



The Concept of the Immortality of the Soul: A Biblical-Theological Study

Joseph Danquah ¹ 

¹ Adventist University of Africa, Ongata Rongai, Kenya.

ABSTRACT

The concept of the immortality of the soul, as held by pagans, has been the subject of extensive scholarly research over the years. Despite concerted efforts to disprove the idea of life after death, the doctrine remains a theological enigma. This research thus delved into the immortality of the soul as depicted in the Bible. The study posited that the body and soul are not distinct entities but rather integral components of the human person. The Bible does not recognize a separate existence of the body and soul after death, instead, it regards them as an inseparable unity that ceases to exist until the resurrection. Consequently, the elements that make up a person and the process described in Genesis 2:7 do not involve the existence of a soul in the dualistic sense. The Bible maintains that no division between the body and soul occurs independently at the time of death. Thus, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul lacks biblical support. The study, employing a biblical-theological approach, sought to address the prevailing debates concerning the concept of the "immortality of the soul." This paper argues for the belief in the immortality of the soul and posits that it is not consistent with biblical teachings. The study suggests that this belief may have originated from the Edenic teaching that humans "shall not surely die." (Gen. 3:4).

Correspondence

Joseph Danquah
Email: danquahj@aua.ac.ke

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of the "immortality of the soul" remains one of the greatest misunderstandings of Christianity.¹ Many have refused to accept the finality and the biblical truth that death brings to life as indicated in Ecclesiastes 9:5. Even within the same religion, there are many perspectives on what happens to the soul after death. It is strongly related to the notion of life after death.² While many people follow certain philosophies and faiths that believe the soul is ethereal, others think the soul can also have a corporeal component.³ Catholics for instance, believe that the soul is a nonmaterial, immortal element of the body that departs from it at death and continues to exist consciously in heaven, hell, or purgatory.⁴ They believe that the Bible teaches about the afterlife. They use passages like Matthew 5:25, 26; 12:31, 32; Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 15:29; 2 Timothy 1:16-18;

¹ Oscar Cullmann, "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?," *Immortality and Resurrection* 46 (1965): 4.

² Vu Hong Van, "From the Belief of the Immortality of the Soul, the Blessing or the Harassing of the Soul towards People to the Worship of the Souls of Vietnamese People," *Asian Social Science* 16, no. 3 (2020): 1.

³ Michael Frede, "On Aristotle's Conception of Soul," in *Essays on Aristotle? S de Anima*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (London: Clarendon Press, 1992), 93.

⁴ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1997).

1Peter 3:18-20 to support their position. However, history reveals that the idea of the immortal nature of the soul arose primarily from Greek pagan philosophies that eventually found their way into the Christian church.⁵

This doctrine has, however, received enormous attention over the years as researchers are frequently challenged with several questions about life after death such as “Do we survive death? Which aspects of a person’s personality survive death?” “Can the concepts of life after death be harmonized with the contemporary perspective?”⁶

This concept is shared by certain Protestants and Catholics and though much research has been carried out to refute the concept of life after death, the doctrine remains a theological conundrum as there have been contradictions even by the several writers that have sought to address this ideology.⁷ There have been efforts by others to challenge the notion of death by promoting diverse beliefs in existence beyond life.⁸ A crucial aspect of this teaching has centered on the idea that the soul continues to exist independently from the body after death. Despite significant progress in science, the enduring popularity of the notion of soul immortality remains strong and is continuing to expand without decline.⁹

There are divergent views on the subject of the “immortality of the soul” among scholars. Whereas some of the early Church Fathers, including Quadratus of Athens, Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, and some more recent scholars such as Martin Heinechen, Oscar Cullmann, and Norman Gulley generally disbelieve in the intrinsic immortal nature of man, some other scholars including Kenneth Baker, Thomas Aquinas, and Augustine firmly believe that the soul is inherently immortal and goes to heaven or hell after death. This has resulted in conflicting doctrines among churches. The Catholic Church, for instance, teaches its members that the soul is everlasting and does not perish with the body whereas Seventh-day Adventists believe in soul sleep.

