

# The Current Body-Soul Debate: A Case for Dualistic Holism

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## OVERVIEW

THE TITLE OF a recent anthology, *In Search of the Soul*, reflects the current diversity of opinion and occasional confusion among Christian scholars about the constitution of humans as body and soul. Four evangelical philosophers each present different theories of body and soul, only

some of which are consistent with historic doctrine, and the book's introduction raises more questions about the traditional view than about recent alternatives.<sup>1</sup>

It may surprise ordinary church members to learn that, for a generation, Christian academics have vigorously debated which theory of body and soul best reflects proper exegesis of Scripture, sound philosophy, and cutting-edge science. The traditional view that our souls are separable from our bodies has been challenged by many scholars, including evangelicals.

This article attempts to make sense of this situation for those who are not professional academ-

ics. It surveys why the debate about the body and soul developed, introduces the current positions, and identifies the important biblical, theological, philosophical, scientific, ethical, and practical-pastoral issues involved. It argues that *dualistic holism*—the existential unity but temporary separation of body and soul—remains the most tenable view.<sup>2</sup>

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CURRENT POSITIONS

### TRADITIONAL POSITIONS

Throughout history, the ecumenical Christian tradition—Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and most historic Protestant churches—has affirmed that God created humans as unities of body and soul but that disembodied souls exist in an intermediate state between death and resurrection.<sup>3</sup> In other words, body and soul are distinct and normally integrated, but the soul can exist separately, sustained by God. They are unified in creation, redemption, and eternal life, whereas separation is a temporary consequence of sin and death. An appropriate term for this view is *dualistic holism*, which emphasizes the union of body

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and soul but recognizes the dichotomy. Dualistic holism is a general position represented by more than one theological and philosophical definition of body and soul.

There are two main kinds of dualistic holism in traditional Christian thought. *Substance dualism* holds that soul and body are distinct substances (things, entities) that are conjoined to form a whole human being. Adapted from Plato, this view is held by Augustine, Anselm, Eastern Orthodox theologians, Calvin, Descartes, many Protestant theologians, and contemporary Christian philosophers such as Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne.<sup>4</sup> Christian substance dualism could be called *Augustinian dualism*. The other theory was proposed by Thomas Aquinas, who adapted Aristotle and taught that humans consist of a substantial soul that informs matter to constitute a bodily human person. A human is not two substances but one being consisting of a spiritual soul and matter. We can label this theory *soul-matter dualism* or *Thomist dualism*. Most Roman Catholics, some traditional Protestants, and contemporary Christian philosophers such as Eleonore Stump, Brian Leftow, J. P. Moreland, and Scott Rae are Thomist dualists.<sup>5</sup> All dualists affirm that body and soul are distinct and that the soul can exist apart from the body. Thomist dualism is more holistic than Augustinian dualism because it emphasizes that a human being is one thing, not the conjunction of two things.

### **MODERN CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL DUALISM**

#### *Philosophy and Science*

Developments in modern philosophy and science challenged traditional Christian dualism. Already in the seventeenth century, philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) anticipated current physicalism by claiming that the soul results from the movement of parts of the body, and Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) was a monist who argued that soul and body are inseparable aspects of a single substance. Nineteenth-century science further

challenged the distinctness of the soul. Evolution implied that consciousness gradually emerged from matter as organisms became more complex, and thus it claimed to explain human mental and spiritual capacities without postulating a soul. In addition, study of brain functions and injuries revealed the dependence of personality and mental functions on the brain, and many thinkers concluded that mind and personality are produced by the brain. For more than a century, a growing number of intellectuals have affirmed the physical basis of the soul.

Christians persuaded by this paradigm have adopted philosophical theories consistent with it. One is called *emergentism*, the idea that the soul (personality and mind) gradually emerges from the physical body and brain during normal development, but that the soul is distinct from the body, acquires its own powers and characteristics, and reciprocally affects the body. Some emergentists believe that God sustains the soul apart from the body after death.<sup>6</sup> *Physicalism* asserts that personality and mental activities are functions of the brain. Most Christians who hold this view are *non-reductive physicalists*.<sup>7</sup> They claim that the soul and mind are generated by brain processes. But they also admit that the mind and the brain have different characteristics, and that science cannot explain how the brain generates the mind or the mind affects the brain. In this way they aim to preserve room for human freedom and genuine personal interaction with God and other human beings. However, physicalism precludes the possible existence of the soul apart from the brain, and so they cannot affirm the intermediate state. A few Christian philosophers are *material constitutionists*, which means that human persons are constituted (generated, organized, and empowered) by, but not identical with, their bodies.<sup>8</sup> Some constitutionists allow for persons to exist in an intermediate state by postulating that the material body divides (“fissures”) at death into a corpse and a body that continues to constitute the person.

### *Modern Biblical Scholarship and Theology*

Developments in modern biblical scholarship and theology also undermined belief in a separable soul. Studies of the Hebrew and Greek words for body, soul, and spirit concluded that biblical anthropology is more holistic and less dualistic than had been supposed. To explain traditional dualistic exegesis, historians pointed out that the church fathers, such as Justin Martyr, Origen, and Augustine, were trained in Platonic philosophy and often read the biblical terminology for body and soul accordingly. Modern theologians have advocated more monistic views of human nature and repudiated dualism as residual Greek philosophy that is incompatible with holistic Hebrew thought.<sup>9</sup>

But if we do not have separable souls, what happens when we die? Two modern alternatives to the traditional doctrine of a disembodied intermediate state are current. One is *immediate resurrection*: at death we instantly acquire resurrection bodies that generate our personalities without interruption. The other is *non-existence-resurrection*: at death our personalities cease to exist until God raises us as bodily beings in the future.

### *Positions in the Current Debate*

In sum, to understand and evaluate the current debate about body and soul, we must consider three competing doctrines of the afterlife in the light of Scripture: intermediate state-resurrection, immediate resurrection, and non-existence-resurrection. If the Bible teaches that human persons exist between physical death and resurrection, then a sufficient body-soul or body-person duality is necessary to make this possible. Other biblical teachings that a theory of body and soul must reflect include the unity of human nature and the spiritual and moral responsibility of human action—the freedom of the will. There are five theories of body and soul that we must evaluate in the light of Scripture, philosophy, and science: Augustinian substance dualism, Thomist soul-matter dual-

ism, emergentism, non-reductive physicalism, and material constitutionism.

## **SCRIPTURE AND SCHOLARSHIP: TWO BOOKS OF REVELATION— THE BIBLE AND NATURE**

Before proceeding to interpretations of biblical teaching, we must consider the relationship between Scripture, philosophy, and science, which can affect how we interpret Scripture. One reason for disagreement about body and soul is that Christians do not relate doctrine and scholarship the same way.

