

THE MEANING OF ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ AND ΝΕΚΡΟΣ
IN THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

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by
Clarence Leonard Jordan
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TO MY DAD

In humble appreciation of his
unfailing love and sacrifice,

and

TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER

In gratitude for the challenge
of her noble and saintly life,
I dedicate this volume.

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PREFACE

Death is the last sombre enigma of human experience. Before it, men stand in dumb anguish, proud defiance, or victorious faith. To the vast majority of the human race, it is a cruel and unnatural intruder, even when it closes a long and happy life. It is a reality so towering that escape from it can be found in neither words nor silence. Happy is the man, then, whose faith will allow him to peer beyond the veil to the victory. Such a man has an inestimable advantage over all for whom death is the synonym of destruction.

Because death is the one form of suffering which no one can escape, and because men are crying out for that faith which will help them to face it victoriously, death and dying will ever be a theme for the Christian preacher. If he is sincere, he cannot forget those who think of death as a lonely voyage into a land of utter darkness and ruin. These he must seek to enlighten and to lead out of despair into triumphant hope. It must be shown that even death, the summons to Christ's weary soldiers, is gain.

In this thesis it has been my task to discover the meaning, rather than to make an application, of "death" and "dead" in the writings of the Apostle Paul. I have sought to avoid all attempts at "preaching", and, although the temptation has been great, I have given a minor place to the theological implications of the words, trying always

to bear in mind that this is primarily a word study. And as I conceive it, the meaning of any given word depends almost entirely upon its etymology, history, and context.

These three lines form the basis of my inquiry.

I have endeavored to give credit in the foot-notes to those authors who have contributed directly to the body of this thesis. The bibliography has been selected and contains the works which have shed some light upon our study. The Greek text is that of Westcott and Hort, and the translations are from the American Revised Version of the Bible.

Acknowledgment is made here of my indebtedness to Dr. W. Hersey Davis for his counsel and guidance. I am deeply grateful to my wife, not only for her constant encouragement and sympathy, but also for performing the tedious task of inserting the Greek words in the text. A further debt of gratitude is due those who have assisted me financially, and thus made it possible for me to pursue my studies here. The part played by friends, faculty and family has been so large that I could never hope to acknowledge, much less repay, the obligation due them all.

C.L. Jordan.

Louisville, Ky.,
November, 1938.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION.

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INTRODUCTION.

1. Etymology and Formation of the Two Words.

(1) θάνατος.

Though this word has been given new shades of meaning from time to time, its form has remained unchanged. In Homer the fully developed form θάνατος occurs, and it has had a continuous history ever since. Throughout the history of the Greek language it has been a very common word.

Because this word has its origin in the infancy of the language, it is impossible to give its original form or root. The present form is said by Wright¹ to have come from θφνατος, θφάνατος, with which may be compared the Sanskrit dhvantaḥ, "covered, dark," dhvan, "to be extinguished," and dhvanaya, "to envelope, blacken." Liddell and Scott, however, think that "the root θαν, found in the aorist θανεῖν, θάνατος, θνητός, has not been identified in the cognate languages."² Valpy supposes it to be allied to τεῖνω, in allusion to the extenuation of the limbs by death.³ Curtius, Boisacq and others are unable to shed further light upon the etymology of this word.

To the root θαν was added the verbal adjective suffix -τος, which may denote capability, as φιλητός, "lovable,"

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1. Comparative Grammar of the Greek Language, p. 77.
 2. Greek Lexicon, p. 678.
 3. Fundamental Words of the Greek Language, p. 109

possibility of susceptibility (Latin -bilis), also an action accomplished, as: ὄρατός, "visible," δυνατός, "possible," νοητός, "conceivable."¹ And since the line between adjective and substantive is very thin, θάνατος, like other verbal adjectives such as βλαστός, πλοῦτος, etc., gradually lost its adjectival sense and took on the functions of a substantive.²

(2) Νεκρός.

When we come to the etymology of νεκρός we are less dependent upon speculation. Like θάνατος, νεκρός has had a continuous history but it may be more readily identified in the cognate languages. The root νεκ, which is seen also in such related terms as νέκυς, "corpse," νέκυια, "funeral offering," νεκρόπολις, "city of the dead, or burying place," is identified in the Sanskrit with ना, "to disappear, perish," nac-a, "loss, disappearance; destruction, ruin; death."³ In the Hebrew it is identified with נָחַם of the verb נָחַם "to smite, kill."⁴ It occurs in the Latin neco, "to kill," noceo, "to hurt," and English nocent, noxious, innocent. Liddell and Scott further identify it with Zend nac-u (cadaver), Gothic naus, navis, and Slavonic navi.⁵

The primary suffixes -ρο-, -ρα-, used in the formation of nouns and adjectives, denote character or feature, as ἐχθρός, "hostile," ψυχρός, "cold," and πονηρός, "bad" or "evil."⁶

1. Jannaris, An Historical Greek Grammar, p. 296.

2. Cf. English "edible, tangible, etc." used as substantives.

3. Macdonnell, Practical Sanskrit Dictionary, p. 139.

4. Parkhurst, A Greek and English Lexicon, p. 373.

5. Op. cit., p. 996.

6. Jannaris, op. cit., p. 297.

Νεκρός continued to be used as an adjective but it was commonly employed also as substantive.

Leaving the etymology of the words, we might be expected to proceed to a working definition. This, however, will be given later in the development of the thesis. We shall turn rather to the meanings of words with the same roots found in the New Testament.

2. Related Words and Their Meanings.

(1) Words related to θάνατος.

a. Perhaps the nearest relative is the verb θανατώ, "to put to death," and in the passive, by rhetorical hyperbole, "to be in the state of one who is being put to death." Metaphorically it means "to make to die, destroy, render extinct (something vigorous)", translated in the Vulgate mortifico, and in the Authorized Version "mortify."

b. θανάσιμος. This word occurs only once in the New Testament (Mark 16:18) and means "deadly."

c. θανατηφόρος. A compound of θάνατος and φέρω, meaning "death-bringing, deadly." James 3:8 is its only appearance in the New Testament.

d. ἀποθνήσκω is a very common word with a great variety of meanings. Literally it means "to die off or out, pass away." It can refer to the natural or violent death of either man or animal, or to the decay of plants. A seed is said to die when it is planted. It is frequently used with the locative, e.g., ἐν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἐν τῷ Αἰῶνι, ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ. It is also used with

the dative to represent a death to something. In 1 Corinthians 15:31 Paul uses it oratorically, though retaining the proper signification of the verb: καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποθνῄσκω, "I meet death daily, live daily in danger of death." Moulton and Milligan point out as a parallel to this passage "the touching letter P. Giss. 1. 17. 9 (time of Hadrian), where a slave writes to her absent master, ἀποθνῄσκομεν ὅτι οὐ βλέπομέν σε καθ' ἡμέραν."¹ Tropically, it appears in the sense "of eternal death, as it is called, i.e., to be subject to eternal misery, and that, too, already beginning on earth (Romans 8:13; John 6:50; 11:26); of moral death, to be deprived of real life, i.e., especially of the power of doing right, of confidence in God and the hope of future blessedness (Romans 7:10)."² In still another sense it means to become wholly alienated from a thing and freed from all connection with it, e.g., τῷ νόμῳ, τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, etc. "True Christians are said simply ἀποθανεῖν, as having put off all sensibility to worldly things that draw them away from God (Colossians 3:3), and since they owe this habit of mind to the death of Christ, they are said also ἀποθανεῖν σὺν Χριστῷ (Romans 6:8; Colossians 2:20)."³

A less common word, but with practically the same meaning, is θνήσκω. Of interest is the perfect articular participle, ὁ τεθνηκώς, which occurs in both the Septuagint and the New Testament in a sense almost identical with ὁ νεκρός, "the

1. Vocabulary of the New Testament, p. 62.

2. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 61.

3. Ibid., p. 61f.

corpse." The verbal adjective θνητός means "liable to death, mortal." Thayer distinguishes it from νεκρός thus: "θνητός subject to death, and so still living; νεκρός actually dead."¹

The Greeks, like the Germans, were fond of forming compound words, and made many such terms from both θάνατος and νεκρός. These, however, we shall not consider, as none occur in the New Testament. Rather, we shall turn to those which seem to bring out more clearly the meaning of the root.

(2) Words Related to Νεκρός.

a. νεκρώ, "to make dead, to put to death, slay." It is equivalent to "to deprive of power, destroy the strength of" something. As a striking parallel to Romans 4:19 (κατενόησεν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα (ἤδη) νεκρωμένον), Deissmann points to I.G. III, 2, no. 1355: ἄνθρωπε...μή μου παρέλθης σῶμα τὸ νεκρωμένον, "O man, pass not by my body, now a corpse."² So far as I have been able to ascertain, there is no difference between the meaning of νεκρώ and θανατώ. In fact, the Vulgate translates both mortifico.

b. νέκρωσις, "a putting to death, killing." "Paul so styles the marks of perpetual trials, misfortunes, hardships attended with peril of death, evident in his body (2 Corinthians 4:10)."³ In Romans 4:19 it means "the dead state, deadness, utter sluggishness." From the papyri Deissmann

1. Thayer, op. cit., p. 291.

2. Light from the Ancient East, p. 94.

3. Thayer, op. cit., p. 424.

cites a parallel: οἱ γὰρ κόκκοι μετὰ τὴν ἐκ σήψεως νέκρωσιν καὶ φθορὰν ἀναζῶσι, "for the seeds come to life again after death and destruction by decay."¹

c. νέκυς, "a dead body," especially of men, "a corpse," in the plural, "the spirits of the dead." There is no appearance of this word in the New Testament, its meaning being taken over by the common form νεκρός with the article. It always has a literal meaning, and refers only to those physically dead.

3. The Use of Other Terms to Express Death and Dying.

(1) τελευτάω, "to bring to an end or close," τὸν βίον, "to finish life, to die." Used intransitively, it became increasingly common, and occurs very often where we would expect θανατόω or ἀποθνήσκω. It appears frequently on Christian tomb-stones. This, however, is no indication that Christian concepts altered or deepened its original meaning. From the fifth century B.C. onwards, it has been used in this sense, and may be illustrated from the papyri by a passage found in P. Magd. 2.6 (B.C. 222): ὁ ἀνὴρ μου τετελεύτηκεν; and another from P. Fay. 29.9 (notice of death, A.D. 37): ὁ ἀδελ(φός) Πενεοῦρις...τετελεύτηκεν ἐν τῷ Μεσ(ο)ρῇ μην(ί) τοῦ πρώτου (ἔτους) Γαίου Καίσαρος Σεραστοῦ Γερμανικοῦ, "my brother Peneouris has died in the month Mesore of the first year of Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus."²

1. Deissmann, op. cit., p. 96, note 1.

2. Moulton and Milligan, op. cit., p. 629.

(2) Κοιμάω, "To cause to sleep, put to sleep;" passive, "to sleep, fall asleep." After the resurrection of Christ, this word in Christian circles became increasingly popular in its metaphorical sense of "to die;" in fact, so much so that it is thought to have been given a heightened meaning by the Christians. But the use of "falling asleep" to express death is older than Christianity, and occurs even in pagan inscriptions, e.g., IGSI 929.13: κοιμάται τὸν αἰώνιον ὕπνον. Likewise the compound κοιμητήριον, "sleeping-place," (whence "cemetery") is not a Christian creation. Moulton and Milligan cite Syll. 589.43 (first half iv/B.C.): ἐν δὲ τοῖς κοιμητηρίοις καθεύδουσιν χωρὶς μὲν τὸς ἄνδρας...¹

(3) ἀπόλλυμι, "to destroy, abolish, put an end to"; middle, "to perish, be lost, ruined, destroyed." This is the word which occurs in John 3:16, "that whosoever believeth...should not perish (μὴ ἀπόληται)." It is a very strong word. It denotes the loss or destruction not only of earthly existence but of eternal or true life as well. There are no grounds, however, for supposing that the substantive ἀπώλεια is equivalent to "annihilation."²

(4) ἐκψύχω, "to expire, to breathe out one's life." Like ἐκπνέω, it presents the conception of death as the departure of the breath from the body, and is used to describe only the physical process of death. Thus Ananias, when rebuked by Peter, expired (ἐξέψυχεν).

1. Vocabulary of the New Testament, p. 350.

2. See Kennedy, St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things, for full discussion.

(5) ἀποκτείνω, "to kill," in any way whatever. Paul uses it in a metaphorical sense "to inflict moral death (Romans 7: 11), to deprive of spiritual life and procure eternal misery (2 Corinthians 3:6)."¹ It differs from ἀποθνήσκω in that the death referred to, whether physical, moral or spiritual, is unnatural. It is the difference between English "die" and "kill."

This by no means completes the list of terms used to express death, as the Greek language has a wealth of such pictures. We do not feel, however, that a discussion of more than the above would be justified. We turn now to a consideration of the use and meaning of θάνατος and Νεκρός in the Greek literature.

1. Thayer, op. cit., p. 64.

CHAPTER II

THE GREEK BACKGROUND

CHAPTER II

THE GREEK BACKGROUND

1. The Classics.

(1) Homer. Both words occur comparatively frequently, but not in a wide variety of meanings. At this time there seems to be no moral or spiritual coloring, only the physical aspect of death being referred to. As we shall see later, however, death is personified and is beginning to have different shades of meaning.

Of interest to our study is a passage in the Odyssey, in which Homer relates the journey of Odysseus to Hades, and tells of his experiences there. In ll. 412 Agamemnon, conversing with Odysseus, gives an account of his death on earth: ὥς θάνον οἰκτίστῳ θανάτῳ, "So I died a most pitiful death, and round about me the rest of my comrades were slain unceasingly like white-tusked swine."¹ The conditions which Odysseus found in Hades correspond very closely to the Jewish Sheol.

Without comment, we shall cite other passages in the Odyssey in which θάνατος occurs: πάντες μὲν στυγεροὶ θάνατοι δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν λιμῷ δ' οἰκτιστον θανέειν καὶ πότμον ἐπικεῖν, "All forms of death are hateful to wretched mortals, but to die of hunger, and so to meet one's doom, is the most pitiful." (12.341.) ὑπαλευόμενος θάνατον καὶ κῆρα μέλαιναν

1. The English translations from Homer are by A.T. Murray in the Loeb Classical Library. (Hereafter referred to as L.C.L.)

φεύγω, "It is to shun death and black fate at their hands that I flee" (15.275).

