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SCIENCE AND FAITH

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THE BROKEN STONE 14/3/1993

Frank Opie

The sea pressured in around a fractured headland resembling weathered coral, throwing up the tumbled stone on a gently sloping shingle beach. It seemed as if in some past age a sandstone bed had been fractured and faulted at this point and recombined by an intrusive dyke of iron forming a breccia.

I stooped, picking up the smooth yet richly variegated stone. It seemed to consist of perhaps 1000 tiny split and fractured sharp edged pebbles locked together in a unified whole and presented by the ocean as a polished whole on this exposed shore. As I wondered I began to see much more than the history of this stone...it was also my history.

1000 fragments impossibly bonded into a beautiful whole which the Master had unified with bonds stronger than the surging storm waves could scatter. The days of my years cemented by faith and power into a significant whole of unknown purpose and import, waiting for the truth to be made known. A stone of promise.

I saw my nation, fragmented, yet bound together by the chords of a love stronger than the destructive forces seeking to scatter the damaged splinters of our society into a thousand fragments. A stone of hope.

Indeed He makes all things beautiful in his time. This is what I am waiting for as I walk along the beach of life with a broken stone, made whole, in my hand.

THE PIVOT

Mike L Anderson

We all know that the hero, Odysseus, will return home safely. But, in the middle of the adventure when he has to deal with the Cyclops, the Phaeacians, the Sirens, we bite our lips and hope. The odds are against him making it. He does make it, of course - Homer made sure of that.

What about the most momentous event in all of history - the event which ensured the salvation of the world. Contingently speaking, Christ's death on the cross could very easily not have happened. The most significant event in all of history was poised on a knife edge. The Jews who wanted to sentence Jesus to death did not have the power to do so (John 18:31). Pilate, who had sufficient power to condemn Jesus was sure of his innocence and wanted to release Him (Luke 23:20). There was a problem, humanly speaking, in ensuring the success of God's salvation plan.

Pilate tries three tricks to avoid condemning Jesus. First, he tries to evade by sending Jesus to Herod. Herod sends Him back. Second, he offers the compromise of having Jesus flogged. Will the crowd accept it and thwart God's salvation plan? Just a few days earlier they were waving palms and singing "Hosanna to the Son of David." Surely there must sufficient residue from this sentiment to keep them from pressing for His death. Surely they will remember God's injunction: "I desire mercy rather than sacrifice." They don't. God's plan is still on track.

Next, Pilate offers the Passover amnesty as a way out. The crowd could have Jesus declared a criminal without actually having innocent blood on their hands. Will they take the offer? Cleverly, Pilate tries to force their hand by asking whether they want the innocent Jesus released or the known murderer Barabbas. Given such a choice, surely the crowd will choose amnesty for Jesus and block God's salvation plan. They don't. God's plan is still on track.

Then Pilate's wife tries to upset the proceedings. She mentions her troubling dream the previous night as if it were a bad omen and strongly admonishes him to have "nothing to do with this innocent man." Pilate has to live with his conscience (and his wife). Surely this Roman will not obey the crowd.

Paradoxically, even Jesus says words which seem to obstruct calvary. Jesus had set His feet resolutely towards Jerusalem and the cross- let's be clear about that. Why then does He say things which induce Pilate to make efforts to release Him (John 19:12)? What is extraordinary is that Jesus talks in the past tense. In effect He says calmly that Pilate will have committed the sin which Pilate is desperately trying to avoid.

Pilate has the sobering words of Jesus and the shrill voice of his wife ringing in his ears as he deals with clamour of the crowd. Who is he going to listen to? He has exhausted his evasive options. All he can do is try again: "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" Their firm answer: "Barabbas." Pilate replies: "What then should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They answer: "Let Him be crucified." Pilate asks as many

as three times: "Why, what evil has he done?" The crowd are insistent- they want him crucified.

Finally he cowardly bows to the crowd and delivers Jesus over to be crucified.

Why did God not play safe? Why have such a huge matter as His salvation plan pivoting on such a pinhead? Was He not declaring His sovereignty in the midst of the seemingly precarious?

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases. (Proverbs 21:1 NIV)"

Praise Him for His determined love!

WHAT IS THE SOUL?

Georges Delpierre

INTRODUCTION

Belief in an immortal soul, like the belief in a Supreme Being, is widespread in various cultures. Many think it is a tenet of the Christian faith. This may be surprising, but there is biblical evidence which seems to suggest otherwise.

First, let us compare various views of the soul.

VIEWS OF THE SOUL

Dictionary definitions:

"The spiritual part of that person that is believed to continue existing after the body is dead." (Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary)

"The spiritual or immaterial part of a human being, often regarded as immortal". (Reader's Digest Oxford Wordfinder).

Extra-biblical views:

Plato (427-347 BC) in the *Phaedo*, accepts a body/soul dichotomy and argues for the divinity of the soul and hence its immortality. Death liberates the soul from the body, which throughout life is a hindrance to the pursuit of wisdom and goodness.

Old Testament:

Two words used: *nephesh* has a primary meaning of "possessing life", and is used (a) in the sense of having a physical appetite i.e. for food; (b) a source of emotion; (c) associated with the will or moral action; (d) designating a specific person (e) used to designate self (Ps 120:6); (f) to designate a dead body (Nu 6:6);

It is never used to designate the "spirit of the dead", although the *nephesh* is regarded as departing from the body at death. (Gn. 35:18). (The New Bible Dictionary, ed. J D Douglas, Inter-Varsity

Press, Leicester 1962).

