

Resurrection and Immortality: Eight Theses

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It is a curious fact that few theological issues are as potentially explosive as the doctrines of resurrection and immortality. In the preface to the English translation of his *study Immortalité de l'âme ou résurrection des morts?* O. Cullmann confesses 'No other publication of mine has provoked such enthusiasm or such violent hostility.'¹

Several factors may account for the heat so often generated by the discussion of these issues. First, serious misunderstanding not infrequently arises from the ambiguity of the terms 'immortality' and 'resurrection'. What a student of Greek philosophy means by 'immortality' is certainly not what the term signifies to a New Testament exegete. What a physicist understands by the phrase 'resurrection of the flesh' differs markedly from the meaning attached to that phrase by a systematic theologian. Secondly, the two terms are often (erroneously) thought to symbolize the difference between Greek philosophy and biblical revelation: Plato argued for immortality, Paul preached resurrection, it is said; the word 'immortality' has no proper claim to a place in the vocabulary of Christian theology. Some imagine that to defend the doctrine of 'the resurrection of the dead' against any notion of 'immortality' is to contend for the faith against the encroachment of philosophical paganism. Thirdly, many who are convinced by arguments for the immortality of the soul find themselves repelled by the view (mistakenly taken to be Christian) that resurrection simply amounts to reanimation: decomposed corpses are to be revived or scattered fragments are to be reassembled, the resurrection body having the same atomic structure as the body that was laid in the grave or was cremated.

Rather than attempting to include a cursory treatment of such matters as the Old Testament and intertestamental views of resurrection and immortality² or the evidences for the resurrection of Christ, this article will focus attention on the New Testament (particularly the Pauline) use of the terms 'resurrection' and 'immortality' and their interrelation. A convenient way of raising the relevant issues will be to state eight theses which one may then seek to explain or defend.

¹ *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (London, 1958). Of the many reviews of this monograph, see in particular Ch. Masson in *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* 8 (1958), pp. 250-67.

² For a discussion of these concepts as they are found in Old Testament and intertestamental literature, see A. T. Nikolainen *Der Aufernehmungsglauben in der Bibel and ihrer Umwelt* (2 vols.) (Helsinki, 1944-46); R. Martin-Achard, *De la mort à la résurrection d'après l'AT* (Paris, 1956); G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (London, 1972); G. Stemmerger, *Der Leib der Auferstehung* (Rome, 1972); H. C. C. Cavallin, *Life After Death*, Part 1 (Lund, 1974).

1. *In the New Testament, immortality involves not so much endless personal survival through the avoidance of physical death as participation in the eternal life of God and therefore immunity from eternal death.*

It is true that in itself the word 'immortality' simply denotes immunity from death (*athanasia*, 1Cor. 15:53, 54; 1 Tim. 6:16) or from decay (*aphtharsia*, Rom. 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:42, 50, 53, 54; Eph. 6:24; 2 Tim. 1:10). But given a New Testament context, the word should be defined positively as well as negatively, qualitatively as well as quantitatively. To be immortal is more than being immune from extinction³ or free from corruption. It is to share the nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4) and to enjoy fellowship with Christ (Lk. 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). Deathlessness and incorruptibility result from full and immediate participation in the eternal divine life. A comparison of 2 Corinthians 5:4 with I Corinthians 15:53, 54 shows that '(eternal) life'⁴ is equivalent to 'immortality'. Note also the significant juxtaposition of these two terms in Romans 2:7 ('to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he (God) will give eternal life') and 2 Timothy 1:10 ('...Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'). The

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Christian is destined to gain an immunity to that principle of decay and deterioration which characterizes humanity in Adam, through sharing the endless life of God.

