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On the horns of a dilemma: bodily resurrection or disembodied paradise?

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In the sixteenth century, Sir Thomas More criticized Martin Luther's purported denial of a conscious intermediate state between bodily death and bodily resurrection. In the same century, William Tyndale penned a response in defense of Luther's view. His argument essentially defended the proposition: If the Intermediate State obtains, then bodily resurrection is superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. In this article, I enter the fray and argue for the truth of this conditional claim. And, like William Tyndale, I use the content and argument of a particular chapter in the Bible, namely, 1 Corinthians 15, to make the point.

Keywords: bodily resurrection; substance dualism; 1 Corinthians 15; intermediate state; heaven; John Cooper

I. A theological problem

In sixteenth century Britain, Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, took aim at the encroaching Protestant Reformation and, obviously enough, its champion, Martin Luther. Now, as a (Roman) Catholic, More has many issues against Luther and Protestant theology. But there is one of particular interest for my purposes here. In his work *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, More accuses Luther of denying the conscious immortality of the soul and of arguing for a position that has been traditionally called 'soul sleep'.¹ This is a view wherein it is said that when a person dies, that person's disembodied soul goes – who knows where – and 'sleeps' or is unconscious until the eschatological resurrection of the dead. I think More is wrong to charge Luther with this view for various reasons, but for lack of space, I'll not go into them here. What *is* correct, and thus, I think, the real target of More's ire, is that Luther denies what is commonly known as the doctrine of The Intermediate State.

The doctrine of The Intermediate State is almost unanimously taught in the Christian theologies of the East and the West (i.e., Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy). This teaching suggests that there is a state of existence for biologically dead human beings – believers, at any rate – in the interim time between one's bodily death and the eschatological bodily resurrection. The Intermediate State suggests at least the following two states of affairs are true and descriptive of the same state of existence:

(SD): There is a state of existence following human biological death in which a believing human (e.g., Jones) exists without her body (i.e., as a substantial soul/mind)

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and

(PS): There is a state of existence following a human's biological death that is paradisiacal in quality.

So, The Intermediate State suggests that (SD) and (PS) are jointly true and descriptive of the same state of existence. For the purposes of this article, I shall not count any conception that affirms one or the other but not both as a doctrine of The Intermediate State (using this term as a specific proper noun). The Intermediate State, then, teaches that a given human person, Jones, for example, when she suffers biological death, continues to exist as a disembodied soul/mind in a paradisiacal existence – that is to say, in a qualitatively excellent condition and environment (i.e., an idyllic place and state).²

To flesh this out just a bit more, and to see why the teaching implies what I've just said, note that the conjunct, (SD), entails a metaphysical thesis, viz., the metaphysical thesis called 'substance dualism'. By 'substance dualism' I mean nothing more than the philosophical anthropological conception that implies (1) human beings are composed of two substances, a body and a substantial soul – the substantial soul being *essential* to a human being and the body being accidental and (2) either the immortality of the human person/soul and/or that the human person/soul will continue to live after the death of the body. It is a metaphysic of human persons such that a human is essentially one substance, a soul/mind, housed in or connected to another substance, a human body.³ At any rate, if The Intermediate State is true, then so is substance dualism.⁴

Now, for an affirmation of (PS), we only need to look at two sample statements in official Church teaching. Here is the *Westminster Confession of Faith* Chapter 32:

I. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.⁵

And here is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 'This perfect life [i.e., this disembodied Paradise] with the Most Holy Trinity – this communion of life and love with the Trinity – is called 'heaven'. *Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness.*'⁶ It is important to note that both the *WCF* and the *CCC* cite Luke 23:43 – Jesus's promise to the robber on the cross, '...Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise' – as support (and we can think of others that might be used, e.g., Luke 16:19–31; 2 Cor. 5:1–10; Phil. 1:23; Heb. 9:27). This suggests, as it should, that both theological statements are attempting to teach and clarify that which the Scriptures teach. Even still, theologians should agree that fidelity to these texts implores one to further rigorous analysis as to their meaning and coherence, as well as an equally rigorous evaluation of longstanding, even entrenched, ecclesial positions purportedly drawn from these passages.⁷

These are just two samples of this deeply entrenched ecclesial position; I could marshal more besides (e.g., the Heidelberg Catechism). But, it should suffice to say that the teaching on The Intermediate State affirms the joint truth of (SD) and (PS) and that they are descriptive of the same state of existence.

