

Return to Index on Home Page

Chapter Nine

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF SPIRIT AND BODY:

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL VIEW

If God is Sovereign and has appointed to each of his redeemed children a specific life work, and if each of us is a duality of body and spirit, then it follows of necessity that both the genetic endowment of the body and the life experiences that mold the spirit must equally have been divinely ordained. Task and talent have to match if the plan is to work out.¹⁶⁰ God never calls us individually to a lifework for which He has not also equipped us both physically and spiritually.

Chosen and ordained by God

In John 15:16 the Lord said to his disciples: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain." When we add to this Ephesians 2:10, "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them," we have to assume that the prerequisite endowment must in every way form part of that ordination.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Or as Gladden put it: "Hereditly is God working in us and environment is God working around us" (quoted by A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, Judson Press, 1907, p.624).

¹⁶¹ Howard A. Synder put it this way: "It is not too much to say that God in his foreknowledge has given to each person at birth those talents that he later wills to awaken and ignite. A spiritual gift is a God-given ability that has caught fire" ("Misunderstanding Spiritual Gifts", *Christianity Today*, vol. 18, 12 Oct. 1973, p.17).

Thus we find in Scripture the sovereign action of God displayed:

- (a) in choosing the individual,
- (b) to fulfill an appointed task,
- (c) for which he has been providentially prepared in advance, both by physical constitution and by foreordained experience.

Of course, it might be argued that this means only that our constitution and our circumstances of life are taken as they come and merely *made use of* in the fulfilling of a call adjusted to fit them — God is only an "opportunist" as it were. But David, in Psalm 139:13-17, seems to have in mind a genetic endowment that is not merely made use of but is specifically planned for. Thus he wrote:

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth¹⁶², your eyes saw my unformed body. **All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.**

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!” (NIV)

We might even see the same thought expressed succinctly in Psalm 47:4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." In the context of the rest of the passage, this could indeed be taken to mean even our antecedents. And why not? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? We are not merely redeemed spirits in an inconsequential body that we shall be glad to be rid of, but whole persons with a potential in both spirit and body to play an appointed role in God's plan for the Universe.

¹⁶² The *earth* is sometimes used poetically as a description of "the womb"; and has been variously translated the *Berkeley* translation has "in utter seclusion"; *Today's English Version* has "before I was born"; the *Jerusalem Bible*, "in the limbo of the womb". Further examples of equating the "earth" and the "womb" can be seen in Job 1:21. Here Job says, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither" -- the "return thither" (i.e., to his mother's *womb*) is simply a way of saying "to the earth". So also in Ecclesiasticus 40:1 [Apocrypha], "Hard work is the lot of every man, and a heavy yoke is laid on the sons of Adam, from the day when they came from their mother's womb until the day of their return to the mother of us all."

But what a wonderful assurance this should provide to the humblest child of God, that he was the object of the Father's special concern from the moment of his conception — indeed, long before that. For we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9; Revelation 17:8),¹⁶³ and foreordained to a unique role in the unfolding plan of redemption, a role for which, according to 1 Peter 4:10,¹⁶⁴ each of us has been equipped with *a* gift (so the Greek) not *the* gift, as the King James Version has it.

The very angels are sent to minister to them who *shall be* heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14¹⁶⁵) — a fact to which every saint who reflects upon the circumstances of his or her pre-Christian experience can bear witness. In retrospect, have we not all been aware of the hand of God molding our circumstances long before we became members of his blameless family? It is a testimony to the truth of Exodus 19:4, "I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself."

How blessed it is to know what we are here *for!* No wonder that Paul should lay such emphasis upon both body and mind in Romans 12:1 and 2 when we seek to find the Lord's will for our life: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present *your bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the *renewing of your mind*, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and *perfect will of God.*" Since God is Sovereign, how could it be otherwise than that his chosen vessels will not only be kept through all the vicissitudes of life by his providential care but will also have been prepared in *body and spirit* for the part they are to play in the unfolding drama. When that part is fulfilled, and when we shall ourselves have been brought to maturity by the very

¹⁶³ "According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him." Ephesians 1:4.

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. . . ." 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

"[God] who has saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. . . ." 2 Timothy 1:9.

". . .and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world. . . ." Revelation 17:8b.

¹⁶⁴ "As every man has received the [*a*, so the Greek] gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." 1 Peter 4:10.

¹⁶⁵ "Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:14.

performing of it, why should we not be ready to go home? So then, as Augustine rightly observed, "a man is immortal until his work is done."

Thus the biblical picture of our constitution means that as to physical endowment, as to spiritual gift, and as to the 'schooling' of life, there will be a matching 'fit' that is perfect because it is divinely ordained.

The Day of Atonement — body and spirit equally represented

Even the ritual on the Day of Atonement attests to this twofold nature of man's constitution, for both body and spirit are equally represented. On that Day two goats (Leviticus 16:5¹⁶⁶) were appointed to be offered as *a single sacrifice*.¹⁶⁷ One goat was an offering for **SIN**¹⁶⁸ to make atonement for the body, the other an offering for **SINS** (Leviticus 16:21, 22¹⁶⁹) to make an atonement for the spirit. Since they stood for a sacrifice to be made on our behalf by one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, it was important that the choice of which goat was to serve in which role must be entirely out of man's hands lest he be tempted to attach more importance to the spirit than the body. Thus the decision was to be made by lot (Leviticus 16:8¹⁷⁰).