In the Iliad, death appears as the twin brother of sleep. "Υπνώ καὶ θανάτῳ διδυμάοσιν, "Sleep and Death, twin brethren" (16.682). Several times it is used adverbially, e.g., "ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ με θεοὶ θάνατόνδε κάλεσσιν, "Ah, me! the gods have called me to my death (or, as sometimes translated, "deathward")" (22.297). Certain forms of death were looked upon as disgraceful or evil, as shown in 22.416: γυν δὲ δὴ ἐγγύθι μοι θάνατος κακός, "Now of a surety is evil death near at hand."

In the Homeric writings, νεκρός is already being used both as adjective and substantive. In Il. 4.492,493 the substantive νέκυς and the adjective νεκρός are used of the same dead person in the sense of "corpse." This sense occurs again in 6.70,71 where Nestor, urging his men to attack and later return for the spoils, says: ἀλλ' ἄνδρας κτείνωμεν· ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὰ ἔκρηλοι νεκρούς ἄμ πεδίον συλήσατε τεθνηῶτας, "Nay, let us slay the men; thereafter in peace shall ye strip the armor from the corpses that lie dead over the plain." Note also the use in this passage of three different roots: κτείνωμεν, νεκρούς, and τεθνηῶτας. The dead as a class occurs in Od. 10. 526: αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν εὐχῇσι λίσσῃ κλυτὰ ἔθνεα νεκρῶν, "But when with prayers thou hast made supplication to the glorious tribes of the dead..."

(2) Aeschylus. As the funeral procession with the bodies of the two brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, who slew one

another in battle, comes into view the chorus sings: ἔτευξα
 τύμβῳ μέλος θοιᾶς αἱματοσταγεῖς νεκρούς κλύουσα δυσμόρως θάν-
 οντας, "'Tis for a tomb I frame my song, inspired by frenzy
 when I hear of their death by an evil doom and of their corpses
 bedabbled with blood" (Thebes, 835).¹ Again, speaking of the
 same brothers, are the words: μέλεοι δῆθ' οἱ μελέους θανάτους
 εὔροντο δόμων ἐπὶ λύμῃ, "To their misery, indeed, they won for
 themselves a miserable death in the havoc of their house"
 (Thebes, 879).

(3) Herodotus. We may cite two instances of θάνατος as
 capital punishment. ὁ δὲ ἰδὼν παρεξιώνταν καὶ μαθὼν τὸν παῖδα
 ἡγεόμενον ἐπὶ θάνατον, "When he (Psammenitus) saw them pass
 by and perceived that his son was led out to die..." (3.14);
 and 3.119: Darius, fearing a conspiracy, seized Intaphrenes
 and his sons, "and imprisoned them with intent to put them to
 death" (συλλαβὼν δὲ σφέας ἔδησε τὴν ἐπὶ θανάτῳ).²

We see νεκρός appearing again as "corpse" in 3.16: ὁ
 γὰρ δὴ νεκρὸς ἔτε τεταριχευμένος ἀνταῖχέ τε καὶ οὐδὲν διεχέετο,
 "for the body, being embalmed, remained whole and was not dis-
 solved.."; as a class in 3.27: τὸ δὴν κατακαίειν γε τοὺς νεκρούς
 οὐδαμῶς ἐν νόμῳ οὐδετέροισι ἐστί, "Therefore neither nation
 deems it right to burn the dead"; and as an adjective in 2.89:
 λαμβθῆναι γὰρ τινὰ φασὶ μισγομένον νεκρῷ προσφάτῳ γυναικός,
 κατειπεῖν δὲ τὸν ὁμότεχνον, "For it is said that one (an em-

1. English translations of Aeschylus by H.W. Smyth, L.C.L.

2. English translations of Herodotus by A.T. Godley, L.C.L.

balmer) was found having intercourse with a woman newly dead, and was denounced by his fellow-workman."

(4) Sophocles. Similar to the New Testament expressions "sick unto death, sorrowful unto death" is Ajax 215: "Ah, how tell a tale so drear? Sad as death what thou shalt hear Of great Ajax..." (θανάτῳ γὰρ ἴσον βάρος ἐκπεύσει).¹ Life and death are contrasted in 802: ... ὅτ' αὐτῷ θάνατον ἢ βίον φέρει, "The prophet, son of Thestor, but today, When in the scales for him hang life and death."

(5) Thucydides. In describing the slaughter of fellow-citizens, largely for private enmities, he says, πᾶσά τε ἰδέα κατέστη θανάτου, "Death in every form ensued" (3.81).²

(6) Xenophon. Death as a penalty occurs in Cyropaedia 1. 2.14: καὶ θανάτου δὲ οὗτοι κρίνουσιν, "They (the elders) try people indicted for capital offences."

(7) Plato. Typical of his use of θάνατος is ... ἢ εἰς τραύματα ἢ εἰς θανάτους ἰόντας, "...either meeting wounds or death or having fallen into some other mishap" (Republic, 399A).³ Nor is there any new meaning given to νεκρός. Πατρόκλῳ...νεκρῷ ὄντι... "Patroclus, who was a dead body" (391B).

The above citations are fairly representative of the use of these two words in the classic period, and it would be useless further to multiply references. We shall proceed now to the κοινή period.

1. English translations by F. Storr, L.C.L.

2. English translations by C.F. Smith, L.C.L.

3. English translations by Paul Shorey, L.C.L.

2. The Κοινή.

(1) Literary.

Because the meanings of our words in the literary κοινή differ so little from classical usage we shall not spend much time here. Polybius uses θάνατος when referring to the sentence of death: θανάτου δὲ κρίνει μόνος, "and they (the people) are the only court which may try on capital charges" (6.14.6).¹ Josephus uses both terms in practically all the shades of meaning shown in the above discussion. Philo, however, in explaining Genesis 2.17, notes that there are two deaths: "the death of man is the severing of the soul from the body, but the death of the soul is the destruction of virtue and the admission of vice," and the latter is the punishment inflicted by God.

(2) Vernacular.

Of all the Greek writings, perhaps the vernacular κοινή will come nearer giving us clear insight into Paul's concepts than any other (exclusive of the Septuagint and the Apocrypha and Apocalyptic), and for this we turn to the papyri. As an example of θάνατος, Moulton and Milligan² cite P. Tebt. I. 5. 92 (B.C. 118), a royal ordinance, decree of Euergetes II: τοὺς δὲ παρὰ ταῦτα ποιοῦντας θαν(άτωις)ημιοῦσθαι, and P. Oxy. III. 472.7 (c. A.D. 130): ἄλλοι πολλοὶ τὸν θάνατον τοῦ ζῆν προκρίναντες. An official document, dated 103-107 A.D., men-

1. Translation by W.R. Paton, L.C.L.

2. Vocabulary of the New Testament, p. 283.

tions that "the man who took his seat at the theater without wearing white garments you (the praefect) delivered to death" (Oxy. 471.107). The fairly late (c. 180 A.D.) Πράξεις Παύλου makes this statement: (οὐ διώκομεν ὡς ὑπονδεῖτε) ὑμᾶς εἰς θάνατον, ἀλλ(λὰ) εἰς ζώην... The well-known inscription at the entrance of the inner court of the Temple at Jerusalem, threatening all who are not Jews with the penalty of death for entering, ends: ὅς δ' ἂν ληφθῇ, εἰς αὐτῷ αἵτιος ἔσται διὰ τὸ ἐξακολουθεῖν θάνατον (O.G. 13.598.7, I/AD). Moulton and Milligan further point out that "in a Latin papyrus containing military accounts, P. Fay. 105, iii, 24 (c. A.D. 180), opposite the name Turbon a letter θ has been inserted, implying, according to the editors, that he has died. The letter, they add, has the same signification on Roman gravestones, and also in a Latin list of soldiers in the Ranier Collection, where the name itself is crossed through."¹ It is significant, however, that θάνατος occurs very rarely on Christian tomb-stones, other terms such as κοιμάω, τελευτάω, and κεῖμαι being used.

The funerary papyri afford many examples of νεκρός. It appears also in the reports of public physicians, e.g., Oxy. I.51.8: "I was today instructed by you, through Heraclides, your assistant, to inspect the body of a man who had been found hanged (...ἐφιδεῖν σῶμα νεκρὸν ἀπηρτημένον...), named Hierax, and to report to you my opinion. I therefore inspected the body (τοῦτο)...and found it hanged by a noose." Mummifiers

1. Op. cit., p. 283.

make almost the same report concerning another corpse (Oxy. III.476.13). In 182 A.D. a slave, while watching an entertainment given by dancing girls, fell from an upper story and was killed (cf. Eutychus who, after falling, ἤρθη νεκρός, Acts 20:9). The strategus commissions one of his ὑπέρηται: ὅπως παραλαβὼν δημόσιον ἰατρὸν ἐπιθεωρήσης τὸ δηλούμενον νεκρὸν σῶμα... "Take a public physician and view the dead body referred to..." (Oxy. III.475.6). An undertaker became greatly incensed when two men carried off their dead brother's effects but left the undertaker with the corpse and the funeral expenses. In presenting them with a bill, he writes thus: καὶ ἐκ τούτου ἔμαθον ὅτι οὐ χάριν τοῦ νεκροῦ ἀνήλθατε ἀλλὰ χάριν τῶν σκευῶν αὐτοῦ, "and from this I learned that it was not on account of the dead man you came here, but on account of his goods" (P. Grenf. II.77.13). We hope his child-like faith in men who would do such a trick was rewarded with prompt payment!

In all of the above citations, νεκρός appears in its general, usual sense. Dr. Robertson says: "Many words which were thought to have a peculiar meaning in the LXX or the New Testament have been found in that very sense in the inscriptions and papyri, such as . . . νεκροί . . ."¹ He does not give the sources of his list, thus making it impossible to check its accuracy, but I have been unable to find any example, either in papyri or inscriptions, which dates earlier

1. Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 80.

than the first Christian century and yet has the "peculiar meaning" sometimes found in the LXX and New Testament.

While it has been neither desirable nor possible in the foregoing discussion to enter into detailed comments on the passages involved, we do not feel that we should leave the question without giving a brief summary of the Greek concept of death and the ideas underlying the words. After doing this, we shall look for a moment at the extent to which this influenced Paul's concept.

3. Summary of the Greek Concept of Death.

(1) It is self-evident that $\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ commonly refers to purely physical death, with no moral or spiritual coloring and embodying no thought of future life either good or bad. The manner in which one met death was often more important than death itself. It was bitter or sweet, honorable or disgraceful, depending upon how it came upon one or how one faced it.

(2) But even as early as Homer there are glimpses of a more serious view of death. The soul, though not absolutely immaterial, was thought of as an attenuated and devitalized thing which departed and took up its existence in Hades. But this was a very gloomy and shadowy existence, so much so that it was better to be a slave on earth than a king in Hades. No moral distinctions prevailed, except that a few "hopeless sinners . . . were from the first consigned to Tartaros, where was carried out the punishment of 'many and terrible deeds of mur-

ders foul and violent'." ¹ Elysium was reserved for a few favorites of the gods. Death was becoming, then, to signify more than an event; it was a condition.

(3) When we come to the later Greek period, especially the Graeco-Roman era, we find men peering wistfully into the Beyond, crying for a voice of revelation to solve the mystery of life and death. Death was the Great Veil. Socrates, though arguing that death is a boon because it is either a dreamless sleep or a journey to where are the true judges and the renowned dead, closes his defence with the words: "Now it is the hour to depart, I to die, you to live; which of us enters into the better lot is hidden from all save God only." This uncertainty was augmented by a pitiful pessimism. Death became to be the equivalent of annihilation. Some of the sepulchral inscriptions are without a ray of hope, such as, "While I lived I lived well; now my little play is ended, soon shall yours be; goodbye and applaud." Angus summarizes this view thus: "Death brings the peace of nothingness, and takes us away from the ills of life...As death may snatch us away at any moment let us quaff the cup of pleasure now; the only regret at the end is that of having lost any opportunity of enjoyment; for the rest 'all is laughter, all is dust, all is nothing.' 'All life is a stage and a game; learn to play it without seriousness or bear the consequence.'" ²

1. Gowen, A History of Religion, p. 267.

2. The Environment of Early Christianity, p. 104f.

For all, however, death was not the epitome of gloom. It was increasingly ethicised from the days of Orphism and especially of Plato. It became the "birthday of eternity." It was the escape of the divine soul which had been temporarily imprisoned, as in a tomb, within the mortal body. The chief sources of this new light, according to Angus, were three: Platonism, which took up and spiritualized Orphism and Pythagoreanism; the Greek mysteries, and, above all, the mysteries of the Oriental cults.¹

4. The Extent of the Greek Influence on Paul.

This is difficult to decide. The fact that he employs some current expressions and ideas of the Greek schools suggests that he was not altogether a stranger to Hellenic philosophy. Tarsus, the city of his nativity, would have afforded him excellent opportunity for instruction in the Greek learning. But as Salmond says, "Some make so much of these probabilities that they assert not only that Paul must have had a Greek education, but that Greek ideas form an essential element in his thought. ... They attribute to him a considerable acquaintance with the mixed Hellenic and Jewish wisdom of Alexandria, and refer us to Greek thought for the origin of some of his characteristic terms. ... But there is little to support so exaggerated a position in point of fact. There is but a formal resemblance between Paul's terms and those of

1. Op. cit., p. 107.

the Greek schools. If he employs some which are familiar to the Greek Philosophy, he gives them a new sense."¹ Perhaps we should allow a little more Greek influence than this, but the statement is largely true. If we are to find the roots of the Pauline concepts, we must look elsewhere. We turn, then, to the Jewish background, reserving further discussion on this point until the crossing of the paths of Paul and Greek.

1. The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, p. 510.

CHAPTER III

THE JEWISH SETTING

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If we are to penetrate into the texture of Paul's thinking we must grasp the great religious concepts of the Old Testament in their original setting. When Paul claimed to be a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" he might have had more in mind than mere physical heritage. He inherited the Jewish mind, concepts, and above all, their literature. Being steeped in the law and the prophets and being educated in a Jewish school, he could not escape their molding influence. The extent of this influence, however, is not to be overestimated, as Paul speaks of his gospel as a thing which he did not learn from others, but received by revelation: "Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ."¹ But this does not mean that he threw overboard all Jewish influences, as indicated by the fact that he found his most ready converts among those who worshipped God (οἱ σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν), i.e., those who were already familiar with the Old Testament and the rabbinic teachings.

But before we can come to any conclusion on this point, we must examine the literature which most likely influenced Paul and try to determine the concept of death there. Then we shall be in better position to understand the relation of

1. Galatians 1:12.

one to another. Let us turn first to the Septuagint.

