

VERITAS EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

DEAD AS LOST

REFINING THE ALIENATION, ANIMATION, AND CORRUPTION THEORIES
OF THE EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUAL DEATH

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Three Explanations of Spiritual Death

One cannot wade deeply into the sermons and writings of evangelical Christians without encountering strange phrases like “spiritual death,” “spiritually dead,” and “dead in spirit.” They have been echoing prominently since John Calvin penned the following words five hundred years ago:

“As spiritual death is nothing else than the **alienation** of the soul from God, we are all **born dead**, and we **live dead** until we are made partakers of the **life** of Christ.”¹

The way Calvin describes the alienation leading to the lack of animation² is reminiscent of Jesus’ metaphors of the vine and branches in John 15. A branch that is properly grafted into the trunk of the grapevine receives the flow of life-giving sap from the vine and produces succulent grapes. The branches that are separated from the vine wither, become unable to produce grapes, and are only worth burning. Despite the fact that the alienation and animation components of this death dovetail well, I am going to separate them for the sake of reevaluating them both. I will refer to the first component as “the alienation theory” (of spiritual death) and the second as the “the animation theory.”

The *alienation theory* explains spiritual death with a variety of relational terms. In Adam we are in estranged from God, lost to God, separated from God, far from God, repugnant to God, enemies of God, etc. We no longer enjoy the friendly relationship Adam and Eve originally enjoyed with God. We need to somehow become acceptable to God and be reconciled to him.

The *animation theory* explains our spiritual death as having spirits/souls that are devoid of spiritual life until the time God sees fit to reanimate (regenerate, recreate, renew, rebirth, quicken, etc.) them. There are soft and hard forms of this theory which compete with one

another. The soft form affirms the need for rebirth and new life but does not press to its logical extreme the idea that our spirits must be totally dead in every possible way. It does not insist that God must regenerate the human spirit before the sinner is able to understand the gospel, accept its propositions as true, and respond to it in repentance and faith. In contrast, the hard form insists that everything inside of us that is properly spiritual is totally and unequivocally dead in every possible way. If we could somehow see our invisible spirits we would see that they're not on their deathbeds dying; they're just dry bones with no flesh, no breath, and no anima. The dead spirit can neither hear, understand, nor respond to the gospel or any other spiritual truth.

There is a third theory that invariably finds its way into the warp and weft of explanations of spiritual death. Technically it is not a theory of spiritual death at all, however. It is more a theory of spiritual impairment. I will refer to it as *the corruption theory* because it holds that some part of us is corrupted, diseased, polluted, wholly vitiated, mortally wounded, poisoned, ruined, fallen, defiled, depraved, infected, leprous, decaying, disabled, obnoxious, etc. The affected part is usually described as our "nature" but the terms soul, flesh, body, heart, will, and mind are frequently substituted. Perhaps by saying that man's "spirit" is dead while man's "nature" is diseased, Calvin could braid this third theory in together with his alienation and animation theories. In the analogy of the vine and branches, this theory could possibly be made to fit by saying the branch is not only severed from the vine but is also withering and rotting. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* shows a preference for the corruption theory while giving slight nods to both the alienation theory and the hard form of the animation theory.³

The following chart shows an incomplete survey of noteworthy thinkers who have advocated one or more of the three main explanations of spiritual death.

	Alienation View	Animation (Soft)	Animation (Monergistic)	Corruption Theory
Augustine	Y	Y	?	Y
Berkhoff	Y ⁴	Y	Y	Y
Blum	Y ⁵	Y ⁶		
John Calvin	Y ⁷	Y	?	Y
Cambridge Declaration			Y	
Lewis Sperry Chafer	Y ⁸	Y ⁹		Y
Concord	?	?	?	?
Millard Erickson	Y ¹⁰			
Norman L. Geisler	Y ¹¹	12	-	Y
Helvitic Confession	?	?	?	?
Charles Hodge	Y ¹³	?	?	?
Anthony Hoekema	Y ¹⁴	?	?	?
Robert Lightner	Y ¹⁵	-	-	Y ¹⁶
John MacArthur	?	?	?	?
McKane / NET	Y ¹⁷			
Douglas J. Moo	Y ¹⁸			
J.I. Packer	?	?	Y	?
J. Dwight Pentecost	Y ¹⁹	?	?	Y
Charles Ryrie	Y ²⁰			
Westminster Confession	Y ²¹	?	Y ²²	Y ²³
Ruben Torrey	Y			
R.C. Sproul	Y	?	Y ²⁴	Y
Warren Wiersbe	Y	?	?	Y
John Piper	?	?	?	Y ²⁵

Historical Development of the Doctrine

Early Greek Church Tradition

While it is true that the Greek Church Fathers²⁶ did not invest as much ink into our problems of sin and death as their Latin counterparts, they were far from silent about them. While Eastern theology is not at all obsessed with the theme of spiritual death, it is obsessed with the theme of spiritual life. According to Kelley, Clement of Alexandria (d. 215) taught that “all men have a spark of the divine in them. . . are sinners. They are, as it were, sick, blind and gone astray; they are enslaved . . . and their condition can be described as death. He nowhere hints, however, that they are involved in Adam’s guilt.”²⁷ Origen believed that children come into the world stained with sin and fits it together with infant baptism.²⁸ Methodius taught that “from the

day sin established itself in [Adam] we men were deprived of the divine breath.²⁹ John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Athanasius, Methodius, and Gregory of Nyssa seem to agree that we inherited the death penalty from Adam's sin. This is echoed by Pomazansky: "man has received death and corruption through Adam (original sin), though he does not share Adam's guilt."³⁰

John Chrysostom (d. 407) may be the best voice among the Greek Fathers for the topic of death. Being Antiochian rather than Alexandrian in his hermeneutic, he earned a reputation for being a thoughtful, logical, eloquent, and moving expositor of the Scriptures. His writings certainly influenced his Latin contemporary Augustine (who occasionally misunderstood him).³¹ Calvin also cites him frequently. In his *Baptismal Instructions* he wrote that the new birth is the way spiritual life in Christ is imparted by the Holy Spirit.³² In his sermon on Ephesians 2, he contrasted physical dying with spiritual dying:

There is, we know, a corporal, and there is also a **spiritual, dying**. Of the first. . . it is a matter of nature, not of deliberate choice. It had to do with the origin in the transgression of the first-created man, and thenceforward in its issue it passed into a nature. . . . whereas this **spiritual dying, being a matter of deliberate choice**, has criminality. . . . Observe then how Paul, having already shown how exceedingly great a thing it is, in so much that **to heal a deadened soul** is a far greater thing that to raise the dead. . . . he [Paul] said, Ye have **arrived at the very last degree of wickedness, (for such is the meaning of becoming dead.)** that he may not excessively distress them. . .³³

In Chrysostom's view, those who are "dead in transgressions" were those who had achieved a state of maximum wickedness by their own deliberate choice. While he can blame Adam for our problem of physical death, they have themselves to blame for their problem of "spiritual dying" and the "deadened soul." Also, to be clear, the soul/spirit is not dead in the animistic sense. It had just chosen a path of extreme wickedness and reached the summit. In a different sermon, he again shows willingness to say we inherited death from Adam but he relegates the scope of that death to physical mortality:

As the best physicians always take great pains to discover the source of diseases, and go to the very fountain of the mischief, so doth the blessed Paul also. Hence after having said that we were justified, . . . he confirms his proposition from things opposite, that is, from death and sin. . . . How then did death come in and prevail? “Through the sin of one.” But what means, “for that all have sinned?” This; he having once fallen, even they that had not eaten of the tree did from him, all of them, become mortal.³⁴

Despite being terse and simple on the matter of death, the Greek Church tradition was strong on the acquisition of divine life through union with the God-man. Often the locus of this life was understandably placed in the future resurrection. And often the life we need to tap into was considered to be something that is available now. Irenaeus and Athanasius seeded the distinctive doctrine of *theosis*³⁵. Since Jesus had both a human nature and a divine nature, he enables humans to “participate” in the divine nature without losing our human nature. Biblical support for this doctrine comes from our having “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4) and the entire gospel of John with its repeated emphasis on life. The influences of Irenaeus (“If the Word is made man, it is that men might become gods”), the recapitulation theory of Irenaeus, Athanasius (“God became man so that men could become god”), Basil (“the highest of all things to be desired [is] to become God”³⁶), Origen (the human spirit is “deified” by contemplation of God³⁷), and Gregory of Nazianzus (“Man has been ordered to become God”³⁸) were foundational and seminal.

Brushing aside the awkward wording, the doctrine of *theosis* really just means that we can foster the mystical union with God which allows us to tap into the nature, energies, life, or “grace”³⁹ of God. As a result, we become transformed in likeness to be more like God. At face value this seems to echo both John 15’s vine-and-branches metaphors and Calvin’s stance that “we **live dead** until we are made partakers of the **life** of Christ.”⁴⁰ But the differences are important as we dig deeper. While their methods of achieving this union with God and partaking in his nature may vary, the Greco-Slavic tradition primarily sees this union occurring in the

sacrament of the Eucharist.⁴¹ The primary way to receive the divine life in the here and now is to consume the bread and wine that have supposedly become the body and blood of Jesus.

It is difficult to judge how much the *theosis* doctrine may have influenced the thinking of the Latin Church tradition. Some say they see it clearly in some of the writings of Thomas Aquinas, who wrote, “full participation in divinity. . . is. . . the destiny of human life.”⁴² Calvin seemed approving of it when he wrote, “The end of the Gospel is to render us eventually conformable to God, and if we may so speak, deify us.”⁴³ Given the dominance of the Greek Church over the Latin Church in the first four centuries, it could be said that the Greek Church led the Latin Church (the two were formally one until 1054 A.D.) to see the Eucharist in much the same way. The Latin Church followed in the footsteps of the Greek Church in connecting the sacraments as the way to tap into the life and transforming grace that God offers to the communicants. But by the fourth century A.D. one noticeable difference between Greek and Latin views on the sacraments could be detected. The Greek tradition went on emphasizing the sacramental primacy of the bread/body and wine/blood of the Eucharist over the sacrament of water baptism. Meanwhile the Latin Church began to prioritize the sacrament of baptismal regeneration by water over the Eucharist. Despite this superficial difference, the same basic sacramental views of grace, sin, death, and life were (and still are) crucial parts of both of their death-and-life equations.

Early Latin Church Tradition

Helpful for understanding divergences in doctrines of sin and death, Mark Galli provides a helpful overview of the evolution of the Greek and Latin Church traditions:

So theology took different paths, East and West. In general the Latin approach was more practical, the Greek more speculative. Latin thought was influenced by Roman law, while Greeks understood theology in the context of worship. Regarding the Crucifixion, Latins thought primarily of **Christ the victim on**

the Cross, Greeks of Christ the victor over death. Latins talked more about redeeming sinners, Greeks, about the deification of humanity.⁴⁴

Louis Berkhoff provides another helpful introduction to the evolution of the Latin view of death and the topics intertwined with it:

These [Greek Church] Fathers do not always make a clear distinction between the good which the natural man is able to do and the spiritual good which requires the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. [But another view gradually emerged in the West.] Greek anthropology also influenced the West more or less in the second and third centuries, but in the third and fourth centuries the seed of the doctrine [of anthropology] that was destined to become prevalent in the West gradually made its appearance, especially in the works of Tertullian, Cyprian, Hilary, and Ambrose. . . . Tertullian represents on the beginning of Latin anthropology, and some of his expressions still remind one of the teachings of the Greek Fathers. . . [he] does not altogether deny the freedom of the will. . . he sometimes uses language that savours of the synergistic theory of regeneration. . . In the writings of Cyprian there is an increasing tendency towards the doctrine of the original sinfulness of man, and of a monergistic renewal of the soul. . . The doctrine of a sinful, as distinguished from a corrupt, nature is even more clearly asserted in the writings of Ambrose and Hilary. They clearly teach that all men have sinned in Adam, and are therefore born in sin. At the same time they do not hold to an entire corruption of the human will, and consequently adhere to the synergistic theory of regeneration. . . All in all we find in them a gradual preparation for the Augustinian view of sin and grace.⁴⁵