Theologians have long spoken of God's revelation as two books, the book of Scripture and the book of nature, also called *special* or *supernatural revelation* and *general* or *natural revelation* (cf. Ps 19, Rom 1:18-25). Until modern times, Scripture was regarded as the final authority on everything that it addresses, including topics also studied by philosophy and science. From Augustine through Aquinas to the Protestant Reformers and dogmatists, theology derived from the Bible was the queen of the sciences, and the conclusions of philosophy and science were read and evaluated through the lenses of interpreted Scripture. But modern science posed a problem because some of its conclusions seem to conflict with Scripture. Since the seventeenth century, most Christians have conceded that the Bible's references to nature are not always intended to teach scientific truths. For example, even Christians who reject evolution have different beliefs about the size, structure, and perhaps the age of the universe than the writers of Scripture did. Modern Christian thinkers have handled this tension in two general ways; one affirms a comprehensive biblical worldview; the other views Scripture and science as autonomous sources of knowledge.

Many contemporary Christian scholars continue to affirm the comprehensive authority of Scripture and Christian doctrine. They grant the validity of science on empirical matters but recognize that science is limited, rests on philosophical

principles, and requires interpretation. They also understand that philosophy is not self-validating or conclusive on basic questions of God, human nature, and worldview. Biblical doctrine finally answers those questions. In this way Christian intellectuals continue to affirm the traditional order of revelation and reason, which recognizes the limited autonomy of science.

Other Christian scholars advocate *complementarism*, the idea that Scripture and science do not conflict because they address different topics or approach the same topics in different ways. Each source of knowledge has its own authority. The Bible reveals the way of salvation and other truths unavailable to reason, whereas science tells us about the structure and functions of the natural world. Thus science cannot contradict Scripture, and Scripture cannot contradict science. Complementarism is evident in the maxim, “Scripture tells us that God created the world, and science tells us how he did it.” If they do apparently conflict, then one or both sources is reinterpreted to restore complementarity. Thus, for example, either Genesis does not affirm a recent creation or science does not affirm an old universe.<sup>10</sup>

Different ways of relating Scripture and science are behind the current debate about body and soul. Some of us insist that Scripture provides the comprehensive framework or worldview in terms of which philosophical and scientific concepts of the soul must be construed, and others look primarily to science and philosophy for concepts of the soul. A major reason why traditional dualists hold their position is that Scripture presents souls as separable. Those who oppose body-soul dualism are typically more persuaded by science than Scripture on this issue. They might even concede that the biblical writers believed in separable souls, just as they believed a three-tiered universe, a flat earth, and recent creation. But opponents of dualism do not consider such beliefs to be enduring teachings of Scripture that bind modern Christians. In sum, the proper authority and relationship between Scripture and modern

scholarship is one significant issue involved in the current body-soul debate.

On this question I side with the Christian tradition of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and leading contemporary thinkers, including Alvin Plantinga and John Paul II, who insist that Holy Scripture presents an enduring and reasonable perspective in terms of which the rest of life and learning should be integrated.<sup>11</sup> That is the main reason why I am a body-soul dualist. In addition, complementarism is unnecessary because contemporary neuroscience does not really conflict with traditional theories of the soul, as explained below.

## **THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF HUMANITY: DUALISTIC HOLISM**

### **OVERVIEW**

During the last century, numerous studies have addressed the biblical view of human nature. Any summary or conclusion risks over-generalization and caricature. I remain convinced, however, that *dualistic holism* best describes the presentation of Scripture as a whole. *Holism* means that humans are created and redeemed by God as integral personal-spiritual-physical wholes—single beings consisting of different parts, aspects, dimensions, and abilities that are not naturally independent or separable. *Dualism* means that our core personalities—whether we label them *souls*, *spirits*, *persons*, *selves*, or *egos*—are distinct and, by God’s supernatural providence, can exist apart from our physical bodies after death. The emphasis of Scripture is on holistic unity because God’s revealed intention for creation and redemption is that we are whole bodily persons. Separation occurs only because of sin and death. Had Adam and Eve not sinned, the separation of body and soul would not have occurred and perhaps we would not even have thought about the possibility of disembodied existence. Christ, the Second Adam, took on our mortal human nature, body and soul, to redeem, restore, and glorify it. Our eternal destiny is to be immortal, resurrected, bodily persons on the new earth, not disembodied souls in heaven. What fol-

lows is a brief consideration of the biblical basis for dualistic holism within the biblical worldview—the creation, fall, redemption, and consummation of God’s kingdom.<sup>12</sup>

### **THE PHYSICAL-SPIRITUAL BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW**

A worldview is an understanding of reality as the context of human existence—the natural order, the moral order, possible supernatural beings and/or God, a possible afterlife, and so forth. The biblical worldview includes more than God plus the physical universe. Scripture distinguishes God from creation absolutely, and it views creation as having both natural and supernatural dimensions. Angels, demons, and invisible powers are part of the picture. God and the angels are spiritual beings with powers of knowledge, agency, and communication. Animals do not have such powers. The biblical view of human nature is cut from the same cloth. God made humans from and for the earth, but we are also part of the spiritual realm. We are dust and spirit, natural and supernatural (but not divine) beings, a little higher than the animals and a little lower than the angels.

An issue behind the body-soul debate is whether the biblical worldview is still normative for contemporary Christian thought. The vast majority of Christian thinkers since the church fathers have affirmed a physical-spiritual universe and have rejected materialism as incompatible with biblical teaching about humanity as well as God.<sup>13</sup> But currently some Christians believe that a materialist ontology of the universe and humans can be a friend, or at least a neutral party. I affirm the traditional correlation of Scripture’s worldview and its understanding of humanity.

### **LIFE AND HOLISM**

Genesis 2:7 states that God made Adam as a soul or living being (*nephesh chayah*), forming him from the dust of the ground and giving him the breath of life (*neshamah*).<sup>14</sup> A human does not *have*

a soul but *is* a soul, a single being consisting of formed earth and breath/spirit (*neshamah*, a synonym of *ruach*). In philosophical terms, a human being is one substance, entity, or thing constituted of two distinct ingredients or components. Earth and spirit are irreducible: spirit does not come from earth, and earth is not a form of spirit. However, earth and spirit are not substances—distinct entities—that are conjoined to form a complex entity, like bread and cheese make a sandwich. Earth is a physical or material ingredient—dirt, soil, clay—in bodily form. Spirit is an empowering non-material force—the whole set of human powers and abilities: The power of life and reproduction is shared with other living things, but our personal, cognitive, moral, and spiritual abilities uniquely image God. God combines earthy stuff in bodily form and spiritual power to make living human individuals. The wholeness of human nature is basic—thus *holism*.

The anthropology of the entire Old Testament reflects the psychophysical holism of creation for life in this world—distinct parts and capacities networked within whole beings.<sup>15</sup> To illustrate, the Hebrew terms translated as *spirit*, *soul*, *heart*, *flesh*, and *inward parts* have both physical and intellectual-moral-spiritual meanings. There is no systematic division between the physical and spiritual parts during life which implies that soul and body are distinct substances, as in the philosophies of Plato and Descartes. However, refined versions of substance dualism are not necessarily ruled out by the Old Testament, as monists frequently claim.<sup>16</sup>

The corresponding New Testament terms (*pneuma*, *psuchē*, *kardia*, *sarx*, *sōma*) come from the Septuagint, the Jewish translation of the Old Testament into Greek, and preserve their holistic meanings. Thus when Jesus speaks of loving God with our whole “heart, soul, mind, and strength,” and Paul refers to “body, soul, and spirit,” these terms almost surely indicate integral aspects and powers rather than separable parts.<sup>17</sup> Traditional exegetes claim too much when they appeal to such texts

as proof that body and soul are distinct things.

