



## **Belief in the Immortality of the Human Soul and a Future Life**

**Louis Manyeli**

*Department of Religion and Philosophy, National University of Lesotho*

### **ABSTRACT**

The paper is a reflection on ancient Basotho's conception of death. For ancient Basotho, death pertains to animals and other animate things, not humans. They believe in a future life. It is argued that it is unfair to regard a belief on the resurrection as meaningless simply because it does not pass either the verifiability criterion or cannot be subjected to scientific experimentation.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Scientific experiments that usually take place in laboratories have empirically verifiable results. With its undisputed observable positive results modern science has turned the modern world into a highly technologically sophisticated world. For this reason, modern science has influenced many people to regard philosophy of religion as nothing but trivialing and controversies on matters that cannot be empirically verifiable. Under the influence of science many people today doubt, and some have even gone to the extent of denying the immortality of the human soul and a life after death.

First, I discuss logical positivism confining myself to Shlick and Ayer. Influenced by empiricism and modern science they discard the idea of the existence of the human soul. For Shlick, only that which is empirically possible can be thought. According to Ayer, the statement that man has an immortal soul is nonsensical because it does not pass the verifiability criterion. Second, I discuss Russell's denial of the existence of the soul and a life after death. He denies that the soul is a constituent of a person and claims that a person is simply constituted by a series of experiences connected by memory and habit. Russell also denies that there is a future life and maintains that such a belief is caused by fear of death.

Third, I explain Heidegger's *Being and Time* on his concept of death. According to Heidegger, we are born to die and for that reason death is inescapable. Heidegger's main claim is that as long as one exists one lacks

## *The Immortality of the Human Soul and a Future Life*

totality, wholeness is attained only at one's death. Fourth, I talk about Aquinas' argument on the immortality of the human soul. Basing himself on Aristotelian philosophy, Aquinas conceives a person as a composite of body and soul and maintains that the soul, as the form of the body is such that it is immaterial and immortal. Fifth, I discuss ancient Basotho conception of death. For ancient Basotho, death is not a separation of the soul from the body where the soul survives death because it is immortal. Rather, a person does not die but simply passes to another life. It is there that he joins the rank of the ancestors, that is, the living-dead.

### **Logical Positivism**

It is a philosophical movement that confines itself to verifiability as the only criterion for the meaningfulness of cognitive statements. Whatever lies beyond the scope of sense-experience asserts nothing or is meaningless. Sensation is conceived as the sole source of knowledge. It is in this sense that Shlick maintains that "this statement obviously means that the truth or falsity of a physical assertion is quite solely dependent on the occurrence of certain sensations" (Shlick, 1991: 43). For Shlick, it is only the statements about physical objects that are verifiable through observation and experimentation. In this way, genuine knowledge is restricted to the verifiability criterion of meaning. Influenced by empiricism Shlick went to the extent of holding the view that "What is merely empirically impossible still remains thinkable; but what is logically impossible is contradictory, and cannot therefore, be thought at all" (Shlick, 1991: 42).

Ayer too is an adherent of logical positivism who confines himself to verifiability as the sole criterion for the meaningfulness of cognitive statements. In his *Language, Truth and Logic* he eliminates metaphysics and rejects the existence of any transcendental reality. For Ayer, that a transcendent being called God exists is a metaphysical assertion that is literally nonsensical or rather, literally insignificant. Regarding the existence of the human soul, Ayer has this to say:

But to say that there is something imperceptible inside a man, which is his soul or his real self, and that it goes on living after he is dead, is to make a metaphysical assertion which has no more factual content than the assertion that there is a transcendent god (Ayer, 1971: 122).

According to Ayer, since the statement 'man has a soul that is immortal' does not pass the verifiability criterion, it must be conceived as being literally nonsensical. Statements such as this are regarded by Ayer as falling under the category of the nature of all metaphysical utterances that make no sense.

Modern science also discards the idea of the existence of the human soul and its immortality. An entity that cannot both be observed and tested experimentally is non-existent. Given that the human soul's existence cannot

be demonstrated scientifically, practical men under the influence of modern science reject its existence. But, to confine ourselves on objects that are perceptible is to narrow our scope in our pursuit of acquisition of knowledge. Physical science cannot answer all the questions under the sun. Like any other discipline, it has boundaries beyond which it cannot go.