Perhaps it was Tertullian (d. 225) who coined the phrase “spiritually dead” in his analysis of Colossians:

The apostle indeed teaches, in his Epistle to the Colossians, that we were once **dead, alienated, and enemies** to the Lord in our minds, whilst we were living in wicked works; that we were then buried with Christ in baptism, and also raised again with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. “And you, (adds he), when ye were dead in sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” And again: “If ye are **dead with Christ** from the elements of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?” Now, since he makes **us spiritually dead—in such a way, however, as to allow that we shall one day have to undergo a bodily death**,—so, considering indeed that we have been also **raised in a like spiritual sense**, he equally allows that we shall further have to undergo a bodily resurrection. In so many words he says: “Since ye are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Accordingly, it is in our mind that he shows that we rise (with Christ), since it is by this alone that we are as yet able to reach to heavenly objects. These we should not “seek,” nor “set our affection on,” if we had them already in our possession. He also adds: “For ye are dead”—to your sins, he means, not to yourselves—“and your life is hid with Christ in God.” **Now that life is not yet apprehended** which is hidden. In like manner [1st] John says: “And it doth not yet appear what we shall be: we know, however, that when He shall be manifest, we shall be like Him.” We are far indeed from being already what we know not of; we should, of course, be sure to know it if we were already (like Him).⁴⁶

Although earlier thinkers in the Greek and Latin traditions (especially Tertullian, Ambrose, and Chrysostom) may have prepared the way for him,⁴⁷ it is the writings of Augustine (d. 430) that the concept of spiritual death gets the first treatise devoted to it. In his *The City of God* he

sets the first obvious precedent for explaining spiritual death using the alienation view, the animation theory, and the corruption theory together:

It seems to me that I ought to examine more carefully the nature of death. For, although the human soul is, in a true sense, immortal, nonetheless it, too, can suffer its own sort of death. It is said to be immortal because it can never, in the least degree, cease to live and perceive. The body, on the other hand, is mortal because it can be deprived entirely of life and because, of itself, it has no power to live. Death comes to the soul when God abandons it, just as death comes to the body when the soul departs. There is also a total death for man, a death of body and soul, namely, when a soul, abandoned by God, abandons the body. In this case the soul has no life from God and the body no life from the soul. . . . the body is rightly said to be dead when its life from God is gone, but, since the body's life depends on the soul, how can the body be said to be dead? . . . [it] takes its life from the soul when the soul is alive in the body, whether the soul is receiving any life from God or not. Life in the bodies of the impious is not the life of their souls, but simply the life of their bodies. This life, even souls that are dead, in the sense of being deserted by God, can confer, since they do not desist from that flicker of life which they can call their own, that is the life which makes them immortal. . . . Human nature was so changed and vitiated that it suffers from the recalcitrance of a rebellious concupiscence and is bound by the law of death. At what the first man became by perversion and penalty, this his descendants are by birth—natures subject to sin and death.⁴⁸

Reformation and evangelical traditions tend to follow this same pattern and use identical verbiage in their discussions of spiritual death.

Reasons to Reevaluate Spiritual Death Theories

There are many reasons for reevaluating the doctrine of spiritual death. As a matter of general principle, we should “test everything and hold on to what is good” (1 Thess 5:21) and ensure that our doctrines “agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness” (1 Tim 6:3).

Second, the doctrine lacks clarity, cohesion, and consensus. The way it weaves together three distinct explanations (with one alternating between soft and hard forms) into a messy braid is confusing. Teachers who attempt to explain it pick and choose one, or two, or three parts of it and struggle to repackage it. Part of the struggle comes from the lack of cohesiveness that the parts have when woven together. For instance, while it is certainly not impossible to logically reconcile the alienation theory with the animation theory, the two can and do compete with one

another for prominence.⁴⁹ Additionally, given the natural need to question how one's soul/spirit can simultaneously in a state of great sickness (dying and losing anima) while his spirit/soul is in a state of absolute stone-cold death (no anima whatsoever), the corruption theory is difficult to reconcile with the animation theory.⁵⁰ Some are inconsistent when defining physical death and eternal death one way while defining spiritual death another way. While all agree that physical death is the separation of the soul/spirit from the body, and that eternal death is the separation of both body and soul (in Hell) from God and his kingdom, many suggest that spiritual death is somehow either less than and/or more than the separation of the sinner's spirit from God.⁵¹

Third, the Reformers who revived Augustine's views on "grace" in the West did not reform his views of grace sufficiently. If this is true, their embrace of his doctrine of spiritual death accepted three aspects he enumerated unnecessarily. Remember that Augustine's starting point in his discussion of death in *The City of God* was the problem of how the soul/spirit can both immortal and dead at the same time. As we saw, he admits that it cannot really be dead. He recognizes that one horn of the dilemma is that it is nonsensical to say that it is dead in the animistic sense. The other horn of the dilemma is that he believes that the soul needs to be regenerated. Reformers and Evangelicals would agree. But Augustine's "grace" is here manifested in magical power channeled by a wizard (priest) who administers the magical sacrament of water baptism. The Latin Church view was that the sacrament of baptism would wash away the problem of original sin and would regenerate the dead soul into a living soul (baptismal regeneration). Augustine tackled the first horn and left the second alone. He proceeds to try to convince his readers (and perhaps himself) that the soul is dead in a different way. The idea that spirit is dead (animation theory) like a twig removed from the vine is plausible and persuasive—but is it really necessary? It is when you're trying to explain how the immortal,

living soul is “dead.” Augustine transitions to the corruption theory and then moves not accidentally to matters of “through the grace. . . infants are redeemed from the bondage of sin,” “the baptism of infants,” “the infants about to be baptized,” and “unbaptized persons,” “forgiveness of sins . . . cleansed by the waters of baptism.”⁵² The dilemma assumes infant baptism and baptismal regeneration.

While Calvin rejected the second horn notion of baptismal regeneration he did not really reject the underlying theory of grace that underpinned it. After reforming some of the unsavory elements out of it (such as the wizard in the middle) he accepted the view that understands “grace” as a power which emanates from God to transform the elect. He did not see any need to rethink the first horn. While not insisting that the Augustinian-Calvinistic view of death, sin, grace, and regeneration need to be rejected, they do at least need to be reconsidered and possibly refined. The second horn deserves to be challenged⁵³ and, if done so successfully, the problem of the mortality of the immortal is no longer a problem.

Augustine was tackling the wrong horn. Our spirits are immortal and eternal so cannot be dead in an animistic sense. While modern monergists deny this, Augustine saw and admitted this fact. He also agreed that physical death is defined as the departing of the spirit from the body.⁵⁴ It is a category mistake to attempt to apply the same definition to the soul/spirit. Saying the spirit is dead is tantamount to saying that the anima which makes us alive somehow loses its own anima. And it is like saying that our spirits lost their own spirits. Analogizing physical death to spiritual death is effective in illustrating an idea so that people can buy into it but it is not effective in arguing for the truth of the idea. The analogy breaks down immediately. This is why Augustine attempted to argue that the soul must be dead in some other way. This may have bearing for the hard view (monergistic) of the animation view in particular.

Fourth, we need to recalibrate after realizing that our understanding of some things has changed (presumably for the better) since Augustine wrote (1,600 years ago) and since Calvin wrote (500 years ago). We have more and better manuscripts of the Bible in Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac. Insights from textual (lower) criticism and centuries of scholarship have enabled modern translations of the Scriptures to be more accurate than the versions that Augustine and Calvin used. Ambrosiaster⁵⁵ and Augustine based some of their ideas upon the Latin mistranslation of Romans 5:12. Could that fact have an impact on the doctrines of sin and death? We also need to be sensitive to the contextualization that may have occurred in the past as Christianity shifted from its Hebrew context to Hellenistic and Latin contexts. With the exception of Jerome, the Latin Church Fathers were fairly ignorant of Middle Eastern languages, customs, and culture. Jerome was a voracious scholar with mastery over a wide arrange of Latin and Greek literature. He also took pains to learn Hebrew from Palestinian Jews during his pilgrimages to Syria (374-379) and Bethlehem (c.385).⁵⁶ Next to Jerome, Augustine was the second most “learned” scholar among the Latin Fathers but his learning focused on philosophy, poetry, and history. His knowledge of the Greek was very slight and he had no knowledge of the Hebrew language.⁵⁷ While his genius cannot be denied, his familiarity with Middle Eastern customs can. Ambrose (who had mentored Augustine) and Cyprian were known more for their administrative abilities than for their scholarship.⁵⁸ Their lack of insight into all things Hebrew very well may have allowed for some important things to be misunderstood.

We need to consider how philosophy may have influenced their theology. Paul did warn us to “beware of philosophy” (Col 2:8). The adoption of traducianism by Tertullian and Augustine played an important part in the formation of the doctrine of original sin in the Latin tradition. And of course the way we define “spirit” obviously has some bearing upon the way we

think about spiritual death. Shifts in our anthropology could call the doctrine of death back into the dock.⁵⁹ The animation theory of spiritual death might seem more plausible when seen from a strict tripartite perspective where body, soul, and spirit are totally distinct from one another. The



tripartite view could allow for the body to be able to die in its way, the soul to become tainted and corrupted in its way, and the spirit to be a thing which can die in its own way. But for those who hold an integrated

view of man, the animation theory is found wanting when weighed. The evangelical doctrine of anthropology has received some correction and recalibration in the last two hundred years.

Arguably contextualization occurred in this area during the transition from the Hebrew to Greco-Roman contexts. And arguably some of us are slowly reforming our way out of that

contextualization. The trend has been to shift away from the Platonic or Tripartite views of man and towards a more biblical, more Hebraic, integrated, holistic, and hylomorphic view of

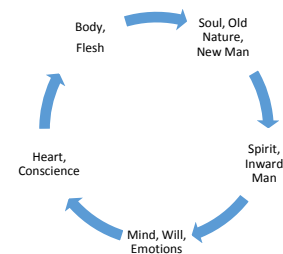
ourselves. Geisler cites Ladd's *The Greek [Platonic] Versus the Hebrew View of Man* as being a "masterful analysis" of the views and a catalyst for this change.⁶⁰ Similarly, Ryrie begins with

"the biblical view of man shows him to us in an impressive diversity, but it never loses sight of the unity of the whole man" and concludes with "Man is like a diamond with its many facets.

Those facets [soul, spirit, heart, conscience, mind, flesh, will] are not separate entities, yet they reflect various aspects of the whole.

They may serve similar or overlapping functions, yet they are distinguishable. They are not parts; they are aspects, facets, faces of the whole."⁶¹ Ward agrees: "Present theological and

psychological emphasis is almost altogether upon the fundamental wholeness or unity of man's



being as against all philosophical attempts to divide it.”⁶² This shift in anthropology should challenge us to rethink our doctrines that are influenced by our anthropology.

The notion of relational death or social death was an important concept that was familiar to those in Middle-Eastern cultures. Western Christians—especially modern urbanites with weaker views of family and community—tend to be less familiar with this alien concept. This may be another thing that was “lost in translation” and in turn provides impetus for reconsideration of our views on death. It could be a key that unlocks doors that have been closed to us. To explain this hebraism of death, here are quotes from two Christian scholars who specialize in Jewish studies. Clifton Payne explains it this way:

The [Midrash] goes on to explain that Abraham expelled Ishmael because Ishmael had fallen into idolatry, and to prevent him from leading Isaac astray, Abraham sent him away. He treated Ishmael **as though he had died**. Even to this day, in some Orthodox Jewish families if a child becomes an apostate the family holds the son or daughter's **funeral**. This is similar to the story of "the prodigal son." The son had become apostate and upon his return the father said, "For this my son was **dead and is alive** again; he was lost and is found" (Lk. 15:11-32). In this sense Isaac was Abraham's only son since Ishmael was the same as **dead**, even as God warned Adam and Eve that if they sinned they would **die** (Gen. 2:17). Isaac was indeed the "beloved" son of Abraham and Sarah's old age, and due to Ishmael's idolatry, their "only" son. Thus, we can understand "only" (yahid) as both unique and especially beloved.⁶³

Kenneth Bailey reinforces the same ideas about relational/social death:

Any Middle Eastern son who requests his inheritance from a healthy father is understood to want his father to die. Such a son is indeed **dead** to the family. At the conclusion of this section the father affirms that the prodigal was indeed **dead** but that now he is **alive**. . . all is lost. He loses everything in two ways. First he loses his family by radically **breaking relationships** with it [and] he then loses everything again in the distant country. . . There is no law or custom among Jews or Arabs which entitles the son to a share of the father's wealth while the father is still alive. Thus if such a request is made, the father is expected to explode with anger and refuse. . . The prodigal receives grace in. . . the freedom to **break his relationships** with his family by selling and leaving town with his inheritance. . . The sons will have the right to dispose of the property only after the father dies. . . Rather than basking in his special privileges, he verbally attacks the father with the cultural equivalent of “Why don't you drop dead?” . . . “was **dead**” can best refer back to before the prodigal left the house. It was out of this **relational death** that he asked for his inheritance and left town. But after that death came resurrection.⁶⁴

This traditional concept of relational death is even still practiced today.⁶⁵ The idea fits with and bolsters the alienation theory of spiritual death. It also potentially weakens the

animation theory by showing a way in which a person can be considered dead while still fully alive in the animated sense. Expanding and reforming our view of death to line up more with this view should give us impetus and tools to test the doctrine of spiritual death.