These opposing views regarding the condition of the human being after death need to be considered. Thus, salient questions may be asked. What is the state of a human being after death? What is the biblical justification concerning the concept of the “immortality of the soul”? What are the anthropological implications of the concept of the “immortality of the soul” for contemporary Christians? The study uses the biblical-theological methodology to address the fundamental questions-regarding the “immortality of the soul”.

Immortality of the Soul: Biblical Perspective

This section considers the biblical perspective of the nature of man to help readers understand the concept of the “immortality of the soul”. This segment seeks to assist readers in comprehending the essence of human existence and the interconnection between the soul and the body, particularly at death.

Old Testament (OT) Perspective of the Soul

The question of human essence has remained a continuous focal point throughout the history of Christian contemplation.¹⁰ The inquiry raised by the Psalmist is, “What is humanity that you should think about them?” Psalms 8:4 represents a fundamental query opened to anyone’s contemplation. The response to this query shapes one’s perspective of self, the world, redemption, and the ultimate fate. Historically, most Christians have depicted human essence in dualistic terms, as comprising a physical, perishable body and a non-physical, undying soul that outlasts the body after death.¹¹

Dualism maintains the perspective that upon passing away, a soul or spirit continues to operate eternally.¹² The terminology ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ refers to the internal existence of an individual, not as an autonomous entity but as interdependent with human nature that encompasses the biological infrastructure, based on biblical monism.¹³ Bacchiocchi, in “*Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Body*”, observes

⁵ James Bonwick, *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought* (Indiana Hills, CO: The Falcon’s Wing Press, 1956), 80.

⁶ John Kwasi Fosu, “Immortality of the Soul in Ecclesiastes and Akan Traditional Thought: A Comparative Analysis from an African Christian Theological Perspective,” *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, April 12, 2021, 61–68, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.2021741>.

⁷ Fosu, “Immortality of the Soul in Ecclesiastes and Akan Traditional Thought: A Comparative Analysis from an African Christian Theological Perspective.”

⁸ Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, 1.

⁹ Tony Walter, “The Afterlife: Popular Beliefs Today,” in *The Eclipse of Eternity* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 32.

¹⁰ Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, 33; H. D. McDonald, *The Christian View of Man* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981), 90; C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (London: Epworth, 1951), 29–30; R. Laird-Harris, *Man, God’s Eternal Creation: A Study of Old Testament Culture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 24; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006); Paul Jewett, *Man: Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 33.

¹¹ Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, 33.

¹² C. Johnsen, *Man, the Indivisible* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), 88.

¹³ McDonald, *The Christian View of Man*, 90.

that “the logical starting point for the study of the biblical concept of the human soul is the account of the creation of man.”¹⁴ In Genesis 2:7 the text reads, “Then God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”

The focal point of this biblical text is encapsulated by the phrase “living soul”. The term “soul” (“*nephesh*”) is a recurring motif in the Old Testament (OT) which appears 755 times and is translated into 45 distinct manners.¹⁵ The term *nephesh* has its origins in the root: *naphash*, which is a verb that appears exclusively thrice in the OT (Ex. 23:12; 31:17; 2 Sam. 16:14). The meaning of this verb on every occasion pertains to the act of “reviving oneself” or “refreshing oneself”.¹⁶ It provides the sole biblical recounting of how mankind was created by God. Moreover, it serves as the bedrock of numerous philosophical musings concerning the essence of human existence. Notably, the term “living soul” in the Hebrew language as *nephesh hayyah* is utilized to refer to both human and animal entities, as outlined in Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, and 30. The adjective *hayyah*, in this context, connotes vitality or the state of being alive.¹⁷ Despite the common rendering of the word “*nephesh*” as ‘soul’ in English, its usage for both humans and animals in Genesis 1:20, 24-30, 2:19, and 7:21 suggests a lack of immortality or elevated faculties.