2. *In distinctive New Testament usage, resurrection signifies not the reanimation of corpses but the transformation of the whole person into the image of Christ by the power of the indwelling Spirit, in spite of the intervention of death.*

The majority of pagan Greeks of the first century AD would probably have understood the New Testament phrase *hē anastasis tōn nekrōn* ('the resurrection of the dead') to mean nothing more than 'the standing up of corpses' (cf. Acts 17:32a). Since, for the Greeks, 'resurrection' was either impossible or at most an isolated miracle,⁵ it is little wonder that some Athenians understood Paul's reference to Jesus (*Iēsous*) and the resurrection (*anastasis*) as an allusion to two new deities, the 'Healer' (*Iēsō*) and his consort 'Restoration' (*Anastasis*) (Acts 17:18).⁶ And no doubt some Christians understood resurrection in crassly materialistic terms as simply the revival of dead persons, the restoration of decomposed bodies to their original atomic structure. But others would have inherited from Judaism the more developed view that resurrection involved the receipt of a new body as the permanent home of the soul that had been preserved intact in heavenly treasures since the time of death.⁷

³ The biblical doctrine of the judgment and consequent reward or punishment of all without exception implies the persistence of every person through and beyond death.

⁴ 'Life' and 'eternal life' are interchangeable in Pauline usage, as in Johannine (see R. W. Thomas, 'The Meaning of the Terms "Life" and "Death" in the Fourth Gospel and in Paul', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21 (1968), pp. 199-212, especially p. 204).

⁵ A. Oepke in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I, p. 369.

⁶ See the note in F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles. The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (London, 1952), p. 333.

⁷ P. Volz (*Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Genreinde*, Tübingen, 1934, pp. 249-55; cf. pp. 117-21) traced the three basic views concerning the nature of resurrection that he found in Jewish literature (viz., 'Neubeseelung des alien

One distinctive feature of the Christian view of resurrection is that the dead are not only revived but also transformed. As for Christ, so for Christians, resurrection brings personal transformation and exaltation as well as the return of life. To be revived is not to be resurrected: the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44) or of the widow of Nain's son (Lk. 7:11-17) was a restoration to temporary physical life (they came to life only ultimately to die once more), not a resurrection to permanent spiritual life. Christ, however, was resurrected, never to die again (Acts 13:34; Rom. 6:9) and always to be exalted at the right hand of God (Rom. 8:34, and note the significant *oun*, 'therefore,' linking vv. 32 and 33 of Acts 2).

What is raised and transformed is not some impersonal corpse but dead persons. The New Testament nowhere explicitly refers to 'the resurrection of the body' or 'the resurrection of the flesh', only to 'the resurrection of the dead' or to 'resurrection from the dead'. The subjects of resurrection are whole persons, who are transformed outwardly and inwardly in what may be called an acceleration of the process of Christification (see Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10). With this in mind, some appeal to biblical usage of 'flesh' or 'body' in the sense of 'whole person' in support of the traditional phrases 'resurrection of the flesh'⁸ and 'resurrection of the body'⁹ which appear regularly in the creeds of the church. Both of these formulations, rightly understood, preserve a fundamental aspect of the truth (*viz.* that the subject of resurrection life is identical with the subject of physical life), but equally, both are open to the grave misinterpretation that resurrection means simply the resuscitation of corpses. Even the phrase 'resurrection in the body'¹⁰, is not without its difficulty. Perhaps the way of wisdom is to be content with the biblical formulation 'resurrection of/from the dead' or with the unqualified term 'resurrection'. If a qualification be thought imperative, the phrase 'resurrection of the person' (preferred by P. H. Menoud¹¹) seems least open to objection.

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Körpers'; 'Wiedervereinigung des alten Körpers and der alten Seele'; 'Neubeleibung der aufbewahrten Seele'—see *op. cit.*, p. ix) to a materialistic, a materialistic-spiritual, and a spiritual anthropology (respectively). He located the religious motive behind the emphasis on the body and its restoration in the necessity for the maintenance of personal identity, and the religious motive behind the stress on the spirit and its embodiment in a new corporeality in the need for divine perfection and freedom from sin.