By this means, God seems to have desired to ensure that the whole sacrifice should be perceived in such a way as to demonstrate that equal importance is to be attached to both components of the human constitution. We are not to set the importance of the spirit above the body or of the body above the spirit.

¹⁶⁶ "And [Aaron] shall take of the congregation of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin-offering." Leviticus 16:5.

¹⁶⁷ A single sacrifice but in two parts: signifying, perhaps, that each person needed only *one* sacrifice but that it would apply to *both* his body and his spirit, for both parts need redemption but in different ways. Thus in Scripture the words SIN and SINS have particular meaning and the author has spelled this out in Doorway Paper #58, "The Compelling Logic of the Plan of Salvation" (In *The Doorway Papers Series*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, vol. 3 *Man in Adam and in Christ*, part 7, pp.283-313).

¹⁶⁸ "And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering". Leviticus 16:9.

¹⁶⁹ "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat into the wilderness." Leviticus 16:21, 22.

¹⁷⁰ "And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat." Leviticus 16:8.

The necessity of both body and spirit

It seems to me that this matching of body and spirit has not been sufficiently recognized. We talk much of our spiritual growth, but forget that the body is an essential part of our identity and therefore of this spiritual development. No man is spirit only: not even, be it noted, *in the world to come*.

If man were a purely spirit being like the angels, the situation would be quite otherwise. Angels are not propagated by *birth*, they are not born as helpless infants: they do not "grow up." They are created "adult." And although they can fall suddenly — like "lightning" as it were (Luke 10:18¹⁷¹) — they do not seem to experience a slow maturing process such as man experiences, since this involves *time* and is hardly conceivable apart from a *physical* reality. So man is born and slowly grows up, and his character is developed as he matures — and this maturing process takes time and is accomplished within the framework of the physical world. The perfection of the angels seems to be a *created* perfection (cf. Ezekiel 28:15¹⁷²), not an acquired one. There appears to have been no time-consuming process involved. Angelic "cherubs" are artistic creations, not adult angels-in-the-making. There is no counterpart of the physical babyhood that man experiences. In man, body and spirit or soul develop together, and the interaction is manifest from the beginning. The natural impulses of the body are "educated" by the spirit, and the spirit matures in the process. No such slow maturing seems possible for a purely spirit creature like an angel to whom birth and growth are unknown.

In man, the interaction between body and spirit is coincident with life itself. The "traffic" is, however, unfortunately heavily weighted in one direction, from body to spirit rather than spirit to body; to the detriment of them both. The reason that a fallen body has such an advantage over the developing spirit is that it has such a head start. Almost all conscious needs in early infancy are physical needs — food, warmth, comfort, even cleansing. Since these are pampered in the newborn, it is natural that the body gets the upper hand from the very beginning, long before the self has had opportunity to be taught to exercise restraint of bodily impulses — almost all of which are inherently degraded by the effects of the Fall. The failure of the "ought" of life to become the "is" of life begins, therefore, very early because of the weakness or the strength (depending upon how one looks at it) of the flesh

¹⁷¹ “And [Jesus] said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven.” Luke 10:18.

¹⁷² “You [an angelic being?] were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created.” Ezekiel 28:15.

(Romans 8.3¹⁷³). Just when the soul reaches the age of accountability, instead of passing from a state of innocence into a state of virtue as God intended, it passes from a state of innocence into a state of guilt because it is most challenged when it is least able to meet the challenge. The demands of the flesh which assail it have already been too strongly confirmed.

The appetites of the flesh are thus developed in the direction of selfish interest before aspirations towards spiritual growth have had a chance to assert themselves. As a result the spirit is corrupted by the flesh. This view is deeply rooted in the early theologies of the Reformers. But because of the dangers of asceticism, the relationship between the appetites of the body and the spiritual longings of the soul has for too long been largely ignored.

We lay such stress upon the need for spiritual discipline that we often fail to discipline the appetites of the body and thus greatly hinder the Lord's work in our lives. We forget that we are body/spirit entities and cultivate only one half of our being, neglecting the body half in the mistaken belief that it does not matter. As a consequence, the resurrection of the body seems remote and unimportant to the life of the spirit.

But should we not in fact be concerning ourselves more than we do with the well-being of *both* essential constituents of our being? After all, we are called upon to glorify God not only in our spirit but in our body also (1 Corinthians 6:20¹⁷⁴) since both belong to God because they are both of God's ordaining. Even the perfect garment of righteousness which is of Christ can be "spotted" *by the flesh* (Jude 23¹⁷⁵).

This does not mean that the needs of the body are to be either pampered or suppressed. It means they are to be brought into subjection. Hugo St. Victor (1096 - 1141) tells how this subjection relates to man's calling:¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ For what the law could not do in that it [the spirit] was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:3.

