Does Man Have an Immortal Soul?

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One of the most firmly entrenched ideas underlying the thinking and doctrine of many sincere believers is the concept of “the immortal soul.” This is the belief that every human being has a conscious component in his or her make-up that will survive for eternity following death. Some believe this immortal element existed prior to conception and birth while others believe it comes into existence at conception and birth. All believe that the physical body is merely the container of this immortal component most frequently called “the soul.” Death is often defined as the separation of the soul from the body, the body going into the grave where it decays while the soul continues on in a state of conscious existence for eternity. Billy Graham describes the difference between the body and soul this way:

You have a body with eyes and ears and hands and feet, but your body is temporary. It will go to the grave. But your personality, your intelligence, your conscience, your memory—these live on forever. This is your spirit, and according to the Bible, our spirit will never die. You may try to end it all today. But you can kill only the body; you cannot kill the soul. You will live forever, whether or not you like it. The Bible says that your soul is eternal.

In her book *Christian Doctrine*, Shirley C. Guthrie, a professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, describes the immortal soul this way:

According to this doctrine only my body can die, but I myself do not really die. My body is only the shell of my true self. It is not me; it is only the earthly-physical prison in which the real “I” is trapped. My true self is my soul, which, because it is spiritual and not physical, is like God and therefore shares God’s immortality (inability to die). What happens at death, then, is that my immortal soul escapes from my mortal body. My body dies, but I myself live on and return to the spiritual realm from which I came and to which I really belong.

The doctrine of the immortal soul is not new. As early as A.D. 150, Justin Martyr wrote of those who said “there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven” (*Dialogue*, 314). By the beginning of the third century, Tertullian had declared the immortality of the soul to be a Christian doctrine, writing, “The soul, then, we define to be sprung from the breath of God, immortal, possessing body, having form, simple in its substance, intelligent in its own nature…” (*A Treatise on the Soul*). After being advocated for centuries by men such as Origen, Ambrose, and Augustine, in 1513 the Roman Catholic Church, under Pope Leo X, officially accepted what nearly everyone had already
come to believe. At the Fifth Lateran Council, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was adopted as an article of the Christian faith. Today, the immortality of the soul is taken for granted by most Catholics and Protestants. It is widely assumed to be true often on the mere basis that an enormous amount of doctrine hinges upon it. But is this a biblical doctrine? Indeed, what does the Bible teach about immortality? And what does it teach about the soul of man?

**The Soul of Man**

The word “soul” comes from a Germanic root, which refers to that which belongs to the sea. It is derived from an ancient Teutonic belief that souls originate in the sea and return to the sea. The Hebrew word translated “soul” in the Old Testament is *nephesh*, which W.E. Vine defines as “the essence of life, the act of breathing, taking breath.” He goes on to say, “The problem with the English term ‘soul’ is that no actual equivalent of the term or the idea behind it is represented in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew system of thought does not include the combination or opposition of the ‘body’ and ‘soul’ which are really Greek and Latin in origin” (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 1985, p. 237-238).

*The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* makes this comment on *nephesh*: “The word ‘soul’ in English, though it has to some extent naturalized the Hebrew idiom, frequently carries with it overtones, ultimately coming from philosophical Greek (Platonism) and from Orphism and Gnosticism which are absent in ‘nephesh.’ In the OT it never means the immortal soul, but it is essentially the life principle, or the living being, or the self as the subject of appetite, and emotion, occasionally of volition” (Vol. 4, 1962, “Soul”).

That *nephesh* does not refer to an immortal soul can be seen in the way it is used in the Old Testament. In Genesis, for example, it is translated “soul” or “being” with reference to man (2:7), but when referring to animals it is translated “creature” (1:24). In Leviticus 21:11, *nephesh* is translated “body.” Moreover, the Hebrew Scriptures state plainly that, rather than possessing inherent immortality, the soul can and does die. For example, Ezekiel 18:4 says, “The soul [*nephesh*] who sins shall die.” This may be why James Strong’s first definition for *nephesh* is simply “a breathing creature” (Strong’s Dictionary #5315). Obviously a breathing creature can stop breathing, in which case it would die.