### **DEATH AND DUALISM**

Death, like sin, was an avoidable possibility in the good creation that God foresaw and permitted our first parents to actualize. Death is both spiritual and physical, separating us from God, the source and sustainer of body and soul. Although some traditional Christian thinkers have argued that the soul was created essentially immortal and indestructible, there is nothing in Scripture which implies that a part of humans is naturally impervious to death and disintegration. The fact that we exist beyond physical death is more surprising than predictable from common human experience. But it is clearly affirmed throughout Scripture.

In the Old Testament, the dead are thought of as ghosts who depart to *Sheol* or *Abbadon*, a dark and lifeless place below the earth, quite unlike Paradise.<sup>18</sup> They are not joyful or active in any meaningful sense, but they do continue to exist even after their flesh and bones decay. Saul's encounter with Samuel at Endor is the clearest example. Samuel is at rest, but he can still prophesy for God. But *Sheol* is not the end. Believers hope to "dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23; also Ps 49:15). A few Old Testament texts envision bodily resurrection when the Lord returns to establish his Kingdom.<sup>19</sup> In sum, although human life is holistic, some kind of dualism is actualized at death. An essential aspect of living persons survives death and is eventually physically resurrected. Thus the Old Testament outlines an intermediate state-resurrection doctrine of the last things.

After the Old Testament, the story becomes complicated. Second Temple Judaism, the Jewish religion between the Testaments, developed at least three different views of the afterlife.<sup>20</sup> One, held by the Sadducees, emphasizes bodily life in this world and does not envision future resurrection or any significant afterlife. *Sheol*—also called Hades—is the final destination of all. Another

view, probably influenced by Plato's philosophy, affirms an immortal soul without bodily resurrection. A third doctrine, developed from the Old Testament by the Pharisees and some rabbis, affirms both that disembodied souls or spirits exist after death and that bodily resurrection will occur at the coming of the Messiah.

It is important to keep all three positions in mind because modern scholarship often acknowledges only two options—either psycho-somatic unity with bodily resurrection, or body-soul dualism with an immortal soul.<sup>21</sup> Given this choice, if we reject the immortality of the soul as Greek dualism, then we must affirm monism as the biblical position. Many biblical exegetes have approached the New Testament assuming that it either presents Old Testament monism or Greek dualism. Historians of doctrine have often accused the church fathers of incoherently synthesizing Hebrew and Platonic views of the soul.

But this dilemma is false. There is no contradiction between a holistic view of life and a dualistic view of death. The Pharisees taught both bodily resurrection and an intermediate state. More significant, a straightforward reading of the entire New Testament yields "both-and" rather than "either-or." The writers continue the holistic emphasis of the Old Testament with respect to salvation in this life and the life to come, and they envision temporary personal existence between death and the general resurrection.

Key texts consistently affirm the general resurrection at the return of Christ. Limited space requires listing them without quotation or commentary. In the letters of Paul, 1 Thess 4:14-16, 1 Cor 15:23-24 and 52, and Phil 3:20-21 explicitly locate the resurrection at the second coming. Romans 8:18-23 links our resurrection with the renewal of creation, which will occur at Christ's return. In the Gospels, Luke 20:35, John 5:28-29, and John 11:23-24 speak of the resurrection as a single event at a future time in history, not beyond time. Revelation 20 places resurrection at the return of Christ and the final judg-

ment. These texts must be given full weight in debates about the biblical view of the human constitution. Thinkers who avoid disembodiment by affirming immediate resurrection must either show that their position is more tenable than the traditional reading of these texts, or that a general resurrection at Christ's return is not permanent biblical doctrine.

Other texts refer to the souls or spirits of the dead, sometimes implying their existence in an intermediate state. *Spirits* in Heb 12:23 and most likely in 1 Pet 3:19-20 are instances. Matthew 27:50, Luke 23:46, and John 19:30 assert that Jesus gave up his *spirit* (not merely his last breath) to God at death. Mark 7:49 and Luke 24:37 use *spirit* to mean a ghost, a deceased human, which indicates that this notion was commonly understood. In Matt 10:28 Jesus clearly implies that the existence of the *soul* is not dependent on the body. Revelation 6 and 20 envision *souls* of the dead awaiting resurrection and final vindication. Paul does not use the terms *soul* and *spirit* for the dead but instead refers to himself, *I* [*egō*], as able to exist apart from his body (*sōma*) or flesh (*sarx*) in 2 Cor 5:6-9, 12:2-4, and Phil 1:21-24. The intermediate state is certainly real for Jesus—his presence in Paradise between his death and resurrection (Luke 23:43). An intermediate state is logically entailed by all the New Testament references to the existing dead in books which also affirm the final resurrection.

In conclusion, although the emphasis of the New Testament is on the resurrection, it also contains a number of significant references to souls, spirits, and an intermediate state that cannot be ignored, denied, or explained away. Those thinkers who try to avoid dualism by affirming non-existence between death and resurrection must show either that their reading of these texts is more tenable than the traditional view or that the intermediate state, like the three-tiered universe, is not permanent biblical doctrine.

If there is any doubt about the straightforward interpretation of the New Testament on its own, then placing it in the context of Second Temple Judaism, especially the doctrine of the Pharisees, provides strong corroboration. In Acts 23:6-8 Paul states his position unambiguously. He identifies with the Pharisees against the Sadducees in affirming the resurrection of the dead. Luke explains that the Pharisees also believe in angels and spirits, the latter term almost certainly referring to deceased humans. Without an equally sound alternative explanation, this text confirms Paul's commitment to the intermediate state-resurrection eschatology.<sup>22</sup>

Current defenders of monism often portray dualism as an academic anachronism held by a few traditionalists who are out of touch with current biblical scholarship.<sup>23</sup> But this picture is inaccurate and self-serving. Although dualism is out of fashion, a number of world-class scholars continue to endorse the intermediate state-resurrection interpretation of Scripture from which it follows. Best known is N. T. Wright, whose 800-page *The Resurrection of the Son of God* is the most thorough study of the biblical texts in their historical context to date. He corroborates the reading of the Pharisees, Acts 23, and Paul's position stated above. Summarizing the eschatology of the entire New Testament, he concludes, "Christianity appears as a united sub-branch of Pharisaic Judaism," which affirms the "two-stage" sequence of intermediate state and final resurrection.<sup>24</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, also cogently defends the traditional position in *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*.<sup>25</sup> It is not a marginal anachronism.

For all the reasons summarized, dualistic holism remains the most responsible conclusion both according to traditional exegesis and modern biblical scholarship. Those who reject this conclusion have yet to produce a counter-proposal that is nearly as thorough, comprehensive, and coherent as the case for the historic Christian position.<sup>26</sup>

**CONCLUSION: DUALISTIC HOLISM AND  
CURRENT THEORIES OF BODY AND SOUL**

A philosophical model of body and soul that fully comports with biblical teaching must be both holistic and dualistic in the ways specified. To test for holism, let's take Gen 2:7, which presents humans as single integral beings constituted of two irreducibly distinct components—formed earth and spirit—material and immaterial ingredients. Some philosophical theories fit this description better than others.

