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# RESURRECTION AND IMMORTALITY: PAUL AND POIMANDRES

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For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:53)

In his now famous but controversial Ingersoll lecture of 1955 Oscar Cullman charged that Christians over the centuries had largely abandoned the New Testament understanding of the afterlife by adopting what is essentially a Greek concept, that of the immortality of the soul.<sup>1</sup> His position is clear: early Christian resurrection faith is irreconcilable with the Greek idea of immortality of the soul and it can neither be surrendered nor reinterpreted without robbing the New Testament of its substance.<sup>2</sup> Cullmann has presented us with a clear-cut "restorationist" issue of interest to students of the New Testament while at the same time drawing us into the wider worlds of Graeco-Roman philosophical and religious thought and the history of Christian theology. I present this study to my teacher, LeMoine Lewis, who through his teaching and scholarship has sought to shed light on the complexities of each of these areas.

Cullmann bases his case upon three contrasts: first, that in the New Testament death is viewed as an enemy, dreaded and powerful, though conquered through Jesus' resurrection, while in Greek thought death is a welcome friend, a release of the soul from the prison of the body; second, that for the early Christians the soul was not intrinsically immortal, but becomes so only through faith in Christ, whereas the Greek concept is that all men are

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immortal by nature; third, that Christians hoped for an immortal body only to be realized on "the last day," while Greeks envisioned a "bodiless" existence of the immortal soul attained by an individual at death.<sup>3</sup> Cullman's essay has been responsibly criticized from a number of directions. While it may be true that the modern Christian when asked about the Christian hope of eternal life might well answer "the immortality of the soul," it is inaccurate to say that later Christian theologians abandoned the doctrine of resurrection for a "Platonic" concept of immortality.<sup>4</sup> It is also questionable whether one can simply merge all the New Testament evidence into a whole and speak of *the* early Christian concept of immortality.<sup>5</sup> Even in the case of a single author such as Paul there has been rigorous debate as to whether key passages such as 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; Philippians 1:19-26, 3:7-21 present a single picture of the "last things" or exhibit a development or shift in his thinking.<sup>6</sup> Cullman's general position, however, has received a degree of acceptance. It is fairly common to hear New Testament scholars and preachers contrast the "Biblical" idea of resurrection with the Greek concept of immortality of the soul.

In this study I wish to take a different approach. It is my contention that a major flaw in Cullmann's position is his assumption that the Hellenistic world can be divided into "Greek" and "Jewish" compartments — thus one speaks of a Greek or Jewish "concept" of immortality. This is simply not the case. As Jonathan Z. Smith has pointed out, what we have in the Hellenistic period are "... archaic Mediterranean religions in their Hellenistic phase within both their native and diasporic settings."<sup>7</sup> All religions of the period are by definition "Hellenistic." This is true of the various forms of Judaism as well as of emerging Christianity.<sup>8</sup> One of the prime tasks of the

New Testament scholar is to explore the ways in which early Christianity responded to what might be called the "Hellenistic situation." The dichotomization "Greek or Jewish" has been particularly evident in Pauline studies over the past few generations.<sup>9</sup> Attempts have been made to account for the "background" of Paul's thought, labeling it either "Hellenistic" or "Judaic." Such compartmentalization, spurred by a quest for "parallels," "borrowings," and "sources" to explain the *origin* of Paul's theology is a misconstrued venture from the start. What is needed is an approach that will shed genuine light on a concept such as "immortality" in the thought of a figure like Paul without making another tradition a foil over against which he is to be compared.<sup>10</sup>

In this article I would like to examine two Hellenistic texts, 1 Corinthians 15:20-58 and the first tractate of the Hermetic corpus titled *Poimandres*. Each presents a particular understanding of immortality. My purpose is neither to explain one by the other nor to place them into tight compartments (Jewish-Christian/Pagan-Greek) but to ask how two different systems of salvation in the Hellenistic period "worked." Obviously a comparison of any two "religions" from any period will yield both similarities and differences. I do not wish to stress either, but to allow such a comparison to sensitize one to issues that might otherwise be overlooked.

I referred above to the Hellenistic situation. What I have in mind by that expression is the peculiar complex of political, social, cultural, and religious realities set in motion by the conquests of Alexander the Great (c. 330 B.C.) and lasting into late antiquity.<sup>11</sup> Martin Nilsson has characterized the age as one of *dissolution* and *rebuilding*.<sup>12</sup> An old world was passing away and a new one coming to birth. All religions of the period were undergoing fluctuation and adaptation to the new situation. To attempt to touch upon even the major elements

