

Naked but Not Disembodied: A Case for Anthropological Duality

ABSTRACT

The Christian tradition has presented various theories in answer to the question of what happens after death. As is well known, the Jewish mindset is predominantly monistic while the Greek is predominantly dualistic. But what about the distinctively *Christian* perspective? Biblical scholars and systematicians array themselves along the monistic – dualistic divide. Recent treatments of theological anthropology range from strict defenses of Aristotelian-Thomistic dualism to scientifically informed monism. The present study is an attempt to present a position which is primarily informed by the biblical text and is thus distinctively Christian. What we find in Scripture is an affirmation of an intermediate state along with an intermediate body fit for such a state as it awaits the final resurrection. The impetus for such a position is found in Jesus' words to the thief on the cross that he would be in *paradise* with him that day (Lk 23.43), and Paul's teaching on the resurrection. Pauline theology presents three stages or qualities of life: a premortal life, a post-mortem but preresurrection life, and a postresurrection eternal life. At no point does Scripture present the existence of a disembodied soul. In its place we find the affirmation that to be human to be embodied, and that applies to all three of the states humanity may exist in.

Whilst the post-mortem state of the human has rarely been the dominant point of theological dispute among Baptists, neither has it been a matter of no concern. With inevitable implications for views of God, of hell, and the nature and extent of salvation, nineteenth-century debates on the 'larger hope' or conditional immortality formed part of the context for the 'down-grade' debates of the 1880s. In New Zealand the issues sparked the first major controversy among in the newly formed Baptist Union.¹ More recently Fuller Seminary Professor Nancy Murphy has popularized an anthropology known as 'nonreductive physicalism,' the

¹ 'Downgrade Down Under: Conflict and Cohesion among New Zealand Baptists', *Baptist Quarterly*, 37 no.7 (July 1998), 351-363.

latest offering appearing in the *Journal of European Baptist Studies*². In response to the views represented by Murphy and others the following study offers an alternate perspective, an ‘anthropological duality’ as a more faithful representation of the biblical witness.

I. Intermediate Worlds beyond

The doctrine of the intermediate state refers to the condition of believers between death and resurrection. The intermediate state also has reference to the worlds beyond. The first issue concerns personal eschatology, the second concerns corporate eschatology. Our major concern is with the first issue but we shall touch on the second in passing.

There are significant indications within the scriptural testimony which lead the interpreter to conclude the intermediate state exists. Along with an intermediate state is the affirmation of intermediate abodes for both the righteous and the unrighteous. The intermediate abode of the unrighteous is *hades* (the final abode is *Gehenna*) and of the righteous is *paradise* (the final abode is *heaven*).³

The interim state of the blessed is paradise: Jesus affirmed this to the thief on the cross in Lk 23.43; to the Sadducees regarding Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mt 22.32; Jn 8.56; cf. Lk 20.34-38); and Paul testified to this at his conversion (2 Cor 12.2-3). As Hall states:

² N. Murphy, ‘How to Keep the “Non” in Nonreductive Physicalism,’ *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 9 no.2 (2009), 5-16. Her other contributions to this field include: *Bodies or Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); *Whatever Happened to the Soul?* W.S. Brown, N. Murphy and H.N. Malony eds. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), and ‘Nonreductive Physicalism,’ in *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, J.B. Green and S.L. Palmer eds. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005).

³ See J. Jeremias, ‘γᾱενᾱ’ in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, trans. G.W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76), vol. 1.657-658, who clearly shows the biblical distinction between Gehenna and Hades. On ‘heaven’ see *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, eds. J.P. Louw, and E.A. Nida (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 1:4. N.T. Wright, *New Heavens, New Earth: The Biblical Picture of the Christian Hope*. Grove Biblical Series B 11 (Cambridge: Grove, 1999) has recently mounted a convincing case that the Christian hope is not confined to an other-worldly *heaven* but in fact the New Testament consistently presents the final hope as the new earth and new heavens. *Heaven* in the New Testament is the abode of God veiled at the present time. Cf. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

The crucified thief...possessed an insight that almost everyone else at Jesus' execution lacked. The believing thief asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom (Lk 23.42)...Jesus promised to the thief that 'today you will be with me in paradise.' Paradise, then, seems to be a specific place or state of being. This is distinct from the kingdom of God – a broader reality referring to an age of God's reign as well as the place of its full manifestation.⁴

According to Bloesch, 'Paradise is a kind of interim heaven, just as hades is a kind of interim hell. These are fluid concepts where the meaning is not always fixed. Paradise will eventually merge into heaven, and hades into hell'.⁵ Bloesch terms this the 'near hereafter' as opposed to the 'far hereafter', or 'an interim heaven' and says this distinction corresponds to one made in late Jewish thought between the heavenly paradise and the final paradise of the world to come.⁶ Various studies confirm that '*paradise* is a regular Jewish way of referring, not to the final destination of God's people, but to the temporary place of rest before the rising from the dead.'⁷

Paradise is not the place of the dead but a place of superabundant life, of resurrection life as a foretaste or shadow of the ultimate reality yet to come. We should note the words of Christ to the thief on the cross that that 'today you will be *with me* in paradise' (Lk 23.43) parallels Paul's language of dying and being *syn Christō* (2 Cor 5.8; Phil 1.23-24), which we shall speak of more below.⁸ This is confirmed in Acts 7.54-60 where

⁴ C.A. Hall, 'Christ's Kingdom and Paradise,' *Christianity Today* 47 no. 11 (2003), 79.

