

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,  
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in  
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

## From The Editor's Desk

All human beings ever born or yet to be face the inevitable and incontrovertible fact that life will end sooner or later, it is how we live that life which will determine our final destination.

This is not new but it is however something that we do need reminders about occasionally as we face the temptations and pressures of the society in which we live.

Many live for today only with no thought for tomorrow or even the hereafter but as followers of Jesus Christ we are to take heed of what the Scripture says in James 4:13-14: Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: <sup>14</sup> Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

This month there are two articles both by Brother Merle Ruth which if we are prepared to be open to the truth as it applies to us all today will help us to see that the God created make-up of man makes him distinct from any of the other creations of God.

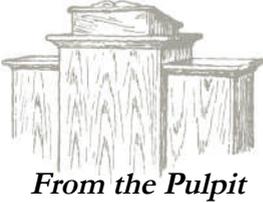
Mankind is the only creation of whom God said: Let us make man in our own image, Genesis 1:26, and that is exactly what He did for the very next verse says: So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them. Genesis 1:27.

Not only did God do that but He also imparted to man the breath of life by breathing into his nostrils and man thus became a living soul. Genesis 2:7

Brother Merle expounds on the unique threefold nature of man which sets man apart from all else. There is that God imparted spirit in man which cannot die but will live forever and that should be and must be our greatest concern in this life – the eternal destination of that indestructible immortal part of man which will live forever.

The idea of a place after death and before the final judgement where any sins we have not repented off before death will somehow be expiated through some form of suffering so that we can face the final judgement cleansed from all sin and unrighteousness as some teach is unscriptural.

Yes there is an intermediate state between physical death and final judgement and is one where we will be in either bliss or torment depending on what our state was before God at the moment of death. J.v.L



*From the Pulpit*

## **Man, A Threefold Being**

*Brother Merle Ruth*

*Dohner Mennonite Church 2010.*

You are about to hear what I would label a non-typical type of Sunday morning sermon. In many respects it will be largely informative in nature; it does however have some doctrinal content also.

This sermon title reads; Man, A Threefold Being.

This obviously means that we will be looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word, it will be an attempt to analyse the human make up. I am of the opinion that this can be a spiritually stimulating study.

When I was still in my latter teens or early 20s I had the unforgettable experience of hearing the now deceased Bishop Richard Danner devote an entire evening sermon to this subject and that exposure ignited in me a never dying spark of interest, but long, long before that in a very thoughtful moment David, that man after God's own heart, raised the question: What is man? *Psalm 144:3.*

There are a variety of possible answers such as the following:

Unlike the animals man is a creature of choice.

Man is the most intelligent of all creatures.

Man is the bearer of the divine image.

Man is the creator's masterpiece.

Man is nevertheless presently a fallen creature but man is still the object of God's love.

These are all acceptable answers however for right now our focus of our interest is still another aspect of man namely his make up.

Of what does he consist? How is he constituted? With what components and how many?

Our sermon title does contain a hint to the number of those components, Man, A Threefold Being. However that title can be taken in two opposite

ways: One way is to view it as a descriptive factual statement - in that case you would say it this way: Man, a threefold being.

The other way is to view it as a question, in that case you would say this way: Man, a threefold being?

Well you will soon discover that our view of the sermon title is not as a question but as a true reflection of the biblical view of man. However honestly demands that I state right up front that even among Bible scholars the threefold view is not a unanimously held view.

As I already implied this subject is a branch of the Bible doctrine of man. In the academic world there are people called anthropologists who also treat man as an object of study but their approach is purely scientific, the typical college anthropology textbook ignores the Bible. We believe that people who do that are depriving themselves of the most authoritative source of knowledge on this subject.

When an atheistic scientist looks at man about all he sees is a body. One such scientist came up with this analysis of the human body: It contains enough lime to whitewash a small old time henhouse, enough potassium to make a firecracker, in a foreign to make one halfpenny nail, enough sugar to fill one sugar shaker, enough phosphorus to make 2000 matches and enough fat to make seven bars of soap.