involved in this rebuilding would go far beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the change that most affected various archaic religious and philosophical movements (including Judaism) was the emergence of a new cosmology. I will briefly sketch in the most general terms this particular aspect of the period.<sup>14</sup> The archaic cosmology, known to us from Homer, dominant throughout the Classical period, and reflected in the Old Testament, was that of a three-storied universe.<sup>15</sup> The earth was a flat disk surrounded by water (chaos). Below was the underworld (Hades/Sheol), the dreary and shadowy abode of the dead. Above was the vault of heaven, the place of the sun, moon, planets, and stars. At the highest level of heaven dwelt the gods. The emphasis was upon order, the order established by creation, the victory over chaos.<sup>16</sup> The regulation of the seasons, the courses of the heavenly bodies, the cycles of life upon earth were guaranteed by the gods.<sup>17</sup> The earth was man's allotted place; he was at home. Death, whose origin was variously explained, was irreversible and viewed as a gloomy state in which a mere shadow of the former self existed in the underworld, removed from the upper world of life and light.<sup>18</sup> The gods were close at hand and frequently made visits to earth to deal directly with man.<sup>19</sup> Man's purpose was to serve the gods, to follow their decrees, to offer prayer and sacrifice. In return he received the blessings of the gods. Religion was a celebration of the order and bounds of creation. All was "in place." The earth was the place to be.

During the Hellenistic period there is abundant evidence of a fundamental shift in man's perception of his place. In this new cosmology the earth was the center and lowest level of a vast and expanded universe. It was surrounded by seven planetary spheres, each dominated by its respective heavenly body and generally perceived to be divine.<sup>20</sup> Below the moon, the first of the spheres,

was the "air" — the abode of various spirits and *daimones*.<sup>21</sup> Above the highest or seventh sphere was the dwelling of God.<sup>22</sup> God and man were thus separated by an interminable distance filled with intermediate powers awesome and unknown.<sup>23</sup> Man, dwelling at the lowest level of this vast cosmos, was no longer "at home." He was out of place. His destiny was to dwell with God in the highest heaven, free from the bonds of death and the mortality of his body. The language of exile is common, men are strangers and pilgrims in this sensible world. Salvation then comes to mean a "getting out" or a "going home" — to be released from the earthly condition and attain immortality and heavenly glory. Most religions of the period, then, were concerned with explaining how man has become what he is, calling him to turn from his present condition and preparing him for his release and the realization of his lofty destiny. Of course the differences between various "ways of salvation" are not to be de-emphasized. Some have descending/ascending Savior figures who open the way of salvation, while others do not. There are different attitudes towards the cosmos ranging from rebellion and fear to worshipful adoration. Various explanations of how men have "fallen" into the powers of Fate and Death are given, with corresponding solutions as to the way of salvation. Yet the underlying cosmological perception of man "out of place" and man "not yet what he will become" seems to be fairly universal.

Our New Testament texts, and especially the Pauline materials (perhaps because we have a corpus of letters from his hand) reflect this new cosmology. Paul is familiar with both ascent and epiphany, the two most characteristic revelatory experiences in Hellenistic religious texts.<sup>24</sup> The language he uses to refer to the heavenly world is common: angels; principalities (*archai*) and powers (*dunamis*); height (*hupsōma*) and depth

(*bathos*); elemental spirits of the cosmos (*stoicheia tou kosmou*); heavenly places (*epouranioi*); dominions (*kupriotētes*); authorities (*exousiai*); thrones (*thronoi*).<sup>25</sup> Paul's cosmos is a vast one, divided into various "heavens" and populated by hierarchies of powers both good and evil who wield sway over human kind. Much of this language undoubtedly comes from the world of Jewish apocalypticism, but as Hans Dieter Betz has aptly pointed out, the phenomenon of apocalypticism typically reflects the developments of the Hellenistic period:

The underlying questions which have led to the development of dualism, angelology, cosmology, astrology and so forth, are to a large extent identical with the basic problems which occupy the entire period of Hellenism, and which have precipitated parallel doctrines there. We have to free ourselves from the idea of treating apocalypticism as an isolated and purely inner-Jewish phenomenon. Rather, we must learn to understand apocalypticism as a peculiar manifestation within the entire course of Hellenistic oriental syncretism.<sup>26</sup>

Whatever the details of Paul's understanding of salvation, the process as a whole must be seen as cosmological.<sup>27</sup> This Cullmann fails to stress in treating Paul's understanding of immortality.

In my treatment of 1 Corinthians 15:20-58 and *Poimandres*, I will pursue three lines of inquiry. First, saved *from* what? How does each text express man's problem, his need for salvation? Second, saved *by* what or whom? How is this salvation to be achieved? Finally, saved *for* what? What is the ultimate destiny of those who attain salvation? My treatment will of necessity be limited. *Poimandres* is a rather complete text touching

on many issues beyond the scope of this study and *related* at least to other Hermetic materials, while 1 Corinthians 15:20-58 immediately draws one into the whole range of Pauline theology.