Regarding logical positivism, I have attempted to demonstrate elsewhere that, "With its empirical method logical positivism cannot quench the thirst for a holistic acquisition of knowledge. Moreover, Ayer's theory fails to solve the problem as to whether we have non-verifiable statements that we count as true" (Unpublished). If one takes logical positivism seriously, one must reject the existence of 'consciousness' too because it does not pass the verifiability principle. As a matter of fact, to regard objects that cannot be scientifically proved as non-existent and entities that cannot be empirically verifiable as meaningless amounts to undermining and over-estimating other disciplines.

### **Russell's denial of the existence of the human soul and a life after death**

In his "Persons, Death and the Body", Russell denies the belief that we shall continue to exist after death. He refutes traditional philosophy's conception of a person as a composite of the body and soul, and denies that the soul exists and that as immortal it continues to exist after death. For Russell, "All that constitutes a person is a series of experiences connected by memory and by certain similarities of the sort we call habit" (Russell, 2000:356). He maintains that the human body continually changes by processes of nutriment and wastage, and this continuity is simply a matter of appearance and behaviour.

Furthermore, Russell maintains that our belief that the soul continues to exist throughout all future time is simply caused by emotions not rational arguments. According to Russell, fear of death is a cardinal emotion that makes us believe in a future life. In other words, our belief that we shall continue to exist after death assures us that death does not imply our total destruction when we die.

Russell's refutation of the existence of an immortal soul is not without problems. The main problem posed by Russell is his endeavour to attempt to resolve a philosophical and theological problem deploying purely a scientific investigation. Russell's main claims that the human body continually changes 'by processes of nutriment and wastage' and that the human body's constitution is a 'series of experiences connected by memory and by certain similarities are quite true. But, his rejection of the existence of the human soul simply because it does not lie within the domain of scientific investigation is false. To claim that whatever is not discoverable through scientific investigation must be shunned is to conceive science as the sole discipline that must be trusted in as far as the pursuit of acquisition of truth is concerned. But some people, while admitting that they cannot scientifically prove that there is a God and that man has a soul that is immortal, still

### *The Immortality of the Human Soul and a Future Life*

believe in God and firmly believe that the human soul is immortal. I believe they do so aware of the fact that science cannot answer every question that man has on the planet. In fact, people hold on many beliefs that cannot be scientifically proven. Unfortunately, Russell ignores the fact that there are certain truths and certain kinds of knowledge that are not discoverable by science, that empirical knowledge is not the only type of knowledge that we have. There are certain things that we know but not through empirical science. Second, Russell's other main claim is that 'it is not rational arguments but emotions that cause belief in a future life'. He maintains that fear is the cardinal emotion that cause belief in a future life. But, in an Athenian court accused of impiety and corrupting the youth, Socrates is not afraid of death. He openly and courageously speaks thus:

For to fear death, my friends, is only to think ourselves wise without really being wise, for it is to think that we know what we do not know. For no one knows whether death may not be the greatest good that can happen to man. But men fear it as if they know quite well that it was the greatest evils. And what is this but that shameful ignorance of thinking that we know what we do not know? (Plato, 1948: 35).

In the above cited passage the philosopher is clearly not driven by emotions. He argues that it does not make sense for people to fear death because by so doing they think they know what they do not know. In other words, he dispels the fear of the unknown. Socrates gives rational arguments that he is ready to die, if need be. As a matter of fact, if he was afraid of death, driven by the emotion of fear, he would have gladly accepted Crito's offer to escape the unjust execution of his adversaries. For Socrates, the philosopher does not fear death with its separation of the soul from the body.

Russell claims that "The most important of these emotions is fear of death, which is instinctive and biologically useful. If we genuinely and wholeheartedly believed in the future life, we should cease completely to fear death". (Russell, 2000: 357). But, Plato portrays Socrates as a wise and just man who dies without fear of death. Since Socrates examined his life and found it worth living, he refuses to escape from the Athenian prison. He maintains that his escape would be a repudiation of the legal verdict against him.