The term “*nephesh*” in Hebrew is primarily associated with the anatomical features of the “throat” and “gullet”, which eventually gives rise to the notion of “appetite”. The interpretation of Genesis 2:7 has traditionally been influenced by the preconceived notions of classical dualism.¹⁸ The expression “man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7) has been the subject of a dualistic interpretation which erroneously translates it to imply that “man acquired a living soul.” Several scholars have contested this translation because they acknowledge the ambiguity surrounding the difference between the Greek-dualistic and the biblical-holistic portrayal of human nature. Aubrey Johnson argues that the term “*nephesh*” in Genesis 2:7 refers to the entire individual and places particular emphasis on their awareness and vitality.¹⁹

According to Pedersen, the OT consistently presents the idea that humanity, inherently, possesses a soul.²⁰ For instance, Abraham commenced a pilgrimage to Canaan with his possessions and all the people he had acquired as documented in Genesis 12:5. Additionally, as chronicled in Genesis 14:21, in the course of his engagement in warfare against the formidable kings and subsequent acquisition of spoils, the King of Sodom exhorted him to relinquish the people and retain the goods. Furthermore, the migration of seventy individuals from the household of Jacob to Egypt is stated in Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5. Moreover, during any census, the inquiry invariably centers on the number of individuals. In these and numerous other instances, individuals may be substituted for souls.

In summary, the OT does not state an immortal and separate soul, but rather recognizes the soul as the animating principle of life in both humans and animals, with its destiny tied to the body.

The State of the Dead in the Old Testament

Various attempts have been made to substantiate the conscious presence of the soul. However, it is incontrovertibly evident in the Biblical context that death unequivocally denotes the termination of life for the entire entity that encompasses both the corporeal and ethereal aspects.²¹ The Bible employs two distinct expressions to denote the abode of the deceased, namely Shoel in the OT and Hades in the New Testament (NT). These expressions are frequently construed as referring to the location where the disembodied souls persist following demise, as well as the site of retribution for the impious.²²

¹⁴ Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, 10.

¹⁵ F. C. Basil, Atkinson, *Life and Immortality* (London: Goodman, 1963), 3.

¹⁶ Basil, Atkinson, *Life and Immortality*, 4.

¹⁷ Aecio E. Cairus, “The Doctrine of Man,” in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 213.

¹⁸ Bacchiocchi posits that the classical doctrine of dualism is grounded in the assumption that the breath of life given to man by God was a solely immaterial and immortal soul that was implanted into the corporeal body. This flawed interpretation can be attributed to the conventional Webster's definition of soul, which characterizes it as “the immaterial essence, animating principle, or actuating cause of an individual life, or the spiritual principle embodied in human beings,” and has been used to understand the Hebrew term *nephesh*, translated as “soul” in Genesis 2:7. This definition is reminiscent of the Platonic understanding of the soul as an immaterial and immortal essence that coexists with the body, but is not an inherent part of it. This pre-existing perspective has influenced the interpretation of OT references to the soul through the lens of Platonic dualism, rather than biblical holism (Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 10).

¹⁹ Aubrey Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff, Wales: Wales Press, 1964), 16.

²⁰ Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 100.

²¹ Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*.

²² Walter, “The Afterlife: Popular Beliefs Today,” 32.

The term “Sheol” is present in 65 instances in the OT and is subject to varying interpretations as a “grave,” a “hell,” a “pit,” or a “death.”²³ The multiplicity of interpretations poses a challenge in comprehending the fundamental essence of the term “Sheol”. Notably, the King James Version (KJV) translates “Sheol” as “grave” on thirty-one instances, “hell” on thirty-one occurrences, and “pit” on three occasions.