¹⁷⁴ "For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:20.

¹⁷⁵ ". . .and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Jude 23.

¹⁷⁶ "Hugo St. Victor, *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*, Book 1, prologue, chapter 3.

To understand the spiritual state of man, the creation and constitution of the whole world must be taken into consideration. For the world was made on account of man; the spirit for God's sake, the body for the spirit's sake, and the world . . .for the body's sake. . . that the spirit might be subject to God, the body to the spirit, and the world to the body.

Thus by making man the bridge (through his embodiment) between the spiritual order and the material order, man becomes a mediator between two different worlds. To see man in eternity as merely a ghost without bodily existence is to reduce him to something that is not man at all and to destroy his unique position in the economy of God. And this in turn is to throw away the key to the true meaning of the natural order, and indeed of the universe, because as Hugh Dryden rightly observed, man *is* the measure of all things.¹⁷⁷ As Genesis 1:28¹⁷⁸ says, man was actually designed to *exercise* dominion over the world.

The “fit” of body and spirit

From the earliest times Christian writers have held that the corruption of the pure spirit, which God creates and infuses into the newborn, results directly from the close union which this infusion brings about. Although Hastings Rashdall held somewhat liberal views on some essential matters of faith, he was a profound scholar and his study of the Atonement is a classic in its way. He takes the position that Paul attributes the initial corruption of the spirit to the fallen state of the body. He wrote: "All Paul's thought about the matter is that the flesh is the source of moral evil (Romans 7:14, 17-18;¹⁷⁹ 8:3, 7, 10¹⁸⁰; and 1 Corinthians 15:44-50¹⁸¹ in particular):

¹⁷⁷ Dryden, Hugh, "The Scientist in Contemporary Life", *Science*, vol. 120, 1954, p.1054.

¹⁷⁸ "God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." Genesis 1:28.

¹⁷⁹ "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal [i.e., physical, flesh], sold under sin. . . . Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." Romans 7:14, 17-18.

¹⁸⁰ "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; . . .because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God,

man is necessarily sinful because he has a body, which creates evil impulses and weighs down the higher part of his nature."¹⁸² Rashdall speaks of this as a view "powerfully suggested by the obvious facts of experience" — yet he does not suggest that man would be better off without a body.

Augustine (354 - 430), following Paul's line of reasoning and using his usual genius for succinct expression, proposed that in Adam "a person corrupted nature, now nature corrupts the person": or, in the original Latin, *Persona corrumpit naturam, natura corrumpit personam*.¹⁸³ And it is clear from many of his observations that he attributed this initial corruption to the body. In one of his letters, for example, he wrote: "It is only by the flesh that original sin is transmitted from Adam" [# 164, chap. vii. 19]. Indeed, he even ascribed this transmission to impure seed or male semen.¹⁸⁴ It was just such a view that led to the thesis that the body must be destroyed by death, not only as a penalty for man's disobedience but as a necessary step towards undoing the effects of the Fall. Francis Turretin (1625 - 1687) wrote,

neither, indeed, can be. . . . If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness." Romans 8:3, 7 and 10.

¹⁸¹ It [the body] is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man, Adam, was made [became] a living soul; the last Adam a quickening [life-giving] spirit. However, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward the which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither does corruption inherit incorruption." 1 Corinthians 15:44-50.

¹⁸² Rashdall, Hastings, *The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology*, London, Macmillan, 1921, p.88, 89.

¹⁸³ "Augustine: quoted by F.W. Farrar, *The Life and Works of St. Paul*, London, Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1879, vol. 2, p.216.

¹⁸⁴ Augustine's words are: "The question now before us does not concern the nature of human seed [i.e., at creation] but its corruption. Now the nature had God for its author; it is from its corruption that original sin is derived". [*On Marriage and Concupiscence*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Buffalo, Christian Literature Co., 1886, vol. 5, Bk. 2, chap. 20, p.290]. Luther was more specific still. He wrote: "Through the fall of Adam sin entered into the world and all men have as a result sinned. *For the paternal sperm conveys the corruption from generation to generation*". [*Luther's Writings*, Erlangen edition, as quoted by J. L. Neve, *History of Christian Thought*, Philadelphia, Mulhenberg Press, 1946, vol. 2, p.230].

"There are many other weighty reasons rendering it necessary that all should die: such as, *that the remains of sin may be destroyed.*"¹⁸⁵

Anselm of Canterbury (1033 - 1109) wrote of the soul being "weakened from the corruption of the body" and "the corruptible body being a burden to the soul."¹⁸⁶ Similarly, Stephen Langton (d. 1228) put it thus: "The soul is infused into an unclean and corrupt body. . . . *From the corrupt and unclean vessel into which it is infused* it contracts an inclination to sin which is called a foment."¹⁸⁷

Martin Chemnitz (1522 - 1586) commented on the development of this doctrine: "Some [Medieval] writers argue that original sin is merely a deficiency. . . . Others argue that the tinder of sin inheres as an unwholesome quality of the flesh only, which inclines the sensitive appetite, and through its mediation also inclines the will downward."¹⁸⁸