Now, I set up this article by referring to the controversy in the sixteenth century concerning the denial of The Intermediate State. The denial of The Intermediate State is motivated in Luther, and as we will see with William Tyndale, by a concerning question: if The Intermediate State is a real state of existence, what's the point of bodily resurrection? Here is Martin Luther on the matter: 'That would be a silly soul if it were in heaven and desired its body!'⁸ In other words, if one *really* thinks that a human person – as a human soul – goes to such a great plane of existence, why should one think that the human wants or *needs* a body? Likewise, in response to Thomas More's attack on Luther, William Tyndale pens this response:

And in like maner Paules argument vn to the Corrinthians is nough worth. For when he saith/ if there be no resurreccion/we be of all wretches to the most miserablest. Here we haue no pleasure/but sorrow/care/and oppression. And therfore if we rise not agayne/all our soferinge...is in vayne. Nay Paul/thou are vnlernd: goo to master More and lerne a new waye. We be not most miserable/though we rise not agayne/for oure soules goo to heuen assone as we be deed/and are there in as greate ioye as christ that is risen agayne...If the soules be in heuen in as greate glorie as the angels after youre doctrine/shewe me what cause shulde be of the resurreccion [sic].⁹

With Tyndale's quote, one is presented with an immediate tension between two Church teachings. The first is The Intermediate State and the second is the Doctrine of Resurrection. Tyndale's prose is dripping with sarcasm. Taking his cue from St. Paul's argument in 1 Cor. 15, Tyndale suggests that, if The Intermediate State is a true teaching, Paul cannot possibly be correct in his assessment of human plight *sans* bodily resurrection.

I think that Luther and Tyndale are correct in their assessments. Allow me to present what I take to be two deductive *theological* arguments that go toward justifying this claim: Redundant Resurrection (RR) and Necessary Resurrection (NR):

(RR):

- P₁: If the Intermediate State obtains, then bodily resurrection is superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. (Premise)
- P₂: The Intermediate State obtains. (Widely held Church teaching)
- C₁: The bodily resurrection is superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. (MP from (P₁) and (P₂)).

(NR):

- P₁: If the Intermediate State obtains, then bodily resurrection is superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. (Premise)
- P₃: The bodily resurrection is not superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. (Widely held Church teaching)
- C₂: The Intermediate State does not obtain. (MT from (P₁) and (P₃))

By my lights, (RR) is unsound and (NR) is sound. Notice, though, that they share a first premise, (P₁). So, the arguments turn on the crucial second premises, (P₂) and (P₃) respectively. Of course, one would also need to agree that (P₁) is true. Attempting to defend the first premise is the point of this article. Doing so brings us face to face with a dilemma: bodily resurrection or disembodied Paradise?

As such, I hope to argue for the truth of the conditional claim in (P₁). And, like William Tyndale, I shall use the content and argument of a particular chapter in the Bible,

namely, 1 Corinthians 15, to make the point. This chapter in the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians features a sustained argument for the truth of resurrection. Not only is this argument concerned with the resurrection of Jesus, but it is, as well, an implicit argument for the truth of, at least, the resurrection of all believers, and resurrection *simpliciter*. Simply stated, the argument concerns the *necessity* of bodily resurrection for post-mortem hope. What is more, it seems that a majority of the Christian tradition found its doctrine of resurrection on the argument set up in this passage. However, as the Redundant Resurrection argument shows, if The Intermediate State obtains, Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15 is unsound and the doctrine of resurrection, i.e., the *necessity* of bodily resurrection, is false (hence the (RR) argument's conclusion, bodily resurrection is superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state).