⁸ On the significance of the phrase 'the resurrection of the flesh' in credal formulations, see W. Bieder, 'Auferstehung des Fleisches oder des Leibes? Eine biblischtheologische and dogmengeschichtliche Studie', in *Theologische Zeitschrift*, I (1945), pp. 105-20; J. A. Schep, *The Nature of the Resurrection Body* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), pp. 220-27 (Appendix II); and J. G. Davies, 'Factors leading to the Emergence of Belief in the Resurrection of the Flesh,' in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 23 (1972), pp. 448-55. Definition of terms is again crucial. If 'flesh' can be shown to signify 'person' or 'man in his flesh-body' in biblical and patristic usage, one of the chief objections to the phrase 'the resurrection of the flesh' is removed.

⁹ For a discussion of the doctrine of 'The Resurrection of the Body' in the early Christian centuries, see articles bearing this title by R. M. Grant in *Journal of Religion*, 28 (1948), pp. 120-30, 188-208. A review of 'Contemporary Exegetical Understanding of "the Resurrection of the Body"' may be found J. Gnilka's article of this title in *Immortality and Resurrection*, ed. P. Benoit and R. Murphy (New York, 1970), pp. 129-41.

¹⁰ See C. R. Bowen, *The Resurrection in the New Testament* (New York, 1911), p. 76.

¹¹ *Le sort des trépassés*² (Neuchatel, 1966), pp. 60f. But Menoud tends to oversimplify when he distinguishes between three competing eschatologies (*op. cit.*, pp. 14, 15; see also p. 50, n. 1; pp. 85, 86): Greek idealistic eschatology, involving the immortality of the soul and deliverance from embodiment; Jewish materialistic eschatology, involving the resurrection of the flesh and the eternality of corporeality; and Christian realistic eschatology, involving the resurrection of the person and the redemption of corporeality itself.

On occasion, it must be noted, the New Testament appears to use the term 'resurrection' in a primitive sense of 'coming to life again' (*cf.* Jn. 5:21a) or emergence from the tomb (*cf.* Jn. 5:28, 29). There is a resurrection that leads to judgment, not life (Jn. 5:29; Acts 24:15; *cf.* Mt. 25:46; Lk. 11:32 and Dn. 12:2; 2 Esdras 7:32-38), a reanimation of 'the rest of the dead' that leads to 'the second death' (Rev. 20:4-6, 11-15).

But in the Pauline Epistles resurrection seems to be depicted as a privilege reserved for the new humanity in Christ.¹² In any event, whatever the anthropological state of the wicked dead after they have regained 'life', they are certainly not possessors of spiritual bodies, since the *sōma pneumatikon* is imperishable and therefore not subject to 'the second death'.

That the believer's resurrection is effected by God through the agency of his indwelling Spirit is shown by Romans 8:11 (where the genitive reading seems preferable). Moreover the pattern that the Spirit of God follows in giving life to 'mortal bodies' is the resurrection of Christ: Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). Strictly speaking, the resurrection of Christ does not cause the resurrection of Christians (as Thomas Aquinas believed)¹³ but it does form its paradigm. The resurrection of Christ or the resurrected Christ is the prototype and pattern for the resurrection of believers. *Aparchē* ('firstfruits') denotes both priority in time (*cf.* Acts 26:23) and superiority in status; his resurrection forms the first and most significant part of a series.

So it is that Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of believers has a twofold basis: an historical fact (the resurrection of Christ—the objective aspect), and the personal experience of that fact (the possession of the Spirit of Christ—the subjective aspect). In Christ's resurrection through the power of the Spirit of God, the firstfruits of the Easter harvest, Christians have a pledge of the full ingathering; in their possession of the Spirit of Christ and in his activity in producing Christ-likeness, Christians have a guarantee of their individual participation in that ingathering (2 Cor. 1:22; 3:18; 5:4, 5).