Some scholars posit that “Sheol” is a realm solely reserved for the retributive suffering of the wicked and shares an equivalent connotation with contemporary hell.²⁴ In his literary work, “Death and the Afterlife,” Robert A. Morey posits that “Sheol”, an underworld domain, is acknowledged 66 times in the OT. Despite the OT's recurring allusions to the corporeal entity being interred in a sepulcher, it unfailingly alludes to the immaterial soul or spirit of humanity as descending to “Sheol”.²⁵ Likewise, in accordance with Warfield's assertions, Daniel J. Meeter posits that upon the cessation of life, the physical form is interred within the confines of the sepulcher whilst the incorporeal essence separates from the mortal vessel and traverses towards the realm of “Sheol”.²⁶

Furthermore, George Eldon Ladd proposes that in the OT, the cessation of existence for man does not occur after death, rather his soul descends to “Sheol”.²⁷ Likewise, a commensurate perspective is espoused by John Thomson, who posits that upon the cessation of life, the corporeal form remains interred in the terrestrial realm while the incorporeal essence transmigrates into “Sheol”.²⁸ The purported notions of “Sheol” as a habitation for souls or a site of chastisement for the depraved, rather than a sepulchral abode for the body, are biblically fallacious. Conversely, The *New International Version* predominantly renders “Sheol” as a grave and, on occasion, as death (Ps 16:10; 1 Sam 2:6). This translation aptly conveys the fundamental import of “Sheol” as the grave, or preferably, the comprehensive realm of the deceased.²⁹

The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* asserts with great emphasis that within the OT, the dwelling of the deceased is not perceived as a locale of suffering or anguish. Johannes Pedersen, in his analysis of Israel: Its Life and Culture, expounds that “Sheol” represents the comprehensive domain of the deceased that encompasses all those who have passed on, whether interred or not.³⁰ The origin of the term “Sheol” is shrouded in ambiguity. Its etymology stems from a root that implies the actions of questioning, inquiring, and interring oneself.³¹ Doermann posits that the term “shilah” is derived from the verb stem of the same name, which conveys the notions of stillness and tranquility.³² The discrepancy between the two aforementioned terms is a matter of relativity. It is a verifiable fact that “Sheol” is a designation for a place of repose for the deceased. “Sheol” is situated in the depth of the earth's subsurface, as it is frequently referenced in tandem with the heavens to denote the outermost bounds of the cosmos (Amos 9:2-3; Ps 139:7-8; cf. Job 11:7-9). For instance, when Jacob was apprised of his son Joseph's passing, he declared, “In mourning will I go down to the grave (“Sheol”) to my son” (Gen 37:35). Likewise, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and all their possessions were engulfed by the earth when the ground beneath them opened up after they had rebelled against Moses' authority. They descended into “Sheol” while still alive, and the earth then sealed over them (Num 16:31-33).

The state of those deceased in “Sheol” is one of feebleness and inactivity. A common fate befalls all, be they righteous or wicked, good or evil, clean or unclean (Eccl 9:2). Solomon offers a pragmatic portrayal of the condition of the dead in “Sheol”: “There is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in “Sheol”, to which you are going” (Eccl 9:10). It is an indisputable fact that the concept of “Sheol”, which denotes the realm of the deceased, embodies an existence that lacks consciousness and being. Death brings an abrupt termination to all activity beneath the sun (Eccl 9:10-11).

²³ Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1949), 170-207.

²⁴ Desmond Alexander, “The Old Testament View of Life after Death,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. David W. Baker (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

²⁵ Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), 72.

²⁶ Daniel J. Meeter, *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Trenton, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1970), 339-345.

²⁷ George Eldon Ladd, “Death,” in *The New Bible Dictionary (NBD)*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmann Publishing Company, 1962), 380.

²⁸ Carl F. H. Henry, “Death and the State of the Soul after Death,” in *Basic Christian Doctrines* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 271.

²⁹ Alexander, “The Old Testament View of Life after Death,” 44.

³⁰ Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 462.

³¹ Theodore H. Gaster, *Abode of the Dead*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Peter Smith, 1962), 788.

³² Ralph Walter Doermann, *Sheol in the Old Testament* (Duke University, 1962), 37.