To show this, in [Section II](#), I outline what I take Paul's argument to be in 1 Corinthians 15:12–19 and demonstrate that substance dualism, a metaphysical thesis upon which The Intermediate State rests, if true, not only denies Paul's premises but also his conclusion that Christ's not being bodily resurrected implies the (not merely biological) death of all those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ. Further to [Section II](#), I outline an argument for the truth of the conditional in (P₁). This argument proceeds from the assumed truth of The Intermediate State to the falsity of Paul's conclusion that resurrection is *necessary* for those hoping to be saved from death. To conclude, in [Section III](#), I suggest that the doctrine of resurrection is true and Paul's argument sound, a position I take to be equivalent to (P₃) of (NR): The bodily resurrection is not superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. So, The Intermediate State is a false doctrine. As such, I suggest that if Christians wish to remain faithful to the biblical text and the centrality of bodily resurrection in Christian theology, we must purge our theology of The Intermediate State and its attendant philosophical program, namely, substance dualism. In the process of doing so, I hope to show how a cogent and logical argument, built on the structure of biblical teaching, can inform errant theological doctrines and philosophical positions.

II. If substance dualism is true, then paul's argument is unsound

Let's look again at the two conjuncts of The Intermediate State:

(SD): There is a state of existence following human biological death in which a believing human (e.g., Jones) exists without her body (i.e., as a substantial soul/mind)

and

(PS): There is a state of existence following a human's biological death that is paradisiacal in quality.

Now, I wish to hold with the majority of Christian theologians that, following a human's death, a believing human (at least), at some point, enters a paradisiacal existence. That is to say, I wish to affirm, with the majority of the Christian tradition, that the state of affairs noted in (PS) is *true*. However, as the (RR) argument concludes, if the paradisiacal state following biological death is conceived as *disembodied* and lived *prior* to bodily resurrection, then bodily resurrection is otiose for those in the paradisiacal state. And, it's otiose in two ways: metaphysically and qualitatively. These will be fleshed out anon. Since it is the first premise of the argument(s) that the defender of The Intermediate State will no doubt deny, I will try and demonstrate that this conditional claim is true: if The Intermediate

State obtains, then bodily resurrection is superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. To begin to defend this premise, let's turn to Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15.

In 1 Corinthians 15:12–19, Paul says the following:

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

I take it that a plausible reading of what Paul says here is that the resurrection or non-resurrection of Christ implies something about the post-mortem condition of Christ and of believers in Christ.¹⁰

I will call Paul's argument in these verses: Dead Christ, Dead-in-Christ (DCDiC). And I think it goes something like this:

(DCDiC):

- P₄: Christ's not being bodily resurrected implies Christ's remaining dead.¹¹
 P₅: Christ's remaining dead implies that of all of those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ have perished.
 C₃: Therefore: Christ's not being bodily resurrected implies that all those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ have perished.¹²

If this is Paul's argument (or, minimally, an argument which Paul may recognize from this passage), then I think it's formally valid. Perhaps, though, there is ambiguity with how he uses some of his words. For example, it is not obvious what the difference is between a person's having *fallen asleep* and her having *perished*. Murray J. Harris, for example, argues that those who have 'fallen asleep'

...are unconscious with respect to *our* world of time and space but not to *their* world of spirit: they are 'alive to God' (Luke 20.38 b) or 'with (*meta*) me (Jesus)' (Luke 23.43). They 'live spiritually, as God does' (1 Pet. 4.6), or, in Pauline diction, they are 'with (*pros*) the Lord' (2 Cor. 5.8) 'with (*sun*) Christ' (Phil. 1.23).¹³

So, for Harris, a person who has 'fallen asleep', in the sense intended here, is *really* alive – just not biologically. Similarly, John W. Cooper argues that,

One must not overlook the importance of the sleep metaphor in I Cor.15:18, 20, and 51. For in I Thessalonians this figure most likely refers to the dead "living together with Christ" in the intermediate state, and there is nothing to suggest that Paul had a change of mind between these epistles.¹⁴

So, Harris and Cooper think that those who are 'asleep' are actually *alive* – just alive in another 'place' distinct from our world. This seems to me to be an affirmation of at least one of the two conjuncts in The Intermediate State, viz., (SD): There is a state of existence following human biological death in which a believing human (e.g., Jones) exists without her body (i.e., as a substantial soul/mind). And, to be sure, there does seem to be

something about the ‘fallen asleep’ metaphor that is not identical to ‘having perished’. What is this ‘something’?