In his *Phaedo*, Plato specifies why a philosopher is not afraid of death. The main reason why a philosopher is not afraid of dying is his unshakeable belief on the immortality of the soul. Death simply means a separation of the soul from the body. According to Plato, the nature of the soul is such that it is indestructible and imperishable. And that which is indestructible and imperishable is therefore immortal. Whether acceptable or unacceptable to some philosophers, this is a rational argument about a belief in a future life. Plato does not accommodate emotional feelings when discussing the problem surrounding the immortality of the human soul in the *Phaedo*.

For Russell, 'If we genuinely and wholeheartedly believed in the future life, we should cease completely to fear death'. Kubler-Ross has an important observation that she makes. She holds that "Death is still a fearful, frightening happening, and the fear of death is a universal fear even if we think we have mastered it on many levels" (Kubler-Ross, 2003: 19). Unfortunately, Kubler-Ross does not tell us exactly why death is a fearful and frightening event.

However, before attempting to explain why death is still a fearful, frightening occurrence, it is worth pointing out that if Kubler-Ross' claim that the fear of death is universal means that everybody is afraid of dying, it is not true. The term 'universal' means that which affects or is done by all people, or which is applicable to all. But in the *Apology* and *Phaedo*, Socrates and Plato have shown that the true philosopher is not afraid of death. Thus, Plato maintains that "The true philosopher studies to die, and to him of all men is death the least terrible" (Phaedo, 1951: 13). The immortal soul of the true philosopher is delivered from captivity. So, there is no reason to fear death. Besides, history of the Church provides us with an innumerable number of believers in Christ who were happy when they died because of their belief in a better life after death. So, it is not true that the fear of death is a universal phenomenon. While many people are afraid of dying, some are not.

While I do not share Kubler-Ross's view that the fear of death is universal, I, nevertheless, do agree with her that for many people, death is still a fearful, frightening event. In my view, the fear of death is caused by separation which is the result of death. Separation from the beloved ones is itself an occurrence that many people, under normal circumstances, find hard to cope with. When a teenager goes to a boarding school, she cries and the parents cry too. They cry not because of not being aware of the benefits the child will get from school, but because separation itself is an event that implies loneliness. The same applies to death, it implies separation that is unwanted. Even though one firmly believes that death means reunion with God, that separation of one's soul from the body may cause one to fear death simply because it brings along separation. So, Russell's claim that if one genuinely believed in a future life, one should cease completely to fear death is wanting. It is separation that causes some people to fear death, not that they do not genuinely and wholeheartedly believe in a future life.

I concur with the view that animate beings are naturally inclined to preserve themselves from perishing and that human beings are no exception to natural preservation. But it is a fact also that while many people are afraid of dying, some are not. Some non-believers who have grasped the fact that they are destined to die are not afraid of death. And some believers who firmly believe that it is death alone that can fully re-unite them with God are not afraid of death.

### **Heidegger**

### *The Immortality of the Human Soul and a Future Life*

In his *Being and Time*, Heidegger investigates the question of Being in general, that is, existence or Dasein. He analyses Dasein, human existence in the context of Being in general. He attempts to demonstrate that a full picture of Dasein can be attained if it is conceived as 'care' from birth to death. Death is a possibility of Being that each Dasein must go through. Death is that possibility that captures one's presence, ends abruptly one's future, and changes drastically one's past.

Heidegger maintains that the authentic life is not restricted to one aspect of Dasein but rather to Dasein taken as a whole. The manifestation of Dasein's 'wholeness' comes to the fore in its being-toward-death. For Heidegger, "As long as Dasein is an entity, it has never reached its 'wholeness'" (Heidegger, 1962: 280). As long as Dasein exists, it 'lacks totality' because it is still 'ahead of itself' since it can still choose its possibilities. Death puts to an end man's capability to choose his possibilities. Death brings to an end Dasein's relations with other Daseins and man's life can no longer be reshaped.