The word ruach means "wind", "breath" or "spirit", (see Ezk 37:1-14, where all three meanings are used!) is generally regarded as the "animating principle" or "dominant impulse or disposition". There are examples where the state of ruach in a man leads to a particular course of action (Pr 16:32, 25:28). It may also mean an evil spirit or a beneficent supernatural influence.

New Testament:

Again two words are used: psyche (more or less equivalent to nephesh) and pneuma (more or less equivalent to ruach).

For example Paul uses psyche twelve times: 6 times to mean "life", 4 times to indicate desire or emotion and 2 uses as personal. He uses pneuma to indicate the higher aspects of human life. In 1Thes 5:23, both terms are used, meaning is the whole person.

Peter applies psyche to the whole personality of man, including its higher aspects, and pneuma for that part of man which survives death.

On the whole, theologians have tended to support the view that there is a component of man's being, the "soul", which survives bodily death. Augustine, for example, regarded the soul of Man as eternal:

DICHOTOMY OR TRICHOTOMY?

Is the soul a dichotomy (body/soul) or trichotomy (body/soul/spirit)?

1. Arguments for dichotomy: (Gruden W, 1994, Systematic Theology)

a. Scripture uses psyche and pneuma interchangeably:

John 12:27 "Now my heart (psyche) is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour."

John 13:21 "After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit (pneuma) and testified, 'I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me'."

Luke 1:46-47 "And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour'". (Parallel images common in ancient Middle East poetry).

b. At death, scripture says that either the "soul" departs from the body or the "spirit" departs from the body.

c. Man is said to have either "body and soul" or "body and spirit".

d. The "soul" can sin or the "spirit" can sin.

e. Everything that the soul is said to do, the spirit is also said to do, and everything that the spirit is said to do, the soul is also said to do.

Arguments for trichotomy:

Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

1 Thessalonians 5:23: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ".

In general, all arguments for trichotomy can be refuted in favour of dichotomy.

If there is a "soul", where does it come from? Creationism holds that God creates a new soul for each person and sends it to that person sometimes between conception and birth. Traducianism, on the other hand, states that the soul is derived from the parents at conception.

IS THE SOUL IMMORTAL?

1. Arguments for an immortal soul.

Although nowhere in the scriptures do we find an explicit statement that Man possesses a mortal body and an immortal soul, there are powerful arguments for an immaterial part of man that can exist without the body:

Acts 7:59: "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit (pneuma)'."

Matthew 10:28: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Luke however, in a parallel passage makes no mention of the soul, but implies a "you" which has survived bodily death to be cast into hell:

Luke 12:4-5: "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him."

Further, Luke tells the story of Jesus' promise to the robber crucified alongside him:

Luke 23:43: "Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in Paradise'."

2. Arguments against an immortal soul.

There are those who claim that neither soul nor spirit survive death of the flesh (Ladd G, A theology of the New Testament,

1994, quoted by Gruden, p. 474).

a) "Psyche" can be translated as life, and different versions of the New Testament differ on the translation of "psyche":

Luke 12:20: "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'" (NIV)

"But God said to him: 'Fool!, this night your soul will be required of you: then whose will those things be which you have provided? (NKJV)

"But God said to him: 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you: and now who will own what you have prepared?'" (AS)

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night you will have to give up your life; then who will get all these things you have kept for yourself?'" (GNB)

Compare the following:

Matthew 16:28: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Mark 8:36-37: "What good is it for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Luke 9:25: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"

Taken together the passages suggest that the soul or self can be lost and hence is mortal.

b) There is no unequivocal statement in scriptures directly supporting this view.

c) Survival of the soul after death is a pagan concept.

d) The doctrine of resurrection involves the resurrection of a physical body sometime after death and before final judgement. We note finally that belief in the immortality of the "soul" is not found in the Thirty Nine Articles, the Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed.

FALLACIES AND FABRICATIONS IN THE NAME OF GOD AND SCIENCE

ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

Mike L Anderson

I received a curious E-mail from a certain gentleman recently.

It started out:

"Greetings in the lovely name of Jesus" and included this statement: "I personally have examined a number of "intermediate forms" - mammal-like reptiles, for example, and their "intermediate" status is clearly wishful thinking on the part of those desperately seeking some support for their evolutionary belief."

He did not present any evidence for his position. I can only presume that he felt that his personal experience as a Bible-believing Christian was sufficient authority to close discussion on the matter. His PhD in mathematics certainly does not qualify as relevant expertise. What we have here is a classic case of misuse of authority or argumentum ad verecundiam. There is a standard reply to this sort of tactic: "I have also personally examined mammal-like reptile fossils and came to the conclusion that denying their transitional status is clearly wishful thinking on the part of those desperately seeking to deny evolution!" That's the trouble with appeal to authority - it leads to a stalemate - until someone starts to bring in evidence.

It is a remarkable fact that the one person who had ultimate authority, Jesus Christ, rested His case not on His own words, but on evidence that others could readily evaluate:

"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

(John 5: 36-40 NIV)

If the One with real authority should do this how much more should His children follow suit?