Here the language of verse 18 seems instructive; for, whatever else, it seems clear that Paul means ‘fallen asleep’ and ‘perished’ as ways of referring to death. But, if Paul means one’s having ‘fallen asleep’ is one’s being ‘dead’ *identically* to the way one’s having ‘perished’ is one’s being ‘dead,’ then he has asserted a tautology. In other words, he has said nothing more than “those who are dead are dead.” But why think he is speaking tautologically? Rather, I think a charitable reading sees Paul ascribing a *qualitative* difference between two senses of death. Simply put, the sort of death he means by *fallen asleep* is less final than the sort of death he means by *perished*. I think that the particular Greek words he uses, viz., *κοιμηθέντες* for *fallen asleep* and *ἀπόλοντο* for *perished*, the latter of which seems a much more violent sort of word, demonstrates a marked qualitative difference between the two states of death.¹⁵ If Paul does mean this sort of difference, one might plausibly read Paul’s argument to conclude: ‘Christ’s not being bodily raised from the dead implies the finality of the death of those who followed him and hoped to see afterlife.’ In other words, if Christ is not bodily resurrected, then those who passed from this world trusting in Christ are *absolutely* dead.¹⁶

If I am correct in suggesting that Paul intends the reading of this passage in a way logically identical to how I have constructed the argument, then Paul’s argument is deductively valid. But is it sound? The truth-values of Paul’s premises are, of course, open to investigation and, oddly enough, *dubitable* given the philosophical anthropology held by the majority of the Christian tradition: substance dualism. To see why, consider a response to the (DCDiC) argument plausibly offered by a substance dualist. I’ll call this the Substance Dualist Rejoinder (SDR): ‘Thanks for your argument, Paul’ they might say. ‘But here’s a problem. According to substance dualism, a human being does not need a body to be a living human being. So, a human’s not being bodily resurrected does not imply that the human being in question is dead. And, since Jesus is a human being, his not having bodily resurrected says nothing about his being *actually* dead.’ ‘What’s more,’ they continue, ‘if it’s false that Christ’s not being bodily resurrected implies that he’s dead, then there’s no reason to think that his not being resurrected says anything about those who have fallen asleep in Christ. At any rate, it certainly doesn’t imply that they’ve *perished* or are somehow beyond all hope. On substance dualism, after all, non-resurrected Christ is likely very much alive!’

Now, unfortunately, if substance dualism is true, I think the substance dualist’s rejoinder is correct. Because, if substance dualism is true, bodily resurrection *has nothing to do with whether Jesus is alive or not*. Bodily resurrection is, for the human being Jesus (and human beings, generally), metaphysically superfluous. In fact, defenders of substance dualism, by way of The Intermediate State, of whom John Cooper seems the chief, appear to imply exactly this!¹⁷ Thus Cooper:

The intermediate state account, entailing a dualistic anthropology, would generate no Christological difficulty...Since human nature is such that persons can exist temporarily without their bodies, Jesus Christ could have existed between Friday and Sunday without his body and yet have been one person with both a divine and human nature. Lacking a body does not entail lacking a human nature completely.¹⁸

To put Cooper’s words a bit more plainly: there is *no* implication between Jesus’s being biologically ‘dead’ and his being actually – as a human being – dead or alive. What follows is that Jesus’s body being in or out of the grave tells us precisely *nothing* about Jesus’s immediate post-mortem state, thus his bodily resurrection’s metaphysical superfluity.