Putting the Theories to the Test

The phrases “spiritual death” and “spiritually dead” cannot be found in any explicit form in any book of the Bible. They are theological constructs. The Bible does occasionally speak of “death” and “dead” in ways that do not fit with the normal sense of physical death. One of the corollaries of the *sola scriptura* principle is the notion that we can interpret scripture with scripture. This is possible and good because even though the scriptures have forty or so human authors, there was ultimately one Author of them all. We can and should interpret the less clear passages of scripture in the light of the passages that are clearer in meaning. Then survey most of the key Bible passages that speak about death in an atypical way. Throughout the survey we will attempt to judge how well the alienation theory, the soft form of the animation theory, and the hard form of the animation theory fit the data. With Payne and Bailey as our segue, the first passage we will consider is Luke 15.

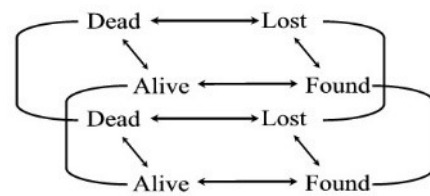
Luke 15 | Dead as Lost

The concept of “relational death” is incontrovertible in chapter fifteen of Luke’s gospel. Our Lord gives three related parables here. The first parable is about a lamb that has become lost in relation to its shepherd and its flock. He leaves the 99 sheep to find the lost sheep. The second parable is about a woman who lost a precious coin (possibly the equivalent then of losing a diamond out of a wedding ring today), searched diligently for it, found it, and rejoiced over finding it. The third parable is commonly referred to as the parable of the prodigal son. But it really is a parable about a gracious and loving father who would not give up on the two disrespectful sons that had become estranged to him. The key word in all three parables is lost.

All three parables are about precious things that are lost, searching for, found, and celebrated. Regarding the return of the younger son to his father, Jesus equates being lost with being dead:

But the father said . . . “this son of mine **was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.** . . . we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours **was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**” (Luke 15: 22-32 ESV)

Chiastic pattern:



When Jesus used the words **dead** as a synonym of **lost**, he was not just contributing a strong evidence for the alienation theory; he was defining death itself in a relational sense. Could it be that this precedent becomes a key that unlocks some or all of the other mysterious passages about death in the Bible? With this possibility in mind let us proceed to the less clear passages.

Genesis 2-3

The controversy over the nuances of human death begins with Genesis 2-3. God prohibited Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of one tree and warned them that if they disobeyed him, they would die on the very same day that they disobeyed (2:17). When the adversary came to tempt them, Eve understood that the penalty was death (3:3) but then was deceived into believing that she “will not certainly die” (3:4). Both Eve and Adam ate the fruit. But neither of them died that same day in the physical sense. Their physical life endured for many more years. Eve proceeded to bear several children and Adam lived to the ripe old age of 930 years (Gen 5:5). The obvious question we are all left with by the ambiguity in Genesis 2-3 is in which way (or ways) did Adam and Eve die?

A very strong argument can be made that the only death Adam died was the physical death of his body (from dust to dust) at the age of 930. Towards the end of the narrative of the fall of man, God gets the last word in by pronouncing curses that clarify the nature of the death God had warned them about earlier: “Because you . . . have eaten of the tree . . . you shall eat bread [live] till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” The death that ends in dust refers only to the death of the physical body. The wage of their transgression was first and foremost a death of the physical body. Perhaps it was exclusively so. The story ends with God driving them away from the garden and actually setting up a guard near the tree of life (3:23-24) “least he reach out his hand and take also of the

tree of life and eat live forever” (3:22). God could have left them in the garden with the tree of life and they could have avoided physical death indefinitely. Dying at the age of 930 years was very premature.

But of course the objection must now arise that God had warned the pair that they would die on the exact same day (2:17) that they ate of the fruit. If they ate the fruit one day and then lived for many more years before experiencing physical death, is it not obvious that some invisible, immaterial part of them died? The matter is not as obvious as it seems given the fact that there are two different ways which Hebrew scholars have translated 2:17b. While the difference is slight, the choice could influence the way we interpret this passage. The vast majority of English translations (KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, RSV, etc.) translate it literally as “for **in the day** that you eat of it you shall surely die.” But the NIV and NET translation teams seemed to have seen something in the Hebrew text which made them think that the real meaning was somehow less exact. They translate it simply as “for **when** you eat from it you will certainly die.”⁶⁶ The literal translation would naturally incline us to see their death as a spiritual type of death which occurred immediately after the eating of the fruit and decades before their physical death. The minority rendering is more lenient on the timing of the death and could lend itself more to an emphasis on the physical death they would eventually suffer. The second view is not without the support of other experts. We should not conclude on the basis of 2:17b alone that the death in focus could have only been an immediate, non-physical (spiritual) death and nothing else. We should be open to the possibility that death in Gen 2-3 could be a non-spiritual, inescapable, eventual, physical death.

On the other hand, there are reasons to think the relational death Jesus referred to in the Luke 15 parables may also be at work in parallel here. Adam and Eve do become lost to God and God seeks them out and restores them. They did become prodigal children. The fact that God clothed them in the skins of animals, instituted some form of animal sacrifice system of blood atonement for them (4:3-6), and gave them the promise of a savior in the future (3:15) shows that the mercy and grace of God were at work to achieve some modicum of reconciliation. But things were not the same as before. The ways in which God set the terms of the relationship with Adam and Eve before they disobeyed and the way he set the terms of the curses after the disobedience is reminiscent of a bilateral covenant. Although it is not clearly stated in Genesis, the prophet Hosea did state clearly that Adam ruined a covenantal relationship they had with God:

Come let us **return to** the Lord. . . that he may **heal** us... he will **revive** us. . . he will **raise us up** that we may **live** before him. Let us know; let us press on to **know** the Lord. . . . But **like Adam they transgressed the covenant**; there they dealt faithlessly with me. (Hosea 6)

The connection between covenants, relationships, life, and death is another thing that was at least partially (perhaps even mostly) lost in translation as the faith spread from its Near-Eastern context into Western (Greek, Latin, European, English, American) contexts.

Relationships between God and humans are established by, enumerated by, and governed by covenants. If any humans are to have any relationship with God, it is invariably based on one or more covenants. The covenant (or treaty) is the legally binding agreement between two parties that explains the relationship between the two. All over the ancient Near-East (from the Hittite and Babylonian empires north of Israel to the Egyptian empire south of Israel), the punishment for breaking a covenant was understood to be death. When Abraham cut the animals in half in preparation of establishing a blood covenant with Yahweh, one of the reasons he suffered an anxiety attack was that he knew “the cutting of the animals in pieces seems more intelligible as an invocation of the same fate upon the partners should they be guilty of breaking their compact.”⁶⁷ As a facet of the alienation theory, the idea of covenantal death is likely with Adam.

Others have recognized that there must have been a covenant in Eden. Kaspar Olevianus (d. 1587), the father of Covenant Theology, called it “the covenant of works.” Based on the explicit penalty of death (presumed to be physical, spiritual, and eternal), Olevianus assumed that God must have implied a promise of eternal life to Adam and Eve if they lived in perfect obedience.⁶⁸ While this seems plausible, it is not strictly biblical and runs off of the cliff of eternal life earned and maintained by works of obedience. Therefore I recommend Lewis Chafer’s description of the covenant (typically called either “the edenic covenant” or “the adamic covenant”) which assumes less:

God entered into a conditional covenant with Adam in which life and blessing or death and cursing were made to depend on the faithfulness of Adam. Human failure followed and the terms of the covenant were executed in righteousness.⁶⁹

If Adam and Eve died on the same day they disobeyed, the death they died is best understood as relational death from a covenantal viewpoint. It may be fair to say that they (and therefore we) became covenantally dead to God when they broke his covenant. The friendly relationships between the two parties died. A new covenant would need to be made if a new

relationship was to be enjoyed. No second covenant was ever made with Adam. This theory augments the alienation theory. While it does not necessarily preclude the animation theory, it does not require it or support it either.

The fact that Adam and Eve were afraid of God and attempted to hide from him (3:8-11) immediately after disobeying could also be used as an evidence of the alienation theory of spiritual death. Their friendly relationship clearly had ended. They hid from God. It might be natural to conclude that their spiritual alienation moved them to hide. But the text gives a different reason instead. The cause of their fear was the new perception of shame over being naked. Some have suggested that before the fall the bodies of Adam and Eve may have been clothed with a glorious radiance⁷⁰ which disappeared when they became separated from God and his glory. But there is nothing in the text to warrant this. It is unclear how often the first pair got to enjoy the presence of God. This argument should not be used to support the alienation theory. But it may be used to help temper the excessive claims of those who use the hard variation of the animation theory and say that fallen man has died (and/or been corrupted) in such a way that we cannot understand God or his words. Despite being in a “fallen” state, they were able to communicate back and forth with him. There is no indication in the text that God needed to regenerate their spirits and renew their minds before communication was possible.

Fifth, in Genesis 2 - 3 the spiritual change in Adam and Eve was not a decrease in spiritual animation or even a decrease in spiritual perception. The change was an increase in spiritual perception. They became “like one of us [presumably indicating Father, Son, Holy Spirit] in knowing good and evil.” Multiple verses in 2 and 3 prove that their moral-spiritual knowledge would increase. The serpent had been right in saying that they would become like God in this way. The irony is that while becoming ungodly in this one act they did in one way become more like God. And somehow this increase in *gnosis* became the reason that God drove them away from the tree of life (3:23-24) “lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat live forever” (3:22). God could have left them with the tree of life and they could have avoided physical death indefinitely rather than dying at a premature 930 years of age. But physical death somehow became a part of the solution to the problem they had caused for themselves. These facts neither directly support nor indirectly preclude the alienation theory. But they do slightly discourage us away from the soft form of the animation theory and forbid us from adopting the hard form of the animation theory. They may possibly support some variation

of the corruption theory so long as that theory emphasizes the unwanted increase in understanding rather than an unwanted decrease in the ability to understand spiritual things.

Ephesians 2 & Colossians 2

We skip to Ephesians 2 because it contains the second most important proof text for the discussions of spiritual death. No reconsideration of the doctrine of spiritual death would be complete without tackling it. Since Colossians 2 is practically identical to it, we will tackle them together.

To the gentile believers in Ephesus Paul stated that “you were dead in your transgressions and sins” (2:1) but God “made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions” (2:5). To the gentile believers in Colossae, Paul wrote: “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins” (2:13).

First, neither Eph. 2 nor Col. 2 says anything about having a spirit that is dead. Clearly the state of death they both talk of has nothing to do with the death of the physical body. And it may be natural to conclude, “if not physical then spiritual.” The characterization of “spiritual death” may be acceptable on a technicality (since something can be categorized either as physical or as spiritual) but it is sloppy at best and potentially eisegetical. In both chapters Paul very clearly says we gentiles used to be dead in three specific ways: (1) in your transgressions, (2) in your sins, (3) in the uncircumcision of your flesh. It would be more exegetically accurate to refer to this death as “sinful death” or “transgressional death” than “spiritual death.” The addition of the fleshly and physical factor of uncircumcision makes it more awkward to call this a state of death a purely spiritual thing.

