THE BIBLE AND THE SOUL

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT SOULS, SPIRITS, HEARTS, MINDS, LIVERS, BODIES, HEAVEN AND OTHER THINGS (INCLUDING THE INTERMEDIATE STATE)

BILL WILDER
The Big Questions
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Monism or Dualism?
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Body

Soul?
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Where’s Life?
The Big Questions

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Where’s Life?
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Old Testament anthropology is typically synthetic and holistic.

The conception of Sheol in the Old Testament is evidence for existence (if not exactly life) after death.

The Old Testament is resoundingly this worldly. The fullest possible existence for a human being is to live an earthly life as God created it to be lived. Health, sufficient material goods, enjoyment of marriage and family, meaningful work, standing in the community, freedom from one’s enemies, and above all, walking in integrity with the God of the covenant—the Israelite who enjoyed these blessings could exclaim, ‘It doesn’t get any better than this (Cooper, p. 37).’"
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Cooper, p. 43: “...the Old Testament picture of humanity positively seems to rule out dualism. Soul and spirit, *nephesh* and *ruach*, seem either to refer to the whole psychophysical person or otherwise to the energizing life-force given by God. Neither refers to an immaterial entity. And regarding the division of labor among the various capacities of human nature, there is no systematic distinction between physical and spiritual organs whatsoever.”
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The conception of Sheol in the Old Testament is evidence for existence (if not exactly life).

Ratzinger, p. 80-81: “Part of this widespread primitive conception of death, to which Israel has not yet made any distinctive contribution of her own, is that death is not simply annihilation. The dead man goes down into Sheol, where he leads a kind of un-life among the shades . . . he is essentially cut off from the land of the living, from dear life, banished into a noncommunication zone where life is destroyed precisely because relationship is impossible . . . In relation to [Yahweh] too, there is a complete lack of communication in Sheol. Death is thus an unending imprisonment. It is simultaneously being and nonbeing, somehow still existence and yet no longer life.”
In the Old Testament, human life is physical and earthly. Old Testament anthropology is typically synthetic and holistic. The conception of Sheol in the Old Testament is evidence for existence (if not exactly life) after death.
Isa 26:19 
Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

Dan 12:2 
And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.
Intertestamental Literature

- Sirach
  - Written by Jesus, son of Sirach, in ~200 B.C.
  - Also known as *Wisdom of Sirach, Ben Sira, Ecclesiasticus*
  - Accepted
    - as of full divine authority by the Roman Catholic Church
    - as useful for “example of life and instruction of manners” but not “to establish any doctrine” by the Anglican Church
    - and as not “to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings” among Presbyterians.
Sirach 14:16-19

16 Give, and take, and indulge yourself (“your soul/psyche”), because in Hades one cannot look for luxury. 17 All living beings (“all flesh/sarx”) become old like a garment, for the decree from of old is, "You must die!" 18 Like abundant leaves on a spreading tree that sheds some and puts forth others, so are the generations of flesh and blood: one dies and another is born. 19 Every work decays and ceases to exist, and the one who made it will pass away with it.

Sirach 17:27-28

27 Who will sing praises to the Most High in Hades (Sheol) in place of the living who give thanks? 28 From the dead, as from one who does not exist, thanksgiving has ceased; those who are alive and well sing the Lord's praises.

Sirach 38:20-23

20 Do not give your heart to grief; drive it away, and remember your own end. 21 Do not forget, there is no coming back; you do the dead no good, and you injure yourself. 22 Remember his fate, for yours is like it; yesterday it was his, and today it is yours. 23 When the dead is at rest, let his remembrance rest too, and be comforted for him when his spirit has departed.

See Cooper, p. 76; Wright, pp. 136-137.
Intertestamental Literature

- 2 Maccabees
  - Written as a summary of a larger work by Jason Cyrene in ~100 B.C. or later
  - Accepted
    - as of full divine authority by the Roman Catholic Church
    - as useful for “example of life and instruction of manners” but not “to establish any doctrine” by the Anglican Church
    - and as not “to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings” among Presbyterians.
It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king, under torture with whips and thongs, to partake of unlawful swine's flesh. One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, "What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors." The king fell into a rage, and gave orders to have pans and caldrons heated.