One attains wholeness or totality only when one finally encounters death, and death will always remain uniquely one's own. Heidegger holds that,

By its very essence, death is in every case mine, in so far as it 'is' at all. And indeed death signifies a peculiar possibility-of-Being in which the very Being of one's own Dasein is an issue. In dying, it is shown that mineness and existence are ontologically constitutive for death" (Heidegger, 1962: 284).

For Heidegger, death gives one's life its totality and mineness. Fulfillment that was lacking while one is, is attained at one's ownmost death, and "No one can take the Other's dying away from him" (Heidegger, 1962: 284). The position or status one occupies in society can easily be represented by other persons; but one's death is irreplaceable. In other words, I can share social roles and functions with others and can easily be represented, but my death is uniquely mine. Death individualizes me and the phenomenon of dying is uniquely and inescapably mine. So, death has the power of totalizing and individualizing Dasein.

Comparatively, Heidegger's conception of death differs drastically with logical positivists' and Russell's conception of death. While logical positivists and Russell set out to deny that a human being has a soul that is immortal, Heidegger does not discuss the question of the immortality of the human soul, rather, his discussion is centered on man as a whole.

On the one hand, for logical positivists and Russell, the death of a rational being is not different from the death of an animal, that is, a brute. When they both die, they simply cease to exist. On the other hand, for Heidegger, when a person dies she attains fulfillment or totality. According to Heidegger, we are born to die; and while we are still alive we lack totality since we are confronted with ample possibilities. Death is vitally important because it gives one's life totality. Instead of destroying life, death

completes it. As opposed to logical positivists and Russell, Heidegger gives meaning to death because it brings totality that was wanting while man is still alive.

On the one hand, Russell maintains that man believes in a future life because he is afraid of death. On the other hand, Heidegger maintains that man ought not to be afraid of dying since death brings along a totality that he has been lacking while alive. Thus, if one properly construes Heidegger's conception of death, one has no reason to be afraid of death. However, I believe that Christianity partly influenced by Platonic conception of death clarifies and specifies the totality that Heidegger alludes to. Death is an entry into eternal life. It is in eternal life where a person ceases to choose the possibilities that Heidegger talks about. Death alone gives a person total fulfillment.

### **Aquinas on the immortality of the human soul**

St. Augustine was the first Catholic theologian to explain the Christian doctrine utilizing Platonic philosophy. He used Plato's teaching on the immortality of the soul to explicate and reinstate the traditional Christian belief in the immortality of the human soul. Platonic philosophy upon which St. Augustine relied over-emphasized the importance of the soul to the detriment of undermining the importance of the body. Plato regarded the body as nothing but the impediment of the soul to function properly. It is not surprising, therefore, that following the Augustinian tradition, the Catholic Church over-emphasized the importance of the human soul.

Later, Aquinas sought to explain the Christian doctrine deploying Aristotelian philosophy. He used Aristotle's doctrine ofhylomorphism and defined man as a composite of body and soul. According to Aquinas, the intellectual soul is the form of the body (Ques. 76, art. 1). Regarding the human soul, he maintains that its nature is such that it is spiritual and immortal.

Aquinas compares the natures of the senses and the intellect in order to clarify and explain the exact nature of the human soul. On the one hand, the senses being corporeal have visible things as their material objects. On the other hand, the intellect is imperceptible and its objects are immaterial; it comprehends universals not particular objects. The activity of the intellect is immaterial since its object is not confined to particular category of things as it is the case with the senses. Just as the senses are sensible because their objects are perceptible, the nature of the intellect is immaterial because the nature of that which it comprehends is immaterial. For Aquinas, that which is immaterial is spiritual. Immateriality is the characteristic feature of the act of the intellectual power.

Maritain correctly interprets Aquinas when he says just as the intellect is spiritual, that is to say, intrinsically independent of matter in its operation and in its nature, so also, and for the same reason, the human soul, the substantial

### *The Immortality of the Human Soul and a Future Life*

root of the intellect, is spiritual. In its nature and existence the human soul is intrinsically independent of matter, that is, the body.

Aquinas maintains that the human soul is immortal. The human soul cannot cease to be because of its intrinsic independence of matter. Aquinas arrives at this conclusion basing his argument on the nature of the spiritual soul. It is such that it has no substantial parts, does not possess matter; and therefore not subject to corruption and disintegration. Hence, the human soul cannot cease to be, once it comes into existence it necessarily exists forever and ever. Death that leads to corruption does not pertain to the human soul but to the body that possesses matter and has substantial parts.