The first use of the word *nephesh* with reference to man is found in Genesis 2:7. Here the Bible states, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [*nephesh*].” The word translated “breathed” is *naphach*, which is the verb form of *nephesh*. When God breathes (*naphach*) into something He has formed, it comes alive as a breathing creature (*nephesh*). When it stops breathing, it is no longer alive but dead. *Nephesh* is therefore the result of *naphach*, of breathing. Notice that man was formed, not of a spiritual substance, but of the dust of the ground. Only when God Himself breathed into the man did he become a living being.

In the New Testament, the Greek word translated “soul” is *psuche*. According to Vine, this word “denotes the breath, the breath of life, then the soul in all its various meaning” (p.1067). Mr. Vine provides a list of eleven various meanings of this word, yet not one of them defines it as the
immortal component of human beings. The Latin equivalent of *nepesh* and *psuche* is *anima*, from which we get the words “animal,” meaning a living creature, and “animate,” which means to make alive or to fill with breath.

In summation, if we take at face value the meanings of the various words translated “soul” in the Bible, we see no intimation of any kind of immortal properties. The reason these words are translated by the English word “soul” is because the translators based their work on the pre-supposition that man possesses an immortal soul which is housed in a physical body. But since all three words, *nepesh*, *psuche*, and *anima*, all contain within them the idea of breathing, it is logical to conclude that what some call “the soul” is indeed quite mortal.

**The Mortality of Man**

The word “immortal” means “without death” or “not subject to death,” implying a state of perpetual or endless existence. In the New Testament, two Greek words are translated by the word “immortality.” The first is *athanasia*, which Vine defines as “deathlessness.” The second is *aphtharsia*, which means, and is sometimes translated, “incorruption.” These two terms go hand in hand, which is to say that whatever is immortal is also incorruptible and vice verse (ref. 1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

To understand the biblical meaning of immortality, it is first necessary to understand the biblical meaning of death. What, according to the Bible, does it mean to die? Some have said that death is separation from God. By this definition, people could experience death yet continue to be alive. In other words, their bodies could stop breathing and be buried, while their immortal souls continue to have conscious existence. This is the essence of the immortal soul doctrine.

But in the Bible, death is identified with the cessation of life, and life is associated with breathing. As we have seen, the various words translated “soul” are all linked to breathing; therefore, it is no surprise that death is frequently connected with the cessation of breathing. For example, when Jesus died on the cross, the Bible says, “Having said this, He breathed His last” (Luke 23:46). To die is to stop breathing. When a human being stops breathing, he or she is dead. The Bible says that God “gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25). Certainly whatever God gives He can also take away. This is clearly what Elihu was saying to Job when he suggested that if God “should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust” (Job 34:14-15). Without breath man is no longer alive; he is mere dust. To stop breathing is what it means to be mortal and to return to dust is what it means to be corruptible.

At the very beginning of the history of man, God defined death as the ultimate consequence of sin, saying to Adam, “In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). The consequence of disobeying God was not that Adam’s body would die while his immortal soul continued to live. It was that Adam would die. He would stop breathing. He would return to the dust. As God said in Genesis 3:19, “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”
Of course, Adam did not stop breathing and fall to the ground on the very day that he disobeyed God. But something died, for we read that “the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). This verse introduces the concept of substitutionary death; that is, the idea that under certain circumstances, God accepts the death of another as a substitute for the one who has sinned.

Some say that Adam died on the very day he sinned because, although he continued to breathe, he was separated from God by his expulsion from the garden. This is sometimes described as “spiritual death.” But this theory is not supported by the Scriptures. For example, in Genesis 4 we read of God continuing to communicate with man after his expulsion from Paradise. We see no evidence that God has rejected man or that man is now separated from God. We do see that man must now relate to God by means of blood sacrifices, but there is no indication of a separation until after Cain slays Abel. At that point we read, “Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden” (Genesis 4:16). Notice it was Cain who separated himself from God, not God who separated from Cain. Separation from God is not something God imposes on man as a consequence of sin; it is something man imposes on himself by his refusal to repent.