Second, the uncircumcision factor makes it clear that Paul is thinking in terms of covenantal relationships here. As sons of the Adam (who had sinned, transgressed, and broken

the first covenant), the Greek people residing in Ephesus and Colossae were dead to God in a covenantal and relational sense. Since the later covenant which God made with Abraham required a circumcision of the male descendants (as an outward sign of the covenantal relationship they enjoyed), and since these Greeks were not circumcised, they did not have any covenantal relationship with God that way either. Whichever theory of spiritual death one might use to attempt to explain the data from Eph. 2 and Col. 2 must account for the fact that the circumcised descendants of Jacob were not in the same state of deadness that the gentiles were in. This has nothing to do with individuals being regenerated and has everything to do with covenantal relationships.

Third, when we consider the small parts that use the word “dead” in the light of the whole, the main things become the plain things, the plain things become the main things, and ambiguous term “dead” becomes clear in its greater context. Consider the table below to see the context of Ephesians 2:

Condition in Adam	Condition in Christ
dead in trespasses and sins	made us alive
walking in trespasses and sins	
following the course of this world	
following the prince of the power of the air	
sons of disobedience	
lived in the passions of our flesh	
by nature children of wrath	have been saved
Gentiles in the flesh, the uncircumcision	
separated from Christ	
alienated from the commonwealth of Israel	fellow citizens
strangers to the covenants of promise	no longer strangers and aliens
having no hope	
without God in the world	
you once were far off	
dividing wall of hostility	

Consider this table to glimpse the larger context of Colossians 2:

Condition in Adam	Condition in Christ
	rooted in Jesus
	built up in Jesus
	circumcised without hands (spiritual)
dead in uncircumcision	circumcised by Christ
	buried with Christ
	raised with Christ
dead in your trespasses	made alive together with Christ
	forgiven all our trespasses
	record of debt cancelled, nailed to cross
	died to the elemental spirits of the world

The quantity and diversity of relational terms in Eph 2 and Col 2 makes it clear that death here a relational death (lost) that is reminiscent of the prodigal son of Luke 15.

Romans 5-7

5:10	death	life	5:10
		justified	5:9
		saved from wrath	5:9
		reconciled	5:10
5:10	enemies	reconciled	5:10
		saved	5:10
		received reconciliation	5:11
5:12	death through sin		
5:12	death to all men		
5:14	death reigned		
5:15	many died		
5:16	condemnation	justification	5:16
5:17	death reigned	righteousness / life	5:17
5:18	condemnation	justification / life	5:17
5:18	disobedience of Adam	life to all men	5:18
		dead to sin	6:2
		baptized into Christ	6:3
		died with Christ (past)	6:3-4
		walk in newness of life (present)	6:4
		united with him in death (past)	6:5

		united with him in (future) resurrection	6:5
		old self crucified with him	6:6
		body of sin brought to nothing	6:6
		no longer enslaved to sin	6:6
		has died (to sin)	6:7
		set free from sin	6:7
		died with Christ (past)	6:8
		we will also live with him (future)	6:8
		dead to sin	6:11
		alive to God	6:11
		set free from sin (past)	6:19
6:19	slaves to impurity	slaves to righteousness	6:19
6:19	slaves to lawlessness	slaves to righteousness	6:19
6:20	slaves to sin	set free from sin	
	fruit/end is death	slaves to God	
		fruit is eternal life	
6:23	wages of sin is death	eternal life in Christ	6:23

As almost everything in the table is relational, Romans 5-6 is saturated with support for the alienation theory of spiritual death. Chapter 5 has a focus on reconciliation of enemies while Chapter 6 focuses on the change of relationships of the slave from the old master to the new master. Whereas in Adam we were relationally dead in sin to God, in Christ we are relationally dead to sin and alive to God. The “dead to sin” and “alive to God” part of the chiasm uses language that fits the gracious father in Luke 15. Paul exhibits this same relational definition of death again in Romans 7:1-6 when he explains how death is what ends relationships to a master, to a spouse, and to the Mosaic Law.

With regard to the animation theory, the eternal life (6:23) seems to be primarily with the life we will enjoy in the future after the resurrection (6:5). Likewise the fruit, end, and wage of sin being death (6:20-23) seems to refer to the future death (physical and eternal) rather than some present spiritual state of death. However, in connecting Jesus’ resurrection with our present

ability to walk in newness of life (6:4), one could conceivably attempt to make a (weak) case either the animation or corruption theories.

The Corinthian Letters

There are three verses in letters to the Corinthian believers which may be speaking of perishing in an atypical way:

- 1) For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor 1:18)
- 2) For we are a sweet aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. (2 Cor 2:15)
- 3) But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. (2 Cor 4:3)

While it is possible to understand “perishing” in these verses as the gradual process of aging and dying that we are all going through, the contrast with “the message of the cross,” “being saved,” and “our gospel” makes it seem like there could be room to see perishing as being a spiritual phenomenon. If that is true that the unsaved are currently perishing it follows that they have not perished (died) already. This would count as a strike against the animation theory, a point for the corruption theory, and a null for the alienation theory.

1st Corinthians 15 is entirely devoted to the resurrection of the body as the solution to the problem of death. The problem of death is first and foremost a problem of physical death (15:21-22, 42). The solution to this problem is here clearly in the future resurrection of the body. The fact that Jesus “became a life-giving spirit” (15:45) is to be understood in the context of the future day when “the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (15:52).

2 Corinthians 3:7 says that the Mosaic Covenant and Law was “the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone.” This may have been explained earlier in 1 Cor

15:56 which says, “the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law.” It is interesting that Paul, a former Pharisee, chains death to sin and the law to sin.

2 Corinthians 4 is famous for the metaphor of the spirit and body as treasure in a clay jar. This imagery could point back to the first-century Greco-Roman practice of burying coins and other valuables in clay jars in times of political and economic instability. When Paul wrote “death is at work in us but life [at work] in you” (:12) and “though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day” (:16). This could sound like fuel for the spiritual animation theory.



But when taken in its immediate context it is clear that Paul is referring to the body (the clay jar) being put to death just as Jesus’ body was put to death (:10-12). He is saying that he and his coworkers were in constant danger of being violently killed just as Jesus was. Also it is clear here that the “the life of Jesus” being “manifested in our bodies” (:11) is not seen as something that happens in the present but in the future resurrection when “the Lord Jesus will raise us also” (:14). The life he is talking about seems to be an eternal, unseen, and future thing. It is unclear how the “day by day” factor can be fit in. The treasure is presently in the jars of clay. Is that treasure the present life of the resurrection in spiritual form? Or is it the hope of the certain and impending resurrection?

2 Cor 5:17 informs us that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation [or new creature]. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” This certainly sounds like the language of rebirth, regeneration, and renaissance. What should we make of this?

First, whatever Paul means here, he is definitely not saying that the human spirit was created in a dead state and was laying around dead for years. It sounds like some facet of us—perhaps our “old man” or “old nature”—was alive and well before it passed away and the new

nature was given. This does not fit the animistic theory of death of the spirit. It does fit the corruption theory of the soul. The problem is not that the old nature is dead and needs to be revived; the problem is that it is alive, needs to be removed (die), and needs to be replaced. This fits in with Paul's concept of being baptized into Christ, his death, and his resurrection. While we might say that this facet of our being is a "spiritual" facet (meaning invisible and immaterial), it is probably a misnomer to say that our spirits need to die and be replaced with new spirits.

Second, perhaps it is not even a "facet" of ourselves that is replaced. Maybe the thing that has died is the old way of living ("that those who live might no longer live for themselves" v.15) and the new is a new way of living for Jesus (v.15). If there must be a part of us that is changed, we could leave it at this: he changes the part of us that decides to live for self or to live for Christ.

Third, in the same breath as it were, Paul continues saying that this exciting old-gone-and-new-come phenomena is, "from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself. . . in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. . . on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." There is clearly a logical chain from God reconciling us to himself, making us righteous and not counting our trespasses against us, and changing us to live for Christ rather than ourselves. How the change is made, we are not told. But there is another undeniable connection between reconciliation (alienation theory) and new creation.

Matthew 8 / Luke 9 | Let the dead bury the dead?

In Matthew 8:22, when a prospective disciple informs Jesus that he would like to begin the peripatetic sojourn with him as his Rabbi, but says he must wait to "bury his father" first, Jesus answers him in an exceedingly odd way: "Follow me and let the dead bury their own

dead.” The parallel passage (which seems to be a second instance of the same excuse by a different prospective disciple) in Luke 9:60 uses the same phrase: “Let the dead bury their own dead.” How can dead people be able to bury physically dead people? Some 1,600 or more years ago, this interpretation was supposed: “Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead.” This would become the majority view. The idea is that a real disciple who is spiritually alive (as evidenced by their willingness to leave everything, follow Jesus, and proclaim this gospel of his kingdom) should pay some of the unregenerate Jews in his area to bury his father rather than postponing his discipleship. Despite the fact that this interpretation of Jesus’ answer leaves Jesus sounding very harsh, unreasonable, and un-Jewish, the number of Bible commentators who adopted this explanation is beyond numbering.

This traditional interpretation goes back at least 1,600 years to the Greek Father Chrysostom. Chrysostom offers a brilliant, admirable, and moving attempt to make sense of the Jesus’ strange words about the dead who should bury the dead. With the following words he sets the first precedent for understanding the dead as the unbelievers and pours further concrete into the foundations for the corruption theory and the animation theory:

But by saying, "their own dead," He implies that this is not one of His dead. And that because he that was dead, was, at least as I suppose, of the unbelievers. . . . many even of them that seem to live are nothing better than **dead** men, living as they do in wickedness ; or rather these are worse than the **dead** . . . this man is a slave to sin. . . . these things he undergoes more grievously than the **dead**, no worms devouring him, but the passions of his soul tearing him to pieces more fiercely than wild beasts. . . this man is gathering unto himself **diseases** without number. . . is buried in the tomb of his innumerable distempers. . . his soul is **corrupted and destroyed**, and undergoes greater **rottenness**. . . for the whole of his life exhales evil odors. . . brings in also that rottenness which is from intemperance, devising each day unnumbered causes of **corruption**. . . this man is going about everywhere with his evil savor, bearing about **a dead soul in his body as in a tomb**. . . a man's soul who is living in luxury and vice. . . rivetted by the chains of our sins. . . [having a] heavy cover of insensibility. . . these **dead men, seeing that they are past feeling**. . . Who then is the embalmer of these? The devil, who carefully fastens them about, and suffers not the man any longer to appear a man, but **a dry stock**. For where there is no eye, nor hands, nor feet, nor any other such thing, how can such an one appear a man? Even so may we see their soul also swaddled up [grave shroud], and rather an image than a soul. Forasmuch then as they are in a sort of **senseless state, being turned to dead men**, let us in their behalf draw nigh unto Jesus, let us entreat Him to raise them up, let us take away the stone, let us loosen the grave clothes. For if thou take away the stone, that is, their

insensibility to their own miseries, thou wilt quickly be able to bring them also out of the tomb; and having brought them out, thou wilt more easily rid them of their bonds. . . . even though his ill savor abound and be ever so intense, nevertheless not even so should we, his friends, forsake him, but so much the rather draw near; even as the sisters of Lazarus then did; neither should we leave interceding, beseeching, entreating, until we have received him alive. For if we thus order our own affairs, and those of our neighbors, we shall also attain speedily unto the life to come; unto which may we all attain, by the grace and love to man of our Lord Jesus Christ⁷¹

Some say that it was Augustine who paraphrased Jesus here as meaning, “Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead.”⁷² So far I have not been able to find that exact phrase in original sources. What I have found shows strong imitation of Chrysostom’s homily where he also “supposes” (indicating uncertainty) that the dead who bury are unbelievers:

Yet He suffered him not, but saith, “Let the dead bury their dead, but do thou follow me.” For in every case He had regard to the intention. And wherefore did He not suffer him? one may ask. Because, on the one hand, there were those that would fulfill that duty, and the dead was not going to remain unburied; on the other, it was not fit for this man to be taken away from the weightier matters. **But by saying, “their own dead,” He implies that this is not one of His dead. And that because he that was dead, was, at least as I suppose, of the unbelievers.**⁷³

As brilliant as they are here, the problem with both Chrysostom and Augustine as interpreters is simply that they wholly bereft of insight into the first-century burial practices in Judea that Jesus, his disciples, and his audiences were familiar with. Gordon Franz, who is an authority on these practices, disagrees with the conclusion which both Chrysostom and Augustine both “supposed.” The phrase “their own dead” implies physical death, not spiritual death. Franz contends that “there is no need to spiritualize the text regarding the dead; both are physically dead!” He explains:

In the first century, when a person died, they normally were taken and buried immediately in the family burial cave that had been hewn out of bedrock. . . . Immediately after the burial, the family would separate itself and mourn for seven days. This mourning period was called *shiv'ah*. It would have been impossible for the disciples to make their request if their father had just died. If they were the eldest sons, they were obligated by custom to immediately bury their fathers. . . . After a body was placed in a burial cave, it was left to decompose. The family mourned for seven days. This initial mourning period was followed by a less intense 30-day period of mourning, called *shloshim*. However, the entire mourning period was not fully over until the flesh of the deceased had decomposed, usually about a year later. . . . The final act of mourning, the gathering of the bones into a bone box called an ossuary, was called *ossilegium*, or “secondary burial.” It is this act, I believe, that is in view in our Lord’s response. . . . When the disciples requested time to bury their fathers they were actually asking for time to finish the rite of secondary burial. Their father had died, been placed

in the family burial cave, and the sons had sat *shiv'ah* and most likely *shloshim*. They had requested anywhere from a few weeks to up to 11 months to finish the ritual of *ossilegium* before they returned to Jesus. . . . Jesus' sharp answer also fits well with secondary burial. The fathers had been buried in the family burial caves and their bodies were slowly decomposing. In the tombs, along with the fathers, were other family members who had died, some awaiting secondary burial, others already placed in ossuaries. When Jesus stated: "Let the dead bury their own dead," He was referring to two different kinds of dead in the tomb: the bones of the deceased which had already been neatly placed in ossuaries and the fathers who had yet to be reburied. The phrase "own dead" indicates that the fathers were included among the dead.⁷⁴

Franz offers a far more informed and plausible interpretation of the two types of dead people in Mt. 8 / Lk. 9. Assuming then that Franz is correct, the dead in focus are not spiritually dead but physically dead. Neither the alienation, animation, nor corruption theories find support here. The physical death theory is the only good fit. A lesson we western-minded interpreters should learn from this is that failure to put the work into research and exegesis, leaves a speculative vacuum that tends to be filled with speculation or eisegesis.

John 3-6

The gospel of John talks about "life" (ζωή) 55 times. This is more than any other book of the Bible. For perspective, Romans comes in second with 37 references to life. This makes it a prime place to look for insights about spiritual death and animation.

In John 3, Jesus is famous for saying some unusual things about the need to be reborn. Most evangelical theologians take this to be an evidence of the need for the regeneration of the dead spirit into a living spirit. Historically it was popular among evangelicals to define an evangelical as someone who has had a born-again experience. Here is what Jesus said:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again [or born from above] he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. . . . You must be born again [or born from above]. (John 3:3-7)

First, there is nothing in this chapter that says our spirits are dead or dying. Jesus is saying that we all have been born from below (the earthly, physical birth) and that we also need a birth from above (the heavenly or spiritual birth). Of course one could see this as a regeneration of the spirit that could happen before our death and before our resurrection. But if we read further it is clear that Jesus is talking about the need for Jesus to die so that “whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (:15), that “whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (:16), and “whoever believes in him is not condemned.” While it can be argued that “eternal life” in John’s gospel can refer to a life that can begin in this life, I will contend that eternal life refers first and foremost to the life that begins after we receive our resurrection bodies. In support of this conclusion, consider how the argument Jesus made to Nicodemus and the language used in Jn 3:3-7 parallels with Paul’s argument about the future resurrection in 1 Cor 15.

Second, since the conversation in John 3 was a private conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin and an elite “teacher of Israel,” we should expect Jn 3 to be heavier than most passages in allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures. There are several. One likely allusion to Ezekiel 36-37 may help shed light on the rebirth concept.

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:24-27)

Ezekiel 37 continues the same theme.⁷⁵ God someday will clothe the dry bones [“the whole house of Israel”] with flesh, sinews, skin, and breathe the breath of life into them. God will regather the people of Israel, open their graves, raise them from the graves, put his spirit with them, save them, cleanse them from sin, become their God, rule over them,

regather them to the land, make an everlasting covenant of peace with them, and dwell with them. Assuming Jesus was alluding to these chapters, it is difficult to know how rebirth would apply to individual gentiles rather than corporate Israel. Either way, the prophecy is talking about events that will happen sometime in the future and it is difficult to think of a reason to “spiritualize” them into the present.

Fairly frequently John 5:25 is cited as a proof text of men being spiritually dead right now, being unable to hear God right now, and being able to have life now. It says:

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

The most unusual thing about this passage is the bit that says “and [the hour] is now here.” Leon Morris provides a good example of this viewpoint:

It is possible to take this in the sense that Christ will call the dead from their graves at the last day, a thought which he goes on to express (vv. 28-29). But at this point (v.25) he seems to be speaking rather of life here and now, as the words “and now is” indicate. Jesus is saying that right now he calls the spiritually dead out of their lost state and gives them life. Life in this sense is not a natural possession: it is a divine gift. He has just said that the believer “has passed out of death into life” (v.24), and while the saying has eschatological overtones by the assurance that he will not come into judgment, Jesus is surely saying that the life he gives will be effective even on the great day of judgment.⁷⁶

First, while it is probably legitimate to say that we who believe in Jesus have already received some measure of a good-faith payment of eternal life, the emphasis in John 5 (as with the rest of the book of John) is first and foremost upon life given at the future resurrection. Jesus put the emphasis on the future when he said that the hour “is coming” (5:25). The judgment is future (5:26), the hour is future (“hour is coming” in 5:28) when the resurrections will take place (5:29). The life we are looking forward to really begins at the resurrection. Perhaps what Jesus is saying by “the hour is now here” is that the people hearing him had to make their choice between believe and disbelieve, life and death at that time.

John 6 is famous for Jesus' "I am the bread of life" statements. In this chapter, eternal life is something "the Son of Man will give to you" (6:27) in the future. There is a clear connection between resurrection ("raise it up on the last day" 6:39) and "eternal life" (6:40) and "I will raise him up on the last day" (6:40).

1 John 2-3

No one who is **born of God** will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been **born of God**. . . We know that we have crossed over **from death to life** because we love our fellow Christians. The one who does not love remains in death. . . . no murderer **has eternal life in him.**" (1 John 3:9-10; 14-15)

John's language here seems to support a form of the animation theory and possibly the corruption theory too. It seems to harken back a few decades to chapter 3 of John's gospel. It also supports the theory that "eternal life" is something that we should have in the here and now and not just something that we get later. The purpose here of this life is to change us from haters to lovers. Also interesting is how 1 John 2:24-25 (" . . . you will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life") supports the alienation theory while possibly echoing both John 14 ("If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him") and John 15 ("I am the vine and you are the branches"). This eternal life (2:25; 3:15) is not dispensed piecemeal by a wizard wielding the magic grace power and muttering incantations but by the believer simply "confessing [rather than denying] the Son [of God]" (2:23) and "letting what you heard from the beginning abide in you" (2:24).

1 Timothy 5

Many have quoted 1 Tim. 5:6 (“But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives”) as a proof text that a man or woman can be physically alive and spiritually dead at the same time. This terse explanation while plausible is far less compelling than an explanation that takes into account the Hebraic concept of relational or social death which Jesus (Lk. 15) and Paul (Rom. 6-7) both expected their readers to understand.

It seems significant that the dishonorable widow who is simultaneously dead in one way and alive in another (v6) is contrasted with the honorable widow who has been “left alone” (v5) and has set her hope on God (v5). The larger context is a discussion of whom the local church should “honor,” provide for, and take the place of family for. Ideally the life of the widow will be sustained by her children or grandchildren (v4). But if an honorable widow has no one in her immediate family to take care of her needs for food, clothing, shelter and such, the local church should take care of her. She is alive to the church and they will help keep her alive physically, it could be said. If the widow has a dishonorable reputation, the church should not take her burden upon themselves like a family would. She is dead to God and dead to them.

While I would argue against the idea that there is no continuity in identity between the community of Israel and the church of Christ, I do not doubt that there is considerable continuity between the two on matters of what is good and what is evil. There is also significant continuity between some of the practices of the communities for dealing with evil people in the community. One of the most picturesque phrases for a disciplinary act of exile, estrangement, separation, and alienation is to be “cut off.”

The phrase “cut off” is found close to 200 times in the Bible. Exodus 12:19, for example, says that if anyone transgresses a specific law, “that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel.” Exodus 31:14 says that anyone who profanes the Sabbath “shall be put to death. . . that

soul shall be cut off from among his people.” Leviticus 20:17 prescribes the following punishment for various sexual sins: “and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of the people.” Paul wrote, “I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers” (Rom. 9:3).

Sometimes cutting off means death by execution by the community. Sometimes God cuts them off. Job 27:8 asks, “For what hope does the godless have when he is cut off, when God takes away his life?” Other times it means rejection by the community, which may or may not eventually lead to physical death. While the community of Christ’s church is not under the jurisdiction of the Mosaic laws, there are similar principles of church discipline that the apostles expected the churches to follow. In 1 Cor. 5, the same Paul that wrote Timothy, exhorted the church to serve the following sentence on a man who was guilty of living for pleasure: “Let him who has done this be removed from among you” (5:2), “deliver this man to Satan” (5:5), “not to associate with sexually immoral people” (5:9), “not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed. . . not even to eat with such a one,” (5:11), and “Purge the evil person from among you.” Although the language is different the concepts are the same as “cutting off” the immoral person from the community. And the concept of being “relationally dead” is readily seen here as well.

In this same vein, when the community of the local church is considering which widows to take care of, they should not let the honorable widows among them die alone with God as their only family member. The dishonorable widows who live for pleasure, by contrast, is already dead to God and to the community of faith because of the way she lives. The church has no obligation to support her.

Titus 3:4-7

But “when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 5 he saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, **through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit**, 6 whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Savior. And so, since we have been justified by his grace, we become heirs with the confident **expectation of eternal life.**”

The “washing” could possibly support a corruption theory and the “new birth and the renewing” seem to support an animation theory. The “on the basis of his mercy” is a parallelism to “by his grace.” “Eternal life” here is something that we can confidently expect to inherit in the future. Perhaps it is fair to say that believers are God’s heirs already, they can enjoy some of that inheritance in the now, but that full inheritance is not given to us until later.

Jude 1:12

Jude said that some evil people in the church were, “autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead.” We can know a tree by its fruits. And we can know a tree is dead when it is devoid of leaves and fruit. Evil people do not bear the fruit God wants them to have. Especially with John 15 in mind yet again, Jude’s botanic usage does seem to support the Augustine-Calvin braid of alienation, animation, and corruption theories.

Revelation

The book of revelation mentions “the second death” four times (2:11, 20:6, 20:14, 21:8) and defines it as “being thrown into the lake of fire” and being “consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.” If being separated from God in Hell is the second death, and the physical body being separated from the soul/spirit is the first death, there is no room in John’s numbering system for spiritual death. If Western doctrines of spiritual death were accurate, perhaps we

should expect that to be the first death, physical death to be the second death, and eternal death to be the third death.

Rev. 3:1 says to the church in Sardis, “I know your works. You have the reputation for being alive, but you are dead.” I might suggest that this means they are dead to God in the relational sense. But it could be that they are not alive in the animation sense. In the John 15 sense of twigs bearing grapes while connected to the life giving sap of the grape vine, perhaps the members of this church are twigs that are not really grafted into the vine.