3. *Only with the death and resurrection of Christ did the ideas of resurrection and immortality emerge from Old Testament shadows into the full light of New Testament day (cf. 2 Tim. 1:10).*

Few will deny that the Old Testament contains isolated adumbrations of Christian teaching about the raising of the dead in passages such as Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6; Job 19:25-27;

¹² Thus I. Héring, 'Saint Paul a-t-il enseigné deux résurrections?' in *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, 12 (1932), pp. 308f. J. B. Lightfoot, however, commenting on Philippians 3:11 (Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, London, 1894, p. 151) makes a distinction between *hē onastasis tōn nekron* (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:42) which includes both 'the resurrection of life' and 'the resurrection of judgment' (Jn. 5:29), and (*hē*) *anastasis (hē) ek nekron* (Lk. 20:35; Acts 4:2; 1 Pet. 1:3) which is restricted to 'the resurrection of life'. On the other hand, J. Jeremias believes that in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul draws a careful distinction between *hoi nekroi* (deceased Christians) and the anarthrous *nekroi* (the dead in general) ("Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15: 50)', in *New Testament Studies*, 2 (1955-56), p. 155!

¹³ For an analysis of Aquinas's view, see M. E. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body* (SBT, 36, London, 1962, pp. 96f., Additional Note A).

Psalms 16:9-11; 17:15; 23:6; 27:4; 49:14-16; 73:23-26;¹⁴ Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2, 3; 12:13. But in these matters Old Testament writers saw 'in a mirror dimly'; it remained for the dimness of reflected light to be replaced by the glow of direct light. Not only did Christ slay death by dying; he also brought immortality to light by rising. He now is the possessor of the 'keys of death' (Rev. 1:18) and the dispenser of eternal life or immortality (Jn. 5:21).

The rootage of the Christian view of the hereafter, however, is securely in Old Testament soil, as the dispute between Jesus and the Sadducees indicates (see Mk. 12:18-27; especially verses 26f. 'As for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God said to him, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.') It is indefensible to assert that Christianity owes its doctrine of resurrection to Jewish thought but its concept of immortality to Greek philosophy. In a splendidly comprehensive analysis of the Jewish background of I Corinthians 15, H. C. C. Cavallin has recently (1974) shown that in Jewish literature between c. 200 BC and AD 100

statements on an immortality of the soul which excludes the resurrection of the body are almost as common as those which explicitly state the resurrection of the body, and the same proportions can be asserted for statements on the soul's life after death without exclusion of the body and texts which state the resurrection without explicit reference to the body.¹⁵

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No longer can anyone maintain that 'resurrection' is Hebraic and 'immortality' Greek; the Judaism of the apostolic era knew both conceptions.

4. Immortality (as defined above) is not a present possession of all men as though it were some anthropological property but is a future acquisition of Christians.

1 Corinthians 15:42, 52-54 makes it clear that only after the resurrection transformation will believers 'put on' the garment of immortality.¹⁶ Immortality is therefore not a human right or heritage gained at birth. As C. K. Barrett has rightly observed, in Paul's thinking not immortality but death was inherited from Adam (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22).¹⁷ Man is not immortal because he

¹⁴ On these verses in the Psalms, see E. Smick, 'The Bearing of New Philological Data on the Subjects of Resurrection and Immortality in the Old Testament', in *Westminster Journal of Theology* 31 (1968-69), pp. 12-21.

¹⁵ *Life After Death. Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Corinthians 15. Part I: An Enquiry into the Jewish Background* (Lund, 1974), p. 200.

¹⁶ The immortality gained potentially at the moment a person comes to be in Christ (1 Cor. 15:22b; cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans*, London, 1932, p. 126) becomes an actual possession in the resurrection of the dead. This seems preferable to the view of L. Cerfaux, who regards 'the personal Christian "self"' as acquiring immortality at death before the resurrection of the body at the parousia (*The Christian in the Theology of St Paul*, London, 1967, p. 202). If the resurrection of the individual occurs at the moment of his death, however (on this issue, see P. Benoit, 'Resurrection: At the End of Time or immediately after Death?' in *Immortality and Resurrection*, ed. by P. Benoit and R. Murphy, New York, 1970, pp. 103-14; and my article 'Paul's View of Death in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10', in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney, Grand Rapids, 1974, pp. 317-28, especially pp. 322f.), immortality may be said to be gained at death.

