

voiced from time to time, that a preventive of death has been discovered is a deception and delusion, disproved also by experience (Ps. 89:48; Job 14:1-2). He who would deliver men from death must strike at the root of the evil. He must free men from the cause of death, the guilt of sin and the wrath of God at sin. Christ has achieved this feat by His vicarious satisfaction, and for this cause He is the only Deliverer from death. "He hath abolished death" (2 Tim. 1:10).

But here the question arises why Christians, though they have remission of sins, still must die. This fact has ever been used to prove that death cannot be the result of sin. Scripture teaches two things regarding the death of Christians: (1) Christians, except those living when Judgment Day arrives, must pass through death as a judgment upon the sin dwelling in them. Rom. 8:10: "The body is dead because of sin," τὸ σῶμα νεκρὸν δι' ἁμαρτίαν; (2) The dying of Christians is no longer death in the full sense because they are delivered from the thing that makes death terrible—the *sensus irae divinae*, as the Apology states.¹¹ Through their faith in Christ this sense of divine wrath has been supplanted by the assurance of divine grace, so that in dying they commend their soul into the Lord's hand.¹² Moreover, the essence of death is really the fact that if nothing intervenes, it is followed by "the second death" (ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος, Rev. 20:14), eternal torment. This consequence has been replaced in the case of Christians by its direct opposite. Through death they pass into life. Christ says of every believer (John 5:24) that he "hath [ἔχει] everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed [μεταβέβηκεν] from death unto life."¹³ (To what extent this truth

¹¹ *Trigl.* 299, XXIV, 56: "That sting and sense of wrath of which Paul speaks 1 Cor. 15:56: 'The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law.' This strength of sin, this sense of wrath, is truly a punishment as long as it is present; without this sense of wrath, death is not properly a punishment."

¹² Examples: Acts 7:59; Luke 2:29. Luther, *St. L.* I:1512: "Natural death, consisting merely in the separation of body and soul, is a simple death. But where the feeling of death, that is, the fright and terror of death, grips one, there is the real and genuine death. Where there is no terror, death is no death, but a sleep, as Christ says, John 8:51, 'If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death.' For when the terror is taken away, the death of the soul is gone, too."

¹³ The perfect used (μεταβέβηκεν) is proleptic. The passage from death to life is an accomplished, certain fact for faith. The same perfect is used (1 John 3:14) in the confident assertion of faith: "We know that we have passed from death unto life." Luther, *St. L.* I:1514: "If you listen to the Law, it will tell you, as we sing in the old Christian hymn, 'In the midst of life we are encompassed by death.' But that is a hymn of the Law. The Gospel, however, and faith invert this hymn and sing: 'In the midst of death we are in life.' We laud Thee, God, our Lord, that Thou art our Redeemer, hast raised us from death, and given us eternal life."

applies to the state of the soul between death and resurrection we shall discuss in the next chapter.) Accordingly, we find Scripture replete with *epitheta ornantia* (embellishing epithets, or euphemisms) regarding the death of the believers, which the early teachers of the Church as well as Luther and our dogmaticians have compiled.¹⁴ Every Christian, and especially every teacher in the Church, ought to know them well and use them.¹⁵

2

The State of Souls Between Death and Resurrection

Holy Writ reveals but little of the state of the souls between death and the resurrection. In speaking of the last things, it directs our gaze primarily to Judgment Day and the events clustering around it. With their coming to faith, the blessedness of the Corinthians was complete except for the bliss awaiting them at "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" on Judgment Day (1 Cor. 1:7). And with Paul the Philippians and all Christians confess: "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body" (Phil. 3:20-21). See also Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:13 ff.; 2 Tim. 4:7-9; Titus 2:13. Great significance the Day of Judgment and its sequels have also for unbelievers. They "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power when He shall come" (2 Thess. 1:9-10). But what meanwhile becomes of the soul? What is the state of the souls between death and the resurrection?

Of the souls of the unbelievers (ἀπειθήσαντες) Scripture declares that they are kept ἐν φυλακῇ, "in prison," a place of punishment

¹⁴ [Such *mortis dulcia nomina* are: being gathered to one's own people, Gen. 25:8, 17; departure in peace, Luke 2:29; departure and being with Christ, Phil. 1:23; a turning away from the evil to come, Is. 57:1; sleep, Matt. 9:24; John 11:11; 1 Thess. 4:13; Dan. 12:2; rest, Rev. 14:13; Heb. 4:11; passing from death unto life, John 5:24; deliverance from all evil, 2 Tim. 4:18; gain, Phil. 1:21.]

¹⁵ Luther says: "Scripture has a lovely manner of speaking of death and the deceased," and then proceeds to set forth this "lovely manner," *St. L.* XIII:1328 f.: "Scripture does not call it death, but a sleep," etc.; VIII:1230: "We must henceforth learn a new speech and language in speaking of death and the grave. . . . That is not a human, earthly language, but a divine, celestial language. For the like you find in none of the books of all learned and wise on earth. . . . But among Christians this should be a familiar, common, and current speech." "We must learn to scrape our tongue." Quenstedt on *mortis dulcia nomina*, II, 1699. Even more copiously Gerhard, *loc. cit.*, § 17 ff.