⁵ D.G. Bloesch, *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory*. Christian Foundations vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: IVP, 2004), 138.

⁶ Bloesch, *The Last Things*, 136-137. This view of paradise is worked out in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, eds. L. Ryken, J. Wilhoit, T. Longman, C. Duriez, D. Penney, and D.G. Reid (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), 315-317. For the views of the fathers of and ancient church supporting the interpretation of paradise as a distinct sphere of existence in the intermediate state see *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament III: Luke*, ed. A.A. Just (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 364-367.

⁷ Wright, *New Heavens, New Earth*, 19. See N.T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology*, SNTS Monograph Series, vol. 43 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁸ While not making the explicit link between Luke and Paul see L. Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: IVP, 1974), 329.

we are told that Stephen already beheld the glory of God at his death. Jesus was standing ready to welcome him into his immediate presence. It is in light of this and other texts (such as 2 Cor 12.3) that we can understand Paul's statement: 'To live is Christ, to die is gain' (Phil 1.21). Paul is here affirming a *temporary stage*, ahead of the final resurrection when God will restore all things to himself, and renew the whole creation.

II Intermediate Bodies Beyond

Until recently a standard Christian response to the question of what happens after death was available. Believing in some sort of dualism of human body and soul, it was thought that death consists in the separation of the soul from the body. The immaterial soul lives on in a conscious personal existence while the body decomposes. At Christ's second coming, there will be a resurrection of a renewed or transformed body, which will be reunited with the soul. Thus most believers held to the immortality of the soul and the physical resurrection of the body. The intermediate state thus entails the existence of a disembodied soul.⁹ Such thinking is, however, more an expression of Greek thought than of biblical theology as the Greeks generally believed in cosmic and anthropological dualisms. Just a brief review may be helpful. According to the biblical testimony human beings are not trichotomous – 'body', 'soul', and 'spirit'. Our 'spirit' is God's breath, God's power working in the world (Isa 40.7; 31.3). Our 'spirit', 'breath', or 'life' comes from God (e.g. Isa 42.5; Job 33.4; 27.3; 32.8). When God breathed into *adam* they became living beings (literally 'souls', Gen 2.7). Animals as well as humans are sustained by the breath (Spirit) of God (Gen 7.15). The basic meaning of 'soul' (*nephesh*) is the principle of life which animates both humans (e.g. Ex 21.23; Judg 5.18; Ps 33.19), and animals (Prov 12.10). Soul is then extended to designate humans as persons (e.g. Gen 14.21; Ex 16.16, Num 5.6; Exek 33.6), as well as to designate the seat of desires, appetites, and thoughts. Nowhere, however, do 'body', 'soul', and 'spirit' represent three separate constituent parts of the human.¹⁰ Gerald Bray

⁹ This view still predominates amongst Reformed, Evangelical, and other conservative Christians. See for instance P. Helm, 'A Theory of Disembodied Survival and Re-embodied Existence,' *Religious Studies* 14 no. 1 (1978), 15-26; and W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: IVP, 1994), 816.

¹⁰ For biblical surveys which highlight these points in detail see J.B. Green, "'Bodies – That Is, Human Lives": A Re-Examination of Human Nature in the Bible,' 149-173; and R.S. Anderson, 'On Being Human: the Spiritual

summarizes the point well: ‘the ancient distinction between body (or flesh) and soul is not valid, because the soul is no more than the life of the body, without which we are talking only about a corpse, not about a human being.’¹¹ Likewise, with Shults we may say:

Overall, then, Scripture depicts the human person as a dynamic unity, which it considers from various perspectives using terms such as ‘soul’, ‘body’, ‘flesh’, and ‘mind’. Distinguishing these dimensions of human relationality is important, but the Bible is concerned with the salvation of the whole person in community in relation to God.¹²