Conclusions and Implications

The Bible’s passages that speak in strange ways about death can be understood in terms of physical death, relational/covenantal death (alienation), animation/nutritional death, the eternal/second death, and/or the dying-but-not-dead corruption theory. Perhaps Augustine and Calvin were justified in chaining together alienation, animation, and corruption in their systematic theologizing of spiritual death. However, in their biblical theology they did get sloppy on occasion and read their theology into the text. Some of the passages evangelicals assume pertain to “spiritual death” may actually have their primary reference in physical death instead. Some of the passages presumed to mean that we can have spiritual life here and now may refer more appropriately to the future resurrection of the body. If so, perhaps then our focus should shift away from theories of mystical life being available in this present life to the present “hope of the [future] resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:6).

While it seems like we should do less spiritualizing regarding our talk of death and life, the door is not completely closed to spiritual theories of spiritual death. The alienation theory

(along with the concept of relational death, social death, or covenantal death) seems to fit impressively well with several of the atypical death passages. The alienation-reconciliation theory should continue to rise in prominence.

While the soft form of the animation theory does fit well with a few of the strange death passages in the Bible, as a matter of proportionality perhaps it deserves less focus than it has received. As we refine our animation theory along the lines of branches being grafted into vines or trees, we need to keep in mind that the reconciliation of the withered branch to the living trunk must happen before the revivification can begin and fruit can be borne. The sequence is reconciliation before animation, not regeneration before reconciliation. The hard form of the animation theory has that backwards and fits with none of the “spiritual death” passages. The corruption theory has some potential, not so much in conversations of what is dead, but what has passed away and been replaced. Since “spiritual death” is vague, ambiguous, convoluted, imprecise, and potentially misleading blanket term, perhaps it is time to retire the phrase (and “spiritually dead”) and use more precise terms.

Grace as the Efficient Cause

Evangelicals have inherited most of their ideas from the Greek, Latin, and Protestant Reformation church traditions. Some of those ideas still need to be protested and reformed. The Greek notion of theosis may have some merit but also may ultimately be misguided—especially when it leads to the wizardry of their sacramental Eucharist. Similarly, the Augustinian and Latin concept of transforming grace needed extremely heavy reformation—especially where it finds its outlet chiefly in the wizardry of their sacrament of baptismal regeneration. Recall how Augustine’s starting point in his discussion of soul death was the problem of how the soul/spirit can both immortal and dead at the same time. He admitted that it is impossible for it to be really

and truly dead. But since he believed that the soul needs to be regenerated, he proceeds to try to convince his readers (and perhaps himself) that the soul is dead in a different way. I'm convinced that the fuel for this was his doctrine of salvation primarily by holy water. Consider the Latin view of sacramental grace by the time of Aquinas:

The generation of a living thing is a change from not living to life. Now a man is **deprived of spiritual life by original sin**; and whatever sins are added there to go still further to withdraw him from life. **Baptism therefore, or spiritual generation, was needed to serve the purpose of taking away original sin and all actual sins.** And because the sensible sign of a Sacrament must be suited to represent the spiritual effect of the Sacrament, and the washing away of filth is done by water, therefore Baptism is fittingly conferred in water sanctified by the word of God. And because what is brought into being by **generation** loses its previous form and the properties consequent upon that form, therefore **Baptism, as being a spiritual generation, not only takes away sins**, but also all the liabilities contracted by sins, — all guilt and all debt of punishment: therefore no satisfaction for sins is enjoined on the baptised. With the acquisition of a new form there goes also the acquisition of the activity consequent upon that form; and therefore **the baptised become immediately capable of spiritual actions, such as the reception of the other Sacraments.** Also there is due to them a position suited to the spiritual life: that position is everlasting happiness: and therefore the baptised, if they die fresh from baptism, are immediately caught up into bliss: hence it is said that baptism opens the gate of heaven. One and the same thing can be generated only once: therefore, as Baptism is a spiritual generation, one man is to be baptised only once. **The infection that came through Adam defiles a man only once: hence Baptism, which is directed mainly against that infection,** ought not to be repeated. Also, once a thing is consecrated, so long as it lasts, it ought not to be consecrated again, lest the consecration should appear to be of no avail: hence Baptism, as it is a consecration of the person baptised, ought not to be repeated.⁷⁷

The Greek Church's view of salvation primarily by holy bread/wine (more than holy water) does not offer a substantive alternative. Schmemmann summarizes their view:

The [Eastern Orthodox] Church as a whole is means of grace, the sacrament of the kingdom. Therefore its structure: hierarchical, sacramental, liturgical, has no other function but of making the Church ever capable of fulfilling itself as the body of Christ, as the temple of the Holy Spirit, to actualize its very nature as grace. . . Hence the unique, the central, ecclesiological significance of the Eucharist, which is the all-embracing sacrament of the [Eastern] Church. . . . For in the Eucharist the Church accomplishes the passage from this world into the world to come. . . . Thus the whole life of the Church is rooted in the Eucharist. . . This indeed is the mission of the Church. . . . It is the slow transformation of the old Adam in us into the new one, the restoration of the pristine beauty, which was lost in sin. . . . The Orthodox spiritual tradition has always stressed the mystical nature of the Christian life, as life "hidden with Christ in God." . . . Nothing reveals better the relation between the Church as fullness and the Church as mission than the Eucharist, the central act of the Church's *leiturgia*, the sacrament of the Church itself.⁷⁸

In both the Greek and Latin Church traditions, the grace of God is described as force or power that flows from God through proxies (the Church, the priests, the sacramental rituals, Mary) into the souls of the human communicants. The Reformers adopted the Latin view of

sacramental grace and gave it the bare minimum amount of reformation needed to avoid the problem of salvation through ritualistic works. But they still left us with a revised version of the notion that grace is a power that flows from God to transform us. They removed the human wizards from the magic equation and made God into the only wizard who can wield his coercive, transforming magic power against the wills of the unwilling. The notion that grace as power needs to be reconsidered and refined.

We can say that God does transform us (for example: “though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day” 2 Cor. 4:16). And we can say it is by God’s grace that we are transformed. Indeed we should still rejoice that we are saved (justified in the past, sanctified and transformed in the present, and glorified in the future) by grace alone. The transformation he works into us is one of his many gifts. But we must be cautious with and not overly simplistic about what we mean when we use the proposition “by.” This is not a good area for simple or sloppy thing on. When we thinking in terms of the six different types of causes—efficient, final, formal, material, exemplar, and instrumental—grace is **the efficient cause** of the transformation but, contrary to longstanding church traditions, it is neither **the formal cause** nor **the instrumental cause** of that transformation.

Grace is an attitude, disposition, inclination, or mindset. Grace should be seen as (or even translated into English as) “generosity” or “graciousness” instead. In this case it is not an etymological fallacy to point out that “grace” (*charis*) is very closely related to “gifts” (*charismata*). Grace is the mental inclination to give gifts. It is the opposite of selfishness. Grace is seen in the father of Luke 15 who throws a party for the son that other fathers would be beating with the rod. While it is God’s attitude of mercy which causes him to not give us the punishment we deserve, it is his attitude of grace/generosity that causes him to give us the

benefits we do not deserve. The grace, mercy, and love of God are all attitudes in God which made him decide to save us. Primarily this fleshes out in the sending, sacrificing, and raising of his Son for us.

Monergism and Mission

Testing and refining our theories here is important because “spiritual death” lies at the heart of the way we see God, ourselves, and others. This then proceeds inevitably to impact our attitudes, policies, and strategies regarding our attempts (or lack thereof) at pre-evangelism (or apologetics), evangelism, church planting, missionary work, and even the very mission of the church in the world today.

When we hold a doctrine that says unbelievers have totally dead spirits surrounded by totally corrupt souls housed in dying bodies, it is easy to begin to think of them as zombies—the walking dead. This attitude about unbelievers necessarily impacts our judgments about what to do about them. For one thing, it is okay for zombies to die physically. The core of their being is already dead and the wrapper is corrupt to the bone. If they were among the elect, surely God can be trusted to regenerate them to life before the moment of their physical death. Ending their miserable lives does not alter whether they are elected for heaven or predestined for eternal separation. This view could lead to an increased ability to rationalize and support coercion, oppression, violence, and even war with worldly weapons against the enemies of God. This is far-fetched rhetoric. The terrors of the Inquisitions can be traced to the precedent Augustine set with the unjust persecution of the Donatists. The clash of the swords of Augustinian Catholics, Augustinian Lutherans, and Augustinian Calvinists resounded throughout the insane devastation of Europe during the Thirty Years War.

If we as monergists decide to attempt to evangelize the zombies, we do so only because we are commanded to do so. Perhaps God may regenerate them right before we talk to them. But if we talk to them and they do not respond in the faith that comes from hearing the word of God, we realize that they are not in a regenerated state. There is no point in talking to them any longer. There is no motivation to persevere in the attempt to win them. When a passenger ship sinks into the ocean and the search and rescue crews are dispatched, the rescuers do not waste time with the corpses that have already sunk into the depths. They can only care about “those who are perishing.” Think of how tremendous the difference in our attitudes would be towards the lost if we think of them as lost-dead rather than as stone-cold dead?

While it is true that we need rebirth, regeneration, new creation, birth from above, and birth from God, the hard form of the spiritual death theory does not test well against most of the biblical data. Monergists who cite Genesis 2-3, Ephesians 2, Romans 5, and Matthew 8 to support their view of “spiritual death” should hear that these are the passages which offer their view the least amount of support.

Spiritual Death and Apologetics

Our apologetic can be constrained by our doctrine of spiritual death. If we see unbelievers as zombies there is no reason to attempt to appeal to their utterly dead spirits through their wholly corrupt mental faculties. What we say to the lost cannot matter anyway since grace must regenerate the hearer before he or she can hear. In the second chapter of his book *Presuppositional Apologetics*, Greg Bahnsen attempts to build a case against the idea that reason and logical arguments can help nonbelievers begin to believe in God and his Son. As a monergist he argues:

. . . faith is a gift from God and as such cannot be produced by the intellectual contrivance of the apologist. Human wisdom . . . cannot be the ground of faith. . . man can know the things of God only when God sends him the enabling Spirit of God. . . our apologetic must rely upon His word rather than autonomous philosophy, science, and history to bring the unbeliever to a knowledge of God. . . **[Man] is unable to know the things of the Spirit.**⁷⁹

All men have inherited Adam's sin. Thus from the outset of their **lives their minds, emotions, and wills are depraved and they are nothing short of spiritually dead. . . because the whole human race is dead in sin, no one has understanding or seeks after God.** . . Sin has incapacitated man's mental ability by making him rebellious in thought against God; as a result he does not speak or **know the truth.** Lacking understanding his reasoning is unprofitable and deceitful. And **according to Ephesians 2:1-10 this incapacitation is total and ultimate; man is dead in sin and, thus, can do nothing for himself.** . . Only the grace of God is able to overcome the sinner's dead and worthless condition. Only God's grace will rectify the worthless condition of the sinner's thinking. This is not of our own doing but is a gift of God. Until that gift is granted the unspiritual man's reasoning will be vain, and he will continually see Christian reasoning as absurd. Faith is given by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Thus this Word of God, not vain philosophy, should be the foundation of our apologetic appeal to the unbeliever. Unless the unbeliever is challenged with God's Word, and **unless the unbeliever is graciously given faith from God, he will continue with a darkened mind which is unable to discern the truth.**⁸⁰

Here again we see an example of a monergist reading his monergism into Ephesians 2 rather than letting Paul speak for himself. Death there is not the deepest possible level of unconsciousness; it is the state of lostness. This is one example of how monergistic epistemology and monergistic apologetics fall with their view of spiritual death and soul corruption. Other skeptical systems with similar philosophical debts to Kant, Kierkegaard,⁸¹ or Barth that emphasize the inability of the fallen mind to know anything spiritual without a jolt of grace power from God's defibrillator run the same risk.