(1 Pet. 3:19-20).¹⁶ Of the souls of the believers we are told not merely in general that they are in God's hand (Acts 7:59; Luke 23:46), but also in particular that they dwell with Christ and in Paradise, Phil. 1:23; "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better." (Luke 23:43.)¹⁷ The "being with Christ" or "in Paradise" of the departed believing souls must certainly be an augmentation of the communion with Christ which Christians enjoy here on earth, because Paul adds: "which is far better," πολλῶ μᾶλλον κρείσσον, better than his communion with Christ here on earth. Moreover, the life "in Paradise," which Christ promised the soul of the believing malefactor, certainly bespeaks a blissful state of the soul after death.¹⁸ These texts surely make it evident that the departed souls of the believers are in a state of blessed enjoyment of God, even though we know nothing further as to the manner of their blessed communion with God. Deductions from the nature of the soul, e. g., that it cannot be inactive,¹⁹ are uncertain and therefore not to be urged in theology.

A soul sleep which excludes a blessed enjoyment of God [psychopannychism]²⁰ must be definitely rejected on the basis of Phil. 1:23 and Luke 23:43. A sleep of the soul which includes enjoyment of God (says Luther) cannot be called a false doctrine.²¹

The Roman purgatory (*purgatorium*), to which Rome consigns the souls of the believers for the purpose of suffering temporal punishments still due, is pure invention, for by their faith in Christ the believers, as Scripture teaches, possess not purgatory, but eternal life

¹⁶ Ideas of the heathen on the state of departed souls, Gerhard, *ibid.*, § 163.

¹⁷ Luther on this passage, St. L. I:1763.

¹⁸ Erroneous ideas of Church Fathers regarding the Paradise of believing souls as *paradisus terrestris*, Gerhard, *loc. cit.*, § 163 f. Luther on Luke 23:43: "Here heaven and Paradise are one."

¹⁹ Thus, e. g., Baier teaches (II, 232, note b).

²⁰ On this error of many Church Fathers see Quenstedt, II, 1745 ff. Bizarre is Hofmann's notion, *Schriftbeweis*, 2d ed., II, 480: "The soul of him who dies in faith is in a state corresponding to the state of death of the disintegrating body that awaits the resurrection."

²¹ Luther, St. L. I:1758 ff.; II:215 ff. A complete history of this doctrine in Gerhard, *loc. cit.*, "De morte," § 293 ff. Luther speaks more guardedly of the state of the soul between death and resurrection than do Gerhard and the later theologians, who transfer some things to the state between death and resurrection which can be said with certainty only of the state after the resurrection. Luther: "It is divine truth that Abraham [after death] lives with God, serves Him, and also rules with Him. But what sort of life that is, whether he be asleep or awake, that is another question. How the soul rests, we are not to know; it is certain, however, that it lives." (II:216.)

(John 5:24; 3:18, 36).²² And this holds true not merely of the souls of Paul (Phil. 1:23) and Stephen (Acts 7:59), but also of the soul of the believing malefactor (Luke 23:43).²³

Recent Protestant theologians likewise teach a sort of purgatory for the departed believing souls. Kahnis (*Dogm.*, 2d ed., II, 498), for example, opines: "The idea of purgatory, no doubt, contains some truth, viz., that many Christians still stand in need of a purgation. There are many Christians of whom one cannot say that Christ is their Life. Still they feel themselves drawn to Him, and of what they do know of Him they bear witness with a sincerity, self-effacement, and devotion which cannot but shame many Christians who are stronger in words than in deeds. Is there to be no hope for such? There are, finally, the numerous Christians who, as far as men are able to judge, have true faith, but whose faith is still permeated with the dross of the old man, so that one is inclined to judge that, as they now are, they cannot enter Paradise, if Paradise is to remain Paradise. Do not tell me that with the body also much of the old man will fall away. . . . The peculiar traits of a person cannot be wiped out by one magic stroke. How should a Christian who was lacking in love suddenly by death be equipped with a flow of love? Hence we can hardly do otherwise than assume that there is room in yonder world for refining and development." These words of Kahnis show that he is contending for a purgatory on the basis of the Roman position of salvation by works. He has lost the central truth of Christianity, that through His *satisfactio vicaria* Christ has purchased for all men full remission of sins and complete salvation and that man possesses (ἐχει, John 3:36; 5:24) this remission of sins and salvation the very moment he comes to faith in Christ as his Savior through the working of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, Kahnis has lost sight of the power of Christian faith as far as both justification and sanctification are concerned. He describes Christians as they are not. For Christ is the Life of all Christians, even the weakest. All confess Christ, too, and walk in a new life according to the new man, or in so far as they believe in Christ. Their life is, of course, still greatly impaired by the dross of the old man. But Christians believe that this imperfection

²² Luther, St. L. I:1762: "Especially what is said of a purgatory is nothing but lies; for it is based on nothing but wicked life and unbelief. Since they deny the doctrine that faith saves, they substitute penance for sin as the cause of salvation."