The Concept of the Soul in the New Testament

The NT expounds upon a precise continuity with the comprehensive perspective of human nature presented in the OT.³³ The examination of the OT's perspective on human nature has emphasized the unity of body and soul as constituting an indivisible whole. Despite the persistence of beliefs in the soul's immortality during the time of the NT, this concept is absent from the NT's writings as its authors adhered to the teachings of the OT. These authors utilized the fundamental Greek terminologies pertaining to human nature in their original forms as derived from the OT, rather than in accordance with the meanings prevalent in Hellenistic society.

The term *psyche* in Greek, referring to the soul, is utilized in the NT in conjunction with the fundamental definitions of the Hebrew "nephesh", which denotes the soul as described in the OT.³⁴ The term "soul" finds its origin in the Greek word "psyche," which encompasses the semantical notions of "life," "breathe," or "soul." In the NT, "psyche" appears forty times, and it is consistently translated as "life" or "lives." This translation bears a clear correspondence with the conventional understanding of the term "life," as indicated in biblical passages such as Matt. 2:20, 6:25, and 16:25.³⁵ The term "soul" or "souls" is employed in not less than fifty-eight occurrences, exemplified in Matthew 10:28, 11:29, and 12:18.³⁶ In certain instances, it denotes merely "people" (Acts 7:14; 27:37; 1 Peter 3:20). In other occurrences, it is rendered or tantamount to certain personal pronouns (Matt. 12:18; 2 Cor. 12:15). Occasionally, it alludes to the sentiments (Mark 14:34; Luke 2:35), to the innate cravings (Rev. 18:14), to the intellect (Acts 14:2; Phil. 1:27), or the essence (Eph. 6:6).

The concept in question encompasses the entirety of the individual in a manner akin to that of the term "nephesh" as utilized in the OT.³⁷ In the defense presented by Stephen before the Sanhedrin, a particular instance can be observed wherein he affirms that a group of seventy-five individuals from the family of Jacob had journeyed towards Egypt, a customary figure that has been established in the Old Testament. This reference can be found in various scriptural passages such as Gen 46:26-27, Ex 1:5, and Deut 10:22. Furthermore, on the day of Pentecost, a total of three thousand individuals underwent baptism, with each person experiencing a profound sense of trepidation (Acts 2:41, 43). In allusion to the kin of Noah, Peter declares that eight individuals were rescued through the medium of water (1 Pet 3:20). Evidently, in passages of this nature, the term "soul" is employed in a manner that is interchangeable with that of "person".

In Matthew 11:28, the profound declaration of repose for the spirits of individuals who embrace the yoke of Christ is explained. The phrase "rest for your souls" is derived from Jeremiah 6:16, which pledges repose for the soul to individuals who abide by God's commandments.³⁸ The term "soul" was commonly employed in the NT to denote "life." This word appears as "life" a total of 46 instances in the NT.³⁹ In these particular cases, life offers a suitable portrayal of the Greek notion of the soul as it is employed in relation to the material realm. The apostle Paul reassured the ship's crew that "there will be no loss of souls among you, but only of the ship" (Acts 27:22; cf. 27:10). Within this specific context, it is appropriate to translate the Greek word *psyche* as "life," as Paul is addressing the loss of lives. Additionally, an angel advised Joseph to relocate his child and wife to the land of Israel because those who sought to capture the infant's essence had perished (Matthew 2:20). This reference to the pursuit, eradication, and conservation of the soul suggests that the soul is not an indestructible element of human disposition, but rather the corporeal existence itself, which can be endangered. Consistent with the OT, the soul is extinguished upon the expiration of the physical body.