The context of 1 Corinthians 15:20-58 is difficult, and the literature which seeks to explicate the position of those in the community who say "there is no resurrection of the dead" (v. 12) is substantial.<sup>28</sup> Did this group, like the Epicureans or Sadducees, deny any concept of an afterlife whatsoever?<sup>29</sup> This is certainly unlikely. A common interpretation has been that we have here a "Platonizing" group which found the notion of the resurrection of the body crude and superfluous.<sup>30</sup> The position which has perhaps received the most favor is that some were denying the futurity of the resurrection, claiming in some way already to experience that mode of existence.<sup>31</sup> Although I find this last interpretation the most plausible, my treatment of 1 Corinthians 15:20-58 will not be based upon a specific identification of the opponents' position. What has too often been overlooked is that while the occasion of Paul's discussion is some type of denial of the resurrection of the *dead*, the chapter as a whole deals not so much with resurrection (which for the community would apply only to the dead in Christ) as with *transformation* — of the living and the dead at the Parousia. In other words, the lines of Paul's discussion in 15:20-28; 35-58 apply to those alive at the Parousia (presumably, in Paul's mind, a numerically larger group than those who have died) as much as to those who have died. What we have then in this text is not only a refutation of those alluded to in verse 12, but an account of Paul's understanding of the cosmic destiny of all believers (and perhaps of all mankind).

Following the questions posed above I want to ask first — saved from what? What is the human situation from which salvation is required? In this text the cosmic

power of death is the all pervading enemy. Death *enters* the human realm by a man, Adam (v. 21).<sup>32</sup> Man's present existence in the world is characterized by six terms in verses 42-54: perishable (*phthora*); dishonor (*atimia*); weakness (*asthenia*); physical (*psuchikos*); of the dust (*choikos*); mortal (*thnētos*).<sup>33</sup> He lives helplessly under the sway of powerful cosmic forces (v. 24) which enforce the rule of death upon him.<sup>34</sup> Even the Torah (v. 56), which was given to bring life, has only strengthened the chain of sin and death.<sup>35</sup> By what means then is one to be delivered? The sending of the "man from heaven" into the lower world held captive by death, and his death and subsequent resurrection to heavenly glory, open the way for "those who belong to him" (v. 23) to be released from their captivity.<sup>36</sup> For those believers in Christ, living and dead, the victory over death comes at the Parousia (verses 23, 51-57) when they experience a transformation into a glorified heavenly mode of existence. This new existence, in contrast to the old, is characterized by the terms imperishable (*aphtharsia*), glory (*doxa*), power (*dunamis*), spiritual (*pneumatikos*), heavenly (*ex ouranou*) and immortal (*athanasia*).<sup>37</sup> The earthly career of Christ, his death, and exaltation to glory, prefigure the destiny of those who are his. They will bear his divine "image" (v. 49) and share his cosmic rule (v. 50).<sup>38</sup> This salvation/transformation process has often been described as the creation of a "new humanity."<sup>39</sup> One might more accurately speak of the creation of a new *genus* or family of beings in the cosmos — the "Sons of God." To answer fully my third question — saved for what? — the difficulties of verses 20-28 would have to be resolved.<sup>40</sup> Paul appears to envision (as in Rom. 8:18-25) not only the "salvation" of those in Christ at the Parousia but the release of the entire cosmos from its bondage to death. The final goal appears to be complete reversal: "all shall be made alive"

(v. 22) and "God may be everything to everyone" (*panta en pasin*).<sup>41</sup> This involves the destruction of rebellious cosmic powers (verses 24-25) and finally of death itself (v. 26) until "all things" (v. 28) are subject to God. It is possible that Paul sees an interim between the Parousia (v. 23) and what he calls the *telos* (v. 24) when the subjecting rule of Christ is fulfilled.<sup>42</sup> If this be the case, then the glorified "Sons of God" at the Parousia share in some way in the conquering of the cosmic powers.<sup>43</sup> This would give a double meaning to Paul's use of Psalms 8:6. Man's ultimate destiny is to share a new mode of existence with Christ as part of a family of immortal, glorified, heavenly beings.<sup>44</sup>

I turn now to a brief examination of *Poimandres*, the first tractate of the Hermetic Corpus.<sup>45</sup> The author (disciple) opens the work with an account of a visionary experience. He sees an immense figure who reveals himself as "Poimandres, the Mind of Absolute Power" and expresses his desire "to know the things that are and to understand their nature and to know God" (1-3).<sup>46</sup> Poimandres promises to teach him these very truths, and the following sections (4-26) are an account of the revelation he receives. This revelation is concerned with explaining the origin of man and how he came to be subject to Fate and Death, the present state of man as he is, and the way he can achieve salvation.