1. The Septuagint.

Here the word θάνατος is no stranger, occurring 220 times, not to mention the frequent occurrence of its cognates and similar terms mentioned in chapter I of this thesis. It prevails in usage over νεκρός, which occurs only 49 times. It is used to translate a wide variety of Hebrew terms, which will be pointed out in the following discussion.

(1) The Hebrew terminology.

a. The word most frequently translated by θάνατος is מָוֶת and its variations. This accounts for 155 occurrences. According to Brown, Driver and Briggs¹ מָוֶת means (1) "to die," of natural or other causes: a. of man: "And he expired and died" (Gen. 25:8); b. of courage: "And his heart died within him" (I Sam. 25:37); c. of animals; d. a tree. (2) "to die" as a penalty--"be put to death"; a. by human authority (capital punishment); b. inflicted by God; c. "die, perish," of a nation by divine judgment; d. die prematurely, by neglect of wise moral conduct. They define the substantive

מָוֶת as (1) "death," opposite of life, the death of all men (that all go to) as distinguished from violent death; (2) death by violence as a penalty; (3) State of death or place of death: a. מִן הַמָּוֶת ; b. מִן הַמָּוֶת ; c. מִן הַמָּוֶת, "gates of death."

1. Hebrew Lexicon, p. 559.

b. The word גָּזַל is translated by $\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ thirty-three times. It means (1) "plague," "pestilence," (2) "cattle-plague," "murrain."

c. The few remaining instances where $\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ appears are translations of such words as טִיחָה , "hard, barren, unproductive," as in Job 15:34, $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\nu\ \gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho\ \acute{\alpha}\sigma\epsilon\beta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$, "for the company of the godless shall be barren"; לִיחַהּ , "strokes, blows upon the body," used in Proverbs 18:6: "A fool's lips enter into contention, And his mouth calleth for stripes ($\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\kappa\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\tau\alpha\iota$)"; גֶּזֶר , "grave, sepulchre, they who sit in the tombs"; לֵי־אֲשֵׁי , "the underworld" whither men descend at death; personified as in Isaiah 28:15: $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu\ \dots\ \mu\epsilon\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\upsilon\nu\theta\acute{\eta}\kappa\epsilon\varsigma$, "we have made a covenant with death"; לִיָּא , originally "a pit" for catching lions but in Job refers to the "pit" of Sheol: $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \pi\epsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\nu\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\nu$, "deliver him from going down to the pit" (Job 33:24), and $\text{הִגְיִסָּה\ דֵּה\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\nu}$, "yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave" (33:22). Concerning this word, Brown, Driver and Briggs say: " לִיָּא here either equals לֵי־אֲשֵׁי (hollow place, cavern), or equals a pit in לֵי־אֲשֵׁי . Cf. from Ezekiel on. This distinction of two parts of לֵי־אֲשֵׁי became important in Jewish and Christian theology."¹

There are several instances of $\sigma\kappa\iota\grave{\alpha}\ \theta\alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\upsilon$, which is a translation of לִיָּאֲשֵׁי , "death-shadow, deep shadow, darkness." It is used figuratively of distress in Psalms 107:10:

1. Op. cit., p. 1001.

καθημένους ἐν...σκιᾷ θανάτου, "such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death," and of extreme danger in Psalms 23:4: ἐν μέσῳ σκιᾶς θανάτου, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." In all, this phrase occurs 12 times.

When we turn to νεκρός we do not find quite such a variety of terms. Of its 49 occurrences, 31 are translations of some form of מֵת. Once it translates לָךְ, "kill, slay," implying ruthless violence; hence, the wholesale slaughter after battle--the slain: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they might live" (ἐμφύσησον εἰς τοὺς νεκροὺς τούτους).¹ In four instances it is equivalent to הָרַג, "to bore, pierce, wound fatally" and thus "slain," e.g., πλήσατε τὰς ὁδοὺς νεκρῶν, "fill the courts with the slain" (Ezekiel 9:7). The translators also give the meaning νεκρός to two other Hebrew words: (1) מֵתָם, "carcass, corpse," either of humans or of animals; and (2) גֵּל, which has the same meaning.

It is apparent from the foregoing discussion that the translators of the Septuagint considered both θάνατος and νεκρός very general terms, especially the former. Thus, θάνατος can mean anything from that which threatens death to the actual death-process and even the condition, state, or place of abode of those who have passed through it. Νεκρός is somewhat more specific and, outside of the variations of meanings found in מֵת, nearly always means "a dead body, a corpse."

1. Ezekiel 37:9.

But even when we say that θάνατος is a translation of מוֹת , which in turn means "death", we have made merely a little circle and are still at a loss to know what was the concept underlying the word. What was in the mind of the writer when he used this symbol for his thought? Did he always mean purely physical death? Or could there be other aspects? Some of these questions must be answered before we can get a full understanding of the historical setting of the words, and in order to do this we shall examine some of the appearances of the terms in their contexts, noting the uses and meanings there.

We turn first to some of those instances where θάνατος means simply physical death, the dissolution of the body into component parts, the end of the natural life, or the separation of the soul and body. In Numbers 16:28ff. Moses rebukes the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and makes the manner of their death the test of the validity of his commission: "If these men die the common death of all men (εἰ κατὰ θάνατον πάντων ἀνθρώπων), or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me." But should sudden death befall them it would be proof that they had provoked the Lord. Mere cessation of life is referred to when Ruth says to Naomi, "Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (θάνατος διαστελεῖ ἀνὰ μέσον ἐμοῦ).¹ Νεκρός also is used in this colorless sense in such passages

1. Ruth 1:17.

as Genesis 23:3: ἀνέστη Ἀβραὰμ ἀπὸ τοῦ νεκροῦ αὐτοῦ, which clearly refers to the corpse, the dead body, of Sarah his wife; Numbers 19:16: ὅς ἐάν ᾅψηται...νεκροῦ..."whosoever toucheth...a dead body...shall be unclean seven days"; and II Kings 19:35, after the angel of Jehovah smote the camp of the Assyrians "and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies" (καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντες σώματα νεκρά).

Very often θάνατος is used of capital punishment, which is expressed in some phrase similar to θανάτῳ θανατούσθω. It might be that from this θάνατος came to mean the penalty of the divine wrath on sin. The Hebrews never separated moral transgression and physical punishment. They knew of no way of punishing a man's spirit. If he sinned, he was beaten with many stripes. Though the offence were entirely spiritual, such as blasphemy, his body bore the brunt of the penalty. With the Hebrew there was no distinction of body, mind and soul in the matter of punishment--only body. There may be some speculation as to what Paul meant when he said, "The wages of sin is death," but when the law said to the transgressor, "θανάτῳ θανατούσθω," only one thing was meant--capital punishment. This even seems to be the sense in such a passage as Genesis 2:17 where God says to Adam, "...for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (θανάτῳ ἀποθανεῖσθε), although Adam did not die in the flesh on the day of his crime. For this reason many suppose that he died spiritually, i.e.,

his fellowship with God was broken. But this would isolate the passage as the only instance where the phrase has such a meaning, not to mention the fact that the early Hebrew had no conception of a "dead-though-living" condition. It seems that for some unknown reason the death penalty was deferred, the immediate punishment being expulsion from the Garden of Eden and severance of the close fellowship with God. Further discussion as to the relation of death and sin, however, shall be reserved until a later time.

There are other expressions which imply an extreme condition or an impending death, such as "sorrowful unto death," "sick unto death." Jonah says, "σφόδρα λελύπημαι ἕως θανάτου."¹ When Hezekiah became extremely ill it was said of him, "ἤρρωσθησεν...εἰς θάνατον."² These expressions are echoed in almost the same words in the New Testament.

But surely the word "death" connoted more to the Jewish mind than the mere cessation of earthly existence. If that were all, why was his life haunted by the fear of death? And why did he draw back in abject horror when he came to the brink of the grave and peered in? Why was there so much complaining about life's transiency? How account for the pitiful wail of the Psalmist: "Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them

1. Jonah 4:9.

2. II Kings 20:1.

that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength: Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand"?¹ Hezekiah, in giving thanks for his recovery, expresses his fear at the approach of death: "I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world...Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption. ... For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth."² Such gloomy forebodings with which the Old Testament mind contemplated the thought of death lead us to think that the physical aspect of it was merely incidental. What was it, then, that gave such a lurid coloring to this word?

The question is partially answered in a paragraph by Kennedy: "But there can be little doubt that the horror of death was heightened for Hebrew minds by the predominantly religious cast of their thought. The value of the present life is immensely enhanced by the fact that it is only with the living that God can enter into relation. He is conceived pre-eminently as the living God, and only the living can respond to His claims. The true purpose of life, indeed, is fellowship with God. ... Hence a long and prosperous existence

1. Psalms 88:2-5.

2. Isaiah 38: 11,17,18.

is recognized as the mark of God's approval, the most convincing evidence of true piety. 'Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long...' (Ex. 20:12). 'If thou were pure and upright, surely now would He awake for thee and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous' (Job 8: 6). 'For evil-doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth' (Ps. 37:9). For the earlier stages of their religious reflection, death then is that which robs of all blessedness. 'They that go down to Sheol cannot praise God. All bonds of intercourse with the Most High are snapped.'¹ The thought of the loss of this fellowship with God was the occasion of much fear and misery, and made "death" a dreaded term.

Another point to be brought out is that 𐤏𐤍𐤁𐤏 , $\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$, can mean not only the process or state of death, but also the realm of the dead, "Deathland." That this is true is evidenced by the fact that the Septuagint occasionally translates 𐤏𐤍𐤁𐤏 " $\theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ " and frequently uses 𐤏𐤍𐤁𐤏 and 𐤏𐤍𐤁𐤏 in apparently synonymous meanings. Death as a realm comes to the fore in Psalms 6:5: $\text{οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ ὁ μνημονεύων σου}$, "For in death there is no remembrance of thee." Also Psalms 9:13: $\text{ὁ ὑψῶν με ἐκ τῶν πυλῶν τοῦ θανάτου}$, "thou that liftest me up from the gates of death. The inhabitants of this realm are οἱ νεκροί , who retain a negative existence, a weakened

1. Kennedy, H.A.A., St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things, p. 107f.

edition of the former self, the faculties dormant, without strength, memory, consciousness, knowledge, or the energy of any affection. The identity continues; the form persists, so that one can recognize and be recognized; the consciousness is capable of waking up in some degree out of its deep slumber. (See Isaiah 14:10; Ezek. 32:21.) For the Hebrew, "death is the reducing of the person, in the sum-total of his energies, to a nerveless and phantom-like existence in Sheol, the place of assemblage for the dead."¹

A discussion here of Sheol as the realm of the dead might be both interesting and illuminating, but I do not feel that it lies quite within the bounds of this thesis. Suffice it to say that "death" in Old Testament thought included all that was meant by "Sheol."

Still another element which enters into the meaning of θάνατος as used in the Septuagint is the relation between sin and death, or the penal aspect of death. It is difficult to point out just when this connection between sin and death came to be emphasized in the popular consciousness, but it was a natural inference to be drawn. Sin was that which separated from God. So was death. To quote Hezekiah again, only "the living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day" (Isaiah 38:19). When existence was transferred to the shadowy realms of Deathland one could no more expect communion with the God of the Living. Sin and death, then, seemed to be

1. Kennedy, op. cit., p. 106.

equivalents, or at least closely related and interwoven. This connection is firmly established by the time of the writing of Deuteronomy: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, death (τὸν θάνατον) and evil, in that I command thee this day to love Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways. ... I have set before thee life and death (τὴν ζωὴν καὶ τὸν θάνατον δέδωκα)...therefore choose life...to love Jehovah thy God, to obey his voice, and to cleave unto him; for he is thy life."¹ If God was life, then His absence was death. As Kennedy says, "Unrelieved death was felt to be a judgment, a doom. Sin and death were inextricably interwoven. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' Eze. 18:4."²

A good summary of the whole idea is given by Salmond. "Death is in every case (in the Old Testament) the withdrawal of the Divine spirit of life (Ps. 104:29,30). But in man's case it is not that alone. It is not an event of nature, but a moral effect, the consequence of sin. In the first pages of the Old Testament it is connected, not with nature or necessity, but with a breach of the moral relation to God. In the day that man entered on the path of disobedience he entered on the path of death (Gen. 3:14). This penal sense of death colors all that the Old Testament says of man's end. It is in its thoughts where it is not in its words. It is the background of pathetic passages in which the immediate subject is the

1. Deuteronomy 30:15,16,19,20.
2. Op. cit., p. 109.

misery of the transiency of life, rather than death itself. It gives to the thought of death as it is expressed, for example, in the ninetieth Psalm, and to those lamentations over man's frailty and the grave's rapacity, which recur in the Psalter, and in the Prophets, in Ecclesiastes and in Job, a meaning and an elevation which such things have not in Ethnic literatures, the best of which know death only as a thing of nature, and know it not in its relation to sin and to the wrath of God.

"So death is not cessation of being, but penalty and reduction of being, carrying two results with it--removal from the fellowship of the living on earth, and removal from the fellowship of God. The dead man does not cease to be. He passes into a condition of being inferior to that enjoyed here, and impoverished of all that makes real life. ... Existence in God's presence, in conscious dependence on Him, is that for which man is made, and the interruption of this is death."¹

Before leaving the discussion of θάνατος in the Septuagint we may mention the metaphorical use of the term. There is a frequent personification of Death, describing it as a tyrannical power which holds sway in the under-world, e.g., "Like sheep they are laid in Sheol; death shepherds them" θάνατος ποιμαίνει αὐτούς).² It is further personified and

1. The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, p. 199f.

2. Psalms 49.14.

used as a figure of speech for "plague, pestilence, or destruction" in Hosea 13:14: "I will redeem them from death: O Death, where are thy plagues?" (ἐκ θανάτου λυτρώσομαι αὐτούς· τοῦ ἢ δίκη σου, θάνατε;) Cf. also Job 28:22: "Death and Destruction say, We have heard a rumor thereof with our ears" (ἡ ἀπώλεια καὶ ὁ θάνατος εἶπαν). Pharaoh called the plague of locusts "this death": "Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat Jehovah your God, that he may take away from me this death only" (περιελέτω ἀπ' ἐμοῦ τὸν θάνατον τοῦτον).¹ Idols also were referred to by the figure Π'ϩ, (οἱ νεκροί): "They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead" (idols) (ἔφαγον θυσίας νεκρῶν).² Other metaphorical uses have been pointed out, such as "pangs of death," "gates of death," "shadow of death," etc.