Additionally, in chapter ten, verse twenty-eight of the gospel of Matthew, Jesus Christ elaborates on the definition of the term "soul" to provide clarification on a frequently quoted yet often misinterpreted words of his: "Do not fear those who are able to kill the physical body but lack the ability to terminate the soul. Instead, fear the one who possesses the power to destroy both the soul and the physical body in the depths of hell" (Matthew 10:28; compare with Luke 12:4). The interpretation put forth on the aforementioned statement resonates with the Greek dualistic perspective regarding the nature of humanity, which diverges from the biblical wholistic outlook. The allusion to the potency of God's ability to annihilate both the corporeal and the ethereal aspects of an individual in the inferno subverts the notion of an insubstantial and everlasting soul. Should God eradicate the soul along with the body in the case of unrepentant wrongdoers, then the concept of an immortal

³³ Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, 17.

³⁴ Henry Wheeler Robinson, *Hebrew Psychology* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1956), 112.

³⁵ Robinson, *Hebrew Psychology*, 67.

³⁶ Robinson, *Hebrew Psychology*, 88.

³⁷ Atkinson, *Life and Immortality*, 14.

³⁸ Tory Hoff, "Nephesh and the Fulfillment It Receives as Psyche," in *Toward a Biblical View of Man: Some Readings*, ed. Arnold H. De Graaff (Toronto, Canada: Association for the advancement of Christian scholarship, 1978), 98.

³⁹ Atkinson, *Life and Immortality*, 14.

soul loses its validity. As a result, in Matthew 10:28, Jesus asserts that the soul can be terminated. Therefore, the soul is not eternal.⁴⁰

The employment of the term "soul" in the writings of Paul is comparatively infrequent when juxtaposed with its usage in the OT or even the Gospels. It is noteworthy that he employs this term in a mere 13 instances⁴¹ including citations from the OT, to denote the physical aspects of life (as evidenced in Romans 11:3, Philippians 2:30, and 1 Thessalonians 2:8), individual identity (as evidenced in Romans 2:9 and 13:1), and the origin of emotional life (as evidenced in Philippians 1:27, Colossians 3:23, and Ephesians 6:6). The individual in question, Paul, does not utilize the term "soul" to signify the existence that persists beyond death. Instead, he links the concept of the soul to the physical existence of man, which is governed by the law of sin and death.

In summary, an examination of the utilization of the term "soul" within the NT reveals a lack of substantiation for the concept of the soul as an incorporeal and perpetual entity that persists beyond the demise of the physical form. This all-encompassing outlook on the human condition nullifies the foundation for the conviction in the continuation of the soul following the cessation of the physical body.⁴²

The State of the Dead in the New Testament

The NT offers scanty insight into the status of the deceased, particularly during the transitional period between sleep and revival on the day of resurrection.⁴³ The primary focus of the NT concerns the procedures that signify the transition from the present era to the future era, which encompasses the arrival of Christ and the resurrection of the deceased. The New Testament obtains its knowledge about the condition of the deceased through eleven references to Hades, which is the equivalent of the Hebrew term "Sheol," and five sections that are commonly used as proof for the conviction in the conscious survival of the soul after passing away (Lk 16:19-31; Luke 23:42-43; Phil 1:23; 2 Cor 5:1-10; Rev 6:9-11). The use of the Greek term, *hades*, in a biblical context ensued when the translators of the Septuagint made a conscious decision to employ it as a substitute for the Hebrew term, "Sheol". However, an issue arises as a result of the disparity between the Greek understanding of *hades* and the Hebrew concept of "Sheol". In the OT, "Sheol" is portrayed as the dwelling place of the deceased, where they remain in a state of unresponsiveness. Conversely, in Greek mythology, *hades* is a subterranean realm where the conscious souls of the dead are sorted into two main regions: one designated for agony and the other for happiness.⁴⁴