²³ Luther on the Papistic purgatory, St. L. II:2067 f.; Smalc. Art., *Trigl.* 465, Part II, Art. II, 12—15; 485, Part III, Art. III, 26—27. Gerhard discusses purgatory in more than one hundred paragraphs (*loc. cit.*, §§ 181—292).

is richly and daily forgiven them so long as they continue in faith (1 John 2:2). If because of this dross they were to be consigned to a purgatory after this life, none of them would escape this fate, not even the Apostle Paul. For he avers, on the one hand, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20); on the other hand, he deplores the dross of the old man still inherent in him, saying: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:23-24.)

With regard to Kahnis' remark that the faults of a person cannot be wiped out as "by a magic stroke," note: (1) In the very moment in which the Holy Spirit succeeds in creating faith in him, man is regenerated and delivered from the dominion of sin (Rom. 6:2, 14). Faith is not the product of human deliberation, self-decision, or concurrence, etc., but as much a creative work of God as the calling forth of light out of darkness at Creation (2 Cor. 4:6). (2) Luther and the old Lutheran teachers certainly are right when they teach that in death the soul of the believer is purified of all the remaining dross of original depravity, as the phrase "in Paradise" (Luke 23:43) proves.²⁴ Paradise is the dwelling place of sinless man. Inasmuch as after its separation from the body the believing soul dwells in Paradise, it must have become sinless. Also, "being with Christ" (Phil. 1:23) is such an enhancement of the communion with Christ that the soul is completely free of sin. Luther therefore calls death the last *purgatorium* of the soul.

Men have also dreamt of an intermediate body for departed souls. Kahnis reports: "Theologians (Schleiermacher) and philosophers (Fichte, Weisse, Goeschel) have come to the conviction that without a material foundation the survival of the soul is inconceivable" (*Dogm.*, 2d ed., II, 522). This idea appeals to Kahnis himself. Likewise to Macpherson, who reasons: "It may fairly be assumed that during the period that elapses between the death of an individual and the coming of Christ, which brings with it the general resurrection, he wears a body suitable to his condition during that period, which in the resurrection to judgment is changed for that spiritual body which he will wear throughout eternity" (*Christ. Dogm.*, 1898, p. 453). He adds: "Schleiermacher, in particular, has dwelt upon the impossibility of our conceiving or imagining a human spirit unassociated with a body." But this idea of an intermediate body is foreign to Scripture.

²⁴ Luther X:2119 ff.; Gerhard, *loc. cit.*, § 55; Philippi, VI, 7.

Schleiermacher's inability to conceive of a human spirit unassociated with a body does not warrant the adoption of this notion. Schleiermacher would not have had to worry about a bodiless soul had he borne in mind that there is a personal and omnipotent Spirit, fully able to keep a soul in existence without its body.²⁵

Before leaving the subject of the souls of the departed, we record the following facts: 1. Departed souls do not return to this world. This is a standing rule and divine arrangement (Luke 16:27-31). Moses and Elias, who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration and spoke with Christ (Matt. 17:3), are to be counted with the risen.^{26a} 2. There is no Scripture warrant for attributing to the souls of the departed a direct knowledge of particular things and happenings on earth (Is. 63:16: "though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not"). To invoke the departed saints for their intercession and help, as Rome enjoins,^{26b} is not only idolatry, but also folly.²⁷ 3. Scripture offers no hope for the conversion of departed souls. Such wishful thinking rests entirely on human speculation. In 1 Pet. 3:18-19 a preaching of judgment, and not a preaching of the Gospel, is meant. See Vol. II, 315 f., for details.

3

The Second Advent of Christ

Scripture teaches that, in divine majesty and surrounded by the hosts of His angels,²⁸ Christ will return visibly,²⁹ in the sight of all

²⁵ Thomasiaus, while declining the intermediate body (*Dogm.* III, 2, 445), assumes that the soul is clothed with the glorified body of Christ during the interval of death. Neither for this is there any basis in Scripture. This fancy is a consequence of the delusion of a physical action of the Sacraments.

^{26a} He who assumes that in 1 Samuel 28 God Himself made an exception to His rule and actually had the soul of Samuel appear must at the same time teach that this exception does not abolish the clear rule enunciated by Christ that the spirits of the dead do not return to this world and that therefore Spiritism is devil worship and a fraud, for which God punished the Canaanites with extermination (Deut. 18:11-12).

^{26b} *Trid.*, Sess. XXV: "that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them." Smets, p. 65 f.; Waterworth, p. 234.

²⁷ Cf. Apology, *Trigl.* 343, XXI, on the adoration of saints.

²⁸ Matt. 25:31: "The Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him." Also Matt. 16:27. Baier (*Comp.*, ed. Walther, II, 260) says: "It will be the office of the angels not merely to accompany Christ and by resounding trumpeting to manifest His advent (1 Thess. 4:16), but also to gather