppressed.

The dichotomy between body and soul, the physical and the spiritual, is still present in the thinking of many Christians today. Many still associate redemption with the human soul rather than the human body. They describe the missionary work of the church as that of "saving souls." This notion seems to depict that, the souls are more important than the bodies. The study asserts that the gospels give no basis for a theory of redemption which saves souls apart from the bodies to which they belong. Until we have a theory of redemption which meets the whole need of man we have failed to understand the purpose of Him who became incarnate that He might be able to save humanity.

In summary, the outcome of the doctrine of immortality of the soul or body-soul distinction is that Christians have surrendered vast areas of life, moral values, and knowledge to the forces of secularism and humanism. Teaching methods and textbooks, even in Christian schools, reflect more humanistic philosophies than biblical views. The total impact of the immortality of the soul is impossible to estimate. Dividing humans into body and soul has promoted all sorts of false dichotomies in human life.

Summary

Clearly, the focus of this research has been the comparison of Roman Catholic and Oscar Cullmann's concept of the doctrine of immortality of the soul. The paper began to affirm that what we believe about the make-up of the human nature largely determines what we believe about our ultimate destiny. The research attempted to compare and contrast the dualistic view of human nature, which emphasizes the distinction between the material, mortal body and the spiritual, immortal soul, and the holistic view, which emphasizes the unity of body, soul, and spirit, each being part of an indivisible organism.

The study has shown that the dualistic view of human nature is largely derived from Greek philosophers and the medieval Church, and has greatly influenced Christian beliefs and practices. For example, the belief that the body is mortal and the soul immortal has led to the strange definition of death as the separation of the immortal soul from the mortal body rather than the cessation of life as clearly attested in Scripture. This unbiblical definition of death has fostered the popular belief in the transition of the soul at the time of death to paradise, hell, or purgatory. In turn, the latter belief gave rise to the Catholic belief in the intercessory role of the saints and to the belief that the church on earth has the jurisdiction to apply the merits of the saints

to souls suffering in purgatory. Regarding the final punishment of the wicked, the research has noted how the belief in the immortality of the soul influenced an interpretation of hell where the lost are supposed to be tormented by God for all eternity. Such a view is in deep trouble today because more and more Christians are rejecting it for biblical and moral reasons.

Oscar Cullmann, a 20th century Lutheran New Testament scholar, for instance, has challenged the Catholic teaching on the immortality of the soul. In his view, there is no distinction between a body and soul that comes independently at death. Therefore, body and soul, are an indivisible unity, part of the same person who ceases to exist at death until the resurrection. Cullmann's position on the doctrine of immortality of the soul seems to be in harmony with the Bible because biblically, the rich imagery and language of destruction used throughout the Bible to portray the fate of the wicked clearly indicate that their final punishment results in annihilation and not eternal conscious torment.

Morally, the doctrine of eternal conscious torment is incompatible with the biblical revelation of divine love and justice. In the final section, the paper established that immortality of the soul had weakened the expectation of Christ's coming by leading people to believe that they can meet Christ at death as disembodied souls. It has rendered the final judgment practically unnecessary by teaching that each person is judged at death by being sent to heaven or consigned to hell. It has spiritualized away the resurrection of the body and the world to come by depreciating the physical aspect of the resurrected body and the material aspect of the world to come. The outcome of dualism is that most Christians today are hardly inspired by the vision of an ethereal paradise, where they are expected to live for all eternity as glorified souls engaged in everlasting singing, meditation, and contemplation.

Conclusion

Based on these two views on the concept of immortality of the soul, (Catholic and Cullmann), the study appears to prove that Catholic teaching on this doctrine is unbiblical whereas Cullmann is in line with the Bible. From the biblical point of view, the body and the soul are not two distinct substances, one mortal and the other immortal surviving together into one human being, but two characteristics of the same person.

The understanding of this view is clearly seen in the usage of the Hebrew word *nephesh* and the Greek *psyche*. Therefore, the study concludes that the doctrine of immortality of the soul is foreign to the Bible. It follows that the Catholic belief in the immortality of the soul, purgatory and the whole teaching of the intercessory role of Mary and the saints are biblically untrue. At best, it qualifies as a tactic to sustain the edenic lie that humanity “shall not surely die” (Gen 3:4).

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