Following the tenets of Greek mythology, Hades was regarded as the deity responsible for presiding over the underworld, and as such, he was commonly associated with the realm itself, which was more commonly known as the nether world.⁴⁵ During the period between the Inter-Testamental period, the Hellenistic Jews were significantly influenced by the Greek concept of *hades*. This resulted in their adoption of the idea of the soul's immortality and a spatial division in the underworld that distinguished the righteous from the unrighteous. Following death, the righteous souls were believed to instantaneously ascend to a state of heavenly felicity, where they awaited the resurrection while the souls of the godless were relegated to a place of torment within *hades*.⁴⁶ The aforementioned perspective ultimately made its way into the Christian ecclesiastical institution and subsequently had an impact on the translations of the Holy Scriptures. It is noteworthy that the term "hades," which is present in the NT on 11 occasions, has been rendered as "hell" 10 times and as "grave" once in the KJV.⁴⁷

The utilization of *hades* within the NT is presented as the standing equivalent of "Sheol", which is the domain of the deceased or the tomb. Jesus alluded to *hades* on three separate occasions throughout the gospels. The initial usage of *hades* is discovered in Matthew 11:23, in which Jesus reproaches Capernaum (cf. Luke 10:15). In this case, *hades*, akin to "Sheol" in the OT (Amos 9:2-3; Job 11:7-9), conveys the most profound location within the universe, much like how heaven represents the utmost elevation. In essence, Capernaum will experience degradation by being relegated to the domain of the deceased, which is the deepest location in the universe.

⁴⁰ Krister Stendahl, *Death in the Western World: Two Conflicting Currents of Thought* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 36-37.

⁴¹ Edward Schweitzer, "Psyche," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 648.

⁴² Schweitzer, "Psyche," 648.

⁴³ Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*, 22.

⁴⁴ Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011).

⁴⁵ Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment*.

⁴⁶ Jeremias, "Hades," *TDNT*, 1: 148.

⁴⁷ Jeremias, "Hades," *TDNT*, 1: 148.

Secondly, the utilization of the concept of hades in the pedagogy of Jesus is evident in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23). Within this narrative, Jesus aptly engaged with individuals on their level. By utilizing familiar elements, the story effectively conveyed pivotal truths to its audience.⁴⁸

The third application is discernible in Matthew 16:18, wherein Jesus confidently asserts that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against His Church. The connotation of the phrase "the gates of Hades" is illustrated by employing the identical expression in the Old Testament and Jewish literature (3 Macc 5:51; Wis. of Sol 16:13) as a term for mortality. Therefore, it can be deduced that Jesus implies that mortality shall not overpower His ecclesiastical body, presumably owing to His triumph over mortality. Likewise, Jesus descended to hades, or in other words, the resting place of the deceased, yet in contrast to others, He triumphed over death (Acts 2:27; cf. 2:31). Hades, where Christ's physical form was interred for three days, did not undergo corruption, a process that ensues from extended burial. By virtue of His conquest over death, Hades, the abode of the dead, has been vanquished. In accordance with this, Paul cries out: "O death, where is thy sting? O graves, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor 15:55). Christ now possesses the keys to "death and Hades" (Rev 1:18) and reigns supreme over death and the grave.

Throughout all of the aforementioned passages, the concept of hades is consistently affiliated with death, for it serves as the final resting place of the deceased, the grave. Upon the conclusion of the millennium, death and hades will relinquish the souls of the deceased (Rev 20:13), and thereafter, death and hades will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). This elucidates that eventually, hades will release the departed, thereby signifying that hades is indeed the dominion of the deceased. A preliminary analysis of the utilization of the term "hades" in the NT unequivocally demonstrates that its connotation and implementation align with that of the Hebrew word "Sheol" in the OT. Both terminologies connote the burial place or domain of the deceased, rather than the location of punishment for the wicked.⁴⁹

Theological Implications

Christians have yielded vast domains of existence, ethical principles, and erudition to the influences of secularism and humanism due to the concept of soul perpetuity or the dichotomy between the corporeal and non-corporeal. Even within Christian educational institutions, pedagogical strategies, and resources tend to reflect humanistic convictions rather than biblical perspectives. The complete magnitude of the soul's eternal existence remains incalculable.