Such then is the picture of death in the Septuagint. A summary of it will be deferred until later, so as to include the discussion of the apocryphal and apocalyptic teaching. We shall proceed now to an examination of θάνατος and νεκρός as found in the Apocrypha and the Apocalyptic literature.

2. The Apocrypha and Apocalyptic Literature.

(1) Θάνατος. That this word retained much of its old significance is brought out by citing several passages. The purely physical, colorless aspect of it is seen in Tobit. He, praying for death, asks, "that I may be released, and become earth" (3:

1. Exodus 10:17.

2. Psalms 106:28.

6); and later he says, "I have asked for death" (ἐγὼ ἡτησάμην θάνατον, 4:2). In Judith 7:27 is the statement: οὐκ ὀψόμεθα τὸν θάνατον τῶν νηπίων ἡμῶν, "and we shall not see the death of our babes" before our eyes, and our wives and our children fainting in death. Death as a penalty appears in I Esdras 8:24: "And whosoever shall transgress the law of God, and of the king, shall be punished diligently, whether it be by death (κολασθήσονται ἐὰν τε καὶ θανάτῳ), or other punishment, by penalty of money, or by imprisonment." So II Maccabees 4:47: τούτοις θάνατον ἐπέκρινε, "them he sentenced to death." But there was still the close connection between sin and death, especially in Wisdom. The author counsels: "Court not death in the error of your life" (μὴ ζηλοῦτε θάνατον ἐν πλάνῃ ζωῆς ὑμῶν, 1:12). He also states that "God made not death" (ὁ θεὸς θάνατον οὐκ ἐποίησεν)¹ but that "by the envy of the devil death entered into the world" (θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν τὸν κόσμον).² God, however, "has authority over life and death" (θανάτου ἐξουσίαν ἔχει).³

There is also a frequent use of θάνατος with ἕως and μέχρι to denote extreme peril or danger, or when exhortation is made to remain firm "until death."

(2) Νεκρός. There is an increasing use of this word, although it does not seem to have any new meanings. As usual, its predominant meaning is that of "corpse, dead body." Jud-

1. Wisdom 1:13.

2. Ibid., 2:24.

3. Ibid., 16:13.

ith remarks, "And the river shall be filled with their dead bodies" (ποταμός ἐπικλύζων τοῖς νεκροῖς αὐτῶν πληρωθήσεται).¹ In Wisdom 18:12 θάνατος and νεκρός occur side by side: "All together, under one form of death, had with them corpses without number" (ἐν ἐνὶ ὀνόματι θανάτου νεκροὺς εἶχον ἀναριθμήτους). Sirach speaks of Elijah as ὁ ἐγείρας νεκρὸν ἐκ θανάτου, "he who did raise up a dead man from death" (48:5). Reflection of the Old Testament conception of οἱ νεκροί as the disembodied inhabitants of the underworld is seen in Sirach 17:28: ἅπὸ νεκροῦ ὡς μηδὲ ὄντος ἀπόλλυται ἐξομολόγησις, "Thanksgiving perisheth from the dead as from one that is not: He that is in life and health shall praise the Lord." It is hinted at also in II Maccabees 12:44, which states that if one were not expecting that they that had fallen would rise again, it were superfluous and idle "to pray for the dead" (ὑπὲρ νεκρῶν εὐχεσθαι). Idols are referred to as νεκροί in Wisdom 13:10: "But miserable were they, and in dead things were their hopes" ταλαίπωροι δὲ καὶ ἐν νεκροῖς αἱ ἐλπίδες αὐτῶν). Cf. 15:5 and also 15:17: θνητὸς δὲ ὢν νεκρὸν ἐργάζεται χερσὶν ἀνόμοις, "But being mortal, he maketh a dead thing by the work of lawless hands."

While the two words under consideration retained much of their old meaning, it is quite evident that the concepts underlying them went through a drastic change. In this period there is much less fear of death, much of its awful horror having van-

1. Judith 2:8.

ished. Under the Maccabees the Jewish soldiers became fiercer, being less reluctant to lay down their lives. Their literature, especially the Apocalyptic, seems to glow with brighter promises for a more glorious future. The flickering, smoldering hope which burned so dimly in the Old Testament now bursts into flame. A new and glorious light shines from beyond the grave. At last there seems to be evidence that the prophecy, "death is swallowed up in victory," will be fulfilled.

An explanation of this change which passed over the Jewish view of death is given by Kennedy: "This (change) was stimulated by the powerful influence of the belief in a Divine retribution, a belief which took shape, as we have seen, amidst the strange revolutions of the fortunes of the Jewish nation. There had been various isolated yearnings for uninterrupted fellowship with God. Several remarkable psalms give ample proof of that. We can scarcely suppose that the idea of a resurrection, as we understand it, passed before the psalmists' minds. Rather was it the passionate cry that, in some miraculous manner, God would deliver them from the gloomy lot of Sheol. But in the Maccabean period these cravings and hopes took a more concrete form. Victory had roused afresh the sense of national unity. God's people were still a factor to be reckoned with. The glorious heritage of the past could still be honored and defended. The triumphal mood was not, indeed, of long duration. Too soon the people again became conscious of their bondage. But an inex-

tinguishable hope had been kindled. The present was the Aeon of distress and anguish, in which God's arm seemed to be shortened. But it was only the precursor of the great Aeon to come, when the Divine purpose for Israel should be laid bare in the eyes of all the nations. Who, then, were to share in that era of felicity? Necessarily, the remnant of the people, the survivors of the chosen stock. Yet this did not satisfy the sentiment of the nation. Were the heroes of their history, the men who had shed their blood for the faith, to have no part in the joyful restoration? The sense of justice revolted from the thought. The omnipotent God could rectify the inequality. His power could invade Sheol. He could bring the righteous dead to life again. This bold conviction laid the foundation for the great resurrection-hope."¹

Nevertheless, the foundation had not been builded upon. Christ had not yet "through death" set free "those who through fear of death were, throughout the whole of their life, subject to bondage."² Many hearts would still view death with gloomy forebodings. For them it would remain the synonym for hopeless doom. The "sting of death" was still there. Would the day come when they could say, "But thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord"?

It now remains to give a brief summary of the findings in this chapter and to show the relation of all of this to

1. Kennedy, op. cit., p. 110f.
2. Hebrews 2:14.

the Pauline writings. From the foregoing discussion we may draw the following conclusions concerning the meanings of the words as they appear in the Jewish setting:

1. Both terms are used very frequently in a colorless sense, meaning no more than our expression "physical death."

2. There seems to be no distinction in meaning between the θαν- and the νεκ- roots. Νεκρός is the adjective, though sometimes used as a substantive, while θάνατος always remains true to its functions as substantive.

3. In some instances the idea contained in θάνατος embraces the concept of Sheol. Thus it was thought of not as annihilation or cessation of existence but as transfer of existence.

4. There is a close relation between sin and death, the two being used occasionally as synonymous terms.

5. Both words were employed metaphorically, θάνατος to represent a person, power, place, plague or pestilence, and νεκρός to represent idols or anything which is devoid of life.

6. During the interbiblical period the conception of death underwent a change, due largely to the birth of the resurrection-hope, although it retained much of its horror. It continued to be man's greatest calamity.

But the question may be asked, What relation does the Pauline conception have to the ideas of death which we have been considering? Unless we have strong evidence to the contrary, we must suppose that he employed the terms in their

current significance. As we pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, Paul, being a Jew, quite naturally would be more influenced by Jewish ideas than by those of any others. Paul makes some very definite statements about death. And as we go into the next chapter we shall note from time to time that his conception harmonizes largely, not with the Greek, but with the Jewish ideas.

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CHAPTER IV

ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ AND ΝΕΚΡΟΣ IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

CHAPTER IV

ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ AND ΝΕΚΡΟΣ IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

1. Introductory Remarks.

(1) Statistical information. We noted that in the Old Testament the use of θάνατος was very frequent while that of νεκρός was sparing. In the interbiblical literature the latter gained ground. In the New Testament it has surpassed, being used 128 times to the former's 115. Much of this gain, however, can be accounted for by the fact that the resurrection plays such an important part in both the preaching and writing of the early disciples. They went everywhere preaching Jesus and the resurrection--a resurrection from the dead (ἡ ἀνάσθησις ἐκ (τῶν) νεκρῶν). Of the 128 occurrences of νεκρός, 73 appear with some form of ἐγείρω, ἀνάσθησις, or ἀνίστημι. All the New Testament authors use both terms fairly uniformly. Paul is partial to neither, employing both 44 times. His letter to the Romans accounts for almost half the appearances of θάνατος, and for 17 of νεκρός. In 1 Corinthians he uses νεκρός 13 times, all of which are in chapter 15 and with one exception of some phase of the resurrection.

(2) Lexical definitions. It was quite a surprise to find that the majority of Greek lexicons and manuals contained such a paucity of material on these two important words, despite the fact that the interpretation of a large mass of Scripture hinges upon them. Liddell and Scott, as well as Boisacq and others, have practically nothing illuminating

to say. Thayer takes the words up in somewhat more detail. He defines *θάνατος* as (1) the death of the body, i.e., that separation (whether natural or violent) of the soul from the body by which the life on earth is ended; (2) the loss of that life which alone is worthy of the name, i.e., the misery of soul arising from sin, which begins on earth but lasts and increases after the death of the body; (3) the miserable state of the wicked dead in hell. (4) In the widest sense, death comprises all the miseries arising from sin, as well physical death as the loss of a life consecrated to God and blessed in him on earth, to be followed by wretchedness in the lower world.¹ Concerning *νεκρός* he says: "1. prop. a. one that has breathed his last, lifeless; hyperbolically and proleptically i.q. as if already dead, sure to die, destined inevitably to die; b. deceased, departed, one whose soul is in Hades; c. destitute of life, without life, inanimate. 2. trop. a. (spiritually dead, i.e.) destitute of a life that recognizes and is devoted to God, because given up to trespasses and sins; inactive as respects doing right; b. univ., destitute of force or power, inactive, inoperative."²

The definitions here given seem fairly comprehensive, and we shall not enter more into detail at this point. As the thesis progresses the words should stand out more clearly in their various aspects.

(3) But before we can proceed further into an analysis

1. Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 282f.

2. Ibid., p. 423f.

of the meanings of the words before us we must take into consideration the statement frequently set forth that θάνατος and νεκρός, as used by the Apostle, cannot be broken up into compartments and qualified by various adjectives. Thus we are not to speak of death as physical, ethical, spiritual, etc., but death as an indivisible whole. Denney shares this conviction. He says, "θάνατος is death, not as a natural period to life, but as a Divine sentence executed on sin; it is not to be defined as physical, or spiritual, or eternal; by all such abstract analysis it is robbed of part of its meaning, which is as wide as that of life or the soul."¹ He later modifies this statement somewhat by saying that Paul no doubt uses death to convey various shades of meaning in different places, but he does not explicitly distinguish different senses of the word.² But he reiterates that it is an indivisible thing, all doom and despair, too simply felt to be a subject for analysis.³

Kennedy would object also, not only to an analysis of it, but to the emphasizing of the various aspects. He feels that "for Paul, as for the men of the Old Testament, death signifies something far deeper than the natural close of life. Too commonly a false analysis has been made of his conception. His idea of death has been qualified by various limiting adjectives. Thus the apostle is supposed in some passages to

1. Expositor's Greek Testament (Romans), p. 594.

2. Ibid., on Romans 5:12.

3. Ibid., on Romans 7:10, p. 640.

speak of "physical" or "natural" death; in others of "ethical," in others still of "spiritual"... We believe it is no exaggeration to assert that such distinctions would have been meaningless for St. Paul. ... For him death is one indivisible experience. It is the correlative of sin."¹ According to him, then, not the mere physical experience, not the mere consciousness of mortality, nor, on the other hand, a spiritual doom ushered in by death, but viewed as belonging entirely to the soul, and out of relation to the physical experience:-- not with alternatives such as these have we to deal in estimating Paul's standpoint, but with an event which includes and implies them all.²

It is well to insist that the significance of θάνατος was for Paul very comprehensive. And care should be taken not to emphasize one aspect to the exclusion of all others. But at the same time it would be utterly incorrect to say that Paul had the same stereotyped meaning in mind each time he employed the words. This really does make Paul mechanical. It ignores shades of meaning too evident to be denied. Like all the other New Testament writers, Paul now brings one aspect of the word to the fore, now another. To fail to analyze the word and to determine which color of the varicolored word he would have us see is to miss much of the richness of his meaning. So we shall agree that it is an

1. St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things, p. 113.

2. Kennedy, op. cit., p. 115.

indivisible whole, but we must urge that, like a prism, it has many sides. Else, what justification would I have for the remainder of this thesis! With apologies then to Messrs. Denney and Kennedy, we proceed with an analysis of the meaning of θάνατος and νεκρός as found in the Epistles of Paul.

2. Physical death.

(1) It is unfortunate that the Greek language never developed a word to be the antithesis of βίος, or at least a word to express the purely physical aspect of death. In the New Testament ζωή is exalted and is used not only of mere existence but also of any moral or spiritual coloring life might have. To this word θάνατος seems to be the antithesis. But the New Testament tends to debase βίος until it appears to have in mind only the earthly existence of either man or beast. Now if there were a word to represent death as the close of such a life many passages in Paul's writings which are now apparently obscure would be greatly illuminated. Would he have used such a term in Romans 5:12: ὥστε...διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν, "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men"? Or even if he had had another word would he have let the sentence, τὰ γὰρ ὁψώνια τῆς ἁμαρτίας θάνατος,¹ remain as it is? But alas, it is left up to our little frail knowledge of the word and its context to decide such questions.

1. Romans 6:23.

(2) Although there is a demand for, but not a supply of, an antonym of βίος, we find a great reluctance on the part of Paul to employ θάνατος when speaking of the death of the body. In fact, we may even say that he does not use it at all solely in this capacity. True, he may include physical death in the term, as we shall see later, but even then it is seldom that that is the prominent element. When the Apostle speaks of this aspect of death he chooses some other term, usually a metaphor. Thus he says, οἶδμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐὰν ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους καταλυθῇ, οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ ἔχομεν οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.¹ In almost the same breath he uses another figure, calling it an "unclothing." καὶ γὰρ οἱ ὄντες ἐν τῷ σκήνει στενάζομεν βαρούμενοι ἐφ' ᾧ οὐ θέλομεν ἐκδύσασθαι ἀλλ' ἐπενδύσασθαι, ἵνα καταποθῇ τὸ θνητὸν ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς.² Perhaps his favorite metaphor for the death of the body is "sleep," especially when referring to "them who sleep in Jesus."³ Those of the five hundred who had seen Jesus but had passed on were said by Paul to be asleep: ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείονες μένουσιν ἕως ἄρτι, τινὲς δὲ ἐκοιμήθησαν, "of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep."⁴ In arguing for the resurrection, he concludes that without it "then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (ἄρα καὶ οἱ κοιμη-

1. II Corinthians 5:1.

2. II Corinthians 5:4.

3. I Thessalonians 4:14.

4. I Corinthians 15:6.

θέντες ἐν Χριστῷ ἀπόλωντο).¹ That physical death, at least, had lost much of its "sting" stands out clearly in the interesting passage I Thessalonians 4:13-15: "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep (περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων), that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died (Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν) and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep." It seems in this passage that either θάνατος was too harsh a word or else it did not convey his meaning.