Thus, by philosophic reason Aquinas has attempted to prove the immortality of the human soul without reference to the Holy Scriptures. Logical positivism discards the idea of the immortality of the human soul because it does not satisfy the verifiability criterion. For logical positivists, propositions of logic and mathematics need no empirical verification because they are tautological. They maintain that it is only synthetic propositions that have to be tested with the principle of verification. In like manner, Russell and some modern scientists deny that the soul exists and that it is immortal because it does not pass scientific tests. I have already shown that to regard the verifiability criterion as the only means to true acquisition of knowledge is to limit the scope of knowledge. Verifiability criterion and scientific experimentations are confined to the phenomenal world. Philosophic reason, as Aquinas has demonstrated, can assist in proving the existence of non-phenomenal entities such as the immortality of the soul.

#### **Life after death: Traditional Basotho conception**

In his book *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Wiredo says that “without argument and clarification, there is, strictly, no philosophy” (Wiredo, 1980: 47). Omoregbe correctly maintains that “the essence of philosophy is not argument but reflection, and this does not have to take the form of the Western-type argument” (Omoregbe, 1998: 5). I share Omoregbe’s view that it is wrong to confine philosophy to Western-type philosophy that consists largely of argumentation and clarification.

If Wiredo is to be taken seriously, one must regard African proverbs, mythologies, wise sayings and conception of death as non-philosophical utterances. In this way, Wiredo’s claim is not different from logical positivism’s main claim that whatever fails the test of verification criterion is meaningless. I am in full agreement with Omoregbe’s claim that reflection primarily constitutes the essence of philosophy. So, when one reflects on how the Basotho traditionally conceived death, one philosophizes.

Traditionally, the Basotho’s belief in another life was and is still unquestionable among the Basotho. Strictly speaking, death is not a word pertaining to people since it is believed that they pass to another life. For Basotho, “The person was said to have gone on a long journey, to be absent, to have gone to ‘where people go’” (Gill, 1993: 58). Death is a word that is



*Louis Manyeli*

reserved to animals and other animate beings when they cease to exist. That is why until this day when a person ceases to exist in this world, it is said that he has left or passed away; meaning that he has gone to another life. The deceased were traditionally buried facing the east because it was believed that people originate from the east. They were buried together with their weapons, tools, seed and the like so that they could continue what they used to do while living in this world.

When a person ceases to be, he returns to his Creator, Molimo (God), and he joins the company of the ancestors. But Casalis holds the view that “These tribes had entirely lost the idea of a Creator. All the natives whom we have questioned on the subject have assured us that it never entered their heads that the earth and the sky might be the work of an invisible Being” (Casalis, 1992: 238). But for the Basotho another name for God is ‘Mopi (Creator), and there is a prayer that stipulates that God is the Creator of all the people, and that when they depart from this world they return to Him. The prayer runs thus:

Molimo ak’u utloe, rea rapela,  
Oh God hear us, we pray,

Molimo oa Leseli, oa Rammoloki,  
God of Light, the Saviour,

Molimo o liatla li maroba;  
God with soft hands;

Liatla li tsoeu tsa Rammoloki,  
The Saviour’s hands are white,

Li soeufetse ke ho bopa masea,  
The whiteness of His hands are caused by moulding infants,

Lichaba li tsoa ho uena ‘Mopong,  
Nations originate from you from Creation,

Lichaba li ea boela ho uena Meahong  
Nations will return to you to your Dwelling Place (Matsela, 1990: 6).

Evidently, Casalis was misled by the natives he questioned about the idea of a Creator. The above cited prayer confirms that the Basotho believed in one God they regarded as the Creator, and they believed that they were destined to return to God. I think the missionaries did not welcome the fact that the Basotho already believed in God because they classified them as pagans. Manyeli observes that “Historically missionaries, supported by the absence of visible sacred objects and places, concluded that Basotho had no religion” (Manyeli, 1995: 73). Casalis too testifies that the Arabs called the natives Caffres (men without belief) simply because they did not have sacred places

### *The Immortality of the Human Soul and a Future Life*

for worship, erected monuments and the like. But the absence of religious symbols does not mean that the Basotho did not believe in God and that when they died they returned to their Creator.