The research reveals that the dualistic and unscriptural viewpoint of human nature has exerted a momentous influence on the prevailing Christian concept of soul perpetuity. The idea of the indestructibility of the soul carries immense pragmatic and dogmatic implications for Christian convictions and customs. The theory of the immortality of the soul has given rise to a plethora of doctrines. For instance, the conviction in the soul's transition to paradise, hell, or purgatory after death is founded on the notion that the soul is inherently eternal and endures beyond death. This pedagogical approach has engendered the Catholic and Orthodox faith in the interceding function of Mary and the saints. Given that the souls of the saints are situated in heaven, it is conceivable to posit that they are capable of interceding on behalf of transgressors on earth. Pious adherents therefore supplicate to Mary and the saints for intercession. This particular practice runs counter to the scriptural doctrine that posits the existence of a singular mediator between the divine and human realms, namely, the individuality of Christ Jesus as expounded in 1 Timothy 2:5. This implies that if the concept of inherent immortality of the soul is discovered to be unscriptural, conventional beliefs about heaven, purgatory, and hell must be entirely discarded. Moreover, as the soul cannot function or exist without the body, the entire doctrine of Mary's and the saint's intercessory function must be rejected as clerical fabrication. Furthermore, the conviction in the immortality of the soul has resulted in Christians losing faith in Christ's second coming. The concept of an immediate ascent of the soul to heaven after death creates confusion and obscurity about the anticipation of the Second Advent, as there appears to be scant justification for the expectation of Christ's descent and the revival of the dormant saints. The principal objective of these adherents is to gain entry into paradise with the greatest possible expeditiousness, albeit as a non-corporeal entity. This fixation depletes any ardour for the impending return of the Lord and the bodily resurrection. In other words, the egocentric yearning for instant immortality triumphs over the biblical collective expectation for the ultimate restoration of creation and its creatures (Rom 8:19-23; 1 Cor 15:24-28). When the only future that holds significance is the endurance of the individual soul after death, the suffering of mankind can seem inconsequential, and the worth of God's

⁴⁸ Karel Hanhart, "The Intermediate State in the New Testament" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1966), 18-31.

⁴⁹ Hanhart, "The Intermediate State in the New Testament," 44.

redemption for the entire world is generally disregarded. The ultimate outcome of the notion of soul immortality is that most Christians will not contemplate beyond their death.

The dichotomy between corporeal and incorporeal, the material and immaterial, remains prevalent in the psyche of a significant number of adherents of Christianity in the contemporary era. A plethora of persons still conceptualize salvation in relation to the human spirit rather than the human physique. The phrase "saving souls" is the terminology they utilize to describe the missionary work of the church. This notion seems to imply that souls are more significant than bodies. As per research, the gospels do not support a doctrine of redemption that saves souls apart from their bodies. The true meaning behind the incarnation of the Savior for humankind will remain elusive to us until we develop a comprehensive theory of redemption that addresses all human needs.

CONCLUSION

From the biblical point of view, the body and the soul are not two distinct substances, one mortal and the other immortal surviving together into one human being, but two characteristics of the same person. The understanding of this view is clearly seen in the usage of the Hebrew word *nephesh* and the Greek *psyche*. Therefore, the study concludes that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is foreign to the Bible. It follows that the Catholic belief in the immortality of the soul, purgatory and the whole teaching of the intercessory role of Mary and the saints are biblically untrue. At best, it qualifies as a tactic to sustain the Edenic teaching that humanity "shall not surely die" (Gen 3:4).

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Pastor Joseph Danquah is a Seventh-day Adventist minister in Ghana. He holds the notable role of Personal Ministries Director within the Mid-North Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Techiman. Currently, he is engaged in the pursuit of a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in the field of Biblical Theological Studies at the Adventist University of Africa, Kenya. Pastor Danquah's primary area of expertise is Systematic Theology, with a keen academic focus on the exploration of anthropology, eschatology, ecclesiology, Christology, and evangelism. His unwavering commitment to faith and education has not only enriched his personal spiritual journey but also contributed significantly to the theological discourse within the Seventh-day Adventist community and beyond.