In place of a trichotomous or dichotomous view of the human the Bible presents a more holistic and unified description. Thomas Torrance helpfully pictures a human person as a ‘body of their soul and soul of their body’.¹³ Torrance’s use of this phrase derives from Athanasius and Karl Barth.¹⁴ Barth appeared to give priority to the soul whereas Torrance wishes to see the soul and body as completely coterminous and hence neither holds a priority over the other but each inherently constitutes the other. In utilizing this language Torrance rejects a trichotomous view of the human person (as body, soul, and spirit) in favor of a description of the human as body *and* soul, related to God ‘through the power and presence of God’s Spirit’.¹⁵ The human ‘spirit’ is actually an essential and dynamic correlate of the divine ‘Spirit’ - not a third object distinct from body and soul. This constitutional view is closer to the biblical testimony than trichotomous views but it also rejects strictly dichotomous conceptions. Rather than speak of some form of dualism between body and soul it is more appropriate to speak of a duality. Dualist presentations suggest two overlapping circles, as in a Venn diagram,

Saga of a Creaturely Soul,’ 177-194, both in *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, eds. W.S. Brown, N. Murphy, and H.N. Malony (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

¹¹ G. Bray, ‘The Work of the Spirit (Romans 8.1-17),’ *Evangel* (Autumn 2001), 68.

¹² F.L. Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 178.

¹³ T.F. Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind: Order and Openness in Theology and Natural Science* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985), 29 (slightly altered).

¹⁴ Athanasius, *De Incarnationis* 15; *Contra Arianos* 2.53-54; 3.20, 30-35. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-1975), III/2, 325.

¹⁵ T.F. Torrance, ‘The Soul and Person in Theological Perspective,’ in *Religion, Reason, and the Self: Essays in Honour of Hynwel D. Lewis*, ed. S.R. Sutherland and T.A. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), 110.

whereas a duality suggests one ellipse with two polarities. What holds these two polarities together is the Holy Spirit. Likewise, it is the Holy Spirit which indwells human beings in unique ways which constitutes the *imago Dei*.

If human beings are considered along the lines of a constitutional duality then the human S/spirit is not some 'spark of the divine' (Origen)¹⁶ but the ontological qualification of the soul brought about and maintained by the Holy Spirit. As Torrance clarifies, 'It is not through any alleged participation in the essence of God, as Hellenic religion and philosophy maintained, but through the objective orientation of man [*sic*] in soul and body to God, the Source and Ground of all creaturely rationality and freedom, that man is constituted a rational subject and agent, i.e. a *person*.'¹⁷ Torrance wants to raise this discussion even further. What makes men and women so distinctive is that as unitary beings, body of their soul and soul of their body, they span two 'worlds' - the physical and spiritual - and are thereby able to reach knowledge of the created contingent order and divulge the secrets of its vast intelligibility.¹⁸ As a result a correspondence between God and humanity, Creator and creature is spanned by the human person in the *imago Dei*.

While Torrance's discussion is dominated by epistemic concerns its basic orientation is surely correct. Torrance understands patristic anthropology to have recast current terms from Middle Platonism into a distinctively Christian anthropology, the two most important aspects being *soul* and *person*. Like the rest of creation, the soul and body are created *ex nihilo* and are contingent rather than immortal.¹⁹ The soul and body of human beings are 'continuously sustained by the creative presence of God and are given immortality through the grace of a relation with God who only has immortality.'²⁰ This graced relation to God is initiated in space-time but extends to the eschaton in which the resurrection of the whole being of the person as body and soul is realized. Resurrection is to a creaturely participation in the uncreated eternal life of God.

¹⁶ D. Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*, 2nd edn. (London: Collins, 1973), 66-78.

¹⁷ Torrance, 'The Soul and Person in Theological Perspective,' 113.

¹⁸ Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind*, 33.

¹⁹ See T.F. Torrance, *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge: Explorations in the Interrelations of Scientific and Theological Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 333-349.

²⁰ Torrance, 'The Soul and Person in Theological Perspective,' 105.

While Torrance restricts his horizons to the resurrection, with Bloesch I affirm that, 'the saints on the other side are not in a state of nakedness but are clothed in a resurrection body. They have not disembodied life but newly embodied life.'²¹ In context it is clear that by 'resurrection body' Bloesch is not speaking about the final resurrection but a pre-resurrection body of some sort. This post-mortem but preresurrection stage in paradise is one in which the saints are clothed in *heavenly garments* or *white robes* (Rev 6.11), a symbol for bodily existence. Samuel, in his visitation from the dead (real or not!) was also clothed in a robe, giving him the appearance of a god (1 Sam 28.13-14²²). In Rev 14 the 144,000, the symbol for the company of the redeemed, are pictured as being in the very presence of Christ, they have experienced the 'first resurrection' (Rev 20.5). What we learn from this testimony is that in paradise saints are indeed closer to God than they are in their earthly, bodily existence (2 Cor 5.6-8). However, they are not yet in their final, resurrected bodies. From this biblical testimony we assert that the saints in paradise are clothed in what Bloesch helpfully terms a *spiritual corporeality* (1 Cor 15.44).²³ Bloesch adds, 'Although they do not possess their final resurrection body, the spirits of the dead in Christ are nevertheless clothed in heavenly garments'.²⁴ As such paradise is a preliminary realm of glory in which, as Erickson writes, 'the experiences

²¹ Bloesch, *The Last Things*, 139.