Casalis correctly recalls what ancient Basotho said: “in ages gone by, [the Lord] send this message to men: ‘Oh, men, you will die, but you will rise again’” (Casalis, 1992: 242). This clearly testifies that they believed in a future life. But Casalis commends that,

It would appear, be asserting too much to say absolutely, that they believe in the existence and the immortality of the soul. They have not given to their ideas on this subject the settled form of a dogma. They allow that man is endowed with sentiments and faculties which the brute does not possess, and know that something of him remains after death” (Casalis, 1992: 243).

In my view, Casalis has in mind the Christian doctrine of man as a composite of body and soul. This belief is such that when a person dies her body perishes and her soul survives death because it is immortal. The resurrection of the body will only occur at the end of time when Christ will come the second time as the supreme Judge of the world.

Casalis fails to understand that Christian conception of death differs drastically from Basotho conception of death. For ancient Basotho, when a person ceases to exist, his soul does not hover around in space awaiting to be re-united with its body on the far remote resurrection day. Rather, the person continues to exist in a mysterious way as an ancestor. Manyeli correctly notes that for the ancient Basotho, “the dead [ancestors] were body and soul, but they could not be seen as they could be during their life time” (Manyeli, 1992: 47). This confirms the fact that for the ancient Basotho, the soul does not separate from the body at death as it is the case in Casalis’ Christian conception of death.

Casalis notes that “the adoration the Basotho render to the deceased establishes the fact that, in spite of the scantiness and confusion of their metaphysical notions, they [the Basotho] believe that man still exists after death, and is capable of acting upon the living in a beneficial or pernicious manner” (Casalis, 1992: 245). It is worth noting that Casalis errs when he says that the Basotho adore the deceased. They render adoration only to God. Just as Christians venerate the saints and adore God, so do the Basotho render veneration to the ancestors and adore God. The Basotho are not confused in their belief that the whole man continues to exist after death. Rather, it is Casalis who confuses Christian conception of death with ancient Basotho conception of death.

## CONCLUSION

Two questions still need further clarification regarding ancient Basotho conception of death, and they are: the immortality of the soul and the resurrection. The confusion is caused by the fact that the first historians were missionaries who confused their own Christian conception of death with ancient Basotho conception of death.

a) **Immortality of the soul:** Ellenberger has this to say:

The Basotho have an ancient faith in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body; the worship of the dead proves the former, and their burial ceremonies the latter... The dead, or perhaps the departed would be the better word, were not believed to suffer any remorse, or indeed any punishment for evil committed on earth; but it was believed that they had physical wants, that they ate and drank, and enjoyed the same pleasures, as they did when on earth..." (Ellenberger, 1969: 247).

It seems to me that, like Casalis, Ellenberger narrates ancient Basotho's conception of death relating it to Christian conception of death, and this becomes problematic. The ancient Basotho prayed the ancestors to calm God's anger when confronted with misfortunes. According to Ellenberger, they were praying or venerating immortal souls then separated from their bodies. I have already shown that Manyeli has correctly maintained that the ancestors are neither spirits nor souls of the dead, but body and soul existing in another form.

Ellenberger holds that ancient Basotho believed that the dead or the departed had physical wants, such as eating and drinking. Now, physical wants are demanded by the body and not the soul. So, the implication is that dead bodies separated from their immortal souls continued to eat and drink, and pursuing the same pleasures they enjoyed while united to their souls before death. Or, alternatively, the implication would be that physical wants were demanded by immortal soul. Both alternatives are nonsensical.

The only plausible option left is that there is no separation of the soul from the body when a person ceases to exist in this world. Mats'ela clarifies Ellenberger's view that physical wants are required while on their journey to (Ntsoanatsatsi) the east where they originated from (Mats'ela, 1990: 100). As a matter of fact, the idea of the immortality of the soul stems from Platonic philosophy and was adopted by Christian theologians. Christian missionaries could not detach themselves from this dualism when writing about the ancient Basotho belief on the living-dead.