The account of man's origin and fall is related in a complicated cosmogony.<sup>47</sup> Archetypal Man is created in the image of God and is immortal (12). He has authority over all things (15). His "fall" is described as a descent into the lower sphere of the material world and an attachment to "Nature" (14). He becomes enslaved to the passions of the body, is subject to death, and falls under the cosmic powers of the planetary spheres which administer Fate (15, 18-19). To be saved, man must find release or escape from this fallen position — from at-

tachment to the material world, from the cycles of birth, death, and decay to which his mortal body is subject, from his slavery to the cosmic powers of Fate. Poimandres concludes his cosmogony with a description of man's plight:

And because of this, man alone, of all the living creatures upon earth, is twofold. He is mortal because of his body, but immortal because of his essential being (*ton ousiōde anthropon*). For even though he is immortal and has authority over everything, he suffers mortal conditions being subject to Fate; although therefore he is above the order of the spheres he has become a slave to it. . . and is held fast (15).<sup>48</sup>

How then is one saved? Primarily through the power of God (Poimandres) who comes to the aid of those who recognize the truth. As the message of revelation from Poimandres is proclaimed, those who believe and repent are promised:

I, Mind, dwell with those who are holy and good and cleansed and merciful and pious, and my presence becomes salvation (*boētheia*) and at once they know everything and they lovingly worship the Father, they give thanks, blessing and singing regularly to him with devotion. Before handing over the body to its own death they despise the senses, understanding what their deeds are. Moreover, I, Mind, do not allow the assaulting deeds of the body to be fulfilled. I am gatekeeper, I lock the entrance of evil and shameful deeds, cutting off their devices (22).

This in turn prepares one for what is called the "ascent" (*anodos*) which is described in 24-26. At death man

leaves the mortal body and as he rises through the planetary spheres he is released from all the powers which enslaved him, finally joining God. For what is he saved? His ultimate destiny is apotheosis — to become divine (*theothenai*) — recovering all lost in his “fall” and regaining his heavenly existence.

One can obviously stress differences in the ways each text expresses an understanding of “salvation.” *Poimandres* has no figure such as Jesus (sent from heaven, living and dying as a man among men, subsequently resurrected to a glorified heavenly existence) who opens the way for mankind to be saved. In Paul the Parousia is the climax of the present age, when the elect ones experience their full salvation, while *Poimandres* appears to place the ascent to heaven culminating in apotheosis at the death of each individual. We have no clear evidence in Paul’s case regarding his view of the “fall” of the first Adam, while salvation in *Poimandres* involves a *gnōsis* of the cosmogony revealed to the disciple.<sup>49</sup> Alternatively, one can place stress on various similarities, and in this regard Reitzenstein’s work still deserves the attention of New Testament scholars, particularly when one recognizes that “parallels” are not necessarily “sources” for questions of origin.<sup>50</sup> I have already pointed out that in this study I am not intending to stress either similarities or differences. I am rather interested in how these texts taken together can remind us of the cosmological nature of “salvation” and, further, how that understanding might help us in setting what Cullmann calls “the resurrection faith” in a broader context.

I do not think it takes us very far simply to juxtapose and contrast “immortality” with “resurrection.” Certainly *Poimandres*’ teaching regarding afterlife is not to be epitomized by the phrase “immortality of the soul” any more than Plato’s or that of any “Greek” religion of the

Hellenistic period.<sup>51</sup> In the case of Paul and the “resurrection” we must first ask how the term *anastasis* functions in his letters, and second what he means by *body* when he writes of a *sōma pneumatikon* (1 Cor. 15:44).

My position is that “resurrection of the dead” is Paul’s way of speaking of the *participation* of Christians who have died in the events of the Parousia. The point is a simple one — resurrection is of the dead, not of the living. The problem in Thessalonica addressed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 makes this clear. The question was one of participation — would those who have died be included in the events of the Parousia? Obviously this hope of resurrection of the dead rests upon faith that Jesus, who *died*, was so raised (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 12-18), making his resurrection the cornerstone of the faith. Yet the resurrection of the dead is subsumed in 1 Corinthians 15 under a more fundamental hope — that of translation or transformation: *translation* from the earthly sphere to the heavenly; *transformation* from an earthly mode of existence to a heavenly one. This, and not the fact that the dead will be “raised” to participate therein, is what Paul calls the “mystery” of the Parousia:

Behold I am telling you a mystery (*musterion*): we will not all sleep, but we will *all be changed* (*allagēsometha*), in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible and we will be changed. (1 Cor. 15:51-52)

Even in speaking of Jesus’ resurrection the point is not that a man who died has been brought back to life (this idea was certainly known to Paul from the Old Testament), but that this *man* Jesus is now an immortal, glorified, heavenly being — the Son of God — and that

he is the "firstborn" (*prōtotokos* — Rom. 8:29-30) of many heavenly "brothers" who will also be so glorified as sons of God. Or, as Paul expresses it in 1 Corinthians 15:45: "the last Adam *became* a life-giving Spirit."<sup>52</sup> To say, then, that the dead (in Christ) will be raised is to affirm that both dead and living *together* will participate in the final hope. First Thessalonians 5:9-11 makes this clear. This is Paul's whole emphasis. He does not elaborate on the "state" of the dead, preferring the metaphor of sleep. The point is that one who has died in Christ has not yet experienced the transformation and at the Parousia must be brought back into the sphere of this realm to join the living. This is apparently what he means by speaking of "rising." He makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 15:35-41 that he does not see resurrection as a revival of corpse or bones. It should be noted also that this transformation is to be realized "by the power (*energeia*) which enables him (Jesus) to subject all things to himself" (Phil. 3:21), which ties into the thought of 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 discussed above.