The only value in all that is that it highlights the fact material elements are part of the human make up but the biblical view of man insists that you are more than a body, that really your body is only the temporary house in which you presently live. In a host of places the Bible bears witness to the fact that a very important part of you is nonmaterial in nature.

For example: *Matthew 10:28* quotes our Lord as saying: Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul.

Why cannot they kill the soul? Because the soul is of an intangible nature. Underlying that saying of our Lord is the assumption that a human being consists of elements that are both material and nonmaterial in nature. It is on this basis that some Bible students prefer to think of man as a twofold being.

But there is this further question: Are there not indications that the nonmaterial part of man consists of more than one component?

It cannot be denied that in the biblical record when reference is made to the nonmaterial side of man two different terms are sometimes employed namely, spirit and soul.

Among Bible students there is a difference of opinion as to how to view those two terms, consequently there arose two main schools of thought. One is dichotomy and the second is trichotomy.

The dichotomy school holds that these two terms, soul and spirit, are altogether interchangeable terms both of which are simply a way of speaking about the intangible part of a person. The dichotomist does not believe that spirit and soul are separate components.

In contrast to that, the trichotomy school believes, that although these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they really do represent two different entities.

But why are they sometimes used interchangeably? The typical trichotomist would likely give this reply: Because they have this much in common, they both relate to the intangible part of man, together they constitute the non-material part of man.

The obvious difference between the two views is that dichotomy regards man as a twofold being whilst trichotomy regards him as a threefold being. Why then am I promoting the threefold view? Is it because holding to the other view de-Christianizes a person? No, it is not that, but rather it is because in my opinion there seemingly are biblical grounds upon which the trichotomy view can be substantiated.

Our next move will be to examine that evidence.

First let's go back in our minds to the creation account. Man is there said to have been created how? In the image of God. In the book, *Doctrines of the Bible*, Daniel Kauffman implies that since man was created in the image of God and since God is a Trinity it is consistent to also view man as a threefold being.

Right in connection with that in a few moments I'm going to read Genesis chapter 2 verse seven, this relates the actual creation of man, *Genesis 2:7*:

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust off the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul."

Three different entities appear to be in view here:

- 1] First the body made from the dust.
- 2] Secondly that God breathed in spirit, for in the Hebrew breath and spirit are the same.
- 3] Thirdly the human soul.

Now are there other passages that support this deduction and so does the Bible elsewhere distinguish between the human soul and the human spirit? Yes, there are New Testament passages that do this.

Turn with me now to the gospel according to Luke chapter 1, here we are going to listen to a portion of the Virgin Mary's song, Luke 1 beginning at verse 46: "And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour." *Luke 1:46-47.*

I am of the opinion that this is more than mere repetition although she does it in a rather incidental way Mary definitely does distinguish between her soul and her spirit and divine inspiration records it that way.

Let's go now to first Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 23, here is Paul praying for the believers at Thessalonica, *1 Thessalonians 5:23*: "And the very God of peace sanctify you holy; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There it is! To me it seems as though Paul is giving us the sum total of what man consists of. Furthermore the order in which these three entities are named are significant, the movement is from the inner to the outward, from the highest to the lowest, spirit, soul and body.

There is yet one more passage in this series, *Hebrews 4:12*, we have highlighted here that penetrating power of God's Word, "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Again a distinction is drawn between the soul and spirit, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.

Do we not have all of this as a scriptural basis for believing that man is indeed a threefold being, consisting of a tangible body plus two intangible components, the spirit and the soul?

I think we do.

The remainder of the message will be an attempt to outline the function of these closely related human components to show how they relate to each other, how they were intended to relate to each other and how they do relate in the victorious Christian.

In this process, and we do need to reckon with the fact that man today is no longer the same as he was in his pre-fallen state, in fact according to the Bible a proper study of man consists of three chapters;

Chapter 1: Man as God made him.

Chapter 2: Man as sin makes him.

Chapter 3: Man as God remakes him.