Full-blown substance dualism recognizes distinct constituents but treats them as substances (distinct entities), which implies that humans are compounds of two things, a body and a soul. This seems more dualistic and less holistic than the biblical picture. Thomism comes closer because it affirms that two distinct ingredients constitute one living being. But like Augustinian dualism, it holds that the spiritual component is a subsistent soul. It also claims that the soul forms the body, whereas the body is already formed by God in Gen 2:7 and Ezekiel 37. So the fit is not exact.

Physicalism, materialism, and emergentism do not fit the holism of Genesis 2 very well because, although they distinguish spirit and matter, they hold that spirit is generated by matter, which denies that there are two irreducible original principles. At least emergentism affirms that the soul or person is a non-physical organization or force-field distinct from the body.

With respect to dualism, conformity to Scripture requires a theory to allow that the soul, spirit, person, self, or ego is sufficiently distinct from the brain and bodily organism that it can exist when the body dies, perhaps sustained only by God's miraculous power. Obviously both Augustinian and Thomist dualisms meet this condition. They conceive of the body-soul relation differently, but both affirm that the conscious, active soul is separable from the body.

Emergentism can likewise be sufficiently dualistic. Although it begins as physicalism, it holds that the soul or person who emerges from the

body is a distinct organization, like a magnetic field is distinct from its magnet. God can miraculously sustain persons in existence without the bodies on which they normally depend. However, emergentists who do not affirm supernatural miracles cannot suppose that persons exist when their brains cease to function.

Even material constitutionists have devised a theory of possible personal survival. Miraculously, atomic fission might take place at death, resulting in two bodies—the corpse and another body that continues to constitute the person. The soul is sustained by a body in the intermediate state.

Only physicalism precludes personal existence between death and resurrection. If the soul or person is identical with or totally dependent on processes in the neurosystem, then when that system ceases functioning, there is nothing left for God to sustain. Physicalists must either affirm an immediate bodily resurrection or non-existence between death and resurrection.

In conclusion, Thomism is the body-soul theory that most closely fits both holism and dualism. Augustinian dualism is a near second, a bit more dualistic than holistic. Emergentism and material constitutionism qualify in some respects, but they do not recognize the basic duality of dimensions and constituents affirmed by the worldview and anthropology of Scripture. Physicalism is the most difficult to reconcile with Scripture.

A model that would fit Gen 2:7 holism and post-mortem dualism is this: God originally created humans as single personal-bodily beings from distinct physical and spiritual components, not by conjoining an existent soul to an existent body. Human reproduction passes both physical and spiritual aspects to our offspring.<sup>27</sup> What continues after death—the soul or spirit—is not simply one original component without the other. Rather, God supernaturally sustains the immaterial form of the whole person without the matter of his/her physical body but still possessing consciousness, bodily shape, and location. (God preserves us in this “unnatural” condition just as



he could have chosen to sustain our heads in existence separate from our bodies.) Samuel in Sheol and the martyrs under the altar in Revelation 6 still wear robes. Ghosts in the Bible and in world literature still have immaterial bodily form and location, as do the deceased envisioned in near-death experiences. Perhaps the dead do retain non-physical bodily form and presence between death and resurrection.

### **PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN THE BODY-SOUL DEBATE**

A Christian theory of body and soul must qualify as good philosophy as well as sound theology. It must be conceptually clear, logically coherent, and adequately address such standard philosophical problems as personal identity, interaction between mind and body, and freedom of the will. We briefly survey how the five theories fare on these three topics.<sup>28</sup>

#### **PERSONAL IDENTITY**

Each human remains the very same being throughout his or her existence even though we constantly change from the moment we are conceived, and even though our awareness of self-identity may change or be lost. Individual identity is metaphysical and logical, not just a matter of fact or of self-consciousness. It is absolutely impossible for me to be another person or for there to be two of me. A fully adequate philosophy of human nature must account for personal identity in this life and the life to come.

Dualist theories and any theory that affirms the intermediate state should be able to do so. The soul, spirit, or core person that exists during this life endures after death until bodily resurrection and beyond. One and the same being continues from the beginning of existence forever, whether or not there is continuity between the earthly body and resurrection body.

Theories that make the person and mind dependent upon the body and brain have problems with identity in the afterlife. Immediate res-

urrection postulates that we receive resurrection bodies the instant we die. But if the person is generated by the body, then the resurrected person is a different person than the earthly person because the resurrection body is different than the earthly body. Non-existence until final resurrection also has this problem, compounded by a gap in existence. Is the resurrection body that comes into existence after perhaps millennia identical with the earthly body, especially if there is no part of one that is part of the other? Perhaps the resurrection body is a different entity made of wholly different stuff. And if the person is generated by the body, then perhaps the person is different even though she appears the same. What is the basis for essential individual identity?

Those who hold these views of the afterlife respond that identity does not depend on continuous existence but on having a unique set of characteristics. Bob Smith is physically and personally unique. If someone exactly like him is immediately resurrected or resurrected after a period of non-existence, then that person is Bob Smith. But this explanation is not sufficient. It does not preclude the possibility of multiple replication—that two or more persons with Smith's characteristics could come into existence—each one qualifying as Smith, which is impossible. Defenders respond that God could or would not create multiple replications. But even so, the mere conceptual possibility illustrates that individual identity is contingent for the immediate resurrection and non-existence until resurrection scenarios, whereas it is a matter of necessity for common sense and most philosophy.

This issue is not decisive. But it demonstrates that the dualist, intermediate state-final resurrection position of Christian tradition is philosophically stronger on personal identity than most of its modern challengers.

#### **MIND-BODY INTERACTION AND NEUROSCIENCE**

Common sense and traditional philosophy recognize that the body affects the mind, will, and

personality—currently referred to as “bottom-up causation”—and vice-versa—“top-down causation.” Bottom-up, hot metal on one’s hand causes pain, and drinking too much alcohol impairs one’s mind and will. Top-down, trying to fold one’s hands in prayer moves one’s hands, causing many other events in the brain and body to occur as well. Soul, spirit, mind, will, brain, and body interact. No plausible philosophy can deny or fail to allow for this fact.

Thus an adequate philosophy must recognize that mind and body are both capable of acting and being acted upon by the other. Each has its own organization, activities, and initiatives. But no philosophy is capable of identifying and explaining the causal chain or mechanism by which such interaction occurs because body and mind are different categories of being with utterly different characteristics. Strictly speaking, all we can do is notice their correlation. For the same reason, science cannot help to explain the causal connections. It can explain how genes cause blue eyes and how smoking causes cancer because these processes are entirely bio-physical and partially accessible to scientific observation. But no one can observe the brain secreting thoughts, or decisions triggering synapses. We simply notice the regular sequential correlation of physical and mental states and events and conclude that there is a causal relationship.