In 1576 Peter Martyr wrote: "If it be asked, what is the seat of [original sin] we answer that it has its place in the flesh as its root and principle: thereafter from that source it also seizes the soul and so spreads through the whole man." He believed it very probable that "a soul is not created with sin but immediately contracts [a sinful nature] the moment it is joined to a body derived from Adam."¹⁸⁹

Zachariae Ursinus (1534 - 1583) stated that the God-created soul is rendered corrupt by the perished body into which God pours it.¹⁹⁰ Benedictus Aretius, addressing the same question, wrote in 1589: "The received opinion is that [souls] are created daily by infusion and infused by creation but in purity; yet they contract defilement by union and intercourse with the body."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Turretin, Francis, *On the Atonement of Christ*, translated by J. R. Willsin, New York, Board of Publications of Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, 1859, p.81.

¹⁸⁶ Anselm of Canterbury: "Conception and Original Sin" (Treatise V. chap. 2) in *Scholastic Miscellany*, edited by E. R. Fairweather, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, Library of Christian Classics, 1956, vol. 10, p.185.

¹⁸⁷ Langton, Stephen, "A Question of Original Sin" in *A Scholastic Miscellany*, edited by E. R. Fairweather, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1956, vol. 10, p. 353.

¹⁸⁸ Chemnitz, Martin, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part I, translated by Fred Kramer, St. Louis, MO, Concordia Publishing House, 1971, p.315.

¹⁸⁹ Peter Martyr: quoted by Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, translated from German by G. T. Thomson, Grand Rapids reprint, 1978, p.341.

¹⁹⁰ Ursinus, Zachariae: quoted by Heinrich Heppe, *ibid.*, p.343.

¹⁹¹ Aretius, Benedictus, *Theologiae Problemata seu Loci Communes et Miscellaneae Quaestiones*, Geneva, 1589, vol. 7, p.2: as quoted by Heinrich Heppe, *ibid.*

In 1626 Johannes Wollebius wrote: "Although man's soul is breathed directly into him by God, it is nevertheless by its union with the body. . . infected by the original defilement."¹⁹²

The idea that the soul in its perfection as it comes from the hand of God is corrupted by its infusion into and union with the body is therefore an ancient one, and one widely held by theologians of the Reformation movement. They did not, however, make the mistake of repudiating the body as something evil — as the Greek philosophers and Gnostics had done. The body, it was believed, was *essential* to man's being. Indeed, it was as divinely appointed in each case as the soul which animated it. In fact, in due course theologians laid emphasis on the "fit" between body and soul, and the importance of this "fitness" of the one for the other has been underscored for centuries. It is a little surprising that Evangelicals have so largely ignored the issue in recent years.

Abraham Kuyper (1837 - 1920) held that the soul or spirit is specifically created to match the body which it animates. And conversely, the body is specifically designed for the soul which is to be assigned to it. Each belongs to the other. He wrote: "The soul is indeed directly and instantly created of God, but this does not happen arbitrarily but rather so that the soul is created in *this* man, at *this* time, in *this* country, in *this* family, with characteristics which are suitable" [emphasis mine].¹⁹³

In elaborating this view, Kuyper explained that "the soul takes on characteristic traits from contact with the body, so that the parents give to the child the outline of the soul, the portrait of the 'I.'" Perhaps the word "frame" would have been even more appropriate than "outline," but Kuyper's meaning is clear enough. Whether for cultural reasons or genetic reasons (or both), it often seems possible to match body type and temperament.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Wollebius, Johannes: quoted by Heinrich Heppe, *ibid.*, p.333.

¹⁹³ Kuyper, Abraham: quoted by G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975, p.290.

¹⁹⁴ In modern times, W. H. Sheldon, without the least interest in the theological implications of the matter, became convinced that body type and personality type were related. He examined some 50,000 individuals and grouped them into three personality types. He then measured the same population with respect to 21 standardized body dimensions and accordingly divided them into three body types (or somatotypes, as he called them). He found a series of remarkably high correlations between the three categories, all of which were in the neighbourhood of 80%. Such a level of correlation is highly significant in his view, and suggests that there is indeed a physique/temperament relation that is to a remarkable degree predictable. In fact, Sheldon found that if he were supplied with these 21 dimensions for a given individual, he could predict within narrow

Thomas Aquinas (1226 - 1274) long ago had observed:¹⁹⁵

The human soul like every cosmic form, is individuated by matter: not *any* matter, but matter earmarked. . . . *This* soul is adapted to *this* body, *that* soul to *that* body, as we have seen; and such co-adaptation remains in the soul even after death. [emphasis mine]

It is possible that Kuypers was influenced in his thinking by this statement. If what Aquinas says is true, then resurrection is not the resurrection of just *any* kind of body so long as it is human, but rather of the particular body that belongs to a particular soul.¹⁹⁶

limits, what kind of temperament that individual would have, and *vice versa*. [*Varieties of Human Physique*, New York, Harper, 1940; and *Varieties of Human Temperament*, New York, Harper, 1942].

¹⁹⁵ Thomas Aquinas: noted by Robert E. Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology*, New York, Macmillan, 1941, p.326.