With that sequence in view let's begin with:

Man as God made him.

This is the stage with which we are the least acquainted but we do know that at that point man was in every respect very good for that is the divinely stated verdict recorded in *Genesis 1:31*.

Evidently God created man as He did because He foresaw the need for man to relate to both the natural world and the spiritual world. God made Adam a threefold being so that he would be equipped to do that. More specifically that in the creation God equipped us with a spirit showed that we could be God conscious; He equipped him with a soul so that we could be self-conscious and He equipped us with a body so that we could be world conscious.

Stating it another way, sense dwells in the body, self in the soul and God in the spirit.

The soul, the central personality relates with the spiritual world through the medium of the spirit, it likewise relates with the material world through the medium of the body.

To the soul was given the freedom and power to choose which of those worlds would dominate. Evidently the spirit can not act directly upon the

body, it needs a medium, that medium is the soul, the intended function of the soul is to keep itself and the body in subjection to the God indwelt human spirit, because of this key role the soul can be viewed as the real you, you have a body and you have a spirit and you are a soul.

The fact that man is a spirit is above all else the thing that makes him unique for it is that which gives him access to the spiritual world, the spirit can subdue the body through the medium of the soul so that the body will obey God. Likewise the body through the medium of the soul can draw the spirit into loving the world.

And now a little more about the soul.

Man's intellectual, emotional and volitional powers all belong to the soul. The soul is also the seat of those non-bodily traits that distinguish one person from another person. Being very good in their original state we can be sure that there was in Adam and Eve a perfectly harmonious working together of all their constituent parts, body, soul and spirit blended perfectly into one unified personality. For however long they remained in that state Adam and Eve were, what we might call, well integrated personalities, very likely the frustrations that now arise from internal discord and conflicting loyalties were entirely absent, being neither divine nor carnal. Pre-fallen Adam was a prime specimen of human nature and his pre-fallen experience amply demonstrates that being human does not in itself necessitate being sinful.

However his being human and therefore a free moral agent made it possible for him to sin, however on the other hand the absence of a sin-prone nature and the blessing of communion with God also made it possible for him to not sin.

Aside from Adam and Eve the Lord Jesus Christ is the only other being who knows what it is to possess the unmarred human nature. As a man Jesus was all that Adam was meant to be, in fact in *1 Corinthians 15* He is viewed as the second Adam, He was both perfectly human and humanly perfect. Christ has been and will remain the only the human to maintain sinless perfection at and, mark it down, He did that while living in a body like the one that you and I live in.

That deity could dwell in a human body is a fact of tremendous importance, it served to show that there is no inherent evil in the body itself.

All that was a glance at man as God first made him, man as God meant him to function.

I'm moving now to Chapter 2:  
Man as sin makes him.

Responding to the enticements of Satan our first parents knowingly disobeyed God. Enormous consequences followed in the wake of that act. One of the immediate effects of the Fall appears to have been the inversion of the relationship between the spiritual and physical.

One expositor puts it this way: In the Fall the soul refused the rule of the spirit and became a servant of the body and its appetites. When life conforms to God's original plan the spirit is like a mistress, the soul is like a steward and the body is like a servant. The mistress commands matters to the steward who in turn commands the servant to carry them out.

This proper order spirit, soul and body was disrupted in the Fall, the human spirit, man's highest faculty was the first to suffer damage, it became dead toward God, not dead in the sense that it is totally inactive but in the sense that it is unable to perform its proper function.

So then Adam's predicted death began in his spirit, culminated finally in his body, the death of his body.

Secondly the poison of sin spread to the soul and blighted man's intellectual, emotional and volitional powers.

The mind of fallen man is blinded so much that he may even call evil good, he is so blinded that he can be persuaded to believe a lie.

Man's heart, the seat of his emotional life, is characterised in the Bible as desperately wicked, (*Jeremiah 17:9*) that which should be hated. His love, his will has turned against God, grown stubborn. In areas where its resistance ought to be strong it has grown feeble.