The mind-body question is a matter of philosophical modeling, not scientific explanation—metaphysical, not physical. Honest physicalists admit that science cannot justify physicalism.<sup>29</sup> Current brain science is conceptually compatible with various theories of body and soul. In fact some prominent neuroscientists are dualists.<sup>30</sup> This point cannot be over-emphasized, because many thinkers assume or claim that neuroscience vindicates or favors physicalism and the evolution of the soul. Neither substance dualism nor the traditional reading of Scripture are incompatible with the verified results of contemporary science. Dualistic holism can still function as the

framework for scientific study of the brain and the philosophical mind-body problem. Christians can retain a robust view of the authority and scope of biblical teaching and avoid complementarism.

Both kinds of dualism and emergentism assert that soul/mind and body are sufficiently distinct and capable of engaging in reciprocal action. Physicalism and materialism handicap themselves because they assert that the soul, personality, and mind are functions of the brain, which has evolved from matter. This dependence implies that our personal and mental capacities are entirely subject to the forces and laws of physics. No room is left for uniquely immaterial events and causes. For materialism and physicalism, the physical causes the mental, but it is hard to see how the mental can be non-physical or causally affect bio-physical processes. Non-reductive physicalists attempt to mitigate the problem. They concede that the causal dependence of the mind on the brain cannot be explained by science, and that the mind does have different characteristics and processes than the organism upon which it “supervenies.” They also affirm that there are “top-down” effects of the mind on the brain as well as “bottom-up” effects of the brain on the mind. But the problem remains if mind is generated and governed by physical reality. The concessions of non-reductivism do not leave room for a possible resolution; they circumvent the problem. The implication of physicalism is that physical forces rule, whether or not we can explain how. Bottom-up causation is real, whereas top-down causation is merely how interacting brain processes appear in consciousness. Dualism and emergentism are better suited to accommodate genuine interaction.

Another philosophical problem is even deeper, and it also afflicts emergentism: It does not seem metaphysically possible for merely physical reality to cause mental reality in the first place. According to the principle of sufficient reason, a cause must be capable of producing its effect. It is possible for a magnet to produce a magnetic field, for winds to form a tornado, and for a single cell to

become an organism, because these effects are different modes of the same kind or level of being. But is it possible for space to produce color, for brain events to generate justice, for hormones to become selfless love? Mental events and qualities are utterly different than physical ones. Given the principle of sufficient reason, it is perennially questionable whether physical stuff can produce thoughts, values, and aspirations, much less the spirits, souls, minds, and persons who have them, either by the long process of evolution or in the development of an individual from a fertilized egg. As stated above, there is no scientific way to determine whether matter can produce mind without begging the philosophical question. All forms of materialism, physicalism, and emergentism are open to the question of sufficient reason. Maybe they are valid. But maybe they invoke metaphysical magic—attempting to pull an immaterial rabbit out of a material hat. Dualism begins with spiritual as well as physical ingredients, and so in principle it does have sufficient reason for our distinctly spiritual and physical capacities.

But there are challenges to both kinds of dualism as well. Philosophers have two issues with substance dualism. First, is it justified to conclude that there are two different kinds of entity—a soul/mind and a physical body—from the differences between physical and mental properties and events? Second, the two substances are so completely different that it seems impossible for them to interact. Thomist dualism also has its critics. One objection is that its concept of the soul as a subsistent principle seems to be an incoherent mix of a substance (entity) and a principle (form individuated in matter). Another objection is from science: the genetic code, not the soul, structures the body and determines some personal-mental characteristics.

In the end, all philosophers adopt models of the body-soul relation after weighing their strengths and weaknesses. No position is entirely free from objections or convincing to all. All philosophers offer reasoned responses to their critics. Some,

both monists and dualists, hold their views primarily for philosophical and/or scientific reasons. Others, including myself, look for a tenable philosophical model of body and soul that fits best with biblical teaching.

#### **RESPONSIBLE AGENCY AND FREEDOM OF THE WILL**

Common human experience confirms the biblical teaching that humans are responsible agents—beings who know and can do what is right or wrong. To be sure, we are determined, limited, enabled, and influenced in many ways by physical, emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual factors, including our sinful nature. Normally, however, we are also significantly free. These involuntary factors do not make us do what we do. We are moral-spiritual agents who are able and obligated to deliberate among possible actions and motives, choose the right ones, and act accordingly. Our wills are free because the determinations, limitations, inclinations, beliefs, and commitments that bear on our choices and actions do not cause them, or make them inevitable, or (usually) make only one of them viable. Even if I love God and affirm his commandments, I can choose not to obey him. Neither God's sovereignty nor our sinful nature eliminates the freedom and responsibility of the will.

This capacity for free choice is crucial, because if our actions are determined, then it is hard to see how we are morally responsible for them. To illustrate, a person who is hypnotized to tell a lie is not morally responsible for lying. Similarly, we distinguish between criminally responsible and legally incompetent persons. Freedom is crucial in the biblical perspective because if the sin of Adam and Eve was the inevitable result of their nature, then sin is God's fault—wired into the world he created. Christian theology teaches that sin was foreknown and permitted by God, but God is not the cause of sin, and it was genuinely avoidable in his good creation. In sum, Scripture and human experience require any Christian philosophy of

body and soul to ground a robust account of freedom and responsibility, as well as recognizing our natural and sinful limitations.

Dualist and emergent theories of body and soul can provide full accounts of responsible agency because they consider the soul, mind, and person distinct from and sufficiently independent of the body and brain that deliberation and action can transcend natural determination and physical causality in the requisite sense.

Physicalist and materialist theories have a problem because they imply that all things and events in the world consist of physical stuff and operate according to physical laws. In the material world, everything that happens is causally determined with the possible exception of subatomic randomness. If human minds are generated and operated by brains, and if brains are physical things, then human minds, including their choices and actions, operate according to the laws of physics. Thus they are entirely causally determined except for subatomic randomness, which is irrational spontaneity, not rational-moral freedom. So if physicalism or materialism is true, then there is no genuine moral freedom. Our sense of freedom and responsibility is an illusion allowed by our ignorance of what actually causes our choices and actions. The apparent influence of our minds and decisions on our brains, bodies, and the world—top-down causality—is merely the reflection of complex brain functions interacting with stimuli from the external world, not genuine mental causation of physical events. Physicalism and materialism entail determinism of the will. There is no wiggle room.

Non-reductive physicalism attempts to wiggle, however, by claiming that there is room for freedom because science cannot “reduce” our thoughts, deliberations, and efforts to brain events and their interaction with the external world. But this move changes the subject and avoids the problem, as stated above. Physicalism is a metaphysical position that entails determinism of the will. Determinism does not evaporate just because someone concedes that physics cannot

explain how it occurs. Non-reductivism is an epistemological position—addressing what we cannot know. Physicalism is a metaphysical position—addressing the nature of what there is. In my view, it is unpersuasive and fallacious to claim that real moral responsibility is possible if physicalism is non-reductive instead of reductive.