¹⁹⁶ This whole subject has a direct bearing on the current interest in the possibility of reincarnation. Reincarnationists propose that when the spirit leaves the body at death, it must suffer a succession of re-entries into the world by re-embodiment appropriate to its state of development at each cycle until it is perfected as a pure spirit and can then be wholly absorbed in a form of "fulfillment" which effectively terminates further embodiment and individualized existence. By contrast, what the New Testament tells us is that the spirit will indeed be reincarnated but not at all with a view to the termination of either personal identity or fulfillment. The Christian view is that the resurrection of the body marks the beginning, not the end, of a fully satisfying existence in which personal identity is preserved intact. Five things are therefore revealed in Scripture about life after death for the redeemed soul:

Reincarnation occurs but *once*.

- (1) Reincarnation occurs by reunion with one's *own* body, resurrected in a perfect form by an act of God, and freed from all possible ills, including death itself.
- (2) The spirit which animates it will be our *own* spirit, also brought by the grace of God to a state of perfect maturity.
- (3) Personal identity is thus fully maintained in spirit and body and *will never have any further need of amendment*.
- (4) This glorified state of personal existence will continue *forever*.

Nature of body/spirit interactions

Many have in recent years discussed the nature of this body/spirit interaction. Herman Bavinck (1854 - 1921) came to a conclusion which brings out a nice distinction with intriguing implications:¹⁹⁷

The body, although it is not the *cause* of all these activities of the spirit, is the *instrument* of them. It is not the ear which hears but the spirit of man which hears through the ears. . . . To the extent, therefore, that the body serves as a tool and instrument of the spirit, it exhibits a certain resemblance to and gives us some notion of the way in which God is busy in the world.

That there is interaction between mind and brain can hardly be doubted, and there is every reason to assume that we can and do by an act of will move our bodily members purposefully. Yet the *mode* of this interaction is still a mystery. How does my will to lift my hand act upon the brain to send the necessary signals to the arm that result in the movement I willed to perform? It seems the answer should be obvious, but we still don't really know, any more than Descartes did when he effectively abandoned the search.

We are, today, confident that the critical organ of mediation between will and movement is certainly the brain, but is this computer-like organ actually the "causal agent" of *both* the will to movement *and* of the corresponding action? Or is the functioning brain merely the "condition" that determines how speedily the response will be made, or how efficiently? Here we may recall an observation made by Viktor Frankl, the Viennese psychiatrist who survived a Nazi Concentration Camp: "My contention is that the physiological basis [i.e., the brain] does not *cause* anything mental, but it does *condition* it and there is a great difference between causing and conditioning."¹⁹⁸

If the brain conditions the capacity and character of the mind or soul, how then could the soul be truer to itself than in a body which even in its fallenness has nevertheless been the instrument of its self-expression and development throughout life? A soul is best housed in its *own* appointed vehicle. It is very difficult to conceive of oneself as a ghost, a pure disembodied abstraction, without some form

¹⁹⁷ Bavinck, Herman, *Our Reasonable Faith*, Grand Rapids, Baker reprint, 1956, p.213.

¹⁹⁸ Frankl, Viktor, in discussion of a paper by J. R. Smythies, "Some Aspects of Consciousness" in *Beyond Reductionism*, edited by A. Koestler and J. R. Smythies, London, Hutchinson, 1969, p.254.

of bodily representation that is recognizably "me": and what better body can I desire to be re clothed in than my own body, albeit perfected? If on the other side of the grave, one half of our being is missing, even if for only a little while — it matters little which half, the body *or* the spirit, the brain *or* the mind — the other half becomes a non-person, a non-entity. Half a person is no person at all. The corpse is not the person, and the risen Lord assured us that He was not just a ghost. So a ghost is not a *person* either. There is no more reason for believing that a disembodied spirit is really a person than there is for believing that an unanimated body is really a person. Thus the existence of a functioning brain appears to be essential for the establishment of "personhood,"¹⁹⁹ and the possession of a brain means possession of a *body*. Near the end of the last century W. G. T. Shedd said that the soul, taken by itself, "is a particular intelligent substance, yet not a person because it is an incomplete part of a greater whole. *It requires to be joined to a body before there can be an individual man*"²⁰⁰ [emphasis mine].

Similarly, and about the same time, H. P. Liddon observed: "When divorced from the personal principle which governs and inspires it, the body is a lump of lifeless clay. The body. . . supplies the personal soul with an instrument, it introduces it to a sphere of action; it is the obedient slave, the plastic ductile form of the personal soul which tenants it."²⁰¹

This may be a rather idealistic view of the "obedience" of the flesh to the spirit, but his meaning is clear enough. Yet it is by no means always certain which of the two constituents is master and which is servant — which is *magister* and which is *minister*. Augustine, speaking of Paul's sense of impotence as expressed in Romans 7 and clearly recognizing the problem in his own life, stated the matter thus:²⁰²

Whence is this monstrous thing? And why is it?
The mind commands the body and it obeys forthwith: the

¹⁹⁹ Though the word *personhood* has not yet found its way into any dictionary of my acquaintance, it is a useful creation and has appeared in several scientific journals of impeccable character. See Leon Kass, "Death as an Event: a Commentary on Robert Morison", *Science*, vol. 173, 20 Aug. 1971, p.200; also see Barbara Culleton, "Manslaughter: the Charge Against Edlin of Boston City Hospital", *Science*, vol. 186, 25 Oct. 1974, p.328.