¹⁷ 'Immortality and Resurrection', in *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 190 (1965), pp. 97, 101.

possesses or is a soul. He becomes immortal because God transforms him by raising him from the dead.

Again it may be seen how important is the matter of the definition of terms. The soul is not immortal in the sense that one of its properties is 'participation in the eternal life of God' (see thesis 1). The subsistence of the individual through and after death is not to be equated with immortality (in the Pauline sense). Sharing the divine nature is a future experience reserved for those who belong to Christ (1 Cor. 15:23, 54f.; 2 Pet. 1:4). Potentially immortal by nature, man actually becomes immortal through grace. Immortality is conditional in the sense that there is no eternal life except in Christ.

In Platonic thought, on the other hand, immortality is an inalienable attribute of the soul. When the body decomposes, the soul is not destroyed. Being spiritual in nature, the soul cannot be divided or dissolved.¹⁸ But the Bible contains no definition of the soul's constitution that implies its indestructibility. Indeed some would find in Matthew 10:28 ('Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell') the implication that the soul is 'destructible'. At least the verse implies that 'soul and body' are punishable, and if all men were immortal in the sense 'immune from death', it is difficult to see how anyone could be consigned to the 'second death' (Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8). What Matthew 10:28 emphasizes is not the potential mortality of the soul but the irreversibility of the divine judgment on unrepentant man. In his total being, whether viewed as 'soul' or as 'body', such a person will incur the divine wrath.

In much popular western thought, the soul is simply one part of man, distinguishable from his body not only in thought but also in reality. As a result, 'the immortality of the soul' implies nothing more than the persistence beyond death of that aspect of man which may be called the soul. The New Testament, however, with its basically monistic anthropology,¹⁹ promises the transformation of the whole person, not the survival of a disembodied ego. Immortality is not assignable to only a part of man.²⁰

To speak of immortality as a future acquisition and of resurrection as a future event is not to deny that man may proleptically enjoy eternal life and experience personal transformation during this life. The believer will gain immortality because the Spirit of life dwells within, already mediating the divine life (Rom. 8:2, 11). And resurrection is not *creatio ex nihilo*, a sudden divine action without antecedents. Rather it represents the culmination of an inward transformation which began at conversion and continues until the believer's death or Christ's advent.

¹⁸ See J. Burnet, 'The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul', in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 7 (1915), pp. 235-60; - M. P. Nilsson, 'The immortality of the Soul in Greek Religion', in *Eranos* 39 (1941), pp. 1-16; and W. Jaeger, 'The Greek Ideas of Immortality', in *Immortality and Resurrection*, ed. K. Stendahl (New York, 1965), pp. 97-114.

¹⁹ S. Laeuchli ('Monism and Dualism in the Pauline Anthropology', *Biblical Research*, 3 (1958), pp. 15-27) finds in Pauline anthropology a certain non-dualistic pluralism. 'Pluralism exists only *sub specie unitatis*, under the assumption that man is basically one' (p. 26).

²⁰ Paul uses the term *psyche* only thirteen times. This would seem to indicate that he was not dependent on Orphism or Platonism for his conception of the soul, or else a more developed view would have been reflected in his letters (see further W. D. Stacey, 'St Paul and the "Soul"', in *Expository Times* 66 (1954-55), pp. 274-77, and the chapter on *psyche* in his book, *The Pauline View of Man*, London, 1956, pp. 121-27).

The principal objection, however, to the notion of the natural immortality of the soul is Paul's unequivocal assertion in 1 Timothy 6:15f. that God 'the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords ... alone has immortality'. God is the only being intrinsically possessing immortality

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(*cf.* Jn. 5:26; 1 Thes. 1:9). He is without diminution or decay (Rom. 1:23) and full of all life, holiness and power.