The concept of freedom actually operative here is *compatibilism*, the idea that moral freedom and responsibility are compatible with complete determination of the will. Compatibilism is deterministic because it asserts that one’s choices are caused by one’s nature, desires, beliefs, and inclinations in response to the factors of one’s situation. The combination of personal and situational factors collectively determines one choice and eliminates others. Yet that choice is free and responsible if it expresses one’s own nature, beliefs, and values, and it is neither internally compelled (like obsessive behavior) nor externally coerced (like a gun to one’s head) against one’s will. In this way determinism, freedom, and moral responsibility are thought to be compatible. Respected thinkers, including Hume, Hegel, William James, and Jonathan Edwards, are compatibilists (but not physicalists). Perhaps compatibilism is tenable for Christians if it rejects physicalism and affirms genuine spiritual, moral, and intellectual factors. But many philosophers, determinists and libertarians alike, consider it incoherent. Either a choice is wholly determined or it isn’t. It can’t be both.<sup>31</sup>

Body-soul dualism does not guarantee a Christian view of the will. A dualist could affirm determinism or deny the sinful nature of the soul. But dualism does provide space for a Christian view of moral freedom and responsibility that physicalism and materialism do not. Emergentism likewise allows sufficient personal transcendence of and affect upon the physical world, but it may be guilty of metaphysical magic, as suggested above, for claiming that moral-spiritual agents emerge from purely physical organisms.

## **ETHICAL ISSUES AND THE BODY-SOUL DEBATE**

Moral responsibility is a crucial issue for our status as persons, but it is not the only one. Theories of body and soul also have implications for fundamental ethical questions about persons at the beginning, end, and during life—issues such as abortion, fetal research, euthanasia, and treatment of the severely impaired. If a human being is essentially and irreducibly both soul/person and body, then biological death is always the death of a human person, even if that soul/person does not yet have, no longer has, or never in this life will have the capacities for self-consciousness, thought, communication, or moral and spiritual activity. But if the soul/person is produced by the body or is just the brain's capacities higher human activity, then a human body is not always a human person, and biological death is not always the death of a person. Embryos and fetuses are not yet persons; babies with severe impairments will not become persons; wives in vegetative states and grandparents with advanced dementia are no longer persons.

It is easy to see that body-soul dualism is a much stronger foundation for "right to life" ethics than physicalist, materialist, or emergentist theories. The latter do not regard the soul/person as an essentially original and enduring component of a human being. Because the soul/person is generated and sustained by the brain, if the brain does not yet function in those ways, or does not function properly, then the soul/person does not exist or is diminished. Active or passive termination of a sufficiently non-functioning biological life is not the death of a human person. For the dualist, however, a human being is always a soul/person even if he or she currently lacks the capacities to function as a person.

Of course emergentists, physicalists, and materialists can reject abortion, embryonic experimentation, and euthanasia for other reasons. They can argue that abortion and fetal research are wrong because they kill *potential* persons, or that euthanasia is wrong because the impaired and elderly

are members of the human family who deserve our care, or simply that such acts are against God's will. Thus it is unfair to allege that thinkers who hold these body-soul theories are weak on Christian ethics. The point remains, however, that dualistic holism provides a stronger foundation for right to life ethics than the other theories do.<sup>32</sup>

## **PRACTICAL AND PASTORAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE BODY-SOUL DEBATE**

In one way or another, all the issues that arise in the body-soul debate are matters of practical and pastoral concern because all God's truth is important for our spiritual health and discipleship. I close with four specific concerns: dealing with death, trusting doctrine, faithful academic witness, and holistic practice.

### ***WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?***

The body-soul debate can be troubling to ordinary Christians because it calls into question deeply-held beliefs about death and the afterlife. We might not be bothered by the idea of an immediate resurrection, but non-existence until the resurrection can be disturbing. "Do you mean that Mother is not in heaven with Jesus?" "So when I die today, I'll be nothing but a memory in God's mind, possibly for centuries?" Some find these thoughts deeply upsetting. It is little comfort to point out that the dead could not be conscious of their non-existence but would instantly experience resurrection.

If traditional doctrine were clearly tenuous or mistaken, it would be proper to re-educate ordinary believers in a pastoral manner. But the doctrine stands up well. Those Christians who challenge it publicly should acknowledge its durability, and they should take responsibility for the effect that their views might have on the spiritual security of less educated believers.

### ***HAS THE CHURCH BEEN WRONG?***

Body, soul, and the afterlife are among many

doctrines currently challenged by Christian intellectuals. Among evangelicals, open theism and the theological eclecticism of the emerging church are examples. The argument of revisionists is standard: Either the traditional doctrine got the Bible wrong, or it was once a valid reading that is now obsolete, or Scripture can be interpreted in different ways. But no one can claim that the traditional doctrine is the only right one.

At stake is the trust of ordinary Christians in the church's proclamation of biblical truth. If the best Christian minds got it wrong for centuries, or if core doctrines are merely possible readings of Scripture, then we ought to embrace doctrinal pluralism or agnosticism. Constant criticism and revision without affirming what endures exacerbate the pernicious dynamics of postmodernism (which also has healthy dynamics).

I recognize the fallibility of human formulations and the diversity within Christianity. Debate and reform have their rightful place. But disagreements do not mean that truth is inaccessible. In fact debates have validated common doctrinal affirmations that underlie our diversity.<sup>33</sup> The Nicene Creed is a powerful example. These core doctrines stand up well against modern objections. Revisionists occasionally prevail on peripheral issues. But their challenges usually reflect non-traditional views of Scripture, biblical authority, hermeneutics, and/or the church's role and responsibility for preserving biblical truth.

The body-soul relation—dualistic holism—and the intermediate state-resurrection doctrine of the last things are part of the traditional ecumenical consensus, still affirmed by Orthodox, Catholic, and most historic Protestant churches. I have argued that this position is more tenable than its modern challengers, given traditional views of Scripture and Christian scholarship, and that the challenges arise mainly from weighting science and philosophy more than Scripture. My concern is that Christians who are not academics realize what is at stake in the body-soul debate and not have their confidence in established doctrine undermined.

#### **CHRISTIAN ACADEMIC WITNESS**

I have a similar concern about Christian witness in professional scholarship. Two positive features of postmodernism are its challenge to the monolithic secularism of modernism and its openness to diverse meta-perspectives. Christians should take advantage of this attitude to produce academically excellent mainstream scholarship from a Christian perspective. I believe that the classical Christian worldview approach to all of scholarship is a more faithful witness than complementarism, which concedes unwarranted autonomy to philosophy and science. I agree that Scripture does not speak in scientific language or present scientific explanations, and that science does have its own sphere of authority. But the body-soul question is not primarily a scientific issue, as explained above. It is more a matter of philosophy shaped by worldview and theology. In addition, apologetics ought to press the case for as many Christian truth-claims as it can, not preemptively concede ground in case scientific materialism becomes compelling.

I respect the Christian conviction and commitment to truth that motivates those with whom I disagree. But I regret what I regard as concessions to modern biblical scholarship, theology, philosophy, and science. I am especially concerned about the effect of their approach on intellectually immature college and seminary students whose doctrine and worldview are still being formed. Their approach models accommodation to culture, not confrontation of culture with biblical truth. Those who disagree with the traditional Christian view of body, soul, and the afterlife ought at least to acknowledge its strength as they present their alternatives.