What then of Paul's use of body (*sōma*) even when describing the glorified state of believers at the Parousia? One could hardly touch upon a more controversial topic in New Testament studies.<sup>53</sup> Bultmann interprets Pauline theology as anthropology, and *sōma* is his key to that anthropology.<sup>54</sup> His definition of *sōma* as "Man, his person as a whole" has been widely accepted. Robert Gundry, in a comprehensive treatment of the question, seeks to refute Bultmann's "holistic" definition, arguing for the "physicalness" of *sōma*.<sup>55</sup> There are complex variations between these two poles.<sup>56</sup> I find Gundry's work on *sōma* convincing, but the implications he draws in interpreting the *sōma pneumatikon* (1 Cor. 15:44) of the Parousia are confused and far-fetched theologically. Paul obviously thinks of Christ as having a *sōma* (Phil. 3:20-21), albeit one of glory (*iēs doxēs*), and so it follows that

those glorified "sons of God" to follow experience a transformation from *sōma psuchikon* to *sōma pneumatikon*. The notion of a "spiritual body" is a difficult one. Discussions about "form," "substance," and "physicalness" have not led to any clarity in this regard. In such contexts *sōma* appears to be a way of talking of a *mode of existence*. The point is that those in Christ will be transformed into a mode of existence characterized as immortal, powerful, incorruptible, glorified, *et al.* I think it is a mistake to interpret Paul's use of *sōma* as a polemic against the notion of an immortal soul. Even his statement about not wanting to die and be found "naked" (i.e., without a body) in 2 Corinthians 5:3-4 is directed against any who would place the transformation *before* the Parousia, not to refute the idea of the immortal soul. Paul recognized that one could exist without the body, either at death or in certain conditions of ecstasy, but neither of these states is a fulfillment of the cosmic transformation for the living and the dead at the Parousia.<sup>57</sup>

My point is that the phrase "resurrection of the body" carries a particular contextual meaning in Paul, and to allow it to epitomize Christian hope, set in contrast to the notion of "immortality of the soul," is a mistake. The issue is narrow and misguided. A text such as *Poimandres* helps us to formulate a more adequate set of questions regarding Paul's understanding of "immortality." The common Hellenistic perception of man as "out of place," enslaved to the powers of Death and Fate and "fallen" from what he is to become, is the place to begin. "Solutions" (i.e., ways of salvation), both individual and cosmic, represented in various texts, neither fall into categories of "Jewish," "Christian," and "Greek" nor fit into a "resurrection vs. immortality" mold. For Paul, those who have died will be "raised" to participate in salvation. Together, both living and dead are



transformed from an "earthly" to a "heavenly" mode of existence. This is what he affirms by "resurrection" and "spiritual body." The broader contours of what he calls "salvation" involve the whole perception of man's place and ultimate destiny. This is what must be explored in understanding what for Paul is the Christian hope.

# NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The essay "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead," first appeared in *The Harvard Divinity School Bulletin* 21 (1955/56) 5-36. It is now conveniently published along with three other related Ingersoll lectures (Harry A. Wolfson, 1956; Werner Jaeger, 1958; Henry J. Cadbury, 1959) in one volume, *Immortality and Resurrection: Death in the Western World: Two Conflicting Currents of Thought*, edited by Krister Stendahl (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1965) 9-53.

<sup>2</sup>Cullmann, pp. 9-10 (All citations to Cullmann are from the above essay following the pagination of the volume edited by Stendahl).

<sup>3</sup>Cullmann, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Cullmann (p. 9) introduces his essay with this assertion. See Harry A. Wolfson, "Immortality and Resurrection in the Philosophy of the Church Fathers," pp. 54-96 in the volume edited by Stendahl mentioned above. Also, Robert Wilken, "The Immortality of the Soul and Christian Hope," *Dialogue* 15 (1976) 110-119. Wilken demonstrates that later Christian theologians were well aware of the complexities of this issue and sought to articulate a position that would both represent the breadth of the New Testament language and relate to the theological needs of the Church.