When man was driven from the garden, he was separated from the tree of life, not from God. In fact, the purpose of putting man out of the garden was to prevent him from being able to eat from the tree of life and live forever (Genesis 3:22-23). This indicates that man was not created as an immortal being. To live forever required consuming the fruit of the tree of life, a symbol of Jesus Christ. No man continues after death in any form of conscious existence apart from the gift of life that comes from Jesus.

The Bible describes unsaved man as being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). It says that “she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives” (1 Timothy 5:6). These passages, along with other similar expressions, are not saying that the unsaved are separated from God or are in some way “spiritually dead.” They are saying that the unsaved are under the sentence of death. They are like prisoners on death row. The only thing they have to look forward to is death.

Paul described the unsaved Gentiles as being “alienated from the life of God,” not alienated from God (Ephesians 4:18). He told the Athenians that God is “not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:27-28). To define death as separation from God is to give it a meaning far different from that conveyed in the Scriptures. Over and over in the Bible, death is contrasted with life, mortality is contrasted with immortality, and corruption is contrasted with incorruption. From a biblical perspective, death is the consequence of sin, the cessation of breathing, the termination of life. To die is to no longer be alive. Death is therefore the state of those whose lives have ended, not a state of separation from God that runs concurrent with the soul’s ongoing life after the physical death.

**God Gives Immortality**
Does man have an immortal soul? Is any aspect of man inherently immortal? The Bible states flatly that God “alone has immortality” (1 Timothy 6:14-16). God alone. This means that no one else does— that is, unless God gives it, which He sometimes does. By coming in the flesh as the Man, Jesus Christ, God has “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). God’s means for making immortality available to mortal man is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the only way any human being can obtain it. As Paul wrote, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). To be everlastingly alive is a divine gift; it is not the condition of any human being, or any part of a human being, at birth. All are born subject to death. To possess immortality we must obey the gospel and receive the gift of eternal life from God.

Only God is immortal (not subject to death) and incorruptible (not subject to decay) (1 Timothy 6:16; Romans 1:23). By nature, man is both mortal and corruptible. For man to become immortal and no longer subject to decay, he must be given the gift of eternal life by God; that is, he must receive these attributes from outside of himself. He does not possess them within himself. Therefore, the Bible says, “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53). If human beings already possessed these attributes, there would be no reason why they would need to put them on.

Immortality is available to all mortal men and women through the gospel of Jesus Christ, but it must be received by obeying the gospel. Once a person has obeyed the gospel, he is still mortal, but he is in a spiritual position to put on immortality. During the period between the time a person obeys the gospel and the time when he actually puts on immortality, the Bible says that we must “by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality” (Romans 2:7). Paul states here that immortality must be sought after. This makes no sense if immortality is an inherent quality of man. If the soul of man were immortal, incapable of experiencing death by its very composition, why would anyone need to seek after immortality? The proposition that mortal man has an immortal soul is self-contradictory.