#### **HOLISTIC CHRISTIAN LIFE AND MINISTRY**

Orthodoxy and orthopraxis go together. Like most Christians doctrines, models of body and soul can shape Christian life and ministry, so it is worth examining their practical implications.<sup>34</sup> Scripture teaches that body and soul are integral

to creation, redemption, and the Christian life. Thus our approach to Christian living and ministry should be comprehensive and holistic. But Scripture also teaches that spiritual well-being is more important than physical well-being in this life and that our eternal destiny is more important than the quality of our present life. Holistic discipleship and ministry must be consistent with Scripture's spiritual focus and Kingdom-seeking priorities.

Critics have frequently blamed traditional dualism for distortions of the Christian life. They allege that a real body-soul distinction promotes otherworldly spiritualism, individualism, concern for soul but not body, culturally insensitive evangelism, and other practical aberrations. They claim that monism is more conducive to biblically obedient life and ministry.

But these broad allegations are largely misdirected or false. Although some dualists have advocated reductive views of the Christian life, most have attempted to practice dualistic holism. Most missionaries have fed the hungry, tended the sick, and educated people for a better life in their cultures as they preached the gospel of salvation. Most Christians have contributed to the common good as well as cultivating personal holiness and piety. In the end, the entire issue of anthropology and orthopraxis is probably irrelevant because until recently virtually all Christians—whether holistic or otherworldly, zealous or slothful—were dualists. Failures of orthopraxis are due mostly to factors such as sloth and greed, rather than body-soul dualism or monism.

Furthermore, simply endorsing monism is inadequate. Denying a separable soul does emphasize that humans are bodily beings made for life in the world. But if the replacement for dualism is physicalism or materialism, then we may have an imbalance toward physical-bodily life and determinism, as stated above. Christian advocates of physicalism reject reductionism, and I accept their claim even if it is undercut by their ontology. But materialism must work harder than

dualistic holism to implement the world and life view taught in Scripture.

## CONCLUSION

This article has surveyed the current debate among Christians about the nature and relation of body and soul and the doctrines of the afterlife involved. I have argued that sound scholarship still favors dualistic holism. If that conclusion is too bold, it is clear that dualistic holism follows from a traditional approach to Scripture and a Christian worldview perspective on philosophy and science. Having considered five theories of soul and body on matters of biblical interpretation, theology, philosophy, ethics, and Christian practice, I rank them as follows: Thomist dualism, Augustinian dualism, emergentism, material constitutionism, and physicalism.

Thomist dualism fits more closely with biblical holism and is more than adequate on all the other issues. But some philosophers wonder if its concept of the soul is coherent. Although Augustinian substance dualism is more dualistic than holistic, it can account for the unity of human nature and ground a comprehensive view of the Christian life. But some philosophers question the logic of two different substances. On its surface, emergentism is adequately dualistic and holistic, but its underlying materialism seems inconsistent with Scripture's physical-spiritual duality and raises the metaphysical question whether soul and mind can emerge from mere matter. Material constitutionism and non-reductive physicalism distinguish person/soul/mind from body. But their materialist ontology seems to undercut the actual distinctness of the soul and its functional transcendence the body, as well as conflicting with the original physical-spiritual duality of Scripture. Constitutionism can account for the possibility of personal existence between death and resurrection, but physicalism cannot.

Exciting work on the Christian view of body and soul remains to be done. It seems possible to revise or construct theories that reflect biblical

perspective even more fully than those considered above. However, Christian scholars need not wander *In Search of the Soul* because it has not been lost. Unless compelling new interpretations of Scripture are forthcoming, dualistic holism should remain the standard for Christian theories of the human constitution.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>*In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (ed. Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005). Green's introduction provides an overview of many reasons for the debate and the issues involved. Steward Goetz presents substance dualism, William Hasker defends emergentism, Nancey Murphy argues for non-reductive physicalism, and Kevin Corcoran promotes material constitutionism. I explain each theory below. A significant omission from the book is Thomist dualism, also explained below. J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae's *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000) is an excellent exposition of this model.

<sup>2</sup>I defend this position in *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Eerdmans 1989; Eerdmans and Apollos 2000). The first edition argues for *holistic dualism*; the introduction to the second edition recommends *dualistic holism* to recognize that body-soul unity is natural and primary whereas separation is accidental and temporary.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), exposition of Articles 11 and 12 of the Apostles' Creed; Rt. Rev. M. Aghiorgoussis, Bishop of Pittsburgh, *The Dogmatic Tradition of the Orthodox Church*, "The Creation of Man" and "Orthodox Eschatology" (<http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article8038.asp>); *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Question/Answer 1 and 57 on unity in life, separation at death, and reunion at resurrection.

<sup>4</sup>Alvin Plantinga, "Darwin, Mind, and Meaning," *Books and Culture*, May/June 1996, defends dualism against materialism. Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (rev. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University,

1997), argues that the soul could not have been generated by evolution.

<sup>5</sup>Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul* (see note 1 above); Eleonore Stump, "Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism," *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 4 (October 1995): 505-31; Brian Leftow, "Souls Dipped in Dust," in *Soul, Body, and Survival* (ed. K. Corcoran; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2001), 120-38.

<sup>6</sup>William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1999) defends an intermediate state as a supernatural act of God. Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004) does not address the issue explicitly but would find disembodied existence difficult to postulate.

<sup>7</sup>Warren Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006).

<sup>8</sup>Lynne Rudder Baker, *Persons and Bodies: A Constitution View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000); Kevin Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

<sup>9</sup>Joel Green ("Body, Soul, Mind and Brain: Critical Issues," introduction to *In Search of the Soul*) surveys developments in biblical scholarship.

<sup>10</sup>J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig explain but do not advocate complementarism in "Philosophy and the Integration of Science and Theology" in *Philosophical Foundations of a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), chapter 17. See also "Religion and Science: Compatible or Incompatible?" in *Reason and Religious Belief* (ed. M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, and D. Basinger; Oxford: Oxford University, 1998, 2003), chapter 11. John Polkinghorne advocates complementarism in *Theology and Science* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

<sup>11</sup>Two significant reiterations of the traditional position on revelation and reason are John Paul II's encyclical, "Fides et Ratio" (1998); and Alvin Plantinga,



*Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000). It is also evident in the title of Moreland and Craig's *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Francis Schaeffer and Charles Colson are popular evangelical leaders who have promoted this perspective.

<sup>12</sup>Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting* (chapters 2-7), surveys the Old Testament, intertestamental, and New Testament basis for dualistic holism that is summarized in the following paragraphs.

<sup>13</sup>Most traditional Christian thinkers adapted versions of Plato's philosophy to articulate and defend the biblical worldview. There is validity to modern Christian criticisms that some aspects of Platonism, such as the essential immortality of the soul, do not reflect Scripture and should be rejected. But we must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water. We should not reject biblical supernaturalism even if we reject Platonic philosophy.

