

REFERENCES FROM THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

TO BODY/SOUL, GENERAL RESURRECTION, & THE INTERMEDIARY STATE

FROM THE BOOK OF CONCORD - TAPPERT EDITION

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On the whole, nature of human afterlife is a subject that the Lutheran Confessions do not directly address. This could mean several things: 1) The doctrine was not in dispute during the Reformation, 2) The reformers did not feel the issue was critical to our understanding of faith, 3) The reformers chose not to speak about things that God has deliberately left obscure, or perhaps, 4) They never got around to debating it.

In the Confessions, the primary discussions of: body and soul, the resurrection, and the period between the earthly life and resurrection, occur only indirectly in discussions about Christ himself (his nature and his death and resurrection), or within topics such as original sin and baptism.

CHRIST'S TWO NATURES AS AN ANALOGY TO THE HUMAN BODY AND SOUL

The texts describe Christ's divine and human natures as distinct yet inseparable, by drawing an analogy to the human body and soul (the outer and inner self), which are distinguished from each other, but are inseparable (ie. not existing apart from each other). A further analogy is made to a red-hot iron, which possesses both iron and heat at the same time, but cannot be separated into the two entities of iron and heat.

From: The Athanasian Creed

¶ 32 Although he is God and man, he is not two Christs but one Christ: 33 one, that is to say, not by changing the Godhead into flesh but by taking on the humanity into God, 34 one, indeed, not by confusion of substance but by unity in one person. 35 For just as the reasonable soul and the flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ. [Tappert, p. 20]

From: Formula of Concord (Epitome) - Part VIII: The Person of Christ

¶ 9 5. Since both natures are united personally (that is, in one person) we believe, teach, and confess that this personal union is not a combination or connection of such a kind that neither nature has anything in common with the other personally (that is, on account of the personal union), as when two boards are glued together and neither gives anything to or takes anything from the other.

On the contrary, here is the highest communion which God truly has with man. Out (ta-488) of this personal union and the resultant exalted and ineffable sharing there flows everything human that is said or believed about God and everything divine that is said or believed about Christ the man. The ancient Fathers have illustrated this union and sharing of the natures by the analogy of incandescent iron and the union of body and soul in man. [Tappert, pp. 487-488]

From: Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration) - Part VIII: The Person of Christ

¶ 18 On account of this personal union and communion, the ancient teachers of the church, both before and after the Council of Chalcedon, have often used the term "mixture" in a good sense and with the right distinction. We could adduce many testimonies on this point from the Fathers, if it were necessary, and have frequently quoted them in our writings. The Fathers further illustrated the personal union and communion by analogies of the soul and the body and of glowing iron. ¶ 19 For the body and soul, as well as fire and iron, have a communion with each other, not only after a manner of speaking and in a strictly verbal fashion, but in deed and in truth.

Yet there is not introduced thereby any sort of blending or equalization of the natures, as mead is made out of honey and water and ceases to be distinguishably either water or honey but is a blended beverage. But the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ is far different from this. For the communion and union between the divine and the human nature in the person of Christ is far different, much higher, and more ineffable, since on account of this union and communion God is man and man is God but without thereby blending the natures or their properties; on the contrary, each nature retains its essence and properties. [Tappert, pp. 594-595]

BODY AND SOUL WITHIN THE DISCUSSION OF ORIGINAL SIN

The text argues that original sin is not just within our body only, but that it is in our body and souls (our inner and outer self) since the two are inseparable.

From: Formula of Concord (Epitome) - Part I: Original Sin

¶ 4 God not only created the body and soul of Adam and Eve before the Fall, but also our bodies and souls after the Fall, even though they are corrupted, and God still acknowledges them as his handiwork, as it is written, "Thy hands fashioned and made me, all that I am round about" (Job 10:8) ... [Tappert, p. 466]

¶ 10 No one except God alone can separate the corruption of our nature from the nature itself. This will take place wholly by way of death in the resurrection. Then the nature which we now bear will arise and live forever, without original sin and completely separated and removed from it, as Job 19:26, 27 asserts, "I shall be covered by this my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God; him I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold him." [Tappert, p. 467]

BODY AND SOUL WITHIN THE DISCUSSION OF BAPTISM

The text argues that when we say we are saved, we mean that both our body and soul are saved (since the two are inseparable). In eternal life, both body and soul are united together, therefore the promise of baptism applies to the whole person (body and soul).

From: The Large Catechism - Luther's Explanation of Baptism

¶ 44 To appreciate and use Baptism aright, we must draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and we must retort, "But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." ¶ 45 This is the reason why these two things are done in Baptism: the body has water poured over it, though it cannot receive anything but the water, and meanwhile the Word is spoken so that the soul may grasp it.

¶ 46 Since the water and the Word together constitute one Baptism, body and soul shall be saved and live forever: the soul through the Word in which it believes, the body because it is united with the soul and apprehends Baptism in the only way it can. No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than Baptism, for through it we obtain perfect holiness and salvation, which no other kind of life and no work on earth can acquire. [Tappert, p. 442]

REGARDING CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO HELL

The text affirms the biblical teaching of Christ's descent into hell/hades/the place of the dead — as a complete person, God and man — but it refuses to speculate on exactly how this occurred.

From: Formula of Concord (Solid Declar.) - Part IX: Christ's Descent Into Hell

¶ 1 Different explanations of the article on Christ's descent into hell have been discovered among some of our theologians just as among the ancient teachers of the Christian church. Hence we let matters rest on the simple statement of our Christian Creed, to which Dr. Luther directs us in the sermon that he held in the castle at Torgau in the year 1533, "I believe in the Lord Christ, God's Son, who died, was buried, and descended into hell." Herein the burial and the descent into hell are differentiated as distinct articles, ¶ 2 and we simply believe that after the burial the entire person, God and man, descended into hell, conquered the devil, destroyed hell's power, and took from the devil all his might.

¶ 3 We are not to concern ourselves with exalted and acute speculations about how this occurred. With our reason and five senses this article cannot be comprehended any more than the preceding one, how Christ has been made to sit at the right hand of the almighty power and majesty of God. We must only believe and cling to the Word. Then we shall retain the heart of this article and derive from it the comfort that neither hell nor the devil can take us or any believer in Christ captive or harm us. [Tappert, p. 610]