After the first brother had died in this way, they brought forward the second for their sport. They asked him, "Will you eat rather than have your body punished limb by limb?" He replied in the language of his ancestors and said to them, "No." Therefore he in turn underwent tortures as the first brother had done. And when he was at his last breath, he said, "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws."

After him, the third was the victim of their sport. When it was demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands, and said nobly, "I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again." As a result the king himself and those with him were astonished at the young man's spirit ("soul"/psyche), for he regarded his sufferings as nothing.
13 After he too had died, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way. 14 When he was near death, he said, "One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!"

20 The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honorable memory. Although she saw her seven sons perish within a single day, she bore it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord. 21 She encouraged each of them in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced her woman's reasoning with a man's courage, and said to them, 22 "I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath (pneuma), nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. 23 Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath (pneuma) back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws."

30 While she was still speaking, the young man said, "What are you waiting for? I will not obey the king’s command, but I obey the command of the law that was given to our ancestors through Moses. 37 I, like my brothers, give up body and life ("soul"/ psyche) for the laws of our ancestors, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation and by trials and plagues to make you confess that he alone is God, 38 and through me and my brothers to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation. 39 The king fell into a rage, and handled him worse than the others, being exasperated at his scorn. So he died in his integrity, putting his whole trust in the Lord."
4 Maccabees
- Written in the late 1st century B.C. or early 1st c. A.D.
- Not in the OT canon for Protestants, Catholics or Orthodox
  - except for the Georgian Orthodox Church
  - and in an appendix for the Greek Orthodox Church
4 Maccabees 13:13-17  
13 Each of them and all of them together looking at one another, cheerful and undaunted, said, "Let us with all our hearts consecrate ourselves to God, who gave us our lives [souls/psyche] and let us use our bodies as a bulwark for the law.  
14 Let us not fear him who thinks he is killing us,  
15 for great is the struggle of the soul (psyche) and the danger of eternal torment lying before those who transgress the commandment of God.  
16 Therefore let us put on the full armor of self-control, which is divine reason.  
17 For if we so die, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will welcome us, and all the fathers will praise us."

4 Maccabees 18:23-24  
23 But the sons of Abraham with their victorious mother are gathered together into the chorus of the fathers, and have received pure and immortal souls (psyche) from God,  
24 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
Intertestamental Literature

- Wisdom of Solomon
  - Written in the first century B.C.
  - Accepted
    - as of full divine authority by the Roman Catholic Church
    - as useful for “example of life and instruction of manners” but not “to establish any doctrine” by the Anglican Church
    - and as not “to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings” among Presbyterians.
Wisdom 3:1-8  But the souls (*psyche*) of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.  

2 In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster,  

3 and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.  

4 For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality.  

5 Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;  

6 like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.  

7 In the time of their visitation they will shine forth (*analampsousin*), and will run like sparks through the stubble.  

8 They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever.

Dan 12:2  Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.  

3 Those who are wise shall shine (*eklampsousin*) like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.
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<th>Monism or Dualism?</th>
<th>Where’s Life?</th>
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<tr>
<td>In the Old Testament human life is physical and earthly.</td>
<td>A variety of positions are evident in the Intertestamental literature.</td>
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<td>Old Testament anthropology is typically synthetic and holistic.</td>
<td>The New Testament is dominated by the resurrection of Jesus and its implications for his people.</td>
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<td>The conception of Sheol in the Old Testament is evidence for existence (if not exactly life) after death.</td>
<td>In accord with much Intertestamental literature, the New Testament also teaches an intermediate state between death and resurrection.</td>
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John W. Cooper
*Body, Soul & Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology & the Monism-Dualism Debate*

Robert H. Gundry
*Sōma in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*

Hans Walter Wolff
*Anthropology of the Old Testament*

Johann Auer and Joseph Ratzinger
*Dogmatic Theology 9 Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*