<sup>14</sup>Ezekiel 37 depicts a similar process for resurrection: God forms a physical body and then adds *ruach* or spirit to make it live. Spirit does not necessarily mean a substantial soul; more likely it means the power of life and personal-mental-spiritual abilities. The same is true of Ecc 12:7, which speaks of spirit departing at death. It is helpful to know that animism was common in the ancient near east: a generic spiritual (divine?) life-force animates all living things. The Old Testament adopts but demythologizes this idea: creaturely *ruach* is not divine, but human *ruach* uniquely images God.

<sup>15</sup>Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (trans. M. Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1974) remains the best, most comprehensive study.

<sup>16</sup>A modified version of substance dualism is consistent with the OT view: The formed body is a distinct but incomplete, non-living, physical entity that is incapable of continuous existence without *spirit*; *spirit* is non-material power that becomes a subsistent entity when infused into a formed body to become a living soul. Thus neither spirit nor body is a complete substance (entity) on its own, but they remain distinct components when conjoined. At death God supernaturally sustains the soul in existence as a "ghost"

or spiritual entity without the physical component.

<sup>17</sup>Matt 22:37, Mark 12:30, and Luke 10:27 from Duet 6:5; 1 Thess 5:23.

<sup>18</sup>They are most often called *rephaim*, whose meaning is uncertain, but *nephesh* (soul) refers to those in Sheol in Gen 35:18; Ps 16:10; 30:3; 49:15; 86:3; and 139:8. Philip Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and the Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002) is very informative but argues that Sheol was for unbelievers, not faithful Israelites.

<sup>19</sup>Isa 26:14-19; Dan 12:2. Ezekiel 37 might mean national restoration. Job 19:26 might mean regained health.

<sup>20</sup>E. P. Sanders, "Life after Death," in *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66BC* (London: SCM, 1992), 298-303; Richard Bauckham, "Life, Death, and the Afterlife in Second Temple Judaism," in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (ed. R. Longnecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 80-95.

<sup>21</sup>A prominent recent example is Alan F. Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); also Joel Green, "Body and Soul, Mind and Brain: Critical Issues," *In Search of the Soul*. Caroline Bynum's illuminating study, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (Columbia: Columbia University, 1995), does not commit this fallacy but recognizes both intermediate state and resurrection.

<sup>22</sup>However, many higher critics doubt that Acts gives an accurate picture of Paul's beliefs.

<sup>23</sup>See, for example, Joel Green, "Body and Soul, Mind and Brain," *In Search of the Soul*, esp. 18-21.

<sup>24</sup>N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), summaries on 372, 424, and 448; quote from 477. Wright discusses all of the points I raise about the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and the New Testament.

<sup>25</sup>Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* (trans. M. Waldstein; ed. A. Nichols; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1988).

<sup>26</sup>Recently Jaime Clark-Soles, *Death and Afterlife in the New Testament* (London: T & T Clark, 2006) emphasizes the diversity among NT authors on many

particular issues and denies that there is a single coherent NT eschatology. But she acknowledges the body-soul distinction and intermediate state-future resurrection in some NT books and does not produce any arguments that invalidate the conclusions of the canonical approach taken by Ratzinger and Wright. I have not yet seen Joel Green's *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). But unless he goes far beyond what he has already published, he is not close to providing justification for an alternative to the traditional position. See John W. Cooper, "The Bible and Dualism Once Again: A Reply to Joel B. Green and Nancey Murphy," *Philosophia Christi* 9, no. 2 (2007): 459-69.

<sup>27</sup>I am a traducian (the soul comes from the parents) rather than a creationist with respect to the origin of individual souls. Sperm and egg are spiritual as well as physical. Scripture teaches that creatures reproduce according to their kind, and humans are both body and soul. Scripture teaches that what God creates is good, but creationism implies that God creates new souls infected with original sin. Scripture teaches that God rested from creating on the seventh day, but creationism teaches that God continues to create souls, even when humans fornicate or fertilize eggs in laboratories. Historically, the arguments for creationism are more philosophical than biblical.

<sup>28</sup>The literature, including works by Christians, on these topics is vast. Instead of providing references for each topic and point, I recommend the books cited elsewhere in this article. *In Search of the Soul* includes essays by four philosophers that address these issues, each with responses by the other three. The debated points are clear. Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, and Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger, include sections that introduce these topics.

<sup>29</sup>See, for example, Nancey Murphy, "Nonreductive Physicalism: Philosophical Issues," *Whatever Happened to the Soul* (ed. Warren Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 139: "It is still possible to claim that there is a substantial mind and that it is neatly *correlated with*

brain events.... It follows, then, that no amount of evidence from neuroscience can *prove* a physicalist view of the mental."

<sup>30</sup>Sir John Eccles, a dualist neuroscientist, won a Nobel Prize in the 1970's. His position is not out of date. See Mario Beauregard and Denys O'Leary, *The Spiritual Brain: A Neuroscientist's Case for the Existence of the Soul* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), which extensively criticizes the use of neuroscience to justify physicalist monism.

<sup>31</sup>Many Reformed theologians are compatibilists because they wish to affirm both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. My own position is Reformed, but I affirm limited free will, as follows. God eternally knows and ordains everything in this world, which he has freely chosen to create. Thus everything surely and inevitably occurs according to his sovereign will, sustained by his constantly concurring providence. *But inevitability is not necessarily determinism.* God's knowledge, will, and providence do not directly cause the events that take place in the world, except for the occasional miracles and other special supernatural acts that he performs. Sustained by God, creatures act according to the natures he has given them, which means that humans regularly exercise their natural God-imaging ability to choose freely. Their choices are completely known and permissibly willed but are not deterministically caused by God or by creaturely factors. Thus I reject both open theism and theological determinism.

In Reformed theology, election and predestination to salvation mean that God eternally wills to regenerate our hearts only because of his sovereign grace and not because of his foreknowledge of our positive response to the gospel. Regeneration, which enacts election, is a sovereign act of God that does directly and involuntarily change us. But regeneration is not the paradigm for everything that happens in the world or for all human choices and actions. Furthermore, regeneration does not eliminate freedom of the will, which both fallen and regenerate humans possess as image-bearers. Regenerated by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christians can again freely choose how to love and obey him

and to resist our residual sinful nature. In my view, Reformed theology can and should avoid determinism and compatibilism.

<sup>32</sup>Moreland and Rae in *Body and Soul* argue that dualism and right to life ethics are strongly correlated.

<sup>33</sup>Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches generally agree on the divine inspiration, infallibility, and authority of Scripture. We differ over the authority of church tradition in addition to Scripture.

<sup>34</sup>Stuart Palmer, "Christian Life and Theories of Human Nature," *In Search of the Soul*, 189-215, evaluates substance dualism, emergentism, non-reductive physicalism, and material constitutionism regarding their implications for Christian life and ministry. He is concerned that affirming the distinctness of the soul will lead to overly individualistic, spiritualistic, and otherworldly practices. His project is legitimate, but his analysis is sometimes flawed by use/abuse fallacies: He confuses distinctness with independence of body and soul, and he regularly infers the "danger" of faulty practices from their mere theoretical possibility.