Thirdly the body also is suffering the ravages of sin. With its numerous gates to the surrounding sin saturated environment the body soaks up a lot of stimulants to sin and channels them into the already perverted mind and sin loving heart, thus creating a sin producing chain reaction.

By way of summary we could say that the downward course of man has moved from spirit control to soul control, and from soul control to body control.

This then is the ruin that the human race has suffered; the soul now operates independent of the spirit and is in grave danger of becoming a slave to the body. The natural man of *1 Corinthians 2:14*, who cannot receive the spiritual things of God, is literally the soulish man, even though in some cases the power of the soul maybe somewhat disciplined, highly polished and capable of remarkable achievements all this avails nothing for man is like a cake not turned in that his spiritual powers are cold and dormant. (*Hosea 7:8*).

Now moving from Chapter 2 into Chapter 3 entitled:  
Man as God remakes him.

Jeremiah 18 relates the account of how that Prophet under God's direction witnessed a potter remaking a vessel that had been marred, the Gospel is the good news, the broken fragments of life can likewise be made new by the Divine Potter, God is looking for pliable, penitent individuals who look to Him in faith and in desperation call upon Him: Lord, mould me and make me after Thy will! *Jeremiah 18:2-6*.

By the inspiration of God degenerated sinners are thus regenerated, instead of patching up the old life God makes one a new creature by means of the new birth.

The new birth is a rebirth in this sense that it is a restoration of what was lost in the Fall.

In the Bible this operation of God is repeatedly represented as a renewing process.

*Romans 12:2*: Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

*Titus 3:5*: Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy He has saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

By the Providence of God the human spirit is quickened and reactivated and infused with God's Spirit and this then becomes the means by which God regains His lost control over the individual.

As we have already implied man is like a three story house, the upper level is the spirit level for it is through his spirit that man stands related to the spiritual world, the renewing process begins in that upper story for that is where sin began its deadly work but thankfully the renewing process doesn't stop there.

Recall with me for a moment that prayer of the Apostle Paul: I pray God your whole soul, your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless.

### *1 Thessalonians 5:23*

In God's original plan man was a unified personality and the unifying factor was the spirit, his spirit, the human spirit dominated and directed by the Holy Spirit, was supreme in authority over the soul and the body so that really the Holy Spirit through the channel of the human spirit kept the whole person in tune with God.

In the remaking process this disrupted order is restored, it is restored so completely that Paul could tell the Corinthians that not only their spirit but also their body was the temple of the Holy Ghost.

It remains true however that there does exist a kind of special kinship between the Divine spirit and the human spirit. What does it say in *Romans 8:16*? The Spirit itself, spelt with a capital S, the Spirit itself beareth witness with our soul? No. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Nevertheless is indicated elsewhere in Romans eight that the redemption of the body is not yet completed even in the wholly sanctified person, he must therefore with the help of God keep his body under the spirit's control. The function of the soul, the real you, chooses to allow the Holy Spirit that dwells in your spirit to control your body. In this respect the remaking process is also both a conditional and a continuing process.

A boy was once addressed in this manner:

Sonny boy, who made you?

His reply went something like this:

To tell the truth Mister, I'm not yet made!

We ought to adopt that same attitude. For God can only remake those who become pliable and He can only perfect those who remain pliable.

Ideally that perfecting process continues until death. When you die you temporarily cease to be a threefold being for you then move out of your body, that house in which you lived for X number of years, that leaves you in an “out of the body” condition called the intermediate state, nevertheless for the saint the intermediate state is a blessed condition for a upon his release from the body the saint goes immediately into the presence of his now reigning Lord to await his new body which he will receive when the Lord returns to resurrect the dead.

In one of these visions John saw the souls of them who had been beheaded for the cause of Christ, and what were they doing? They were reigning with Christ and that is in perfect accord with the promise of Christ: To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne. *Revelation 3:21* That promise was initially addressed to first century saints for whom death by martyrdom was a constant threat, they lived every day with death staring them in the face.

