

Are We Souls?

Written by K B Napier

Tuesday, 03 February 2015 11:33

A saying is attributed to CS Lewis, but has never been proved to be written by him:

"You don't have a soul. You are a soul; you have a body."

Personally, I query Lewis' much vaunted claim to be Christian, but here I wish to talk about the idea that because we have a body we ARE souls. The idea came about not with Lewis, but from a Quaker paper published in 1892. (See my various articles and book on Quakerism). The paper attributed the saying to George MacDonald, who wrote about it in his 'Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood'. And MacDonald was only expressing a common idea in the 19th century. In fact the source of the 'Lewis' statement appears to be a talk by Dr R Thornton on spiritualism, that appeared in the Church of England's Church Congress of October 1881. He said:

"We should have taught more carefully than we have done, not that men are bodies and have souls, but that they are souls and have bodies."

It seems that The Guardian reproduced the talk, as did many other publications. A Catholic source (www.firstthings.com) calls readers to be very wary of the saying, because of its spiritualist nature. Thornton was dealing with spiritualism because it was the decade's 'hot topic'. The publications that reproduced the talk were all spiritualist. One current Christian source says that the phrase can be traced back to a 1960 book, but it is mistaken, for the source goes back a hundred years beforehand!

It is not my intention to repeat what I have already covered in my own paper on the subject, [O-001](#)

. I merely wish to address the idea that a body has a soul. The spiritualistic saying is wrong. There can be no soul without a body. And a soul cannot exist until a body is made at conception. It grows with the growth of the body. The soul of a child is immature because it needs to learn and to judge matters. Hopefully, that same soul *will* mature with age and be useful!

The body is physical, but no man can say what *fully* constitutes a soul. Spiritualists make all

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kinds of godless claims, but these can be rejected. As I point out in my own paper, 'soul' is almost equally regarded as 'spirit' in the whole of the Bible. That is, both terms are usually expressed as being interchangeable. Thus, for 'soul' one can read 'spirit' in about 50% of all texts where they are used.

The most common use of 'soul' in scripture is as a description of the mind... personality, emotions, thoughts, and so on. This is the 'inner man'. Every person, then, has a soul, and every soul lives forever (not eternally as does God). This means a soul will continue after death, in a body, but not necessarily in Heaven. To be more precise, the soul will enter Hell if the person is unsaved. It will remain a soul – the entire content of the person's mind, which will, by its continual abode of Hell, be tormented by its own thoughts and feeling of loss (not being in Heaven).

But, the soul of a saved person will live joyfully forever in a new body. I venture to suggest that the soul in this case is the spirit. It cannot be the spirit in the unsaved man, because his spirit is dead throughout his life, and this is how it will be in Hell. This possibly explains why the use of 'soul' and 'spirit' in scripture is 50-50.

Some think the soul exists outside the body. We simply do not know this! It is possible, but no man can ever prove such an hypothesis. But, we DO know that a soul cannot exist *without* a body. It is part of the human being created by God, whether or not the body and soul is abused by sin and is never saved. Therefore, to say "We ARE a soul" is false. It is as false as saying "We ARE a kidney" because we have kidneys inside us!

It is true that a soul defines who we are as persons, but that soul changes dramatically if we are saved. Before salvation the soul is constantly fed on, and expresses, sin. After salvation, the soul is transformed into God's 'organ of use'. It is no longer ruled by sin, even though it can fall to it at some time.

Some Christians claim that the soul is different from the spirit. This is not quite the case as I show in my brief paper: 'soul' and 'spirit' might be different but they are also used *interchangeably* in scripture!
It seems to me that 'soul' is the 'base unit' but that it changes to 'live spirit', which includes the soul, at salvation. Salvation alters the constitution of 'soul' so that it communes with the Holy Spirit, but it does so within the body, by linking with the will, thoughts, and so on. Only after resurrection will the saved soul shed its sinful character (the 'old man') and finally exist fully holy

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and pure... but still in a body, albeit a new, fit-for-Heaven one!

There is a fallacy in some circles, that says we will just become disembodied souls or spirits. It is a fallacy because descriptions of God and angels in Heaven and of our own future existence there, suggest strongly that we will be in a physical place. Why else have a 'new heaven and a new earth'? The physicality of Heaven and the new earth will be different in composition and character from our present sin-based bodies and earth, but they will be bodies nevertheless.

We are identified not so much by our bodies as by the souls/spirits that inhabit our bodies. The 'inner man' defines us more than our face, or muscles, or any other outward thing, because 'beauty is only skin deep'. Does the brain produce what our souls express? We have no idea! Is the soul, then, external to our brain but within the body? Again, we have no idea. There is no way to prove either hypothesis.

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