5. Just as resurrection is an act of God, so immortality is a gift of God.

The agent in the resurrection of the dead is generally said to be the Father (Jn. 5:21; Acts 26:8; Rom. 4:17; 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 1:9; 4:14b; Heb. 11:19) but on occasion the Son.²¹ (Jn. 6:39, 40, 44, 54). And for the preservation of resurrection life, man is also dependent on God acting through the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4). Denial of the resurrection does not arise from ignorance of man's constitution (as though man were capable of raising himself); it stems from ignorance of God, his Word and his power (Mk. 12:24; 1 Cor. 15:12, 34). Without the exercise of God's power, there can be neither the act of resurrection nor sustained resurrection life.

With regard to immortality, the corollary of the view that only God is essentially immortal is the truth that man is only derivatively (not inherently) immortal. Man comes to possess immortality only as it is conferred on him through the divine will and grace. His immortality is not essential or intrinsic but derived or extrinsic. Some believe that man was created 'immortal' only to forfeit that immortality through disobedience. Others allege that man was created 'immortable' (that is, able not to die), with the possibility of gaining immortality through obedience to God,²² as Theodore of Mopsuestia observed, Genesis 2:17 does not say 'You will become mortal if you sin'. Whichever view be held (and again it is largely a problem of defining 'mortal' and 'immortal'), immortality comes to man as a gracious divine gift.

6. In Pauline thought, resurrection and immortality are inseparable and complementary ideas.

It is in 1 Corinthians 15 that these two ideas are most clearly juxtaposed.²³ From verses 42, 50-54 it is apparent that there can be no immortality without prior resurrection; resurrection is the sole means of acquiring immortality. Nor can there be resurrection without subsequent immortality; immortality is the inevitable outcome of resurrection. From a Christian perspective, the two

²¹ This second usage may be explained on the principle that the operations of the Persons of the Godhead *ad extra* are interchangeable or that Christ acts in obedience to the Father's will and as his agent (*cf.* Jn. 10:18).

²² For the distinction between 'immortable' and 'immortal', see F. S. M. Bennet, *The Resurrection of the Dead* (London, 1929), pp. 1-53.

²³ Those at Corinth who denied the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12) may have been a minority of 'enlightened' rationalists who were promulgating the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and arguing that resurrection was both inconceivable and unnecessary. But in the light of 1 Corinthians 4:8 and 2 Timothy 2:17, 18 it seems more probable that they were the 'over-realized eschatologists' of the first century AD who asserted that the only real resurrection—the spiritual—was accomplished at baptism and therefore lay in the past. Against this view of resurrection as a spiritual *fait accompli* Paul insists on the futurity of the resurrection and the reality of the resurrection body.

doctrines stand or fall together. To deny resurrection is to deny immortality, since embodiment is necessary to meaningful existence. To deny immortality is to deny resurrection, since divine life is necessary to sustain transformed persons.

Secondly, immortality and resurrection are complementary notions. The Christian doctrine of resurrection prevents an impersonal and individualistic interpretation of immortality. It is 'dead persons' (*hoi nekroi*) not 'discarnate souls' that are raised. It is 'dead persons' who are resurrected, not the dead individual. The personal and corporate nature of resurrection life must never be overlooked. The New Testament knows nothing of a neo-Platonic immortality of 'the Alone with the Alone'. On the other side, the acquisition of immortality through resurrection guarantees that the resurrection state is not temporary. Those raised by Christ during his ministry rose, only ultimately to die; they had not gained immortality. Once resurrected, Christians will permanently bear the image of the man from heaven (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 1 Jn. 3:2).

7. All Christians will be transformed but not all will be resurrected.

In both 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 Paul distinguishes between the dead in Christ and those who live to witness his parousia. Those who 'remain until the coming of the Lord' (1 Thes. 4:15) will be transformed ('changed', 1 Cor. 15:51) without experiencing death or resurrection.²⁴ The 'dead in Christ', however, will be both raised and transformed (1 Cor. 15:42, 52), or, better, will experience a resurrection-transformation. Thus the dictum 'the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the living', if taken to imply that

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the dead are not transformed and the living are not raised, both distorts and preserves (respectively) the truth. Both the living and the dead are transformed—the latter by resurrection—with the result that, in either case, the outcome of the change is identical, *viz.*, the possession of the spiritual body.