**b) Resurrection:** Historians agree that the ancient Basotho believed that ancestors were living persons. Did they become ancestors immediately after ceasing to be, or at a later stage? In his attempt to clarify that the ancestor is a composite of body and soul, Manyeli explicitly alludes that the deceased did not rise immediately. He contends that:

## *The Immortality of the Human Soul and a Future Life*

The very position of the dead man's body in the grave seems to be against this idea of spirit-ancestors. We know that the graves of the ancient Basotho had a partition in which the dead man was placed in a sitting position. This position had a special signification because the ancient Basotho believes that it would facilitate the rising up of the dead person (Manyeli, T., 1992: 47).

The above cited passage indicates that the deceased did not rise immediately. Mats'ela also holds that the ancient Basotho believed that the deceased did not rise immediately; they needed food, drinks, clothes and the like while placed in a sitting position awaiting their resurrection to the east where they originated (Mats'ela, 1990: 100). What remains unclear is the time when they would rise and enter into the rank of the ancestors.

But Casalis holds the view that "As soon as a person is dead he takes his place among the family gods" (Casalis, 1997: 250). It is worth noting that by family gods the ancient Basotho were not referring to deities but the ancestors. For Casalis, the deceased person immediately assumes an invisible form and becomes an ancestor. This makes sense when recalling the prayer the ancient Basotho addressed to the ancestors. They made "a distinction between the ancient and modern divinities. The latter are considered inferior in power, but more accessible; hence this formula, which is often used: 'New gods, entreat the ancient gods for us'" (Casalis, 1997: 249). Casalis affirms also that "Each family is supposed to be under the direct influence and protection of its ancestors" (Casalis, 1997: 248). Given that these families cannot be influenced and protected by dead persons, it follows that the ancestors are living beings dwelling in their own unknown invisible place.

Evidently, Casalis' view discards the idea of the resurrection that presupposes death. How, then, do we reconcile Manyeli and Mats'ela's contrasting views with that of Casalis regarding the idea of the resurrection? Given the overwhelming belief on the rising of the deceased, the idea of the resurrection cannot be discarded. I think the ancient Basotho's belief on the resurrection was not as remote as the Christian belief on the second coming of Christ when the dead will rise from their graves. For the ancient Basotho, it was just a matter of time one would rise and be numbered among the ancestors. For them, the resurrection was as imminent as the parousia of the early Paul to the first Thessalonians. It is not surprising that soon after their burial people would be saying to them: 'New gods, entreat the ancient gods for us'. Though less powerful, the deceased who have just entered into the rank of the ancestors knew better the situation and condition their families left behind.

## REFERENCES

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*. (1<sup>st</sup> Complete American Edition) Vol. I New York: Benziger Brothers Inc.

***Louis Manyeli***

- Ayer, A.J. 1936. *Language, Truth and Logic*. London: Penguin Books.
- Boyd, Richard, Gasper Philip, and Trout, J.D., ed. 1991. *The Philosophy of Science*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Casalis, Eugene. 1997. *The Basotos*. Morija: Morija Printing Works.
- Eze, E.C. 1998. *African Philosophy*, ed. Massachusetts: BlackWell.
- Gill, Stephen. 1993. *A Short History of Lesotho*. Morija: Morija Museum & Achieves.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Ribinson. New York: Harper & Row.
- Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth. 2003. *On Death and Dying*. New York: Scribner.
- Manyeli, Thomas. 1992. *Religious Symbols of the Basotho*. Mzenod: Mzenod Publishers.
- Manyeli, Thomas. 1995. *Phenomenological Perspective of Basotho Religion*. Mzenod: Mzenod Publishers.
- Mats'ela, Z.A. 1990. *Bochaba ba Basotho*. Mzenod: Mzenod Publishers.
- Plato. 1948. *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito*, trans. F.J. Church. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Plato. 1951. *Phaedo*, trans. F.J. Church. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Presbey G., Struhl, K., and Olsen, R., ed. 2000. *The Philosophical Quest*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.