This tour of the most infamous spiritual death passages of the Bible paints a different picture. Our spirits are not corpses. Our souls are not dead to spiritual truth. After the fall we did not lose the ability to know good and evil; that was when we gained it. We are not faithless towards God because we are dead and incapable of faith; we are dead to him until become reconciled to him through faith. Instead of seeing unbelievers as zombies that cannot be won over, we would see them as precious hostages who need to be rescued, as lost and valuable coins that need to be searched for diligently, as runaways who need to be rescued and rejoiced over? We might regain an evangelistic zeal and learn evangelistic perseverance. We might recover the sense of privilege the apostle Paul and his coworkers felt about being ambassadors for Christ who entreated the lost to "be reconciled to God!" And also like Paul we might offer reasonable arguments that are persuasive to the minds of those who can reason and can believe.

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End Notes

¹ John Calvin. *Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom41.iv.iii.i.html>

² The Latin word *anima* also can be translated as life, wind, breath, the vital principle, soul, and spirit.

³ Phillip Schaff. "The Westminster Confession of Faith." In *The Creeds of Christendom: Vol III: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, 613-616. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993.

- a) "the corruption of their own hearts" and "corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts" (V:V)
- b) "corrupted nature" and "corruption of nature" (VI:IV)
- c) falling from "communion with God" (VI:II)
- d) becoming "dead in sin" (VI:II)
- e) becoming "wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body" (VI:II)
- f) being "subject to death with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal" (VI:VI)

⁴ Louis Berkhoff. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996. 259
 "Sin separates man from God, and that means death, for it is only in communion with the living God that man can truly live." Berkhoff also muddies the waters by saying, "Spiritual death means not only guilt, but also pollution. Sin is always a corrupting influence in life and this is a part of our death. . ."

⁵ E. A. Blum. Walvoord and Zuck (Eds). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985. John 11:1-44:

This climactic miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was Jesus' public evidence of the truth of His great claim, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Death is the great horror which sin has produced (Rom. 5:12; James 1:15).

Physical death is the divine object lesson of what sin does in the spiritual realm. **As physical death ends life and separates people, so spiritual death is the separation of people from God and the loss of life which is in God** (John 1:4). Jesus has come so that people may live full lives (10:10). Rejecting Jesus means that one will not see life (3:36) and that his final destiny is "the second death," the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15).

⁶ Ibid:

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⁷ William Pringle (trans). Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians by John Calvin*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom41.i.html>

⁸ Lewis Sperry Chafer. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1993
 Each person of the race is born **spiritually dead—separated from God**. . . . [and the second death] is the eternal perpetuation of the **spiritual death—unending separation of soul and spirit from God**. . . . On the general theme of this second death. Dr. C. I. Scofield makes the following comment. . . "their eternal state is one of **eternal 'death' (i.e., separation from God)** in sins. . .

⁹ Ibid,

"The cure for spiritual death is regeneration or passing from inward death unto life."

¹⁰ Millard J. Erickson. *Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998. 631.

"The essence of **spiritual death** can be seen in the case of Adam and Eve. . . . It **also meant spiritual death, separation between them and God.**"

¹¹ Norman L. Geisler. *Systematic Theology: Volume Three: Sin, Salvation. Vol. 3*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2004. 122-127.

Death is separation from God, and spiritual death is spiritual separation from God. Isaiah said, "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2). The instant Adam sinned, he experienced **spiritual isolation from God**; this is evidenced by his shame and his hiding from his Creator. . . . Not only did Adam **lose his relationship with God, he also lost his fellowship with Him**. Adam no longer wanted to talk with his Creator but instead hid from Him in the Garden. . . . Adam's fall **affected his relationship with God in several ways. . . . Death is separation, and spiritual death is spiritual separation from God**. Consequently, by **spiritual death**, which occurred at the very moment he sinned, Adam **lost his relationship with his Creator**. Likewise, as we have seen, all his descendants are naturally "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1 KJV).

¹² Ibid.

Every descendant of Adam—every person born of natural parents since the Fall—is spiritually dead as well. . . . “You must be born again” (John 3:3, 5–7). The new birth of which Jesus speaks is the act of regeneration, whereby God imparts spiritual life to the believer’s soul (1 Peter 1:23). Paul says of this, He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5–7) Without this regeneration, every human being is spiritually dead in sin. . . . Hence, without a new birth (John 3:3), also known as “regeneration” (Titus 3:5 KJV), no one can be saved.

¹³ Charles Hodge. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. II. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952. Chapter VII.

The effects of sin upon our first parents themselves, were, (1) Shame, a sense of degradation and pollution. (2) Dread of the displeasure of God; or, a sense of guilt, and the consequent desire to hide from his presence. These effects were unavoidable. They prove the loss not only of innocence but of original righteousness, and with it of **the favour and fellowship of God**. The state therefore to which Adam was reduced by his disobedience, so far as his subjective condition is concerned, was analogous to that of the fallen angels. He was entirely and absolutely ruined. It is said that no man becomes thoroughly depraved by one transgression. In one sense this is true. But one transgression by incurring **the wrath and curse of God and the loss of fellowship with Him, as effectually involves spiritual death**, as one perforation of the heart causes the death of the body; or one puncture of the eyes involves us in perpetual darkness.

¹⁴ Anthony A. Hoekema. *The Bible and the Future*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994. 82.

“Death as threatened in Genesis 2:17, therefore, includes what we commonly call spiritual death: that is, the disruption of man's fellowship with God.”

¹⁵ Robert Lightner. *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation: The Theology of Everlasting Life*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991. 29.

“. . . spiritual death was immediate: they were separated from God. They hid themselves from the presence of God.” Also Robert Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1995. 174.

“Adam and Eve experience spiritual death, separation from God, the moment they sinned. They lost their relationship with God and came under the dominion of Satan.”

¹⁶ Ibid, 36. “Every facet of man’s nature has been polluted or defiled by sin. . . . inborn corruption.”

¹⁷ *The NET Bible*. Biblical Studies Press. 2006. Note on PR 2:18:

The point of this line is that those who fall prey to an adulteress will end up among the departed spirits in the realm of the dead. This might mean (1) physical death: he will get himself killed by her zealous husband . . . or (2) **spiritual death**: he will find himself **estranged from the community, isolated from the blessings of God, a moral leper, living a shadowy existence of “death” in the land of no return** (W. McKane, Proverbs [OTL], 288).

¹⁸ Douglas Moo. Romans 1-8. Moody Press: Chicago. 1991. P.331-332. Romans 5:12.

That death is the inevitable consequence of sin is taught in Genesis 2-3. It was a staple of Jewish theology. . . . the passage goes on to contrast *thanatos* with. . . eternal life. . . . and *thanatos* also is generally equivalent to . . . condemnation. It could be argued that *thanatos* in v. 12 means **spiritual death: the estrangement from God that is a result of sin**, and which, if not healed through Christ, will lead to eternal death. In fact, however, we are not forced to make a choice between these options. Paul’s frequently uses *thanatos* and related words to designate a physic-spiritual entity, total death, the penalty incurred for sin. . . . he may simply have in mind this death in both the physical and spiritual aspects (so most commentators).

¹⁹ J. Dwight Pentecost. *Things Which Become Sound Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1965. 14-16

“The penalty for disobedience was spiritual death. Physical death was the result of spiritual death. . . . Because we were in Adam at the time Adam sinned, Adam's **spiritual death** passed to us. That is why we were **born spiritually dead. . . . the one who is under sin and spiritually dead is also under condemnation**. . . . There is a fourth fact presented in the Scripture as a part of the doctrine of depravity. . . . he is a citizen of a rebel state. Therefore, **he has no relationship whatsoever to Jesus Christ. Finally, we find that the doctrine of depravity presents also the truth that man in his natural state is lost-L-O-S-T. There is perhaps no word as hopeless as the word lost. . . . and Paul writes the word LOST over the Gentile nations because they were under sin; they were spiritually dead; they were under condemnation; they were under Satan's power; they were lost.**”

²⁰ Charles Ryrie. *Basic Theology*. Victor Books, 1986. 220.

“Death always means **separation**; therefore, his **death separated us** from the dominion of original sin.”

²¹ Philip Schaff. *The Creeds of Christendom: Vol III*, 615.

falling from “communion with God” (VI:II), becoming “dead in sin” (VI:II), being “subject to death with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal” (VI:VI).

²² Ibid, 615. falling from “communion with God” (VI:II), becoming “dead in sin” (VI:II), being “subject to death with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal” (VI:VI).

²³ Ibid, 615. falling from “communion with God” (VI:II), becoming “dead in sin” (VI:II), being “subject to death with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal” (VI:VI).

²⁴ R. C. Sproul. *Chosen by God*, 90-94.

²⁵ John Piper. *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*. 57

To be spiritually dead means to lack the power to choose godliness and thus escape the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. Yet the spiritually dead are not inactive—indeed, their sinful natures control and even drive them, for their minds are set on and enslaved to what that nature desires. . . . we are deeply affected by evil, determining influences. . . an inner inclination towards evil (‘the flesh’) [Note how he is saying that the corrupt flesh is the animation of the spirit. But also consider how flesh and spirit should be thought of as opposites. – Christopher.] . . . It may seem paradoxical that someone can be both spiritually dead and active, but think of sociopathic killers. Serial killers are not infrequently described by those who deal with them as seeming to have something dead within them and yet they deploy all their energies to do horrors. Indeed, it is what is dead within them that allows and even drives them to do what they do. For their consciences are dead, which makes them all the more dangerous.”

²⁶ By “Greek Church Fathers” I mean that these thinkers were the fathers of the Greek Church tradition. By “Latin Church Fathers” I likewise mean that these thinkers were fathers of the Latin Church tradition. In no way do I mean to imply that these “Fathers” were the fathers of the Church that is built upon the prophets and apostles with Jesus as its chief cornerstone. From that respect, these “fathers” are better seen as the early church children.

²⁷ J. N. D. Kelley. *Early Christian Doctrines*, 181

²⁸ Ibid, 181.

²⁹ Ibid, 183.

³⁰ Michael Pomazansky. *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*. St Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2009. 166
The balanced Orthodox view is that man has received death and corruption through Adam (original sin), though he does not share Adam’s guilt. Many Orthodox, however, have accepted an impossible translation of Romans 5:12, which does not say that we have all sinned in Adam, but that, like Adam, we have all sinned and found death.”

³¹ See Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou. “Chrysostom and Augustine on the Sin of Adam and its Consequences.” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*. Vol. 39, No 4, 1995.
https://www.academia.edu/5113828/_Chrysostom_and_Augustine_on_the_Sin_of_Adam_and_its_Consequences_Introduction_of_it_in_Contra_Julianum_Introduction

³² Thomas C. Oden. *Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology: Volume Three*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992. 156.

³³ Phillip Schaff. “The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom.” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Reproduced at <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/chrysostom/ephesians/2.htm>

³⁴ Phillip Schaff. “The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom.” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf111.vii.xii.html>

³⁵ Theosis is usually translated as divinization or deification. While the wording may sound pantheistic and henotheistic (Mormon), it really should be taken more like the process of becoming godly.

³⁶ All three of these quotations are cited in Daniel Clendenin *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003. 177. Admittedly the idea that men should become “god” (not God) borders on blasphemy to the ears of western orthodox Christians. It might help to rephrase it as “so that men could become godly” to make it more palatable. C. S. Lewis would revise this slogan later into something more acceptable to Western minds: “God became a man so that men could become sons of God.”

³⁷ Ibid, 127

³⁸ Ibid, 120.

³⁹ The Longer Catechism of the Eastern Church defines spiritual death as occurring “when the soul loses the grace of God, which quickened it with the higher and spiritual life.” Grace is pictured as a magical transforming force. Phillip Schaff. *The Creeds of Christendom. Vol II: The Greek and Latin Creeds*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993. 469.

⁴⁰ John Calvin. *Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom41.iv.iii.i.html>

⁴¹ One substitution for this comes from Alexander Schmemmann. *For the Life of the World*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973. 35.

And thus this offering to God of bread and wine, of the food that we must eat in order to live, is our offering to Him of ourselves, of our life and of the whole world. . . . It is our Eucharist. . . in Christ has become the very life of man . . . He has performed once and for all the Eucharist and nothing has been left unoffered. In him was Life—and this Life of all of us, He gave to God. And we do it in remembrance of Him because, as we offer again and again our life and our world to God, we discover each time that there is nothing else to be offered but Christ Himself—the Life of the world, the fullness of all that exists. It is His Euchrist, and He is the Eucharist. . . . We come again and again with our lives to offer; we bring “sacrifice” – that is, give to God—what He has given us; and each time we come to the End of all sacrifices, of all offerings, of all Eucharist, because each time it is revealed to us

⁴² Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae*. Christian Classics, 1981. 3.1.2. Cited at <http://orthodoxwiki.org/Theosis>

⁴³ Cited in Thomas Oden. *Life in the Spirit*, 176.