The Composition of Man

Of what material is man composed? Are we spiritual beings inhabiting earthen bodies? Do we continue to exist as souls even after our earthen bodies die? To answer these questions biblically, we must go back to the beginning. Genesis 2:7 tells us that in the beginning, “the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” What truths can be elicited from this statement? First, that the man Adam was formed. The word translated “formed” is the Hebrew word yatsar, which means “to squeeze into shape, to mold into a form; especially as a potter” (#3335). Second, that he was formed by the Lord God. This means that the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual attributes of man were determined by God Himself. They did not evolve or occur arbitrarily. Third, the first man was formed by God out of the dust of the ground. The word “dust” is the Hebrew word aphar, which can also refer to clay or mud. In other words, man was formed out of the material of the ground. The word “ground” is the Hebrew word adamah, which is closely connected to the name Adam.
Our English word “human” comes from a Latin root meaning “of the earth.” It is equal to the Hebrew word *adam*, which is related to *adamah*, the Hebrew word for “earth”—not the planet but the ground. Since the first man Adam was formed of the dust of the *adamah*, as his offspring we have all been formed of the dust of the *adamah*; therefore, the word *adam* can be extended to refer to mankind or humanity in general. When God made man (*adam*), He was making mankind. Is man a spirit being inhabiting an earthen body or is man an earthen being? In Psalms 103:14 David says, “For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” This passage does not say that we are spirit; it says we are dust. The word “frame” is *yetser*, which is the noun form of *yatsar* and refers to the thing formed. Man is a formed being, and according to the Bible, that which has been formed is composed of dust. The very fact that we have been formed confirms that we did not exist prior to the time of our formation.

In Job 33:6 Elihu says, “I also have been formed (*yatsar*) out of clay.” He did not say his body had been formed out of clay, but that he had. In explaining this he says, “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). This statement is in perfect harmony with Genesis 2:7. It was the Spirit of God hovering over the earth that shined light into darkness and formed man to inhabit the Garden of Eden. The first man was not an eternal being who stepped out of eternity into a human body. He was a made being, formed by God of the dust of the ground.

We know that Adam was formed as a mature male adult and that Eve was formed out of one of Adam’s bones, but the rest of us are formed under a different system. According to the Bible, where is man formed? Job answers this question when he says, “Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?” (Job 31:15). Isaiah echoes this when he writes, “Thus says the LORD who made you and formed (*yatsar*) you from the womb....” (Isaiah 44:2). Man does not pre-exist the womb. Man is not formed in eternity past. Man is formed in the womb.

David describes the process of forming man when he writes, “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb” (Psalms 139:13). And Job says, “Your hands have made me and fashioned me, an intricate unity; yet You would destroy me. Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay. And will You turn me into dust again?” (Job 10:8-9).

Concerning the word “soul,” the *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* says this: “For a Hebrew, ‘soul’ indicated the unity of a human person; Hebrews were living bodies, they did not have bodies. In the NT, ‘soul’ retains its basic field of meaning. Soul refers to one’s life” (p.1055).

Adam was living clay (as opposed to ordinary clay) made in the image of the living God. This was what made him remarkable, not that he was in some way by his composition immortal. In the thinking of the Hebrews, before the introduction of Greek philosophy, man was considered a spirit-animated body, not a spirit person in a body. In fact, their concept so emphasized the unity of body and soul that the Hebrew language does not even contain a word which precisely parallels our word “body,” as we use it with reference to the physical aspects of man.
In the Bible there is an inseparable unity between the physical and the spiritual. What touches the body touches the spirit as well. There is no Scripture that suggests we are spirits in a body, like water filling a glass. To the contrary, we are physical beings endowed with life by the Spirit of God.

The word translated “body” in the New Testament is the Greek word *soma*, which Vine says refers generally to “the complete man.” An example of this can be found in Matthew 5:29 where Jesus said, “It is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body [*soma*] to be cast into hell.” But Vine also says it can refer to the physical nature alone as distinct from the spiritual, which is usually identified either by the word *pneuma* (spirit) or the word *psuche* (soul). An example of this can be found in Matthew 10:28: “And do not fear those who kill the body [*soma*] but cannot kill the soul [*psuche*]. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul [*psuche*] and body [*soma*] in hell.”

Some use this passage to show a separation between the body and the soul, as though each can exist apart from the other. But this was not Jesus’ point. He was simply saying that even though another person may be able to kill you, he cannot destroy who you are as a person, what you believe, your character. In other words, homicide may put an end to the natural life, but we can all die with our spiritual life firmly intact.