8. The identity between 'the physical body' and 'the spiritual body' is not substantial but personal.

In describing the nature of resurrection, the New Testament uses two basic formulae: the physical body may be said to be *transformed into* the spiritual body or to be *replaced by* the spiritual body. That is, there are the complementary ideas of change and exchange: 'this corruptible body must put on incorruption' (1 Cor. 15:53), and, 'a physical body is sown, a spiritual body is raised' (1 Cor. 15:44). But whether continuity or discontinuity is stressed, the difference between the pre- and post-resurrectional states remains a crucial part of Paul's teaching. Without some

²⁴ If 'each in his own order' in 1 Corinthians 15:23 implies more than two categories (*viz.*, Christ and the Christian dead), the third 'order' may be Christians alive at the parousia (as in 1 Thes. 4:16, 17), who are not mentioned because they are not 'raised' but 'transformed' (thus J. Héring, *RHPR* 12 (1932), pp. 306f.). Nevertheless, A. Jones ('The Problem of the Vulgate Reading in 1 Corinthians 15:51', in *Scripture* 2 (1947), p. 47) claims that since the living are 'raised' at the parousia from a state of mortality by the putting on of immortality, they do not forfeit full participation in Christ's bodily resurrection; although *omnes quidem resurgemus* are not Paul's words, the sentiment they express is Pauline.

alteration to his whole being—be it a transformation or an exchange—no mortal may inherit immortality (1 Cor. 15:50, 53). Substantial or numerical identity between the successive forms of the Christian's embodiment seems excluded by the dual concept of a 'spiritual body' not yet possessed (2 Cor. 5:1) and the indispensability of change before such possession (1 Cor. 15:50).²⁵

In the midst of this somatic change or exchange, however, personal identity is preserved.²⁶ Those who are to bear the image of the heavenly man will not be personally different from those who bore the image of the man made of dust (1 Cor. 15:49). There are two dwellings but only one occupant. The subject of the successive forms of corporeality is the same 'self' who will be transformed, by the Spirit of life at the resurrection.²⁷

Conclusion

It may be helpful to conclude by suggesting four of the (many) ways in which the biblical doctrine of immortality differs from the Platonic. First, it is the whole person who gains immortality, not the soul or spirit that inherently possesses immortality. Secondly, immortality is gained by the resurrection transformation, not by birth, and therefore is a future gift of God, not a present inalienable characteristic of human nature. The Christian's entrance upon the state of immortality will be by God's act of resurrection which will be the climax of the Spirit's process of transformation. Thirdly, the destiny of the Christian is somatic immortality, not disembodied or purely spiritual immortality. Fourthly, possession of immortality is dependent on relationship to the Second Adam, not the first Adam. It results from union with Christ, not from being a mortal.

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²⁵ H. Clavier ('Brèves remarques sur la notion de *sōma pneumatikon*', in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge, 1956) pp. 342-62) speaks of a 'changement d'organisme et de constitution', 'continuité, mais pas identité numérique' (p. 347). 'It ne s'agit pas d'une meme constitution physique autrement orientée, mais d'une organisation totalement différente, adéquate à l'Esprit qui la règle et qui la commande' (p. 351).

²⁶ Matthew 22:29 implies that the resurrection body has no procreative powers but this does not mean that all distinction between the sexes will be obliterated.

²⁷ Note the comment of W. G. Kümmel (in H. Lietzmann, *An die Korinther. I. II*', enlarged by W. G. Kümmel, Tübingen, 1949, p. 195): 'Die Kontinuität des mit dem *sōma psychikon* and dann mit dem *sōma pneumatikon* bekleideten Menschen ist... keine naturhafte, substanzielle, sondern eine geschichtliche; das "Ich" erhält zuerst einen irdischen and bei der Auferstehung einen himmlischen Leib'; and the observation of C. K. Barrett (*A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, London, 1968, p. 373): 'The same historically continuous ... *ego* makes use successively of two different kinds of body.'