²² The incident recorded in 1 Sam 28.3-19 where the medium at Endor supposedly brings back Samuel from the dead does not validate the Spiritualist position, for the medium herself is surprised, even alarmed, when she sees a 'god coming up out of the earth' and recognizes him to be Samuel. Some scholars believe that demonic spirit's impersonated Samuel and therefore Samuel did not appear. Others believe that God himself interrupted the séance and permitted the real Samuel to appear, thereby shocking, and upsetting the medium who had not anticipated such a thing. Scripture and sacred tradition is clear that we reach the saints not directly or even through earthy channels, such as mediums, but through Christ himself. For more on the 'communion of saints' see R.W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2:353-368.

²³ Bloesch, *The Last Things*, 139.

²⁴ Bloesch, *The Last Things*, 140. This view is compatible with that of, amongst others, M. Luther, *Commentary on Genesis*, WA, XXV.321; and P.T. Forsyth, *The Justification of God* (1917. Blackwood, SA.: New Creation Publications, 1988), 153.

of paradise and Hades are doubtlessly not as intense as what will ultimately be, since the person is in a somewhat incomplete condition.²⁵

If we accept the fact that Scripture teaches an intermediate state, and that state necessitates an embodied existence, then we must ask for a more precise definition of this embodied-but-not-yet-resurrected state. A number of church thinkers provide some constructive suggestions. John Wesley writes; ‘We cannot tell, indeed, how we shall then exist or what kind of organs we shall have: the soul will not be encumbered with flesh and blood; but probably it will have some sort of ethereal vehicle, even before God clothes us “with our nobler house of empyrean light.”’²⁶ A number of recent thinkers have suggested something similar, although they limit this to Jesus Christ, and to a few saints associated with his passion. In his *Christian Theology* Erickson expresses the view that Jesus alone had a two-stage resurrection. Between resurrection and ascension Jesus occupied an intermediate body and that is why it bore the marks of the crucifixion.²⁷ In his *Systematic Theology* Grudem entertains the same idea – this time extending it to those who were raised from the grave at the time of Christ’s resurrection in Matt 27.52-53.²⁸ In relation to this event Grudem writes, ‘Since they came out of the tombs ‘after his resurrection’ we may assume that these also were saints who had received resurrection bodies as a kind of foretastes of the final day of glorification when Christ returns.’²⁹ In light of these comments it surely fits the evidence much better to simply assert an embodied post-mortem but preresurrection existence - the intermediate state in paradise - while we await the final resurrection body at the *Parousia*.

Providing added impetus to such a view is the reality that there shall be growth or progress in paradise. Even in a state of perfect sanctification one is still able to grow ‘in wisdom and in stature’, as did Jesus himself (Lk 2.52). Scripture speaks of degrees of glory (1 Cor 3.18), the lowest levels of which begin in this life (cf. Heb 12.23). Scripture also holds out the promise of a final incorruptible or eternal body. This is not a refurbished natural body but a body that has been transformed and

²⁵ M.J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1189. Erickson does not make this point in relation to an *embodied* existence in the intermediate state but to a *disembodied* existence in this state.

²⁶ *The Message of the Wesley’s*, ed. P.S. Watson (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 238, cited in Bloesch, *The Last Things*, 140, cited in Bloesch, *The Last Things*, 142.

²⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1205.

²⁸ For another account see Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 632-646.

²⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 834-835.

recreated (1 Cor 15.35-49).³⁰ Calvin envisioned the interim state as one of *beatitudo* and *expectatio*. In Christ and beyond death we have the vision of God, but we still await the final resurrection of the body.

In paradise there will be perfect love and perfect holiness but not perfect peace or perfect joy. Neither will there be perfect knowledge. In John Wesley's words, 'Paradise is only the porch of heaven...It is in heaven only that there is the fullness of joy; the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore.'³¹ Why may this be so? Believers in paradise will have perfect fellowship with God but not with the children of God, since the church militant still battles against death and oppression. The martyrs under the altar continue to cry, 'How long?' (Rev 6). The saints on the other side pray that God's justice might be revealed and vindicated. Until the Church is completed, restored, and resurrected perfect fellowship is not possible.