**Can We Be Open-Minded?**

Today’s Apostolic movement embraces more Catholic and Protestant concepts than most Apostolics are aware of. The doctrine of the immortal soul is one. For example, Nathaniel Wilson writes,

> Scriptures (too numerous to mention) reveal the truth that from the time a person becomes a living soul, he/she will never again return to “non-being.” Physical death is not “cessation of being,” but rather a separation of the conscious soul and spirit of man from his body. However, that conscious soul/spirit continues to be eternally conscious and experiences pleasures or unpleasantness, as the case may be.” (*The New PASTORS Course*, Book III, p.25).

This doctrine is apparently an official position of the United Pentecostal Church International, since it appears as an explicit teaching in their adult Sunday school literature. An unidentified writer states, “Human beings are not merely material beings; they are also immaterial beings that will never cease to exist” (Century Series, Vol.VI, p.95). David F. Gray affirms this position when he writes, “The soul is conscious after death, and depending upon the spiritual state of the individual at death, goes either to hades or to paradise (places of unrest or rest) to await the resurrection and judgment. The soul is the real person, containing all that he is, his essence and his personality” (*Doctrines of the Bible*, p.177). Since both of these works are published by Word Aflame Press, the official publishing organ of the UPCI, we must conclude that these statements represent the official view of this organization.
Many believers have been taught that to reject the doctrine of the immortal soul is to embrace a “cult doctrine.” For example, in their book Understanding the Cults, Josh McDowell and Don Stewart list “Rejection of Orthodox Christianity” as a characteristic of cults. From their perspective, this includes rejection of both the doctrine of the immortal soul and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Due to this sort of sweeping assertion, many sincere believers have a hard time keeping an open mind on this subject. After all, who wants to be associated with the cults? On the other hand, is guilt-by-association a reasonable method for establishing the truth or falsity of a doctrine? If it is, then those who accept the immortal soul doctrine may want to reconsider their view. It is true that the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists have rejected this doctrine, but consider the list of those who embrace it: Mormons, Christian Scientists, aboriginal American Indians, Roman Catholics, most Protestants, Moslems, Hindus, Taoists, Gnostics, most Greek philosophers, ancient Egyptians and Babylonians, Jungian psychologists, Scientologists, and New Agers. Suffice to say that if the verity of a doctrine were dependent on the doctrinal purity of everyone who accepts it, then the doctrine of the immortal soul should have been declared dead on arrival. As Mark Twain once said, “One of the proofs of the immortality of the soul is that myriads have believed it—they also believed the world was flat.”

Roots of the Immortal Soul

For Christians, the fundamental problem with the immortal soul doctrine ought to be that it originated with Plato, not the Bible. When I say it originated with Plato, I do not mean to suggest that he was the first to ever propose such a construal; only that it was largely by the influence of his writings that the belief entered and became entrenched in Christian thinking. From the second century on, many of the most influential Christian writers, including Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, were trained in Platonic philosophy. They were therefore familiar with Plato’s lament in his book Phaedrus, “We are imprisoned in the body, like an oyster in his shell.” And in Phaedo where he asks, “What is purification, but...the release of the soul from the chains of the body?” Writing in his book The Republic, Plato states matter-of-factly, “The soul of man is immortal and imperishable.” To Plato and his disciples, the soul exists independent of the physical body and continues to exist after the physical body is dead.

Actually, we could go back even farther and find roots for the immortal soul doctrine in the Garden of Eden, where we read two contradictory statements. First God, who says, “For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Then Satan, who counters, “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). This means that according to the Bible, the first to declare that man possessed immortality apart from Jesus Christ was Satan himself, the master deceiver. We ought to keep in mind that Jesus declared the devil to be “a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

Immortal Soul vs Resurrection

Prior to the coming of Jesus, many Jews had been influenced by Greek philosophy and had accepted of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul (see Jubilee 23:31; Wisdom of Solomon
But according to the *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*, Jesus shared “the Hebrew notion of resurrection rather than the notion of an immortal soul” (p.452). It goes on to say, “Immortality for Paul is not the continuing existence of the soul apart from the body, but is rather the new heavenly existence of those who, clothed in ‘spiritual bodies,’ share in Jesus’ resurrection in the new age” (p.452).