²⁰⁰ Shedd, W. G. T., *Dogmatic Theology*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan reprint (no date), vol. 2, p.287.

²⁰¹ Liddon, H. P., *The Divinity of our Lord*, London, Rivington, 1871, p.260.

²⁰² Augustine: *Confessions*, Book VIII, chapter 9, section 21.

mind commands itself and is resisted. The mind commands the hand to be moved, and such readiness is there that the command is scarce to be distinguished from the obedience. The mind commands the mind to command the will, and yet though it be itself, it obeyeth not. Whence this monstrous thing? It commands itself to will and would not give the command unless it willed, yet is not done that which it commandeth. But it willeth not entirely; *therefore it commandeth not entirely.* [emphasis mine]

Kornhuber's experimental work (see chapter 8, page 108) fully supports Augustine's careful observation that "the command is scarce to be distinguished from the obedience." A delay *does* exist between will to action and the action willed, but it indeed requires highly refined scientific instrumentation to demonstrate it! Yet Augustine perceived it merely by reflecting upon it; and beautifully stated it. And he was just as perceptive as to the reasons why the will is sometimes so "reluctant to obey"!

John Taylor sought to underscore this dual nature of man's person and the need for the child of God not to downgrade the significance of the body. He wrote:²⁰³

It is important that we should not confuse these two dimensions of duality, nor suggest that body belongs more to the animal pole and soul to the spiritual pole of man's personality. Body and soul are parallel and interpenetrating along the whole range of man's being; his soul is involved in his animal nature no less than his body, the body shares in his spiritual experience as well as the soul.

Herman Bavinck summed up his view of the relationship by saying simply, "The soul is a spirit *designed for physical life*" [emphasis mine].²⁰⁴ Augustine put the relationship thus: "Each man is a soul using a body" (*anima utens corpore*).²⁰⁵ Robert E. Brennan stated the Roman Catholic position by saying, "The soul of man is designed by nature to be united with matter which it needs in order to accomplish

²⁰³ Taylor, John, *Man in the Midst*, London, Highway Press, 1955, p.17.

²⁰⁴ Bavinck, H., *Our Reasonable Faith*, Grand Rapids, Baker reprint, 1956, p.203.

²⁰⁵ Augustine: quoted by Vernon J. Bourke, *The Essential Augustine*, New York, New American Library, Mentor Books, 1964, p.257.

its perfection."²⁰⁶ The role of the body in the maturing and the perfecting of the soul was long ago stated by Anselm of Laon (d. 1117) when, in a fragment of a treatise on Original Sin, he wrote:²⁰⁷

[God] created rational spirits and set them in bodies so that, by ruling the body and subjecting it to itself in obedience to God, the soul itself might in due time be made blessed with the body in God. Furthermore, such a union brings with it a great kinship between the two, so that *one* thing is wonderfully made from *two*, and the soul naturally possesses such a great love for the body that it is frightened beyond measure at the thought of separation from it. [my emphasis]

The "fit" is extremely close, and this fact was never entirely lost sight of though often neglected by the general Christian public. Now, it seems, modern science has also begun to recognize this truth. Christian people have paid remarkably little attention to the importance of the body in the maintenance of spiritual health, and indeed all too frequently have well-nigh neutralized their testimony by over-indulgence and pampering the flesh. It is not surprising, therefore, that the crucial importance of the resurrection of the body for the completion of personhood in the world to come should similarly have been sadly neglected.

Nature of personhood

One of the most vocal and articulate writers of the last century on the duality of man's constitution was James Orr (1844 - 1913). He, too, believed that the abhorrence we have at the thought of disembodiment and the deep feelings of repugnance in the presence of a corpse (especially one unburied and uncared for) stems from the natural attachment of soul for body in every healthy individual. The promise of bodily resurrection is probably far more crucial to our spiritual well-being and peace of mind than we commonly realize. We give little thought to

²⁰⁶ Brennan, Robert E., *Thomistic Psychology*, New York, Macmillan, 1941, p.195.

²⁰⁷ Anselm of Laon: "A Fragment on Original Sin" in *A Scholastic Miscellany*, edited and translated by E. R. Fairweather, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1956, vol. 10, p.262.

the possibility that in the future state the body will be just as important to our identity as the spirit will be. James Orr put the issue thus:²⁰⁸

The true biblical doctrine of immortality, I think, includes the following points: (1) Man is a compound being (not, like God and the angels — pure spirit — but an embodied spirit), a being made up of body and soul. . . . (2) It was no part. . . of the Creator's design for man in his ideal constitution that body and soul ever be separated. The immortality man was to enjoy was an immortality in which the body was to have its share. . . . (3) The soul, in separation from the body is in a state of imperfection and mutilation. . . and deprivation. . . . (4) True immortality is through Redemption, and this Redemption embraces the Resurrection of the body.