Another figure which Paul used to soften the tone of physical death is ἀνάλυσις, "an unloosing, a dissolving, departure." He tells the Philippians that in either life or death he will be the victor and that he doesn't know which to choose, "συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι" (Philippians 1:23). Finally, when he writes to Timothy, having come to the end of life's journey, he says, Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤδη σπένδομαι, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ἀναλύσεώς μου ἐφέστηκεν, "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come."² For him there would be no death--only a weighing of anchor, a breaking of camp.

1. I Corinthians 15:18.

2. II Timothy 4:6.

Through years of hardship, peril, plenty and want, laughter and tears he had been moored to the flesh. He was tired now. He wanted to go home. Anchors aweigh!

Perhaps such expressions are reflections of the attitude of the Master Himself, who at times apparently refused to use the words in their popular significance. When he told the crowd of mourners that the ruler's daughter "is not dead (ἀπέθανεν) but sleepeth," they began laughing him down (καταγέλων αὐτοῦ).¹ Even the disciples did not understand Jesus' figure when he said, "Lazarus our friend has fallen asleep"; it was necessary to tell them openly (παρρησία), "Lazarus is dead" (Λάζαρος ἀπέθανεν).² It is difficult to tell whether Jesus, in the above cases, was merely using a figure or actually trying to explain the nature of physical death. It is true, as Scott says, that "he recognized that man's true being was something apart from the mere bodily existence, and death thus resolved itself into a natural incident, analogous to sleep, which broke the continuity of life only in seeming."³ This sleep, unlike the eternal sleep referred to by the pagans, was one from which the sleeper would be awakened. Accordingly, we are not surprised to find Paul employing the metaphor and referring to death as "sleep". This gives no ground, however, for the doc-

1. Matthew 9:24.

2. John 11:14.

3. Scott, E.F., article "Death" in Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels.

trine of "soul-sleeping."

(3) Although Paul was fond of using metaphors, there are instances in his letters where θάνατος and νεκρός occur with a large physical coloring. Of necessity, when Paul alludes to the death of Jesus, he must include, with other things, the physical aspect. It was the actual shedding of blood that came to his mind when he spoke of Jesus "becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ).¹ The death of Jesus was a death to sin, but it was more than that. Paul could not separate it from that instrument of torture and physical death--the cross. More clearly, perhaps, than he saw the supremely ethical life of Jesus, which was a death to sin, did he see

" . . . a green hill far away,
Without a city wall;
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all."

Of course, the death of Jesus had a much deeper significance than the death of the individual, as we shall see later. In fact, the Apostle seems to put them in different categories. He glories in the death of Christ as the means by which we are to be reconciled to God (κατηλλάγμεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ). Death, when it came to man, was his greatest calamity; when it came to Jesus it was man's greatest blessing. Thus the paradox, by death He abolished death. A few expressions such as "baptized unto his death,

1. Philippians 2:8.

conformed unto the likeness of his death, etc." will suffice to show that, when applied to Christ, θάνατος had quite a different meaning from that in Romans 6:23 and similar passages. This, however, will be discussed under the heading, "The Death of Christ."

When we turn to νεκρός, we find that Paul employs it frequently to refer to the physically dead as a class. But even then it is nearly always in some connection with the resurrection. Whatever else he may have meant by the dead (οἱ νεκροί), from which Jesus arose and from which the believer shall arise, he at least meant that they had hitherto become corpses. There is absolutely no ground for any interpretation that would make the dead referred to mean those who were without true spiritual life, making the resurrection a rising from a state of moral and spiritual apathy to a newness of life with Christ. Thus the resurrection from the dead (ἐκ (τῶν) νεκρῶν) would not necessarily presuppose physical death. But if this be so, the question immediately arises, How can Christ be said to have risen from the dead when he was never in such a state of spiritual deadness? It seems that the great resurrection-chapter in First Corinthians is directed against those who, like Hymenaeus and Philetus,¹ might have thus construed οἱ νεκροί and said the resurrection is past already. It is true that Paul refers to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, but he makes it very clear that he means something

1. II Timothy 2:17,18.

else when speaking of ἡ ἀνάστασις ἐκ νεκρῶν.

Like θάνατος, however, νεκρός is a very general term. While it certainly includes the physical aspect, as pointed out above, it no doubt goes beyond that. I do not think we would be justified in saying that Paul ever uses it as the exact equivalent of the meaning conveyed by English "corpse, dead body." He comes very close to it in passages like II Timothy 4:1, where he gives a charge to Timothy before "Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead" (Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, τοῦ μέλλοντος κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς). Here the contrast seems to be purely physical--between those who are existing in the flesh at the time of His coming and those who have departed this life. But even so, Paul considers "the dead" more than mere corpses; they were still personalities of some sort.

We conclude, then, that for Paul "death" and "dead", even when the physical side stands out the sharpest, mean something more than the cessation of life-processes or the end of earthly existence, for this leaves the soul unaccounted for. The foregoing discussion would lead us to believe that Paul inherited the Jewish/^{conception} of the Old Testament that physical death is the withdrawal of the spirit or soul from the body. "This mortal must put on immortality."¹ The transfer is death.

1. I Corinthians 15:53.

Enough has been said about physical death as such. It is yet to be considered in its relation to spiritual death, sin, and the victory over death. We turn our attention now to another aspect of death--the spiritual.

III. Spiritual Death.

The student of Paul's epistles cannot fail to be impressed with the frequency with which the Apostle speaks of death, dead, and dying in a sense which refers not so much to the physical act as to a spiritual condition. If he wishes to show what a calamity it is to be out of Christ, he calls such a condition death. To be carnally minded is death. The wages of sin is death. The sorrow of the world worketh death, etc. Or if his aim is to set forth the privileges of being in Christ, he speaks of being free from the "law of death," "delivered from so great a death," "death shall not separate," etc. For Paul, then, death takes on a spiritual significance which almost overshadows the physical. It is into this meaning that we wish to inquire, and we shall first consider some of the passages in which it thus occurs.

(1) A passage which well illustrates this aspect of the Apostle's teaching is found in the second chapter of Ephesians. Here he contrasts the former life as unbelievers with the new life in Christ. "And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through trespasses and sins (καὶ ὑμεῖς ὄντας νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασι καὶ ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν), wherein ye once walked ac-

according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest:--but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with him."¹ Some construe τοῖς παραπτώματιν as instrumental, "by means of, or through, trespasses," while others take it as locative, "in trespasses." For our purposes it does not matter which case it is in, for the fact would still remain that Paul considered the Ephesians, as well as himself, at one time in a state of death. To live in the lusts of the flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, was not life at all. In such a condition, one was alienated from God. This was so horrible to the mind of Paul that he must use a strong word to describe it. So he says, "You were dead." He is speaking, Dr. L.A. Muirhead observes, "from the point of view of a conscience acutely alive, aware that its sin has already set the death-power at work, and foreshadowing to itself an awful end."² This condition seemed to be in St. Augustine's mind when he cried remorsefully as he reviewed his vicious youth, "Such was my

1. Ephesians 2:1-5. Cf. Colossians 2:13.

2. The Terms Life and Death in the Old and New Testaments, p. 29.

life, but, my God, was it life?" (*talis vita mea numquid vita erat, deus meus?*)¹

Meyer thinks that *νεκρός* is used here proleptically and thus means "liable to eternal death." But this is hard to reconcile with the tense of *συνεζωποίνεσθαι*. And as Abbott points out, "it is very improbable that the apostle, in speaking of the working of God's power towards them, would mention only their future deliverance from death, and not their actual deliverance from spiritual death. Nor could the readers fail to think of spiritual death."² The whole of the mercy of God, in his quickening them, is spiritual, and therefore of necessity is the death also.

It is not to be denied, however, that if persisted in, this state of callous existence, which deserves the name death, will become an eternal doom, made final upon physical death. Unless "made alive", the unregenerate man continues in his present condition--death. Physical death barely enters into it, except to congeal into finality the present situation. Alford remarks, "That it involves physical death is most true; but ... is so subordinate to spiritual death, as often hardly to come into account."³ Peake, in commenting on the parallel passage in Colossians 2:13, also agrees to this. He says, "It is not of liability to eternal death, or to physical death as the certain consequence of

1. Confessions, i11, 2.

2. International Critical Commentary (Eph. & Col.), p. 39.

3. Quoted by Hovey, The State of the Impenitent Dead, p. 34.

sin that he is speaking, but of a state of actual death, which can only be spiritual."¹ So then the Apostle is here arguing that the power that raised Christ from the dead (physically) and exalted Him is also the power that took them out of the state of spiritual death and gave them a new life and a new dignity with Christ. But this "raising" or "making alive" of the spiritual life in no way refers to what Paul meant by the "resurrection."

The use of this word to describe the condition of those out of moral and spiritual harmony with God appears again in the same letter. Paul pleads with the Ephesians to be imitators of God and to walk in love. He then strongly enjoins them to shun fornication, filthiness, covetousness and like sins. Because they are children of light they should walk in it and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Since the works of the evil-doer are to be reproved, he exhorts, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead ("Εγείρε, ὁ καθεύδων, καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν), and Christ shall shine upon thee."²

In this case the context would forbid any other interpretation except that of spiritual death. "The dead" are simply the morally and spiritually insensible or perverted.

Such a conception is neither new nor peculiar to Paul's writings. He was merely employing νεκρός in a sense

1. Expositor's Greek Testament (Col), p. 52. So also Williams, Cambridge Greek Testament (Col. & Phile.), p. 94f.
 2. Ephesians 5:14.

common to the other disciples as well as to the Master Himself. In several Synoptic passages Jesus speaks of a death which is spiritual rather than physical. He sees the mass of men enslaved to sin, estranged from God. From this "death" he seeks to deliver them. It is possible that he had this in mind when he told the messengers from John to report that "the dead are being raised" (νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται)¹ and when he charged the disciples to raise the dead.² It is expressed more unmistakably in the saying, "Let the dead (spiritually) bury their dead (physically),"³ and in the words of the parable, "This my son was dead and is alive again."⁴ A distinction is clearly made also in Jesus' caution to the disciples, "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ... Fear him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell."⁵ The accident of death, of the separation of the soul from its material body, can make little difference to the essential man. This view of death is developed by John even more than by the Synoptics. "Death as conceived by John," says E.F. Scott, "is something wholly spiritual. The idea is enforced in its full extent that physical death is only a "taking rest in sleep," and in no wise affects the real life (John 11:4,11-14). ... Death is thus regarded not as a single in-

1. Matthew 11:5.

2. Matthew 10:8.

3. Matthew 8:21.

4. Luke 15:24.

5. Luke 12:4,5; Matt. 10:28.

cident but as a condition, in which the soul remains, until, through the power of Christ, it passes into the opposite condition of life. Life, in the view of John, is the absolute, Divine life, in which man, as a creature of earth, does not participate. His natural state is one of 'death', not because of his moral sinfulness, but because he belongs to a lower world, and the life he possesses is therefore relative and unreal. It is life only in a physical sense, and is more properly described as 'death'.¹

Turning again to Paul, we find him distinguishing between those who walk according to the flesh and those who walk according to the spirit. The former, he says, mind the things of the flesh while the latter mind the things of the spirit. The result of having one's mind so fixed is either death or life and peace, not in the future, but now. "For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace" (τὸ γὰρ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς θάνατος, τὸ δὲ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος ζωὴ καὶ εἰρήνη).² He explains that this is because "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God."³ Here the two ideas contained in spiritual death are blended. We saw that John described the purely physical life, the unregenerate life, as "death"; while Paul spoke of those who

1. Article "Death" in Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, p. 428f.

2. Romans 8:6.

3. Romans 8:7,8.

were openly and flagrantly disobedient and rebellious as "dead in trespasses and sin." Now Paul points out that the purely physical life (κατὰ σάρκα) has a moral and spiritual significance, in that it is not subject to the law of God. Accordingly he can say of the woman who lives in pleasure that she is dead while she liveth.¹ "This, especially on the side of moral inability, is the death which Paul describes so powerfully in Romans 7:14ff., from which, conscious of his helplessness, he cries to be delivered (24), and from which he recognizes that no deliverance is possible except through the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."²

All of this we understand. But there are other passages in which the meaning does not lie so near the surface. Take, for example, the well-known and often misinterpreted (and non-interpreted) words of I Corinthians 15:29, "Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead?" (ἑπεὶ τί ποιήσουσιν οἱ βαπτίζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν). What does the writer mean by the "dead"? Are they spiritually dead as described above, or the physically dead, or both, or neither? It would be useless to append a catena of interpretations of this passage, for I am frank to admit that I do not know what it means, nor have I found an explanation advanced by anyone else that is satisfactory. Perhaps the most like-

1. I Timothy 5:6.

2. Lambert, J.C., article "Life and Death" in Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, vol. I, p. 700.

ly is that suggested by some commentators and supported by the context, which would refer it to the baptism of trial and suffering through which the disciples of Christ were called upon to go, which would be utterly useless and absurd if it had been, and continued to be, undergone for the dying and for the dead. "The use of the present tense in the verb (βαπτίζόμενοι), the close connection of the second member of the sentence with the first, and use of the word "baptized" in this sense in Matthew 3:11 and Mark 1:38,39, are the grounds on which this interpretation may be maintained."¹ But perhaps it would be best to reserve final opinion until the day when, by the grace of God, we shall have the author himself explain it.

Other passages which are difficult of interpretation but which clearly contain to some extent the spiritual aspect of death may be mentioned in passing, though a fuller discussion will be reserved until later. In the first chapter of Romans Paul describes those whom God has given up in the lusts of their heart. The doers of such evil deeds as he enumerates are worthy of death.² The meaning of θάνατος here is not so much the spiritual condition of such ones as the doom pronounced upon that kind of life. Many think too that spiritual death is meant when Christ is said to have abolished death,³ because Paul knew full well that bodily death had

1. Lias, J.J., Cambridge Greek Testament (I Cor.), p. 175.

2. Romans 1:32.

3. II Timothy 1:10.

not been abolished and that it continued to take its toll even among those who believed. But this is to misunderstand the meaning of καταργέω. Paul did not mean that it had been done away with, but that it had been nullified or rendered inoperative and powerless. Its sting had been removed. This would apply to death in any of its aspects.