<sup>5</sup>Both the limited nature of our New Testament documents, as well as the diversity of vocabulary used for the afterlife and heavenly world, preclude the construction of a single coherent picture. One need only trace out New Testament references to terms and concepts such as Hades, Gehenna, Paradise, heaven, heavens, the heavenlies, the third heaven, tartarus, *stoicheia*, et al. to be impressed with the complexity of the task and the sparseness of the evidence. Cullmann ignores the implications of this wide range of vocabulary. The same problems exist when Cullmann speaks of "Jewish" conceptions (p. 23) as if they were a unity. Cf. George W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr., "Some Presuppositions of Cullmann's Essay on Immortality of the Soul and Resurrection of the Dead," in *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, Harvard Theological Studies XXVI (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972) 177-180.

<sup>6</sup>Indeed, Cullmann's weakest treatment of New Testament texts comes when he briefly passes over this very problem, pp. 36-45. For bibliography on these texts see Bernard Spörlein, *Die Leugnung der Auferstehung*, Biblische Untersuchungen 7, (Passavia Passau: Friedrich Pustet Regensburg, 1971) 199-209. For the view that Paul shifted his ideas see W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: University Press, 1939) 125-145. Also Albert Schweitzer's rather imaginative way of dealing with these texts, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. by William Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953) 131-140.

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<sup>7</sup>Article on "Hellenistic Religions," *New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1975<sup>15</sup> Macropaedia, Vol. VIII, p. 749.

<sup>8</sup>Smith's comment is supported by recent studies on the "Hellenization" of various forms of Judaism in the period. Cf. Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* trans. by John Bowden, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (New York: Atheneum, 1970); Morton Smith, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century," *Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, ed. M. Davis (New York: Harper and Bros., 1956) 67-81; H. A. Fischel, *Rabbinic Literature and Greco-Roman Philosophy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973); Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942) and *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962); E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, Vols. I-XI, Bollingen Series XXXVIII (New York: Pantheon, 1953ff.). For early Christianity see Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* trans. by John A. Baker (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964).

<sup>9</sup>See for example the way in which Schweitzer's *Mysticism of Paul* is divided, especially chapter 2 "Hellenistic or Judaic?" and the literature he cites. Also W. D. Davies' introduction "Paul and Judaism Since Schweitzer" in his *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: S.P.C.K., 1970<sup>3</sup>) vii-xv, as well as his first chapter.

<sup>10</sup>For example, W. D. Davies' approach to non-Jewish materials is illustrated on pp. 92-93 of *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*. After quoting a summary by A. D. Nock of Lucius' initiation into the mysteries of Isis (taken from Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* XI) he writes: "No comment is further needed; the whole atmosphere in which Lucius lived and moved is far removed from that of him who had died and risen with Christ." Certainly this approach to comparative materials is as inadequate as that of the History of Religions school which Davies criticizes. E. P. Sanders in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973) 1-24, offers some helpful observations on this problem of comparison. The difficulty comes with finding a way to formulate the best questions.

<sup>11</sup>In general see W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization* (3rd ed. revised by author and G. T. Griffith, New York: World Publishing Co., 1961); M. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, Vols. I-III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941); Paul Wendland, *Die Hellenistisch-römische Kultur* (4th ed. revised by H. Dorrie, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1972).

<sup>12</sup>*Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*, Vol. II (1961<sup>2</sup>). A summary of the evidence and discussions of this massive work is found in his *Greek Piety* trans. by H. J. Rose (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1969).

<sup>13</sup>See the masterly survey article by Martin Nilsson, "History of Greek Religion in the Hellenistic and Roman Age," *Harvard Theological Review* 36 (1943) 251-275. A few of the most basic studies: A. D. Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933); A. J. Festugière, *Personal Religion Among the Greeks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954); E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1970); Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans* (New York: Dover Publications, 1960) and *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956).

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, pp. 92-185.

<sup>15</sup>See the helpful essay, "Mesopotamia," by Thorkild Jacobsen in *Before Philosophy*, ed. H. and H. A. Frankfort (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1946) 137-217.

Also the article, "Cosmogony," by T. H. Gaster in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962) 702-709, which includes a sketch of this "universe" and an excellent bibliography.

<sup>16</sup>For Biblical texts see Gen. 1:1-2; Prov. 8:22-31; Psa. 74:12-17; 89:9-11; 93; Isa. 51:9-10. For a text outside the Old Testament see the Sumerian Poem "Creation of the Pickax," which is trans. in S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1944).

<sup>17</sup>Gen. 1:14-19; 8:22 for the Biblical counterpart.

<sup>18</sup>Psa. 6:4-6; 88; 115:14-18; Isa. 38:9-20; Job 3:11-19; 10:18-22; 14:7-12. Compare the *Epic of Gilgamesh* VII.40-48. For a general survey of Hebrew, Mesopotamian, and Greek ideas of afterlife see S. G. F. Brandon, *The Judgement of the Dead: The Idea of Life After Death in the Major Religions* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967) 49-97.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Gen. 18:21-33; 28:10-17.