In Scripture it is clearly taught that the saints in glory have still not received all that had been promised (Heb 11.39). Apart from the church militant they shall not be made perfect (Heb 11.40). The happiness of the church triumphant is dependant upon the redemption of the church militant. In his *The last Things* Bloesch cites Bernard of Clairvaux to this effect: 'Many among us are already in the courtyards waiting until the number of their brethren shall be complete; into this blessed house they shall not enter without us, that is to say: no saints without the whole body.'³² Presently departed saints are with Christ in paradise and are, mysteriously, involved in the affairs of earth waiting until one day they will accompany Christ in the final battle against Satan. They will also take part in judging the rulers on earth. Paul intimates that many of God's saints will be given the reward of having a role in ruling and judging.³³ Paradise is the church triumphant but the church triumphant is still engaged in the ongoing struggle against death and darkness. In the new heaven-new earth the church triumphant will be transmuted into the eternal kingdom of God and the church militant will be no more.

Now we as believers proceed from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3.18), but we shall not reach the pinnacle –

³⁰ P. Lampe, 'Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body,' in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, eds. T. Peters, R.J. Russell, and M. Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 107.

³¹ H. Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Wilmore: Francis Asbury, 1980), 121.

³² Bloesch, *The Last Things*, 142.

³³ Cf. 1 Cor 6.1-3; 1 Thess 3.13; cf. Wis of Sol 3.7-8; Jude 14-15; Rev 19.14, 20.4.

uninterrupted joy and peace – until we are joined with all our brothers and sisters in Christ in the grand finale of Christ's cosmic victory over chaos and unrighteousness.³⁴

Only Jesus has attained the incorruptible, eternal body. Enoch, Elijah, Samuel, and the other saints who rose with Jesus (Mt 27.52-53) are unambiguously embodied, but they still await the glorious consummation of God's kingdom and thus of their final, resurrection bodies. What they currently inhabit is clearly some form of interim body in anticipation of their final resurrection body like Christ's. Paul calls this the 'spiritual body' (1 Cor 15.44), what Bloesch above terms a 'spiritual corporeality'. In 1 Cor 15 Paul uses a variety of images and metaphors to illustrate what he means by a spiritual body.

III A Spiritual Corporeality in Paul

1 Cor 15 famously outlines something of an apocalyptic timeline in an attempt to describe or articulate the future resurrection of believers. While we must not confuse scriptural metaphors with spiritual realities we have to acknowledge that we are able to grasp the latter only by means of the former.³⁵ This is, at least, what Paul does in 1 Cor 15 through the use of the imagery of seeds and fully grown plants (1 Cor 15.36-38), and examples taken from creation (vv 39-41). You sow a seed not the body which it is to become. There is a qualitative difference between the premortal physical body and the postresurrection person, or, as we read in verse 44, from the 'physical body' to the 'spiritual body'. The examples in verses 39-41 illustrate the fact that different 'bodies' can exist in unison. 'The underlying thought runs like this: if these quality differences are possible *within* the *present* cosmos, they are all the more likely between the present and the future eschatological realities.'³⁶ This is emphasized further in the three-fold antitheses of verses 42-43.

Verses 45-49 further the discussion with the typological contrast between Adam and Christ. The difference between our present existence and that of our postresurrection existence will be as different as the contrast between Adam and Christ. And yet, as we know from this corporate representation, there is something in common between Adam and Christ – their humanity, and there is something in common between our pre and postresurrection existence, our personal identity.

³⁴ Bloesch, *The Last Things*, 143.

³⁵ Bloesch, *The Last Things*, 136.

³⁶ Lampe, 'Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body,' 108.

What, however, does Paul mean in verse 44 by a 'spiritual body'? Clearly it does not refer to the constitution of the body but emphasizes that God's Spirit is the only force that creates the new body.³⁷ Unlike the physical body which is created by two natural parents, the spiritual body is beyond the possibilities of the present nature and creation.³⁸ This conforms with the view of Torrance earlier that even in our premortal existence we are the body of our soul and the soul of our body. 'Spirit' is thus the Holy Spirit who indwells us and animates us with physical and spiritual life. God's Spirit is the agent of our new spiritual (*pneumatic*) body, and his Spirit already indwells believers now (Rom 8.9-11.23). Once again the analogy of the seed and plant may be applied here, while Paul acknowledges a considerable degree of discontinuity between our premortal and post-mortem existence (vv 37-38) this must be held within a robust continuity (v 36).³⁹ In seeking to define Paul's use of the 'spiritual body' Harris writes, 'It is a form of embodiment that is fully responsive to the Christian's perfected spirit and perfectly adapted to its heavenly environment.'⁴⁰

Having affirmed the personal continuity of the believer in premortal and post-resurrection existence we may now specifically apply this same argument to the post-mortem but preresurrection stage as well. In that stage believers are personally raised to new life and are clothed in a spiritual body that prefigures that of the final resurrection body to come but is still short of that state. What is important for Paul is the understanding that even in this intermediate state the believer is 'with Christ' (2 Cor 5.8; Phil 1.23-24).