That is however a promise that every saint can still claim; To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.

And the fulfilment of that promise begins already just on the other side of the door of death but the Christians ultimate hope is not the intermediate state but the eternal state for he will then have received both a new body and a new heaven and earth in which to dwell eternally for you are indeed a never, never dying soul.



## *A Look at the Intermediate State*

*Brother Merle Ruth*

*Dohner Mennonite Church 2011*

This message is both informative and doctrinal in nature.

Whenever a new baby is conceived and born there comes into existence another never dying soul.

Now here's a question for you to ponder:

Into how many different stages of existence will that soul travel?

I'm guessing that many people would rather quickly reply in these terms something like this;

Two, the here and the hereafter. This world and the world to come.

In line with this is a common say that when a person dies he passes from time into eternity. The only thing wrong with this kind of thinking is that it somewhat overlooks the detail around which this message will revolve, that detail also appears in our Mennonite Confession of Faith booklet.

I'm now about to read from that document Article 17 of the Christian Fundamentals, this Article is entitled "The Intermediate State."

"We believe that in the interval between death and resurrection the righteous will be with Christ in a state of conscious bliss and comfort but that the wicked will be in a place of torment in a state of conscious suffering and despair."

And then a number of Bible references following that.

For people who died long, long ago this referred to interval of time has become very long, actually much longer than the length of their former life. So really in the biblical view there are all together three stages of existence.

Stage One begins with conception and birth and ends with the death of the body.

Stage Two begins with death and will end with the return of Christ.

Stage Three is that never ending eternity that follows in the wake of the resurrection and the judgement.

With these facts in view it ought to be obvious that when ever we look at what lies beyond death we ought to think in terms of two successive stages. I'm suggesting that those two successive stages could well be labelled the "near hereafter" and the "far hereafter" and how do they fit in with these three stages I just outlined?

In the following way, the near hereafter corresponds to stage number two and the far hereafter corresponds with stage number three.

I'm of the opinion that stage number two, the near hereafter is too often confused with stage number three which corresponds with the far hereafter.

It seems to me as though it is too commonly thought that death immediately ushers one into the far hereafter – stage number three, the eternal state.

One of the purposes of this message is to clarify in our minds the fact that there is indeed an intermediate state of existence that lies between life as we know it now and life as we will know it in the future – the eternal state.

The sermon title is simply ‘A Look at the Intermediate State’ and it is called that because of that stretch of travel that lies between Stage One and Stage Three.

Now why has the truth about the intermediate state become so beclouded, Why?

Maybe it is due to the influence of misleading remarks, even ministers of the gospel can make statements that are misleading to their hearers.

I’m going to share now two such statements.

In the first one a very popular American evangelist is describing the change that will occur at death, these were his words,

“Just remember that at one moment you will be suffering but in another moment you will be instantly transformed into the likeness of the Saviour.”

Next one it is a remark by the long deceased Dwight Moody,

“Some day you will read in the papers that D L Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don’t you believe a word of it. At that moment I shall be more alive than now, I shall have gone up higher, that’s all, out of this old clay tenements into a house that is immortal, a body that death cannot touch and sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto His glorious body.”

I want to be charitable but these may have both been somewhat off-the-cuff remarks to which little thought had been given but the fact remains people form opinions on the basis of just such a remarks.

Did you detect anything in these statements that did not seem altogether biblical?

Do these statements allow for the intermediate state? Do they?

No, they both give the false impression that the departing saint received his new body immediately after death.

Hopefully as we proceed the wrongs of that concept will become plainer.

Remember our title is: A Look at the Intermediate State.

But as we take this look we are made to realise that we see through a glass darkly, it seems almost intended that we should not know a great deal about the intermediate state but do we know as much as can be known?

Before I attempt to enumerate what can be known I'm going to very briefly take the negative approach.

What is it not?

The intermediate state is not to be viewed as a third destiny like somewhere between that of the saved and that of the lost, No, it is not that.

Again it is not meant to suggest that the world of departed spirits has in it a third place for people who were morally in between.

