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Survival of Death or Life after Death: A Christian Model

ABSTRACT: Of all the philosophical problems, survival of death or life after death seems to be one of the most vexing problems for not only do we not have good empirical evidence to help inform our philosophy, but it appears to be a problem that has everlasting implications. "Man aspires to integrate immortality …; he aspires to the immortality of the personal, not the impersonal and the common" (Berdyaev). The philosophical question regarding survival of death continues to haunt us. In this essay, we will explore the philosophical problem of survival of death using a Christian model. We will begin with some general comments regarding survival of death or life after death. Then in the first section we will present what may be termed a "popular" view within this tradition, but we will argue that the dualism of this position does not properly reflect the tradition. In the second section we will propose an alternative position that is consistent with evangelical Protestant theology, following the lead of the British theologian Anthony Thiselton. It places an emphasis on the holistic nature of person, the notion of resurrection, while accounting for the "now and not yet" language found in Scripture. In the third section we will bring into the discussion another religious model, the Hindu Vedic model. We will show how this model is similar to the early discussions of death in Genesis, and suggest that it is consistent with the proposed model of the second section of this essay.