This brings us to the final matter I want to discuss: the contradiction between the doctrine of the immortal soul and the doctrine of the resurrection. The Apologists of the second century were adamant in their assertions that a true Christian believed in the resurrection and therefore could not also believe in the immortality of the soul. To them, these doctrines were contradictory. It was only later that the immortal soul gained wide acceptance. But in the earliest writings following the time of the apostles, belief in the immortal soul was considered to be “godless and blasphemous” (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, lxxx. 3-4). The reason for this was because it was looked upon as an expression of man’s insolence towards God. In the Christian faith, salvation from death was a mighty act of God, but in this Platonic view, immortality was an innate possession of the only part of man that really mattered, that which is conscious. This was recognized as being identical to the motive underlying the fall of man; which is to say, it was man attempting to make himself like God. Instead of taking eternal life as a free gift of God’s love, this was man insisting that his soul in its very nature was akin to the eternal Creator.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the reason the eternal God shared in the same flesh and blood as us was so that He might “taste death” (Hebrews 2:9,14). On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared that having been “put to death,” He was then “raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it” (Acts 2:23-24). When Jesus breathed His last, He died and was buried in a tomb. But since He was God in the flesh, it was not possible that He should be held by death forever. So on the third day He overcame death, not because His human soul was immortal but because He was raised from being dead by the power of God (Romans 8:11). The idea that while His body lay in the tomb His conscious soul went into hell to contend with the devil has no support in the Scripture. It is a contrivance of those who embrace the doctrine of the immortal soul. It may make for good preaching, but it doesn’t make for good exegesis.

**Conclusions**

If the human soul did not pre-exist its placement in the body, then we must conclude that there was once a time when it did not exist. It therefore came into existence, presumably, by the creative design and power of God. And what God creates, God can destroy. What God makes alive, God can make un-alive. Therefore, if the soul was created, we cannot in all honesty say that its inherent nature is immortal. This means that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul requires us to believe that every human soul has always existed in eternity past; otherwise we have no basis for believing it must exist in eternity future. But if this is true, then the soul is essentially a godlike entity, without beginning and without end, hence without creation. This cannot be the case, however, since the Bible states emphatically that through Jesus Christ “all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible” (Colossians
1:16). According to the doctrine of the immortal soul, human souls are invisible and live both in heaven and on earth. They therefore must be created and are thereby subject to destruction. Either way you have it, if there really is such a thing as a human soul, it cannot be immortal.

There are a number of biblical passages which some may call upon to refute the arguments made in this paper. I have not attempted to offer an explanation for each of them, partly due to the space limitations of this paper and partly because I am convinced that a change in perspective is the necessary first step in finding the correct interpretations. What I mean is, when a person examines the Scriptures from the presupposition that all men are endowed with an immortal soul, he will interpret these passages in a way that harmonizes with that presupposition. But I maintain that to do so is to interpret the Bible through the lens of Platonic philosophy, the same error that blinds Trinitarians to the doctrine of Oneness. But once we discard the Greek lens and replace it with the Hebrew lens of the Old Testament, suddenly we will begin to see these same passages in an entirely different light. This I challenge every proponent of the immortal soul doctrine to do.

In summary, let me say that I find not even one verse in the entire Bible that explicitly states that human beings are endowed with an immortal soul. The doctrine of the immortal soul, though believed by many, is in fact contradictory to many explicit statements of Scripture, such as God “alone has immortality” and “this mortal must put on immortality.” Moreover, the Bible asserts that man is made of the dust of the ground, not a spiritual substance which is encased in dust. The term “human being” means “earthen being.” God and angels may be spirit beings, but man is definitely of the earth. As Paul writes, “The first man was of the earth, made of dust” (1 Corinthians 15:47). And indeed, if we are made of dust, then we are not immortal and to dust we shall one day return. In light of this reality, let us thank the eternal God for His promise of the resurrection and His gift of everlasting life.