Again neither is it another place or the imagined purgatory that supposedly gathers in the people that were not bad enough for hell nor good enough for heaven.

And neither is it a limbo like place into which the spirits of unbaptised babies and unenlightened pagans supposedly go.

But these conclusions that can be reached if this term the intermediate state is misunderstood.

At the bottom line the Bible puts all the living in one of two categories and that two category concept carries over and continues after death.

To suppose that there is a third category of departed spirits with a separate destiny is a gross misunderstanding of this doctrine.

Again the negative question: What is it not?

The intermediate state is not the name for a place but rather it is the name for a condition, a condition that lies between one's present condition and his eternal condition.

Now obviously departed souls are somewhere and along the way the biblical record does drop some hints leading us to believe that they definitely are not all in the same place and that one group may have changed places. Now alluding to the widespread opinion that the departed spirits of Old Testament saints were relocated at the time when Christ ascended, that they were then released from the abode where they had long been in with then transported into what is commonly called heaven.

That may all be true but you would then have the problem of harmonising that with the fact that already on the day of His crucifixion Jesus said to the repentant thief, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise (**Luke 23:43**).

But right now my point is this; the doctrine of the intermediate state relates primarily to neither the location nor the relocation of departed saints, primarily it relates to the condition in which they exist after they die.

It is unlike the condition in which they had been formally and unlike the condition into which they will get into, it is an in between state of existence.

I'm now moving over to the positive side and am going to enumerate 10 facts based on what God has revealed.

Fact Number One.

Those who are in the intermediate state must compose an almost incredible number.

There can be no other realm with so high a population.

Why? Because for a very, very long time souls have been entering that stage of existence and have remained there, they are presently in Stage Two of their ongoing existence.

Even Aaron must still be in the intermediate stage, he like all the rest has not yet received his glorified body and so people in this stage of existence constitute an enormous population.

Fact Number Two.

And this was already alluded to, there is a great deal about the intermediate state that we do not know.

When Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the Mount of transfiguration they too were in the intermediate state there. On the Mount of transfiguration those two departed saints, Moses and Elijah, talked with Christ about the deacease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. **(Luke: 9)**

They seemingly were knowledgeable of that forthcoming event.

That raises this question: Are all the departed saints someone knowledgeable of ongoing events in the world that they left behind or were Moses and Elijah to be viewed as exceptions to the rule?

We are also told that the repentance of one sinner creates joy in the presence of the holy angels.

Does that mean it creates that also amongst the departed saints?

Although we wish we could know we need to be content that God knows some things that we do not know.

We do know that God is very much opposed to any effort on our part to communicate with departed saints.

Fact Number Three.

The intermediate state is a temporary state, it is a time of waiting, something more beyond that is still in store and here in lies the main reason for calling it the intermediate state.

One writer put it this way: “Following death we go as it were into a waiting room.”

In one of his visions, John the Revelator, saw under the altar the souls of departed saints, furthermore he heard them cry with a loud voice, How long O Lord? **Revelation 6:9-10.**

That reflects the obvious fact that they are waiting, their waiting is necessitated by the fact that God’s program has not yet arrived at the third stage, the consummation stage.

Also in that highly controversial passage **Revelation 20** I believe that John was simply being shown in a vision the contrast in the after death experience of the lost and the saved.

The latter, the departed saints, are depicted as living and reigning with Christ, that is how they occupy their time of waiting.

One is on biblical grounds when he maintains that God has not yet consigned any of those who have departed from this life to their ultimate des-

tiny but that time will surely come for as is stated in **Acts 17: 31** God has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world.

In the concluding portion of **Matthew 25** Jesus gives a preview of that awesome day when all men and women will be turned either to the right hand or to the left.

To the one group He will say, Come, to the righteous into life eternal and to the other Depart, ye shall go into everlasting punishment.

That development, if we may call it that, will mark the beginning of the eternal state, the third and final phase of human existence.