IV Contemporary Proposals on Human Nature

Arranged along a continuum, perspectives on human nature today can be characterized as more or less materialist/monist, more or less dualist. On the extreme poles are two positions - (reductive) materialism and radical dualism - both of which are incompatible with the Christian

³⁷ This is clearly articulated by M.J. Harris, 'Resurrection and Immortality in the Pauline Corpus,' in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament*, ed. R.N. Longnecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 147-170, especially 153.

³⁸ Lampe, 'Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body,' 109.

³⁹ The same applies for our likeness to Christ which is both 'the same' and 'different', cf. Phil 3.20-21; 1 Cor 4.8; 15.23-27.

⁴⁰ Harris, 'Resurrection and Immortality in the Pauline Corpus,' 153. Harris is not arguing for an intermediate state, however.

tradition. Between these two poles we find a bewildering spectrum of opinion over which Christians divide. The options include Monistic views such as: Eliminative/Reductive Materialism; Constitutional Materialism; Nonreductive Physicalism; Two-Aspect Monism; Reflexive Monism; and Dualistic views such as: Emergent Dualism; Substance Dualism; Holistic Dualism; Naturalist Dualism; and Radical Dualism. A brief response to a number of these views is required before a constructive proposal of our own is offered.

Various problems are inherent in each of these positions. It will not be necessary to provide a full critique of each position here but rather to indicate the sorts of difficulties they present. Substance dualism incurs at least four significant problems. First, the appeal to 'basic beliefs', while not unfounded, is extremely difficult to hold to in a postmodern world in which all foundationalisms have been undermined. Many philosophers of the mind also appeal to basic beliefs but do not come up with substance dualism but, conversely, some form of materialism. Their basic belief is that they are embodied animals. It is tenuous to build a theory on such a weak philosophical foundation. Second, the appeal to a soft version of 'common sense realism' suffers from many of the same objections already raised. Common sense realism is not as common nor as sensical as its advocates profess. The issues concerning human nature must be resolved by broad empirical and theoretical considerations. For instance, many Christians claim to be trichotomists. How does a common sense appeal work in that discussion? Third, the biblical testimony used to support substance dualism is actually very weak. Fourth, in almost all cases of substance dualism the temptation is given in to and a radical dualism results. While this is not the *necessary* consequence of such a view it is a common (sense?) consequence. When a radical dualism is introduced we are once again into Platonic or Aristotelian dualism and a long way from Scripture and the tradition.

Emergent dualism suffers many of the same objections, although it has its own cluster of problems. First, how can physical properties create non-physical properties? Or, how can biological existence come together to create a brain and with it an immaterial mind? This seems to be a miracle stretched to its limits. Second, the biblical testimony for this view is similar to that of substance dualism, slim. Third, if the soul/mind comes into existence through the body then it appears unlikely that it is able to be maintained without a body. Hence to posit some divine miracle by which God sustains the mind/soul between death and resurrection is inconsistent with the theory as a whole. Substance dualism is far better able to account for the intermediate state than in

emergent dualism. Fourth, if the soul emerges out of the complex configuration of neural circuitry, then in the resurrection why is it that this *new* body does not generate its own (new) soul? Or does God prevent the natural emergence of a soul in the next life in order to add from the outside the persisting soul of the individual? And if God does this there why should we not think he does it here (substance dualism)?

Recognizing the significance of such a critique advocates of nonreductive physicalism assert that consciousness, sentience, mentality and religious experience are all higher-order features of the physical world that cannot be reduced to microphysical constituents (e.g. atoms, molecules, cells, quantum events) and their relationships. *Physicalism* signals an agreement with scientists and philosophers who hold that it is not necessary to postulate a second metaphysical entity, the soul or mind, to account for human capacities and distinctiveness. *Nonreductive* indicates a rejection of contemporary philosophical views that say that the person is ‘nothing but’ a body. However, this position also is open to considerable critique. First, nonreductive physicalism suffers the constant critique that it is, in actual fact, reductionistic. Second, there is little biblical evidence to support such a view. Third, it rests almost entirely on contemporary scientific findings, especially in neurobiology and neuropsychology. Fourth, if this theory is true then it is little different from the (currently fictitious) idea that if we can build a computer modeled on the neural networks of the human brain but operating at a trillion times faster, it may in fact, under this view, constitute the creation of a human *soul* and thus the very real possibility that this computer must be considered human – or at least in possession of a soul and thus redeemable. We now find ourselves in the realm of transhumanism. Fifth, a dualist would respond to this hypothetical example and say that no matter how clever a computer may become it must still be programmed from outside. However, we could never really program into it the subjective feeling of what it is like to be alive and to experience color, beauty, music, art, love, painting, architecture, nature, parenthood, happiness and even spiritual experiences – all the things that go to make us human.