Then, in another place, he rightly observed,²⁰⁹

As Materialism ignores the rights of the spirit. . . so an ultra-spirituality is too apt to ignore the rights of the body and to regard it as a mere accident of man's personality. . . .

The Bible. . . knows nothing of an abstract immortality of the soul. . . nor is its Redemption a Redemption of the soul only, but of the body as well. It is a Redemption of man in his whole complex personality — body and soul together. It was in the body that Christ arose from the dead; in the body that He ascended into heaven; in the body that He lives and reigns there forever more. It is his promise that, if He lives, we shall live also. [John 14:19²¹⁰]; and this promise includes a pledge of the resurrection of the body.

We cannot retain our true manhood, as God designed it, in the defective vehicle in which we now find ourselves clothed, since the result of Adam's Fall is

²⁰⁸ Orr, James, *The Christian View of God and the World*, New York, Scribners, 1893, p.198, 199.

²⁰⁹ Orr, James, *ibid*, p.136, 196.

²¹⁰ “Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you shall see me. Because I live, you shall live also.” John 14:19.

communicated to us by natural generation and we are reduced to a form of manhood quite other than what God intended. *Perfect* manhood for us lies only on the other side of the grave, in a resurrected body animated by a spirit redeemed and made perfect.

To return to James Orr again, he wrote:²¹¹

The soul is not the whole of the man. It is a false view of the constitution of human nature to regard the body as a mere appendage to the soul, or to suppose that the human being can be equally complete whether he has his body or is deprived of it. This is not the biblical view, nor, I venture to say, is it the view to which the facts of modern psychology and physiology point. If anything is evident, it is that soul and body are made for each other, that the perfect life for man is a corporeal one.

Biblical view of personhood

In recent times the most comprehensive study of the human constitution from the biblical point of view is probably that of Robert H. Gundry. In his discussion of the Judaic beliefs, Gundry observes that when we turn to Jewish literature of the Intertestamental and New Testament period, God is seen as making the body to suit the spirit which it contains "just as the potter suits a vessel to its intended contents." Thus in the *Testament of Naphtali* (2:2-4), we find the following observation:

As the potter knows the vessel, how much it is to contain, and brings clay accordingly, so also does the Lord make the body in accordance with the spirit and according to the capacity of the body does He implant the spirit. And as the potter knows the use of each vessel, what it is meet to be used for, so also does the Lord know how far it is capable.

Gundry observes that the soul was held to be unable to lead a normal life without the body, and that, contrary to the Greek view, the divestiture of the body by the soul was regarded as entirely undesirable.²¹² He suggests that "Man is an animated body rather than an incarnated soul. . . . Man does not *have* a body; he *is*

²¹¹ Orr, James, *ibid.*, p. 197f.

²¹² Gundry, Robert H., *Soma in Biblical Theology*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.108.

a body — a psychophysical unity. The body is the soul in its outward form. . . . Death is not cessation, but a separation in which each part suffers. . . ."213 The consequence of this is that "the designations 'animated body' and 'incarnated soul' no longer oppose each other, for because of their interpenetration the soul *is* the animation of the body and the body *is* the incarnation of the soul. The soul *has* a body and the body *has* a soul and man as a whole *is* both, a psychological unity — but a unity, not a monad."²¹⁴

Since man was designed for life on earth and appointed its "manager" (Genesis 1:26²¹⁵), he naturally was equipped with a physical means of interaction with the material world. But this physical means must in turn have *its* manager. So the will must be able to act upon an instrument that can, in response, effectively manipulate and act upon the physical order. God acts upon the spirit, the spirit upon the body, and the body upon the world.

While the Greeks saw the body as fundamentally a handicap to the spirit, the biblical view is quite otherwise. Thus Gundry writes of Paul's position:²¹⁶

Barring the effects of sin (which touch the spirit as well as the body), the body as such does not *shackle* the spirit. It provides the spirit with an organ of expression and action, just as the spirit provides the body with animation and direction. By total separation, then, body and spirit die together. The whole man dies.

Because the spirit was designed to act through a body, and because the body without the spirit soon loses its inner structure and organic unity and purposeful character, both spirit and body are effectively destroyed when they are separated. Gundry therefore concludes:

The biblical touchstone for truly human life is not mere consciousness of the spirit, let alone the material being of a physical object such as the body. Rather, man is fully himself in the unity of his body *and* spirit, in order

²¹³ Gundry, Robert H., *ibid*, p.119, 120.

²¹⁴ Gundry, Robert H., *ibid*, p.121. A *monad* is an absolute unit, indivisible into parts. In this sense angels, being pure spirit, are monads.

²¹⁵ "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." Genesis 1:26.