But that is yet future so also is the resurrection which must necessarily precede the judgement but, that transition moving from the intermediate state to the eternal state will be different in one respect, over a very long period of time people have been entering the intermediate state one by one but in contrast to that for both groups, sinners and saints, entrance into the eternal state will be a group experience.

It will occur in an all at once fashion instead of a one by one fashion.

Now let's take a moment for review.

The redeemed whose probation on earth is over have not yet reached the final stage of their existence nor the final stage of their redemption and they will not unto all the elect have been gathered in and then following the resurrection in the judgement all the redeemed of all ages, all together will be ushered into their final state that Peter refers to as the new heaven and the new earth.

But many of those in the intermediate state do not have that kind of future to look forward to for many the far-hereafter will be worse than what they are experiencing now in the near hereafter.

We are now ready to look at Fact Number Four.

The intermediate state is an abnormal state of existence.

More than anything else the one factor that makes it so abnormal is the absence of the body.

We have a body now and in the far hereafter we will again have a body but on the other side of the door of death we begin to exist temporarily in a disembodied state, a disembodied condition.

As we have already noted twice in the book of Revelation John saw the souls of the departed saints, normally the nonmaterial part of the person can't be seen, but bear in mind John was seeing in a vision, but even so he wrote with inspiration because the occupants of the intermediate state are indeed bodiless souls.

Very shortly I'm going to read from second Corinthians chapter 5.

Here the intermediate state is likewise in view, although this is a very interesting passage it is somewhat difficult because of the way two figures of speech are somewhat mixed together.

On the one hand Paul likens the body to a house and he names two of them, the temporary mortal house in which we live now and the permanent immortal house that is yet to be given.

Secondly he likens this present body to a garment that covers the real inner person.

Now let's listen to second Corinthians 5 beginning at verse one,

**2 Corinthians 5:1-4** <sup>1</sup>For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: <sup>3</sup>If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. <sup>4</sup>For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

During this life your soul is covered with a garment of your body, when we die that garment, your body, is laid aside leaving your soul in a state that is here described as naked in verse three and in verse four as unclothed.

This is simply a figure of speech for the out of the body condition that characterises existence in the intermediate state.

Body number one was left behind, body number two is not yet been supplied and that leaves one in an abnormal state.

Let's move now to Fact Number Five.

Although it is an abnormal state for the saint the intermediate state is nevertheless a definite improvement over what we are experiencing now.

My Bible is still open at second Corinthians 5, and we're going to pick up again at verse six, here again the intermediate state is in view.

**2 Corinthians 5:6** <sup>6</sup> Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

Now also,

**2 Corinthians 5:8-9** <sup>8</sup> We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

Here in verse eight we come upon a new expression – absent from the body.

Paul knew that if the Lord did not return, sooner or later he would discover what it would be like to be absent from the body, this is another confirmation of the fact that death will indeed usher us into an out of the body condition.

Furthermore here in verse eight Paul was also expressing a preference, We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

I understand Paul to be saying that any lack, any lack that will be associated with being absent from the body will be more than compensated by the fact that it will be being present with the Lord in a more direct way than we are now.

That he really did view it this way and that he did view the intermediate state as an improvement is further confirmed in **Philippians 1:21-24**, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Did you hear those comparative statements?

To die is what? Gain.

To depart to be with Christ is what? Far better.

So already in the intermediate state the departed saints begins and experience that is far better than he can experience now, it is that much better that in my opinion we can properly say that departed saints are in the heaven of the near hereafter, the heaven of the intermediate state.

And now Fact Number Six.

Although we cannot explain how, the dying person, whether he be a saint or sinner, as he enters the intermediate state remains alive and awake to his surroundings.

Some professing Christians deny this, they claim that death marks the beginning of a long sleep, a sleep of the soul that continues until awakened by the resurrection.

We cannot deny that in some passages those who died are said to be asleep but then again there are other passages, some of which we have already noted, that give an altogether different impression leading us to believe that the term sleep and rest when used to describe the dead are either figures of speech or they have primary reference to the body, the body that has died.