Closer to the position advocated in this essay is the constitutional view of humanity. This view is anti-dualist. If persons (souls) and bodies are distinct, as Augustine and Descartes thought them to be, then one would not expect to find the level of causal dependence of the one (the mind) on the other (the body) as we in fact do find. The constitutional view argues that if there should be an immaterial person in the future who claims to be me, that person is mistaken, and necessarily so. For as they see it, the *T* cannot exist and fail to be physical. And the physical

thing I am, they believe, has no immaterial parts such as a soul. Under the constitutional view the human person is not comprised of an immaterial soul (dualism) nor is it a compound of soul-and-body (emergent dualism or nonreductive physicalism), nor is it identical with the physical object which is the biological body (animalism or reductive physicalism). On a constitutional view human persons are constituted by bodies but are not identical with the bodies that constitute them. Why? Because *bodies* and *persons* refer to different things but you cannot have one without the other. This means that while persons are biological entities they can never simply be reduced to that of a physical organism.⁴¹

What separates this view from the one advocated in this essay is the state of the person in the post-mortem but preresurrection stage. The constitutional view can argue for some form of immediate survival upon death but it most often does not.⁴² In its place is the belief that at death the person ceases to exist because the body ceases to exist and there is no immaterial or immortal soul which can survive. In the resurrection the person is recreated – resurrected and once again lives. Thus this view argues that as persons we exist, cease to exist and then begin to exist again. This is a miracle and without a Christian worldview would make no sense. How does this re-existence or resurrection take place? Several theories are offered the most relevant of which is *reassembly*. At the resurrection God gathers together all the bits that made up one's body at death and causes them to be propertied and related just as they were at the moment immediately preceding death. Obviously this reassembly would also entail a healing and restoration of the body from what was wrong with it at death (e.g. cancer, bullet hole). This would be the result of divine decree.

The constitutional view suffers from a number of problems, briefly stated here. First, there are obvious philosophical and intuitive problems with this theory. Does the doctrine of the resurrection require

⁴¹ For a presentation of these views and others with critical interaction see *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, eds. J.B. Green, and S.L. Palmer (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005).

⁴² The argument is rather philosophical and, I think, forced. It posits that at the moment of death the molecular makeup of the individual ceases to be personal and merely becomes a corpse while instantaneously the molecular structure of the body is 'translated' to heaven whereupon the person now exists. Elements of the Star Trek *transporter* are appealed to as a science fiction illustration! Cf. K. Corcoran, 'The Constitutional View of Persons,' in *In Search of the Soul*, 165.

belief in numerical sameness in regards to the body or simply a view of qualitative sameness? A commitment to this view requires a response to the following sorts of questions: What will be the size of our resurrected bodies? Will deformed bodies be reassembled with the same deformed parts? Will resurrected bodies be infant or adult in nature? What will happen if a person dies at thirty but has had an organ transplant from someone aged twenty – what organ will be reassembled to which person? Each of these questions contributes to the philosophical and intuitive problems inherent in this view. Second, the biblical evidence would seem to rule this theory out, especially in its teaching about the intermediate state, as argued above.

The biblical narrative provides a lot of information about human persons and how they relate to God, to others, and to the self. However, the biblical narrative just does not give us the explicit details or even engage in philosophical speculation about the composition and construction of the human person such as we find in many of the views represented above. What is required is a consideration of human nature which takes seriously the biblical narrative and then builds on that so as to present a picture of the person which is commensurate with the whole theological commitment to which the biblical narrative points and to other factors which have a bearing on the issue. The following is a brief attempt at such a construction.

V Anthropological Duality

None of the positions above are fully satisfactory in light of the biblical evidence, the criticisms leveled at each view, or the wider theological commitments to which I personally hold to (formed out of the biblical witness). Therefore what I present is an alternative view.⁴³

Certain passages within Scripture clearly indicate an intermediate state between death and resurrection, a state in which the individual lives on in conscious personal existence (Lk 23.43; 16.19-31; 2 Cor 5.8). In addition to these already mentioned texts there are references in Scripture where the distinction between body and soul is difficult to dismiss, foremost of which is Jesus' statement in Mat 10.28: 'Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.' It would appear that biblical teaching does not rule out the possibility of some type of compound character, or at least some sort of divisibility, within the

⁴³ This view is largely compatible with the suggestion of Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 537-557, although the differences are obvious.

human makeup. This is not based on the biblical distinction between ψυχή (*psyche*), πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) or σῶμα (*soma*) but the possibility is not precluded on lexical grounds.

One final line of evidence is important – the transfiguration episode (Mt 17.3-9 par.) This was clearly not an apparition, nor was it a parable or a vision but an actual historical event. Moses and Elijah, both long dead, are *embodied* and conscious and yet they are not yet in their resurrection bodies. They must therefore be in an intermediate state and in an interim body.