We have not yet entered upon a discussion as to the relation of death and sin--two words closely allied in Paul's thinking. So important is this that we have reserved a separate section for its discussion. But before entering into it, it might be well to sum up what we found to be involved in Paul's meaning of spiritual death.

(1) θάνατος and Νεκρός are used to refer to the absence of the life of faith, an unregenerate condition which prevails in all men until they are begotten again or "made alive" by Jesus Christ. They are "in the flesh" and not "in the spirit." They cannot be pleasing to God because they do not have the spiritual eyes or ears with which to see or hear Him. They cannot feel His presence. Spiritually insensible, they are like corpses which do not respond to their environment. Truly, they are dead.

(2) Not being sensitive to the leading of God's will, they quite naturally lapse into all kinds of shameful practices and disgraceful habits. Sin reigns in their mortal bodies, and sin alienates from God. And to be separated from God--O horrible thought! Is there a word to describe

it? He chooses the darkest, gloomiest, most fearful words in his vocabulary--θάνατος and νεκρός. Now, in a deeper sense than ever before, they are dead, dead in trespasses and sins.

(3) It may be noted also that there is no time element in the words. It cannot be said that this spiritual death, or the doom passed upon it, is past, present or future. Thus it is not dependent upon the physical process of death either to usher it in or to end it. The death of the body merely seals or makes final a condition which already exists.

This by no means exhausts the elements in the spiritual aspect of θάνατος, but others will be brought to light in the discussion which follows on the relation of death to sin. We look now at what is perhaps the heart of the meaning of θάνατος in Paul's epistles.

IV. Death the Result of Sin.

Sin and death are indissolubly associated in both the Old and New Testaments, and in studying Paul's epistles, one is immediately impressed with the frequency with which the two words, θάνατος and ἁμαρτία, appear together. Whatever may be contained in these terms, it is certain that they are so entwined that they must be considered in their relation to one another in order to a clear understanding of either. At times they seem synonymous. In Romans 5:17 Paul speaks of sin reigning (ὁ θάνατος ἐβασίλευσεν) and a few verses later he says that sin reigned in death (ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν

τῷ θανάτῳ). In other contexts the words are used in apparently identical meanings, and it would be possible to substitute one word for the other without greatly altering the sense. Perhaps this is due, as Dubose points out, to the fact that "the penalty of sin is sin itself; its curse is that it breeds more and more of itself, and the death and hell to which it is condemned are nothing but itself multiplied and left to itself."¹

(1) But the outstanding fact in the relationship of sin and death is that the latter is the supreme penalty pronounced by God upon sin. It is the wages of sin (Romans 6: 23); it is the recompense received by the slaves of sin (16). Sin and death entered the world hand in hand through the transgression of Adam. "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Διὰ τοῦτο ὥστε δι' ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διῆλθεν ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον—).² Dodd thinks that Paul is here following the rabbinic doctrine in which he was brought up, it being part of that doctrine that death came in by sin.³ At any rate, it is quite evident that Paul accepted the Genesis account of the origin of death. It is

1. Dubose, The Gospel According to St. Paul, p. 153.

2. Romans 5:12.

3. Dodd, C.H., Moffatt New Testament Commentary (Romans), p. 80.

idle to speculate as to whether or not there would have been death had not Adam sinned. Paul does not say, but maintains that it was there when sin made its appearance and has been associated with it ever since. He could say to his contemporaries that they who practice such things are worthy of death.¹ Death continually "enters the world" and passes "unto all men," not only because Adam sinned but because "all sinned." "In whatever speculative fashion the apostle may have conceived the connection between the sin of Adam and that of his descendants," says Kennedy, "we know from his whole religious outlook that when he makes the statement, 'all sinned', he can never have in view an unmeaning, mechanical fiction. Apart from any theorising on inherited guilt, we have his position clearly stated in Romans 3:23: 'All sinned (πάντες γὰρ ἡμαρτον) and fall short of (ὕστεροῦνται) the glory of God.' All are blameworthy. Death, therefore, in St. Paul's view, is not something which works, as it were, mechanically. It is, as it speaks to the sensitive conscience, the shadow of the wrath of God."² Thus Paul's view is a reflection of the Old Testament teaching that "the soul that sinneth it shall die."³

The relation of sin and death, then, is one of cause and effect. We have seen all along with what fear the Jewish mind regarded death. With equal fear and dread did his

1. Romans 1:32.

2. Op. cit., p. 115.

3. Ezekiel 18:4.

conscience regard sin. It is therefore quite natural and logical that he should associate the two, making one the penalty or result of the other. Only death, in all of its hideousness and horror, could possibly be a fitting punishment for sin against a holy and righteous God.

(2) That θάνατος and ἁμαρτία have this relation in Paul's epistles is obvious to all and disputed by none. But we must go a step further. We have seen what Paul meant when he used θάνατος in other connections, but what does he have in mind when he relates it to sin? In answer to this question there are principally three lines of thought: a. that he was referring primarily to the death of the body; b. that he meant chiefly spiritual death; c. that he included all aspects of death. We shall consider these in the order named.

a. While it lies within the realm of theology to determine whether or not it was in the Creator's original design for man that his nature, body and soul, should ever be violently disrupted and severed, as death now severs them, it is quite within the sphere of our present study to inquire if Paul included the death of the body when he made such statements as, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression",¹ and "death (entered) through sin" (διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος).² It is quite

1. Romans 5:14.

2. Romans 5:12.

evident, and all agree, that not physical death alone is meant. But many feel that it is the prominent element. Sanday and Headlam paraphrase Romans 5:12 thus: "and sin brought with it the doom of (physical) death." They then add, "Some have taken this to mean "eternal death," chiefly on the ground of vv. 17,21, where it seems to be opposed to "eternal life." But it is far simpler and better to take it of "physical death" because (1) this is clearly the sense of v. 14; (2) it is the sense of Genesis 2:17; 3:19, to which Paul is evidently alluding. It seems probable that even in vv. 17,21 the idea is in the first instance physical."¹ He explains, however, that Paul does not draw the marked distinction that we do between this life and the life to come. Dr. Robertson also feels that "by death in Genesis 2:17; 3:19 physical death is meant, but in vv. 17 and 21 eternal death is Paul's idea and that lurks constantly behind physical death with Paul."² Likewise, Stevens says, "On the ground of the narrative of the Fall in Genesis, Paul regards physical death as the penalty of sin."³ A somewhat modified statement is made by Thomas: "The reference to death as coming through sin is primarily to physical death, though physical death is the expression and sign of the deeper idea of spiritual death (II Timothy 1:10). It is impossible to draw any sharp distinction between them in this passage (Romans 5:12f.)."

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1. International Critical Commentary, p. 131f.
 2. Word Pictures in the New Testament, p. 358.
 3. The Pauline Theology, p. 340.

Even though physical death was in the world before Adam, it was in connection with sin that the moral meaning and estimate of death became clear."¹

It has also been pointed out that Paul took over from the Old Testament and elaborated in his theology the idea that physical death is the punishment of sin, although Jesus contradicted this view. "This prevailing Jewish belief (that death is the punishment of sin) is indeed expressly contradicted in the words concerning the slaughtered Galileans and the eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell (Luke 13:1-4). Jesus there insists that death, even when it comes prematurely and violently, is not to be regarded as a Divine judgment. Sin is punished, not by physical death in this world, but by a spiritual death hereafter. ... Destruction is in store for all sinners; and the punishment cannot therefore consist in death by violence, which falls on few. Much less can it consist in natural death, from which the good can escape no more than the wicked."² It is obvious that Jesus did teach that physical death was not necessarily the result of sin, but we doubt very much that Paul's conception was contrary to this. In fact, we shall see later how his view harmonized with it. But it might be remarked in passing that very often too much stress is laid upon what Paul "inherited", as though he had no originality, no revelation, but merely a ready-made theo-

1. Devotional Commentary (Romans), p. 205.

2. Scott, op. cit., p. 428.

logy which he swallowed in toto.

There is another view which would make θάνατος mean not so much physical dissolution as the weakness, sickness, and sorrow which are its accompaniments and, especially, the dread of the dark underworld, the land of shadows and forgetfulness, into which death ushers the soul. In other words, it retains in the Pauline writings practically the same signification it had in the Old Testament. Physical death was meant but it was viewed in an ethical light. As Stevens points out, "The word 'death' had widely different associations for the Hebrew mind from what it has for the physiologist. By a Jewish mind death is not regarded as a mere physiological phenomenon. When Paul says that death entered the world and has continued to hold sway over mankind in consequence of sin, we should not, in order to resolve the difficulty in question, jump to the conclusion, as many expositors have done, that moral and not physical death is meant. We should rather remember what 'death' connotes to the Jewish mind, which does not separate the physical from the moral after the manner of natural science, but finds the primary significance of the fact of death in its ethical aspects."¹

b. If it can be said that the death of the body is treated as "the point of the punitive sentence, about which all the other elements in that sentence are grouped,"² it

1. The Theology of the New Testament, p. 351f.

2. Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 284.

is evident that there are other elements, and at times such elements assume large proportions. It is not denied, even by those who hold that Paul's reference is to physical death, that the spiritual factor plays an important role. Some think it to be the leading role, others the sole role. We hear DuBose saying, "When St. Paul says that Death reigned from Adam until Moses (that is, even prior to the giving of the law), even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, it is not necessary that he should mean physical death. ... I think it would very much lighten up St. Paul's whole teaching and thought if we assumed that generally he does not mean by death the physical change, but only the spiritual quality and consequences which sin has attached to it. What else does he mean when he says that the sting of death is sin? Extract the sting by annulling the sin, and death ceases to be death in the obnoxious sense. It becomes a blissful and blessed change, a birth or an awakening to something higher and better."¹ This is an extreme position. It exalts the spiritual almost to the exclusion of the physical. Though Paul softened the idea of death with various metaphors, I doubt that he, or any other Christian since his time, no matter how confident he might be of the annulling of sin, welcomed physical death as "a blissful and blessed change, a birth or an awakening to something higher and better." When the time

1. The Gospel According to St. Paul, p. 160f.

comes, saint or sinner wants to cling to the last remnant of earthly existence. And he will give all that he has to put off his last breath even a few hours.

The danger of holding to the view that Paul meant purely spiritual death is evident from a few sentences of Matthew Arnold's *St. Paul and Protestantism*. "Paul's conception of life and death," he says, "inevitably comes to govern his conception of resurrection. What indeed...is for Paul life, and what is death? Not the ordinary physical life and death;-- death for him is living after the flesh, obedience to sin; life is mortifying by the spirit the deeds of the flesh, obedience to righteousness. Resurrection, in its essential sense, is therefore, for Paul, the rising, within the sphere of our visible earthly existence, from death in this sense to life in this sense."¹ That this element does enter into Paul's conception of death is true, as we have seen, but it must not be allowed to dominate and even exclude all others. However, we can be assured that the doom which, according to Paul, is ushered in by sin and with which sin recompenses its hirelings, does not reach its consummation in the death of the body.

c. Perhaps the safest ground, as usual, is found in the middle of the road. Here an effort is made to reconcile the two views. The death which entered by sin is a very general term, and Paul applies it in a more profound sense than ap-

1. p. 143.

pears in either physical or spiritual death alone. It seems that he is not distinguishing between the various aspects of death, but regarding death as a fact in its full significance in relation to the whole nature of man. For example, when the Apostle said, "...that, as sin reigned in death (ὥστε ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ), even so might grace reign through righteousness, etc." he means that "sin reigns, as it were, over a charnel-house; the subjects of its empire are men as good as dead, dead in every sense of the word, dead morally and spiritually, and therefore doomed to die physically."¹

If it would not be going too far within the realm of theology, we should like to quote at length from Beyschlag, who has some very illuminating remarks on Paul's meaning of θάνατος in this connection. He says, "This statement ('the wages of sin is death') is not, according to a common interpretation, an explanation of what we now call death, but it presupposes the apostle's peculiar idea of death, and explains it as the result of sin. What is this idea? It is an error to suppose that the apostle did not include the death of the body in the death which, according to Romans 5:12, has come into the world by sin, or to suppose that because many passages (as, for example, Romans 7:10, "I died") cannot possibly refer to the death of the body, he had diverse conceptions of death, and applied now the one and now

1. Sanday and Headlam, op. cit., p. 143.

the other. He only takes a profounder and more comprehensive view of death than we do; death is to him something that refers not merely to the body, but also to the soul; and not merely to the moment when soul and body are separated, and the soul set free perhaps to rise to a higher existence; it is a state and course of life in contradiction with that communion of body and soul which God intended, which begins long before the moment of separation, but is completed and revealed in that moment in order to remain permanent for body and soul--unless a higher power interposes."¹ He goes on to say that death is the effectual judgment of God which is felt beforehand in the soul, as wretchedness and a sense of guilt, as an inward sentence of death, and is felt in the body as weakness and frailty. Death is manifest not only in the failure of the body, but also in the soul. "In all these passages," he adds, "death is conceived as the direct result of sin, that is, death is viewed only in its relative realization, which is already present; other passages, such as Romans 6:22,23, consider it rather in its absolute realization, as the final result of the sinful development, as the final κατάκρισις and ἀπώλεια of man; that is the main difference in the application of the idea. Now, the death of the body lies midway between that secret incipient condition and this manifest consummation of the process: it is a moment of transition, an acute manifestation of the chronic condition of di-

1. Beyschlag, New Testament Theology, vol. 2, p. 55.

sease, which makes an epoch in its progress."¹

It is not necessary, then, to exclude the one when speaking of the other. Being definitely interrelated, they are best understood when considered in their relation to one another. Sin pays off in both physical and spiritual currency, both here and hereafter. The most casual observer is aware that sin wreaks its havoc and holds its tyrant sway over the physical world, bruising, breaking, blighting men's bodies as well as their souls. This is brought home to the heart with tremendous force when one visits an insane asylum and there looks upon some of the bodies which are reaping the rewards of sin. You cover your eyes at the fearful sight. Something hot stabs at your heart. You see in a new light the words of Paul: "The wages of sin is death"--slow, excruciating, agonizing, diabolical death!