<sup>20</sup>The usual order was Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, Moon. Cf. Cicero, *Republic* VI. xvii. In Jewish materials these spheres are controlled by various angels, cf. Hagigah 12b (Epstein, pp. 69ff.); *Sepher ha-Razim*, ed. M. Magalioth (Jerusalem: American Academy of Jewish Research, 1966). The secondary literature on both Jewish and non-Jewish materials is vast.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Eph. 2:2. Franz Cumont, *Afterlife in Roman Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922) offers the best general treatment of this point.

<sup>22</sup>In some texts this is called the "eighth" heaven, thus the common term "ogdoatic" as in *Poimandres* 26.

<sup>23</sup>This sense of separation is reflected in the *Hymn to Demetrius Poliorcetes* (c. 300 B.C.), "The other gods are either far away or have no ears . . ." which is translated in F. C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Press, 1953), pp. 66-67. For a general discussion see Jonathan Z. Smith, "Birth Upside Down or Rightside Up?" *Map is Not Territory*, Studies in Judaism and Late Antiquity 23 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978) 160-166.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. J. Z. Smith, "Hellenistic Religions," p. 751. I am thinking of 2 Cor. 12:1-10; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Gal. 1:12, 16. For an ascent text somewhat typical of the period see the so-called "Mithras Liturgy," trans. into English with Greek text by Marvin W. Meyer, *The "Mithras Liturgy," Texts and Translations* 10 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) and Morton Smith's discussion of this and other such texts (including Jewish ones) in "Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati," *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. A. Altman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963) 142-160. On epiphany see the "Thessalos Letter" published by A.-J. Festugière with French translation, commentary and notes, "L'expérience religieuse du médecin Thessalos," *Revue biblique* 48 (1939) 45-77.

<sup>25</sup>Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 2:6 (Col. 2:15; Eph. 2:2); Gal. 4:3, 10 (Col. 2:8, 20); Eph. *passim*; Col. 1:16 (Eph. 1:21).

<sup>26</sup>On the Problem of the Religio-Historical Understanding of Apocalypticism," *Journal for Theology and Church* 6, ed. Robert W. Funk (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) 152. Also cf. John J. Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic in the Hellenistic Age," *History of Religions* 17 (1977), 121-142 and Jonathan Z. Smith, "Wisdom and Apocalyptic," *Religious Syncretism in Antiquity*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975) 131-156. On the similarities between Greek and Jewish "eschatology" see the interesting little study by T. Francis

Glasson, *Greek Influence in Jewish Eschatology* (London: S.P.C.K., 1961).

<sup>27</sup>This is Schweitzer's great contribution in *Mysticism of Paul*, but he had a restricted view of "Jewish apocalyptic." For a survey of the controversy surrounding this statement see Sanders, *Paul*, pp. 433-511. The classic studies of Paul's language of the heavenly world are the underpinning of this position: M. Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909); Hans Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum* (Tübingen, 1951) and the massive collection of primary source materials in John J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and their Background* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973) 172-208, 271-297.

<sup>28</sup>Spörlein, *Die Leugnung der Auferstehung*, pp. 1-18, offers an excellent survey of the history of interpretation from Patristic through modern times. Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, trans. by John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971) 156-159 has an interesting discussion of the problems.

<sup>29</sup>Schweitzer, *Mysticism* writes, "These deniers of the Resurrection were therefore no skeptics, but representatives of the ultra-conservative eschatological view that there is no resurrection" (p. 93).

<sup>30</sup>A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *1 Corinthians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914<sup>2</sup>) 329ff. Many refer to Acts 17:32 in this regard. Cf. Cullmann, pp. 45-47, who cites Justin, *Dialogue* 80 where he speaks of some who say there is no resurrection from the dead, but that immediately at death their souls would ascend to heaven. Spörlein, *Leugnung*, pp. 171-188 covers the variations of this position.

<sup>31</sup>Perhaps like those named in 2 Tim. 2:8. Cf. J. Schniewind, "Die Leugner der Auferstehung in Korinth," *Nachgelassene Reden und Aufsätze* ed. by E. Kahler (Berlin, 1952) 110-139. This interpretation goes back to John Chrysostom, *In Ep. prima ad Corinthios*, Hom. XXXVIII.1 (MPG 61). This is the position of W. G. Kümmel (H. Lietzmann), *An die Korinther* (Tübingen: 1949) 192ff.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Rom. 5:12-21. This Adam-Christ typology has been extensively investigated. Cf. Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) for bibliography. Paul likely held some view of man's "fall," perhaps similar to Pharisaic Judaism. Cf. Knox, *Paul and the Church of the Gentiles*, pp. 94ff.

<sup>33</sup>Each of these terms has received extensive attention, particularly *psuchikos*. See the appropriate articles in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley.

<sup>34</sup>Other relevant Pauline texts: Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 4:9; 6:3; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Gal. 4:3, 9-10 (Eph. 1:20-21; 2:2; Col. 2:15, 20). Cf. Knox, *Paul and the Church of the Gentiles*, pp. 990-110; Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents*, pp. 172-180.