A human life is one of personal embodied existence – nothing more nor less. And yet this does not require the assertion of reductive materialism. If personhood is in fact inseparably tied to bodily existence, the implications require some teasing out. In the Old Testament the human is regarded as a unity. In the New Testament, the body-soul terminology appears, but it cannot be precisely correlated with the idea of embodied and disembodied existence. While body and soul are sometimes contrasted (Matt 10.28), they are not always so clearly distinguished, as we have seen. In addition, the pictures in Scripture only ever regard humans as unitary beings. Seldom if ever is a spiritual nature addressed independently of or apart from the body.

The full range of the biblical data can best be accommodated by the view of holistic dualism, but not in the exact way that this has been presented so far by any of its advocates. For this reason perhaps yet another term is required in order to situate our view from that of others. Holistic dualism does not describe our position as it's stress on dualism is too emphatic. Nonreductive physicalism is no more satisfactory for it emphasizes the physicality too much. In its place we argue for an anthropological *duality*.⁴⁴ According to this view, a human is a materialized unitary being. In Scripture humans are so addressed and regarded. They are not urged to flee or escape from the body, as if it were somehow evil or contingent. At the same time the human is never reduced to a physical 'thing' but is always addressed as someone that is more than physical – or more than the sum of the physical parts of which it is constituted – we are spiritual beings as well. Humans possess a soul and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The soul, though, makes no sense whatsoever apart from the body. This duality can never be broken down – even at death – so as the immaterial part of the human (the soul) lives on without the material part (the body). Rather, at death the

⁴⁴ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 554, 557, with whom I am in agreement for the most part, calls his view 'conditional unity' and later 'contingent monism'. The latter term is more correct on our opinion.

physical body that is inhabited now decomposes but the *person* is translated to paradise and embodied in a *spiritual corporeality*. At the resurrection this temporary body will be replaced with a perfect resurrection body like Christ's (Phil 3.21). The person will assume at both points a human body that has some points of continuity with the old body, but is also a new or reconstituted or spiritual body. One is an intermediate body suitable for the intermediate state of paradise; the other is a perfected and final body like that of Christ the first-fruit (1 Cor 15.20).

Using an analogy provided by Erickson but altering it for the purposes of the current argument,⁴⁵ appeal may be made to the difference between a chemical compound and a mixture of elements. In a mixture, the atoms of each element retain their distinctive characteristics because they retain their separate identities. If the nature of a human was a mixture, then the spiritual and physical qualities would somehow be distinguishable, the person could act as either a spiritual or a physical being. On the other hand, in a compound, the atoms of all the elements involved enter into new combinations to form molecules. These molecules have characteristics or qualities that are unlike those of any of the elements of which they are composed. In the case of simple table salt (the compound sodium chloride), for example, one cannot detect the qualities of either sodium or chlorine. It is possible to break up the compound, whereupon one again has the original elements with their distinctive characteristics. These characteristics would include the poisonous nature of chlorine, whereas the compound product is non-poisonous.

We might think of a human as a unitary compound of a material and an immaterial element. The spiritual and the physical elements are not always distinguishable, for the human is a unitary subject; there is no conflict between the material and the immaterial nature. However, unlike table salt, the human compound is not dissolvable. A human person is a body of their soul and a soul of their body and if this were not the case then the individual subject would not be that subject – they would be something else. So for 'you' to be 'you' requires a body and a soul not one or the other, for otherwise you would become something (but not someone) other than you are.

Perhaps another analogy which is closer to the theological home may prove useful - that of world history. According to a premillennial reading of Scripture there is yet to come an intermediate state for the

⁴⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 555.

world, something normally termed the millennial kingdom. This is a time when all of time-space enters into a new, intermediate phase of redemption in preparation for the final redemption into the new earth. This corresponds in conception to what I am proposing for individual persons. As the earth will one day be destroyed by fire but recreated or restored in perfection (2 Pt 3.10-13), after an intermediate state (Rev 20.1-6), so too the human body can be destroyed and recreated/restored by God, something which moves through several phases – creation, fall, redemption, and finally renewal.

Anthropological duality emphasizes the differences within unity between the body and the soul animated and held perpetually together by the Holy Spirit. If we may use an christological analogy, body and soul are somewhat analogous to the two natures of Christ – they are without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation. Central to the uniting of the two natures and to the uniting of body and soul is the Holy Spirit. Upon death the Christian faces an embodied existence in paradise as they await the resurrection and the new heavens and new earth. In relation to Christ's words to the thief on the cross we may declare with Ephrem the Syrian:

There came to my ear
from the Scripture which had been read
a word that caused me joy
on the subject of the thief;
it gave comfort to my soul
amidst the multitude of its vices,
telling how he had compassion on the thief.
O may he bring me too
into that garden at the sound of whose name
I am overwhelmed by joy;
my mind bursts its reins
as it goes forth to contemplate him.⁴⁶

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⁴⁶ Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymn on Paradise*, in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament III: Luke*, ed A.A. Just (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 367.