And it is equally true that this death prevails over the human spirit. Much of what psychologists call "personality maladjustments and disorders" is but sin making a down payment. Selfishness, greed, envy, hatred, dishonesty, etc. leave in their wake a desolation which is properly and fittingly called by the only word that will describe it--death! What the future holds in store, only the Almighty knows. But as for the present, "Sin reigns in death."²

1. Beyschlag, op. cit., p. 56.

2. Romans 5:21.

Before closing this chapter, I should like to add a few remarks which might aid in clarifying some of the apparent obscurity of Paul's remarks about death. Some writers have fallen into error because they emphasized the man's concepts (which he "inherited") and ignored the man. And to isolate the word from the speaker is often to miss his meaning, for the meaning might not always lie on the surface. It must be borne in mind that Paul was a Jew, and while he might or might not have taken over the popular concept in the words *θάνατος* and *νεκρός*, he nevertheless would think as a Jew and arrive at his conclusions as a Jew. Now the Hebrew is a religionist and not a philosopher. He does not deal in speculations and abstractions, which method so often characterizes the Greek mind. He thinks in terms of concrete objects, and consequently his language is full of pictures. His abstract ideas are garbed in words of the physical universe, and sometimes the words are to be taken literally, sometimes figuratively, and sometimes both literally and figuratively. The way to the Jew's brain and heart was through his five senses. Characteristic of this mode of thinking are the words in 1 John 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life..." Shunning theories, he clung to facts.

To illustrate still further, let us take for example

Paul's use of the word σταυρός. Would we dare say that by this he meant merely the physical cross, the two intersecting pieces of wood? Yet could we possibly exclude this entirely? In the word Paul embodied all the ideas of sacrifice, suffering and humiliation; but he also included the actual physical fact of wood and nails, blood and sweat. Likewise θάνατος is an awful fact, both abstract and concrete, both physical and spiritual.

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CHAPTER V

ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ AND ΝΕΚΡΟΣ IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

(continued)

CHAPTER V

ΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ AND ΝΕΚΡΟΣ IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES.

(continued)

V. Ethical Death.

In the last chapter we found that spiritual death, besides being part of the punishment for sin, was also a state in which men were estranged from God, or "dead in trespasses and sins." Now we come to study another aspect of death which, for want of a better name, we call "ethical death." This is a death to sin. It is the very opposite of the depraved condition described by "dead in sin," and might be called more appropriately "life". Before being "made alive" one is "dead in sin"; after the process is completed one is "dead to sin." The death thus referred to excludes entirely the physical element, being wholly a matter of the spirit.

The uses of θάνατος and νεκρός in this connection are most frequent in the sixth chapter of Romans. In the fifth chapter Paul has been seeking to convince his readers that grace and life abounded more exceedingly than sin and death. Then in the sixth chapter, fearing that his argument, "the more sin, the more grace," might be perverted, he points out that a continued existence in sin is absolutely incompatible with the new life ushered in by grace. "We who died to sin" (οἵτινες ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ), he questions, "how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that

all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death (εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν)?"¹ The very first stage of the Christian life is death, a death like the death of Jesus, a death to sin. The apostle then continues, "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death (διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον): that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life."²

While the death thus mentioned will include, in the case of the believer, a mortifying of the deeds and desires of the flesh and walking in newness of life, it involves more than that. It has a legal or judicial aspect. The picture seems to be almost the same as that in chapter seven, where Paul describes the legal relation of husband and wife. While both partners live they are obligated to one another, but should one die the legal contract is canceled and the other is "discharged from the law (of the husband)." A death having transpired, Paul concludes, "But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held: so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter."³ In this passage he is speaking of the relation of the believer to the law, but it would apply equally as well in the case of the relation to sin.

1. Romans 6:2,3.

2. Romans 6:4.

3. Romans 7:6.

"A dead man," says Thomas, "is discharged from sin and emancipated from it. Death cancels all obligations and breaks all ties, so that our connection with sin was broken off at the cross, and the bondage by which we were formerly held in its fetters was destroyed by our union with Christ. This general maxim about death putting an end to bondage is thus used to confirm the view of the believer's relation to sin. He is released from both the penalty of sin and also (in union with Christ) from the power of sin."¹ When the old man was crucified, the body of sin was done away, "that we should no longer be in bondage to sin, for he that hath died is justified from sin" (τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας).²

This death, then, is a liberation. It frees men from all claims which sin might have had to rule over them. When sin's slave died, sin no longer had a right to dominion over him, and the slave need no more present himself as an obedient servant of sin unto death. But after the slave had died and sin had marked him off his books, Christ revived him. He then became "alive unto God in Christ Jesus." Being made free from sin, he became a servant of righteousness, and he must present himself unto God, as alive from the dead (ὡσεὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας) and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Now, "sin shall not have dominion over

1. Devotional Commentary, (Romans), p. 10f.

2. Romans 6:6,7.

you: for ye are not under law, but under grace."¹

So the argument, "let us sin, that grace may abound", would be absurd in the light of this death to sin. Paul takes it for granted that when a man dies he is a corpse, and it is not the nature of corpses to go walking around. Having died to sin, how is it possible to continue activity in that sphere?

Dying to sin, however, does not exhaust Paul's meaning of θάνατος and νεκρός in the "ethical" relation. This death is also a death with Christ. If the Romans can reckon themselves to be dead unto sin, it is because "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."² The two are inseparably entwined. The so-called ethical death does not take place merely by the will of the believer, but by his union with Christ. This is clearly brought out in such expressions as "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death," "For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death" (εἰ γὰρ σύμφυτοι γεγόναμεν τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ), "our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin," and "if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." In all these verses it is evident that while the death referred to has its fruit in "newness of life," the death itself is a dying with Christ. Paul

1. Romans 6:14.

2. I Corinthians 15:3.

makes much of the believer's union with Christ, emphasizing it over and over again with such metaphors as "husband", "cornerstone", and "head". We are crucified together with Christ (Gal. 2:20). We died together with Christ (Col. 2:20). We are buried together with Christ (Rom. 6:4). We are quickened together with Christ (Eph. 2:5). We were raised together with Christ (Rom. 8:17).¹ Therefore His death becomes our death, and "it is no longer I that liveth, but Christ liveth in me."²

The death with Christ to sin involves also a dying to the world (Gal. 6:14), to the world's doctrines and precepts (Col. 2:20), and to the attitude and affections of the mind that is set on earthly things (Col. 3:2). It is passing "out of death into life," a process which some call "mystical" death. When the apostle writes, "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God," Lambert is of the opinion that "in this case, at least, it is plain that the death of which he thinks is not the judicial but the mystical dying, the dying which is at the same time the birth to a new life (cf. John 12:24f.) that carries with it a putting to death of all that is earthly and evil in the natures of those whom Christ has redeemed (Col. 3:5)."³

Just how Paul conceived the death to take place, or

1. Mullins, The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression, p. 412.

2. Galatians 2:20.

3. Article "Life and Death" in Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, vol. I, p. 700.

what transpired, we cannot answer, that being in another field. But we might say that he represented this death by the symbol of baptism. The baptism into Christ is really a baptism into His death. And apart from the idea of a death baptism has no significance. "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death," says the apostle. The death with Christ to sin is a prerequisite to the burial and resurrection, and it is only because "we have become united with him in the likeness of his death" that "we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." As Denney puts it, "If the baptism, which is a similitude of Christ's death, has had a reality answering to its obvious import, so that we have really died in it as Christ died, then we shall have a corresponding experience of Resurrection. τῆς ἀναστάσεως is also dependent on ὁμοίωματι: baptism, inasmuch as one emerges from the water after being immersed, is a ὁμοίωμα of resurrection as well as of death."¹

We see, then, that the meaning which Paul attaches to θάνατος and νεκρός in this connection is quite different from that expressed in Romans 5:12; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1, etc. There death appears as the result of identification with sin and as the corresponding alienation from God; here it is the union of the believer with Christ and the consequent withdrawal from the life of sin. The same words, but with tremendously different meanings.

1. Expositor's Greek Testament (Romans), p. 633.

The ethical aspect of death plays an important part also in the death of Christ, because "the death that he died, he died unto sin once for all; but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (ὁ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν, τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ἀπέθανεν ἐφ' ἅπασι· ὁ δὲ ζῇ, ζῇ τῷ Θεῷ).¹ His death to sin, however, does not presuppose, as in the case of the believer, a previous life in sin. But further discussion on the death of Jesus will be reserved for a section on that subject. We turn now to the meaning of θάνατος as seen in contrast with the opposite term ζωή.

VI. Death the Antithesis of Life.

In the mind of Paul death assumed its largest proportions and stood out in boldest relief when viewed in a setting of life. The student of his letters is immediately struck with the frequency with which he uses both terms in the same sentence, and usually in antithesis. A rather full but by no means exhaustive list of passages in which life and death occur together is as follows: Romans 5:17,21; 6:2,8,11,13,23; 7:10; 8:6,13,38; 14:8; I Corinthians 3:22; II Corinthians 2:16; 4:11,12; 5:4; 6:9; 7:3; Galatians 2:12; Philip-
pians 1:20,21; I Thessalonians 5:10; II Timothy 1:10; 2:11; 4:1. So frequent are the occurrences that should we be able to arrive at what Paul meant by life we would have a very good definition of death. Cremer stated it well when he said, "The

1. Romans 6:10.

essence of death...does not consist in the extinction of the man, but far rather in the fact of its depriving him of what he might have had in and through his life, and thus forming a direct antithesis to life, so far as life is to the man a possession and a blessing. ... It is the antithesis of that eternal life which God had purposed for man, and which man may yet obtain through Christ (Rom. 6:23)."¹ In this respect Paul's writings resemble the frequent Johannine antithetical expressions of life and death, except that John's are more often of spiritual life and death.

It is obvious that neither time nor space would permit us to examine all the above passages, but we shall try to consider a representative number of them in order to bring out the various shades of meanings of the words as they appear together.

An interesting passage with which to begin is II Corinthians 4:11,12. Previous to this, Paul has been setting forth the glory of the gospel of Christ. That such treasure should be committed to "earthen vessels" (ὄστρακίνοις σκεύεσιν) seems incredible unless it be for the purpose of showing all the more the "exceeding greatness of the power of God." Ostraca are so easily broken. If they hold together at all it is because of God's presence. But with Him to sustain, even if they are persecuted, they will not be left down and out; even if dashed down they will not be destroyed. "For we who live,"

1. Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of the New Testament Greek, p. 283.

continues the apostle, "are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (ἀεὶ γὰρ ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες εἰς θάνατον παραδιδόμεθα διὰ Ἰησοῦν, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φανερωθῇ ἐν τῇ θνητῇ σαρκὶ ἡμῶν). As soon as one rescue is effected he is handed over to death once more. He always goes about with his life in his hand; but then it is also in God's hand, who does not allow it to be lost. His addition of οἱ ζῶντες heightens the paradox that life is a series of exposures to death: "We who live are constantly dying; we are ever a living prey to death."¹ He then says, "So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (ὥστε ὁ θάνατος ἐν ἡμῖν ἐνεργεῖται, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ ἐν ὑμῖν). Because of what has just been said this conclusion is so startling that some think it is sarcastic: "So you see that Apostles have a very hard existence; while you live in comfort." But as Plummer points out, there is probably no irony. "The first half of the conclusion is drawn from the first half of verse 11: 'Always we the living are handed over unto death; so that it is death that is at work in us.' The second half of the conclusion is drawn from the second half of verse 11: 'The power of the life of Jesus preserves us to work for your salvation; so that it is life that is at work in you.'"² This seems to be the correct interpretation, and if so, the antithesis is main-

1. Plummer, Cambridge Greek Testament (II Cor.), p. 77.

2. Ibid., p. 78.

ly verbal, for ὁ θάνατος is wholly physical and ἡ ζωὴ is chiefly spiritual. Besides, ἡ ζωὴ was active in the apostle no less than in the Corinthians.

The meaning of θάνατος in Romans 5:21 has already been discussed, but we might draw attention to the relation of the words found there. The reign of sin is set over against the reign of grace, and the end of the one contrasted with the fruit of the other. Sin reigned in death; grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life. The contrast is made even stronger in 6:23. Sin brought forth death; grace (the free gift of God) brought forth eternal life. Whatever Paul meant by eternal life, he meant just the opposite by θάνατος.

Life and Death are conjoined as correlative powers in several passages. Heading the list of things which Paul names in Romans 8:38 as having no power to separate from the love of God are θάνατος and ζωὴ. The reference may be to earthly life and death, although it is possible that spiritual life and death are meant. True, Paul did conceive of spiritual death as having power to separate from God, and even being such a state itself. But even when dead in trespasses and sins one was not separated from the love of God. "God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."¹ More than likely he used the words in an absolute sense and included all as-

1. Romans 5:8.

pects--physical and spiritual, temporal and eternal.

Another list occurs in I Corinthians 3:22, where Paul enumerates some of the "all things" which, he says, "are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death (εἴτε ζωὴ εἴτε θάνατος), or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." The grouping here, however, does not seem to be antithetical, and strangely enough, instead of being antonyms life and death appear to be synonyms. If life to the Corinthian Christians was a blessing, so was death. Surely the apostle could not mean physical death as such, nor is it at all possible that he referred to spiritual death. In what sense could he consider death to be a blessing?

It is possible that he had in mind what we considered as "ethical" death. To be united with Christ in his death to sin was really to be made alive, and this was life in the true sense of the word--a blessing indeed. Thus our passage would read, "All things are yours; whether life, or even more--the abundant life!" But this is unsatisfactory, as the term ζωὴ would include this aspect of θάνατος and its addition would be redundant. I think it more probable that Paul meant "death in Christ," physical death after one had united with Christ in life. Those having thus died are "the dead in Christ."¹ That Paul considered such a death a blessing and a privilege even above earthly life is manifest in Philippians

1. I Thessalonians 4:16.

1:21-23: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh,--if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I know not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better." Paul, like John, could very easily have written, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow them."¹

Before going to another section, we may say a few words about the antithesis of life and death as expressed in the phrase ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς. To determine the meaning we are almost wholly dependent upon the context. The "living and the dead" whom Christ shall judge are clearly those who are physically alive or dead. "All shall be judged, whether alive or dead," is the apostle's meaning. But when Paul says, ἀλλὰ παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ὥσπερ ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας, the words are to be understood of spiritual life and death.