²¹⁶ Gundry, Robert H., *ibid.*, p. 159.

that the body may be animated and the spirit may express itself in obedience to God. Both parts of the human constitution share in the dignity of the divine image. That dignity lies in man's service to God as representative caretaker over the material creation. For such a task man needs a physical medium of action as much as an incorporeal source for the conscious *willing* of action. [Emphasis mine]

Thus the soul or spirit provides the body with an ordered economy and unifies its multitude of parts. In its turn the body guarantees the soul a means of expressing its individuality and establishing its identity. This truth long ago led Martin Chemnitz to observe:²¹⁷

The soul has its *own* body, to which it has been personally united to constitute. . . human nature, which is neither body alone nor soul alone but a composite nature The soul, not by itself or of itself but through the organs of the body, manifests and exercises its powers and activities, and the organs of the body use these powers of the soul to grow, feel, and live. . . .

We must note that in man neither the soul nor the body by itself has the condition of a person, and the union takes place in order that the person of man may be constituted. [Emphasis mine]

How, then, one may ask, can the "person" exist at all as a disembodied ghost? Without its proper vessel it has no means of self-expression, unless we depart radically from the implications of a truly biblical psychology. When the soul is first given to the earthly body, that body will certainly have genetically determined endowments or pre-formed *characteristics* (i. e., gifts). But it is largely empty of *content* in so far as any actual *character* is concerned. The vessel has its "structure" and shape, but it awaits for the events of life to supply the "content" that will be poured into it and will then reflect its shape. When in due course the spirit or soul is once again "given" to the resurrected body, both structure and content have already matured with realized fulfillment. Neither soul nor body require a fresh beginning. The whole person is thus made perfect by a single act, the reunion of body and spirit.

As a result of living in the body, the soul has taken the shape of the vessel and to that extent acquired its destined character. When, at death, it returns to God

²¹⁷ Chemnitz, Martin, *The Two Natures of Christ*, translated by J. A. O. Preuss, St. Louis, Missouri, Concordia Publishing House, 1971, p.90, 92, 94.

to await the body's resurrection, that which was of God in Christ of this developed character is preserved in its perfected state. Thus the 'making alive' of the saints is, as J. N. Sevenster put it, "a unique total event."²¹⁸ It is a total fulfillment of the total potential of the spirit and its body, rejoined *forever*.

In some way, therefore, the soul is preserved as to its identity even as the body is preserved as to *its* identity. While the body "waits" in the earth, the spirit "waits" with God in heaven, each needing reunion with the other. And it seems highly unlikely that there can be conscious personal identity until this reunion has taken place — a reunion that hinges upon the resurrection of the body and its re-animation.

It is a remarkable thing that for all our multiplication of the "tools" of biblical study, some of the older Bible Dictionaries seem to have enjoyed far more freedom in discussing such matters than the later ones have. Daniel R. Goodwin, who contributed the article on *Resurrection* in Smith's four volume *Dictionary of the Bible* (the American edition is dated 1870) has this to say on the present subject:

Inasmuch as all we have ever experienced, and all we thus positively know of [the soul's] action and development, has been in connection with and by means of a bodily organization, by what sort of philosophy are we to conclude that of course and of a certainty, it will have no need of its bodily organization, either for its continued existence or even for its full action, progress, and enjoyment in a future state?

How do we know that the human soul is not, in its very nature, so constituted as to need a bodily organization for the complete play and exercise of its powers in every stage of its existence? So that it would, perhaps, be inconsistent with the wisdom of its Creator to preserve it in an imperfect and mutilated state, a mere wreck and relic of itself and its noble functions, to all eternity? And thus, if the soul is to be continued in immortal life, is it not certainly in the end to be reunited to the body?

The redemption of the body is constantly set forth as the highest and ultimate goal of Christian hope. . . .

In saying, therefore, that if the body be not raised there is no Scriptural hope of a future life for the soul, we do not exalt the flesh above the spirit, or the resurrection of the body above the immortality of the soul. We only

²¹⁸ Sevenster, J.N.: quoted by G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975, p.254

designate *the condition on which alone the Scriptures assure us of spiritual immortality*, [emphasis mine] the evidence by which alone it is proved. . . . Christ brought life and. . . immortality to light, not by authoritatively asserting the dogma of the immortality of the soul, *but by his own bodily resurrection from the dead*. . . . The New Testament doctrine of *immortality* is, then, its doctrine of the *resurrection*. . . . The New Testament doctrine of the resurrection is the doctrine of the resurrection of the *body*.

We must therefore assume that some circumstance which has hitherto been given insufficient attention guarantees that in departing this life we do not enter into the Lord's presence *bodiless*. In leaving this body, our now perfected spirit is at once united with a glorified body so that the believer will literally "never taste of death" at all (John 8:52 and 11:26²¹⁹): somehow the expected "interim" will never be experienced.

Implications

I am persuaded that to speak of the conscious experience of a creature of God who throughout the whole of life has no such conscious experience save through the agency of a body designed specifically to serve that very function, is to fly in the face of all the evidence. We not only have every assurance that a body is essential

²¹⁹ "I [Jesus] say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that you have a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and you say, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death." John 8:51-52.

"Jesus said unto [Martha], I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25, 26.

and is promised unequivocally, but we also have every assurance that to be absent from *this* body is to be consciously present with the Lord in a condition which is not *less* fulfilling but "far better" than our present one.

How such a thing can be possible is the subject of Part III.

☞ PROCEED