<sup>35</sup>This is a complicated notion with which Paul deals elsewhere: Gal. 3:19-22; 4:1-10; Rom. 5:20; 7:7-25. Cf. Bo Reicke, "The Law and the World According to Paul," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951) 261-263; G. Macgregor, "Principalities and Powers: The Cosmic Background of Paul's Thought," *New Testament Studies* 1 (1954) 22ff.; A. J. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1964).

<sup>36</sup>On the pre-existence of Christ in Paul see Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; 1 Cor. 15:47; Phil. 2:6 (Col. 1:15-17).

<sup>37</sup>15:42-53.

<sup>38</sup>This identity of Christ with those who belong to him is a central idea in Paul's

thought. Christians are "fellow heirs" (*klēronomoi*) with Christ (Rom. 8:17) and will be "glorified with him" (*sundoxasthōmen*) at the Parousia (Rom. 8:17; Phil. 3:20-21). Christ is the "firstborn" (*prōtotokou*) of many brothers" (Rom. 8:29-30).

<sup>39</sup>Cf. Scroggs, *The Last Adam*, pp. 102ff.; C. K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962) 92ff.

<sup>40</sup>Cf. Spörlein, *Leugnung*, pp. 70-78.

<sup>41</sup>This language obviously lends itself to a "universalist" interpretation. Cf. Origen, *On First Principles* I. 6. 2-4; I. 7. 5; II. 3.5; III. 5. 6, *passim*.

<sup>42</sup>The interpretation hinges on the use of *epeta/eita* (verses 23-24) and whether the verbs of verse 24 with the double use of *hotan* refer to what is to be accomplished in a time period between the Parousia and the *telos*. In Rom. 8:18-25 the release of the cosmos from decay appears to be tied to the Parousia. On this problem see H. A. Wilcke, *Das Problem eines messianischen Zwischenreiches bei Paulus*, Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments 51 (Zürich, 1967).

<sup>43</sup>Cf. 1 Cor. 4:8; 6:1-3; 2 Cor. 10:1-6.

<sup>44</sup>Compare the use of Psalms 8 in Heb. 2:5-18.

<sup>45</sup>The best edition of the text is A. D. Nock (ed.) and A.-J. Festugière (trans.) *Hermès Trismégiste* I-IV (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1945-54) which contains a critical text, facing French translation and every extensive notes. The English translation of the Corpus, W. Scott and A. S. Ferguson, *Hermetica* (Oxford, 1924-36) suffers from Scott's drastic editing and extensive reconstructions and conjectures. An English translation of *Poimandres* is found in David R. Cartledge and David L. Dungan, *Documents for the Study of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980). The most extensive study of *Poimandres* is Richard Reitzenstein, *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig, 1904). The best full-scale study of the Hermetic literature is by A.-J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* I-IV (Paris: Gabalda, 1944-54).

<sup>46</sup>The translations are my own following the text of Nock-Festugière, and I am citing the section numbers of their edition.

<sup>47</sup>Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935) 99-144.

<sup>48</sup>The text at this point is corrupt.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. *Poimandres* 27-29, where the disciple is given his commission to preach to mankind. It is not clear to what extent the details of the revealed "mystery" (cf. 16) of the revelation were "preached" to all, but in general terms, at least, "awakening" appears to involve some recognition of the cosmogony which then leads to salvation. Paul, too, received "visions and revelations," parts of which he did not reveal (2 Cor. 12:1-4), and portions of his letters do reflect a kind of teaching which we might call "cosmogony" of which we know little.

<sup>50</sup>Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* and his *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions* trans. by John E. Steely (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1978).

<sup>51</sup>Cf. the well-known "cosmology" presented in Plato, *Phaedo* 108-114 as well as the "Myth of Er" in *Republic* X. 613-620. "Bodily" ascent or translation to heaven as well as that of the "soul" is found in Greek materials. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Empedocles* 66-71. E. Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality Among the Greeks* trans. by W. B. Hallis (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1921) offers many references showing the variety of views regarding "immortality."

<sup>52</sup>James D. L. G. Dunn, "1 Corinthians 15:45- last Adam, life-giving spirit,"

*Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, edited by Barnabas Lindars and Stephen Smalley in honor of C. F. Moule (Cambridge: University Press, 1973) 127-141, has a good discussion of this phrase.

<sup>53</sup>For a full bibliography of the important studies see Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976) 245-252.

<sup>54</sup>*Theology of the New Testament* trans. by Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951) I. 191-203.

<sup>55</sup>Gundry argues for an anthropological dualism with *sōma* always meaning the "physical" body.

<sup>56</sup>See Gundry's summary, *Soma*, pp. 3-8, 184-203.

<sup>57</sup>2 Cor. 5:6-9; Phil. 1:19-26; 2 Cor. 12:1-4.