VII. Death as the Realm, Existence, or Condition of the Dead.

It is significant that Paul nowhere uses ᾗδης (Sheol) or γέεννα, two words frequently employed by biblical writers to denote the abode of the dead. In comparison with the other writers, he even uses οὐρανός sparingly. Partial explanation, at least, may be found in the meaning which he attaches to θάνατος and νεκρός. For example, in I Corinthians 15:54,55

1. Revelation 14:13.

Paul says, "But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."¹ O death, where is thy victory?²

O death, where is thy sting? (κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νίκος. ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ νίκος; ποῦ τοῦ, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον;).

By personalizing it, he makes θάνατος practically equivalent to a meaning given it in the Septuagint where, as we have seen, it translated one of the Hebrew words for the realm of the dead. In the above passage Paul could have in mind both the king and the kingdom of the underworld--all to be "swallowed up." The tyrant death is also the last enemy to be abolished.³

When our writer speaks of the resurrection, it is nearly always in connection with ἐκ νεκρῶν, a phrase which lends itself to the idea of the departed spirits of some abode. Without the article it refers to the dead as a class, and the preposition ἐκ signifies emergence from this class, state, or condition. Paul does not give a name to the place which the νεκροί inhabit, but wherever they are, they are "with Christ."⁴ And that is all that matters with Paul.

We are not to suppose, however, that the νεκροί of Paul's writings are to be identified with the disembodied

1. Cf. Isaiah 25:8.

2. Cf. Hosea 13:14.

3. I Corinthians 15:26.

4. Philippians 1:23. We are speaking here, as well as in the paragraph which follows, of the Christian dead. Paul still thought with horror of those who died "out of Christ."

spirits of the underworld which are called by that name in the Septuagint. They are departed spirits but not disembodied spirits. Paul says definitely that even if death should bring a dissolution of the earthly house there is a much better one in the heavens.¹ If he had thought that death ushered in a shadowy existence among the shades, he would not have said, "For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life."²

VIII. Death Used Metaphorically.

We may begin with those passages where the word appears to be personified. In Romans 5:14,17 Paul says that "Death reigned" (ἐβασίλευσεν ὁ θάνατος), and Sanday paraphrases, "the tyrant Death held sway."³ Sin and death had their beginnings together, they were propagated side by side, and now they are represented as ruling-co-jointly. Denney would take θάνατος to be personified in 7:5 also, and he adds, "This tyrant of the human race is the only one who profits by the fruits of the sinful life."⁴

1. II Corinthians 5:1.

2. Ibid., 5:2-4.

3. International Critical Commentary (Romans), p. 131.

4. Expositor's Greek Testament (Romans), p. 638.

Paul addresses θάνατος in I Corinthians 15:55 as though it were a venomous creature, a scorpion or a hornet, which is rendered harmless when it is deprived of its sting. The snake has lost its fangs. The word κέντρον ("sting") is used of a "goad" (Acts 26:14; Proverbs 26:3); of the "sting" of a bee (4 Maccabees 14:19); of the "sting" of the infernal locusts (Revelation 9:10).¹

While not a personification, θάνατος is used figuratively in Romans 7:24 when Paul describes his fleshly body with all its passions as "this body of death."² He has been picturing the constant conflict going on between his spiritual self and his carnal self. Then from the depth of his heart comes the cry, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (τίς με ρύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου;). In effect he is saying, "This body from which proceed so many sinful impulses; this body which makes itself the instrument of so many acts of sin; this body which is thus dragging me down to death,--how shall I ever get free from it? What Deliverer will come and rescue me from its oppression?"³ The body of death would seem to bear the same meaning as "the body of sin" in 6:6. It is the body which, as the instrument if not the seat of sin, is involved in its doom.

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1. Robertson & Plummer, International Critical Commentary, p.378.
 2. The manuscripts vary between "this body of death" and "the body of this death." But regardless of which is correct, the meaning would not be greatly altered.
 3. Sanday & Headlam, op. cit., p. 178.

Paul also employs θάνατος figuratively to express a great peril, danger or sickness. When he and his company were in Asia a terrible affliction befell them and they "were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life." This served to diminish their trust in themselves, but to increase their faith in God, "who raiseth the dead, who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver" (ὅς ἐκ τηλικούτου θανάτου ἐρύσατο ἡμᾶς καὶ ρύσεται).¹ He says "death" rather than "peril of death" because he had regarded himself as a dead man. Whether the word is a figure for a dangerous illness, as some think, or persecution at the hands of opponents, as advocated by others, is not clear, but whatever it was, it was extremely dangerous and capable of producing death. A similar usage occurs in II Corinthians 11:23. "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself) I more; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft" (ἐν θανάτοις πολλάκις). The plural here may refer either to the different occasions on which he was nearly killed, or to the different kinds of extreme dangers to which he was exposed. The latter seems more probable, as he goes on at once to mention a variety of things which might have proved fatal.

The illness of Epaphroditus was so severe that it was regarded by Paul as "nigh unto death" (παραπλήσιον θανάτου).

1. II Corinthians 1:10.

The Philippians had heard that he was sick--and very sick he was, so much so that it seemed as though he would die.¹ Paul commends him to them, "because for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death (διὰ τὸ ἔργον Κυρίου μέχρι θανάτου ἡγγίσαεν), hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me."² But it is not necessary to suppose that the phrase always included deliverance from the grave peril. It merely states the degree of danger and says nothing about the outcome, whether it be fatal or not. Christ became obedient *μέχρι θανάτου*,³ i.e., He did not draw back even when death came, although it was a death on the cross. He actually died--"Christ died for us."⁴

IX. The Death of Jesus.

(1) One of the most evident elements in the death of Christ is the historical, physical fact. As we noted above, His death was the death of the cross--the cross as an instrument of intense agony and physical suffering.

"See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

Yes, but it was more than sorrow and love--it was blood--red, warm, human blood. Christ died according to the Scriptures, and the Scriptures said that there was no remission of sins without the shedding of blood, not figuratively, but actually.

"In the case of the Redeemer's Crucifixion," says Moule, "we

1. Philippians 2:27.

2. Ibid., 2:30.

3. Philippians 2:8.

4. Romans 5:8.

see combined the Hebrew's dread of the death-penalty by suspension (Deut. 21:23) with the Roman's horror of the servile cross. Thus the supreme Obedience expressed the Sufferer's willingness both to 'become a curse for us' (Gal. 3:13) as before God the Lawgiver, and to be 'despised and rejected of men' as 'the outcast of the people.'¹

When Paul quotes the words of Jesus, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come,"² we may rest assured that the image thus conveyed to his mind was of a death in the flesh. Apart from the physical death of Christ, the Lord's Supper has no significance. And, as indicated previously, the same is true of baptism.

The death of Jesus, in all of its aspects, but especially the physical, is largely what Paul has in mind when he refers to the sufferings of Christ. In Philippians 3:8,10 the Apostle exclaims: "Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, ... that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death (συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ); if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead." When Paul describes his

1. Moule, Cambridge Greek Testament (Philippians), p. 41.

2. I Corinthians 11:26.

labors and sufferings we see a little more clearly that to become conformed unto Christ's death means both physical and spiritual anguish. "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in the city, the wilderness, the sea, among false brethren." Then after mentioning hunger, thirst, fastings, cold and nakedness, he names an added burden, "that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches."¹ The sufferings and death of which Paul partook, therefore, were both within and without, and Moule apparently misplaces the emphasis by making them chiefly spiritual. He says, "The immediate thought is that of spiritual harmony with the suffering Lord's state of will. His Death, as the supreme expression of His holy love and surrender, draws the Apostle as with a spiritual magnet to seek assimilation of character to Him who died."² While containing an element of truth, this view leaves out the important element noted above. But we shall see that Paul means even more than physical death when speaking of the death of Christ.

(2) What we have described as "ethical" death is another element in the Death of Jesus. His whole life was a

1. II Corinthians 11:24-28.

2. Cambridge Greek Testament (Philippians), p. 66.

death, a death to sin. When Paul argues with the Roman Christians for a high moral and ethical life he bases his appeal on the death of Jesus. They were buried with Him, they were crucified with Him, they were united with Him in His death; and the death that He died, He died unto sin; therefore, reckon yourselves dead unto sin. From this it is clear that "the death" is not limited to the death on the cross. "The whole life of Jesus was a death to sin, culminating in the final act of the cross."¹ So far as sin was concerned He was a dead man, for it had no power in His life; and so far as God was concerned he was alive. His death to sin in this sense is practically equivalent to "the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God." A somewhat different but an entirely plausible interpretation is given by Denney. He says, "Christ's death on the cross was a death to sin...in the sense that it introduced Him to a condition in which He had no longer any responsibility in relation to it. He had assumed the responsibility of it in love, but He had also discharged it, and sin had no claim on Him further."²

(3) But the real meaning of the death of our Lord is seen in the fact that Paul regarded it as a death for sin. Apart from this, the physical death upon the cross has no significance. Jesus' death was not a point in Paul's preaching--it was his gospel; and that death was profound in its

1. Parry, Cambridge Greek Testament (Romans), p. 65.

2. Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 134.

meaning only because it was a death for sin. This is evident on every hand. In Romans 5:8ff. the Apostle says, "...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Christ died for the ungodly, he became a curse for us, he gave himself up for us, he was delivered unto death, he died for our sins according to the scriptures, he is our propitiation, and with numerous other phrases throughout all of his epistles the great interpreter of Christ sets forth the atoning death of our Lord.

In this sense the death of Jesus is unique, and θάνατος has a meaning here that it has in no other connection. He bore our sins, and so his death was our death. "It is Christ set forth in His blood who is a propitiation; that is, it is Christ who died. In dying, as St. Paul conceived it, He made our sin His own; He took it on Himself as the reality which it is in God's sight and to God's law: He became sin, became a curse for us. It is this which gives His death a propitiatory character and power; in other words, which makes it possible for God to be at once righteous and a God who accepts as righteous those who believe in Jesus. He is righteous, for in the death of Christ His law is honored by the Son who takes the sin of the world to Himself as all that it is to God; and

He can accept as righteous those who believe in Jesus, for in so believing sin becomes to them what it is to Him. I do not know any word which conveys the truth of this if 'vicarious' or 'substitutionary' does not, nor do I know any interpretation of Christ's death which enables us to regard it as a demonstration of love to sinners, if this vicarious or substitutionary character is denied."¹ All the terrible consequences of sin, which by right should have fallen on us, Paul gathers together in the one word θάνατος, and places it upon the Christ upon the Cross.

If the question is asked, "How can these things be?" we can only reply that Paul was too much concerned with the fact and its fruit to raise such a question, much less answer it. His it was to proclaim, not explain. He makes the Lord's death at once a propitiation for sins, an expiation of sin, and a redemption from its power and bondage, and leaves it at that. There simply isn't time to argue when a man is glorying that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" because "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."² If the sting of death is sin, and Christ in his death has borne that sin, then truly "death is swallowed up in victory."³

1. Denney, The Death of Christ, p. 126.

2. Romans 8:1,3.

3. I Corinthians 15:54.

X. The Victory Over Death.

As vital as the death of Jesus was in the preaching of Paul, it was inadequate without the resurrection. "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."¹ After the Apostle Paul met the risen, living Lord on the Damascus road the burden of his message, like that of the other apostles, was "Jesus and the Resurrection." From that day onward, by the lips and life of Paul, "Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead (Χριστὸς κηρύσσεται ὅτι ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγήγερται)."² In re-stating his gospel to the Corinthians he says, "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you...that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures."³ Never once did Paul waver in his conviction that Jesus Christ was victorious over death.

Attention should be called, however, to the fact that although Paul says that Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep and the firstborn from the dead he nowhere says that Christ arose, as if it were something He Himself did. It is always, "He was (is, has been) raised from the dead" (ἐγερθεὶς, ἐγήγερται. Note the passives.); "is made alive," and "God who raised him from the dead" (ὁ ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ

1. I Corinthians 15:17.

2. Ibid., 15:12.

3. Ibid., 15:1,3,4.

νεκρῶν). Jesus did not rise; God raised Him. And thus was He declared to be the Son of God.¹ Had He not been God's Son, God would not have raised Him.

The resurrection of Jesus is not only proof of His deity, but it is also the guarantee that God will raise up the believer in Him. This is the theme of the great resurrection-chapter in I Corinthians. If Christ has not been raised then all is vain, all is nothing, and even worse, we are false witnesses. But if Christ has been raised, then the resurrection of the believer is not only probable but certain. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."²

Assuming the resurrection of both Jesus and the believer, for this is no apologetic either for or against it, there arises a question which does fall within the sphere of our inquiry: What is the resurrection ἐκ (τῶν) νεκρῶν? Who are the dead, and what does Paul mean by the term when he uses it in this connection?

As we have noted elsewhere, the phrase ἐκ νεκρῶν is almost tantamount to the "realm of the dead, the dominion of death, deathland." It includes as a class all of those who have departed this life, whoever or wherever they might be, and regardless of whether they were morally good or bad. The resurrection is the emergence from this class of dead ones. Of such Jesus is the firstborn (ὁ πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν

1. Cf. Romans 1:4.

2. I Corinthians 15:22.

νεκρῶν),¹ and if the temporal reference in πρωτότοκος is the more prominent, the meaning will be that He is the first to pass out of the dominion of death. But if sovereignty is the leading idea, the meaning is that from among the dead He has passed to His throne, where He reigns as the living Lord, who has overcome death, and who, before He surrenders the kingdom to the Father, will abolish it.² Accordingly, when it is said that Jesus was raised ἐκ νεκρῶν it is to be understood that the reference is to those who are physically dead, as Jesus cannot be thought of as being among those who were spiritually or morally dead.

When we come to the resurrection of the individual the case is somewhat different. Two extreme positions may be taken. The first is that "the dead" referred to are the spiritually dead and that the resurrection is but the quickening of the soul from such a state. It takes place when the believer is "made alive" in Christ Jesus, when he passes out of death into life. The other position makes the resurrection entirely a matter of the life to come, and states that there is no resurrection apart from physical death. So far as νεκρός is concerned, the word will lend itself to either interpretation.

At first glance these two lines of thought will seem to be in contrast to one another, but closer examination might lead to a different conclusion. In reality they are not op-

1. Colossians 1:18.

2. Peake, Expositor's Greek Testament (Colossians), p. 507.

posed but are in agreement. Spiritual quickening in this life and the resurrection in the life to come are but two aspects of the same continuous process. The former is the beginning, the latter the consummation. Resurrection of the soul from the state of moral and spiritual stupor is but the down payment, the earnest, of the resurrection of the body. In Romans 8:11 Paul declares that the present indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers is the pledge of their resurrection. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you." The fact that God has made them alive and that already they are living a resurrection life in the spiritual sense is proof that God has power also to raise them after the death of the body.

"Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. ... And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all." (I Corinthians 15:24-28).

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