⁴⁴ Mark Galli. “The Great Divorce.” April 1, 1997. *Christian History Magazine*. Pp.12-13. <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ch/1997/issue54/54h010.html>

⁴⁵ Louis Berkhoff. *The History of Christian Doctrines*. Baker: Grand Rapids. 1937. 129-130

⁴⁶ Philip Schaff. *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. “Chapter XXIII.—Sundry Passages of St. Paul, Which Speak of a Spiritual Resurrection, Compatible with the Future Resurrection of the Body, Which is Even Assumed in Them.” <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.v.viii.xxiii.html>

⁴⁷ Tertullian, for example seems to know nothing of spiritual death while speaking at length on physical death and resurrection. It would be interesting to check Cyprian, Ambrose, and Jerome on this topic sometime.

⁴⁸ Augustine. *The City of God*. Translated by Walsh, Zema, Monahan, Honan. New York: Doubleday, 1958. 269-272.

⁴⁹ As we saw earlier with Calvin, it is only a mild challenge to reconcile the alienation theory and animation theory with one another. When a twig is separated from the sap of the vine it was once plugged into, it begins to wither and is as good as dead. Alienation leads to loss of animation. When someone is “cut off” from his community and exiled into a land that is hostile to human life, that person is already dead to the community (the relationship died) and that person is as good as dead from a practical standpoint. When someone we know dies physically, we bury (separate, alienate, remove) the rotting corpses from our purview. If our spirits are in fact dead it is not difficult to imagine God deciding to keep us quarantined at a distance.

Despite the fact that these the alienation and animation theories can be reconciled to the satisfaction of most, the fact remains that these two theories are different enough from one another that they can (and do) compete with one another for prominence. The tendency for synergists tend to prioritizing or emphasize the alienation view while softening the animation view is one evidence of this. The tendency of sympathetic monergists and fence-straddling synergistic-monergists tend to try to present both views faithfully and end up with very questionable cohesiveness in the attempt is another. The tendency for militant monergists to emphasize and sharpen the animation theory at the expense of the alienation theory is another. All forms of both theories should be reexamined.

⁵⁰ One possible answer could be there is no contradiction here as it is the soul that is sick and it is the spirit that is dead. This answer might satisfy those who hold to a strict tripartite anthropology where soul and spirit have no overlap. But to those of us who prefer an anthropology that considers soul, spirit, mind, heart, nature, and body to be tightly integrated and overlapping, to say the soul is dying and the spirit is dead fails to satisfy. Attempts to logically reconcile of the soul corruption theory with the spirit animation theory becomes challenging at best. The need to have a doctrine of original death that harmonizes with the doctrine of original sin provides a reason to re-evaluate the animation theory. Ultimately though I contend that the two do not fit together and attempts should not be made to cobble them together.

⁵¹ One example of this can be seen in Robert Shaw, *An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*. Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1992. 76

They became dead in sin. . . which is the wages of sin. . . [and] included temporal death, consisting in the dissolution of the union between the soul and the body; spiritual death, consisting in the loss of the favour and image of God; and eternal death, consisting in the everlasting separation of both body and soul from God.

Shaw emphasizes separation on two of the three deaths, minimizes separation in spiritual death slightly by saying it is the “loss of favor” (which is correct and consistent with relational separation), and then adds loss of the image of God.

⁵² Augustine. *The City of God*. Translated by Walsh, Zema, Monahan, Honan. New York: Doubleday, 1958. 272-275

⁵³ Challenging the view of “grace” as an irresistible transforming power is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁵⁴ As James put it, “the body without the spirit is dead” (James 2:26). As Solomon put it, “all come from dust, and to dust all return. . . the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecc 3:18-21; 12:5-7.)

⁵⁵ J. N. D. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1978. 354

⁵⁶ Phillip Schaff. *History of the Christian Church: Vol. III: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity AD 311-590*. Hendrikson. Peabody. 1996. 970.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 1000-1001.

⁵⁸ Ibid 965

⁵⁹ I use the word “dock” here in either the sense of the accused in a legal trial and/or as the place where an old ship goes to have maintenance performed upon it.

⁶⁰ Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology: In One Volume*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2011. 738

⁶¹ Charles Ryrie. *Basic Theology*. Victor Books, 1986. 195-196.

⁶² WE Ward. "Trichotomy." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984. 1111-1112.

“body soul and spirit. . . . This view developed from Plato’s twofold division, body and soul, through Aristotle’s further division of the soul into an (1) animal soul, the breathing, organic aspect of man’s being, and (2) rational soul, the intellectual aspect. . . . Both Tertullian and Augustine held to the dichotomy of body and soul but leaned almost to the threefold analysis of man by making the Aristotelian distinction between the animal and rational soul. Present theological and psychological emphasis is almost altogether upon the fundamental wholeness or unity of man’s being as against all philosophical attempts to divide it.”

p.345 Origin’s theory that created by god the soul preexisted the body to which it was assigned as a penalty for its sins. . . . most Greek Fathers rejected this view. . . . Augustine . . . attains the pessimistic valuation of the material order and the suggestion that the body serves as a prison for the soul which it implies. The prevalent Greek theory was creationism, i.e., that each individual soul was created independently by God at the moment of its infusion into the body. . . the explanation to which Augustine on the whole leaned, although with many hesitations, was the traducianism one associated with Tertullian, viz. that each soul is somehow generated from the parent’s soul. . . . Augustine himself was critical of the materialist strain in Tertullian’s brand of traducianism, but observed that a spiritual version of the same theory fitted best with his teaching about original sin.

⁶³ Clifton H. Payne, Jr. “The ‘Only Begotten’ Son.” *Jersusalem Perspective*. 2004.

⁶⁴ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Finding the Lost; Cultural Keys to Luke 15*. Concordia Publishing House, 1992. 109-118, 188

⁶⁵ In 2009 Israel Dwek sat shi’vah (a Jewish mourning ritual that lasts seven days and is done when a member of one’s immediate family dies) for his son Solomon Dwek after Solomon gave testimony to federal authorities against improprieties among three New Jersey mayors and several Brooklyn rabbis. Even though Solomon was contributing to justice in the public sector, he was shaming his father by being a Jew who bore witness against other Jews. So great was the shame felt by his father that he made it clear that his son had died to him.

⁶⁶ NET Bible. Gen 2:17. The NET translators includes three helpful notes to explain their translation choices:

53 tn Or “in the very day, as soon as.” If one understands the expression to have this more precise meaning, then the following narrative presents a problem, for the man does not die physically as soon as he eats from the tree. In this case one may argue that spiritual death is in view. If physical death is in view here, there are two options to explain the following narrative: (1) The following phrase “You will surely die” concerns mortality which ultimately results in death (a natural paraphrase would be, “You will become mortal”), or (2) God mercifully gave man a reprieve, allowing him to live longer than he deserved.

54 tn Heb “dying you will die.” The imperfect verb form here has the nuance of the specific future because it is introduced with the temporal clause, “when you eat. . . you will die.” That certainty is underscored with the infinitive absolute, “you will surely die.”

sn The Hebrew text (“dying you will die”) does not refer to two aspects of death (“dying spiritually, you will then die physically”). The construction simply emphasizes the certainty of death, however it is defined. Death is essentially separation. To die physically means separation from the land of the living, but not extinction. To die spiritually means to be separated from God. Both occur with sin, although the physical

alienation is more gradual than instant, and the spiritual is immediate, although the effects of it continue the separation.

⁶⁷ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965. 68.

⁶⁸ Renald E. Showers. *There Really is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology*. Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1990. 10.

⁶⁹ Lewis Sperry Chafer. *Major Bible Themes*. Findlay, Ohio: Dunham Publishing Company, 1953. 104.

⁷⁰ S. Lewis Johnson suggested this in one of his sermons. But I don't remember which one. At least one other Bible teacher suggested it as well. The idea does have some merit. Perhaps Adam and Eve prior to disobedience had been clothed with the glory that associated frequently with angels who come from the presence of God and those few men (Moses and Jesus) who spent time in the presence of God. Angels who come from basking in the glory of God in the highest heaven are often described as being clothed in white robes that emit a brilliant glory when they intrude into our world. Think white like lightning, not like bleached wool. In Exodus 34 Moses had a face so radiant after spending time with God that the Israelites were afraid to come near him. Moses ended up wearing a veil to cover that glory. We read in Daniel 7 of Jesus in his glory described as "his clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire." In Matthew 28 we read of Jesus that "his appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow." In Mark 9 when Christ was "transfigured" his appearance changes such that "his clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them." So although Genesis 2-3 does not actually hint that Adam and Eve had a covering of glory prior to disobedience, it does seem to allow for the idea that they had been enjoying a fellowship with God in a way that was more intimate than even Moses had enjoyed. And if Moses had begun reflecting God's radiant glory from his face, would it not also be natural for Adam and Eve to do so all the more? Perhaps then part of the reason Adam and Eve realized their nakedness was that upon dying the glory they might have naturally had from fellowship with their Creator could have so faded because the fellowship had ceased. But this is really is unfounded speculation. The explanation given in the text is different.

⁷¹ Phillip Schaff. "The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom." Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Reproduced at <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/chrysostom/matthew/8.htm>

⁷² Augustine cited in Thomas Adams. *The Works of Thomas Adams*. Volume I. Ulan Press: 2012.

⁷³ St Augustine's Homily on Matthew 8:18-22. Reproduced at <https://stjoeofoblog.wordpress.com/2013/06/30/st-augustines-homily-on-matthew-818-22/>

⁷⁴ Gordon Franz. "Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead." Mar 20, 2009. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2009/03/20/Let-the-Dead-Bury-Their-Own-Dead.aspx>

⁷⁵ One of the many fascinating notes that the NET Bible offers on John 3 is:

Jesus' somewhat enigmatic statement points to the necessity of being born "from above," because *water* and *wind/spirit/Spirit* come from above. [Isaiah 44:3-5](#) and [Ezek 37:9-10](#) are pertinent examples of *water* and *wind* as life-giving symbols of the Spirit of God in his work among people. Both occur in contexts that deal with the future restoration of Israel as a nation prior to the establishment of the messianic kingdom. It is therefore particularly appropriate that Jesus should introduce them in a conversation about entering the kingdom of God. Note that the Greek word πνεύματος is anarthrous (has no article) in v. 5. This does not mean that *spirit* in the verse should be read as a *direct* reference to the Holy Spirit, but that both water and wind are figures (based on passages in the OT, which Nicodemus, *the teacher of Israel* should have known) that represent the regenerating work of the Spirit in the lives of men and women.

Also germane to this discussion is the strong case based on rhetorical criticism that Paul also had Ezekiel 37 in mind when writing Ephesians 2. Robert H. Suh. *The Use of Ezekiel 37 in Ephesians 2*. JETS 50/4 (December 2007)

⁷⁶ Leon Morris. *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989. 195.

⁷⁷ Joseph Rickaby. "Of God and His Creatures." *SVMMA CONTRA GENTILES of Saint Thomas Aquinas*. St. Louis, MO: B. Herder. Chapter LIX. Reproduced at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/gentiles.vii.xxxix.html>

⁷⁸ Alexander Schememann. "The Missionary Imperative in the Orthodox Tradition." In Gerald H. Anderson (ed.) *The Theology of the Christian Mission*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1961. 252-255

⁷⁹ Bahnsen, Greg L. *Presuppositional Apologetics: Stated and Defended*. Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision Press, 2008. 50-51.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 53.

⁸¹ Merold Westphal suggests “for Kant the primary barrier between God’s view of the world and ours is our finitude—more particularly, our temporality—for Kierkegaard it is our sinfulness.” Merold Westphal, “Christian Philosophers and the Copernican Revolution.” *Christian Perspectives on Religious Knowledge*. Eerdmans, 1992. 177.