I'm turning now to some passages I previously alluded to in Revelation chapter 6 beginning at verse nine.

**Revelation 6:9-11** <sup>9</sup> And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: <sup>10</sup> And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? <sup>11</sup> And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

For now the significance of these departed saints is the evidence that they were fully conscious, wide awake, thoughtful and active.

But what about the lost?

Might their after death experience be different?

Indeed it will be, but in this one respect it is a life, neither do their souls sleep.

That rich man described in Luke 16 was in an intermediate state, life on earth was still going on, he had brothers who were still living, was he asleep? By no means.

He knew he had died, he recognised Lazarus and even Abraham whom he had never met, he knew he was being painfully tormented and he was more awake to his neglect of duty than he had been in his life on earth and he wanted his brothers to be warned.

The soul sleeping theory ignores all these facts.

Persons in the intermediate state are not asleep, they are wide awake.

Next Fact Number Seven.

Already in the intermediate state there is a sharp contrast between the condition of the saint and the condition of the sinner.

In this life the saint bears a cross whereas the sinner lives a seemingly care-free life but be assured of this, the inequalities that exist now will not last for ever, life was hard on Lazarus and easy on the rich man, but death came to both alike and then the tables were reversed.

It was the formerly rich man who now began to beg, A drop of water please!

And what was he told? Thou in thy lifetime receivedst good things and likewise Lazarus evil things but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. **(Luke 16:19-25)**

The balancing of many unsettled accounts begins just on the other side of the door of death.

Next Fact Number Eight.

Dying saints as they enter intermediate state are perfected in Holiness.

**2 Corinthians 7:1** lays upon us the obligation to cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting Holiness in the fear of God. Evidently that process will be completed by God as the Saint enters Paradise, the heaven of the intermediate state.

We read in the book of Jude that God is able to not only keep us from falling in this life but He is able also to present us faultless before the presence of His glory.

I'm turning now to Hebrews 12, that great passage, Hebrews 12 beginning at verse 22, this describes the change of company one experiences when he is translated into the kingdom of God's dear son.

**Hebrews 12:22-23** <sup>22</sup> But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, <sup>23</sup> To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

This last clause is I believe a description of departed saints who already in their intermediate state are the spirits of just men made perfect. How wonderful it is to anticipate being made perfect in Holiness just on the other side of the door of death.

And now a very sobering Fact Number Nine.

Opportunity to choose one's destiny terminates as one crosses the threshold into the intermediate state.

Unlike this world the intermediate world offers no hope for those who might want to repent.

The rich man was told it is too late, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, **Luke 16:26.**

Here in the intermediate state changing sides is not permitted.

When once the eyes close in death one's destiny is for ever settled.

Must we not admit that we ourselves view this awful fact too lightly?

Every minute of every hour of every day numbers of people are leaving behind to their last opportunity to change their hell bound course of travel.

A greater tragedy then that is hard to imagine and yet we can become so calloused that we do so little, if anything, about it and that too must be viewed as a tragedy.

And now lastly Fact Number Ten.

And it may surprise you to hear me say this: You and I may never experience the intermediate state.

If indeed we don't we will be an exception to the rule that has stood for 6000 years, however I still maintain that there is a real possibility that we may never enter this stage of existence but how can that be?

Because eventually there will be a last generation.

For that last generation, and it could be our generation, the return of Christ will occur before their death occurs and consequentially such persons will bypass this stage of experience by means of an instant translation, they will move directly from stage number one into stage number three.

In first Corinthians 15 beginning at verse 52 Paul affirms that the future will indeed unfold in this fashion,

**1 Corinthians 15:52** <sup>52</sup>In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye we shall be changed from mortality to immortality, we will move from stage number one to stage number three if we are among the living.

That momentous event will mark the end of the intermediate state and will mark the commencement of the eternal state.

On that day, in one way or another, we will all meet our Lord and we will meet Him as either a saint or sinner.

How we treat Him now depends on how He will treat us then.



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