Such a conclusion runs exactly opposite to what a number of theologians and exegetes might assert. For example, Murray Harris says this:

Without the Resurrection the New Testament loses its soul and the Christian faith its central pillar. Without a risen Christ, the Christian message becomes meaningless and the Christian's faith is futile (1 Cor. 15.14, 17). 'A person cannot give himself to a dead man, nor can he expect anything or receive anything from a dead man', yet the apostolic proclamation called for personal surrender to a man who had died (Acts 10.39,43; 16.31; 20.21; 25.19) and the Christian claimed to have received eternal life from a man who had died (John 10.11, 28).¹⁹

Harris's logic seems pretty simple. If Jesus did not rise from the grave, he remains dead – and not just biologically. This logic seems to sit well with the argument I think Paul's making in 1 Cor. 15. Paul's argument, and its conclusion that Christ's not being resurrected implies that all those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ have perished, *should be true* if it is the case that Jesus's bodily death implies his death as a human being. But, given substance dualism, as the (SDR) shows, *this is precisely false*. If substance dualism is *true* – if it's the way things actually are – then Paul's argument lacks a lot of purchase, if it has any at all. So, Harris's worry, St. Paul's worry, and the worries of other theologians besides seem entirely misplaced, *if substance dualism is true*. But, I take it that these theologians share this worry for a reason: Jesus's remaining not bodily resurrected means something *catastrophic* for Christian faith. So, there seems to be an implicit contradiction between the metaphysics undergirding long-held Christian doctrine and Paul's seemingly explicit teaching. Unfortunately, the tension between Paul's teaching and historically held doctrinal positions gets worse.

To see why there is a further, perhaps more devastating, contradiction between Christian doctrine and St. Paul's argument, consider again the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 32. I take it that the Westminster Divines are saying that the substantial soul of the righteous person (i.e., Christian believer) purportedly goes to a paradisiacal place between the death of her body and the future bodily resurrection. What the *WCF* teaches is an explicit affirmation of The Intermediate State: the thesis that conjoins these two states of affairs:

(SD): There is a state of existence following human biological death in which a believing human (e.g., Jones) exists without her body (i.e., as a substantial soul/mind).

and

(PS): There is a state of existence following a believing human's biological death (e.g., Jones) that is paradisiacal in quality.

The *WCF*'s affirmation of The Intermediate State seems obvious in statements like: “[t]he souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory.”²⁰ This teaching *entails* disembodied existence in Paradise – an idyllic place and state – between bodily death and bodily resurrection.²¹ The same sentiments are echoed in Article 12 [Section II](#) of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

I say these sorts of doctrinal teachings are, if true, potentially devastating to Paul's argument for the necessity of bodily resurrection for post-mortem hope. Why is a doctrine espousing a paradisiacal intermediate state for disembodied souls problematic for Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15? To attempt answering this question, consider the following claim, a claim I'll call Christ's Intermediate State (CIS):

(CIS): If the doctrine of the paradisiacal intermediate state for disembodied human beings is true, then, at biological death, Christ *qua* human being went to Paradise – an idyllic place and state.

This claim seems entirely plausible, assuming the truth of The Intermediate State. Perhaps, though, it is not yet clear how, if true, it might unhinge the argument I say Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 15, the conclusion of which was this: Christ's not being resurrected implies that all of those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ have perished.²² To demonstrate the calamity for Paul's argument (or, at any rate, my presentation of Paul's argument) given the truth of the (CIS) claim, we need to think about how one should expect the 1 Cor. 15 argument to proceed if one believes (CIS). Recall the (DCDiC) argument:

(DCDiC):

- P₄: Christ's not being bodily resurrected implies Christ's remaining dead.
- P₅: Christ's remaining dead implies that of all of those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ have perished.
- C₃: Therefore: Christ's not being bodily resurrected implies that all those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ have perished.

But, if a Christian affirms, with The Intermediate State, that disembodied Paradise follows any righteous person's death, then what we should have expected Paul to argue is actually Christ in Paradise, Paradise in Christ (CiPPiC):

- P₄*: Christ's not being bodily resurrected implies his remaining as a disembodied human being in Paradise – an idyllic place and state.
- P₅*: Christ's remaining as a disembodied human being in Paradise implies that all of those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ remain in Paradise – an idyllic place and state.
- C₃*: Therefore: Christ's not being bodily resurrected implies that all of those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ remain in Paradise – an idyllic place and state.

The first premise of this argument certainly *seems* true, if it is the case that disembodied humans go to Paradise following bodily death and before bodily resurrection. The Intermediate State affirms that disembodied human beings do just this. Further, the second premise seems true if, as Paul indicates, the fate of Christ and his followers are linked; that is, if it is true that the fate of the one (the followers) depends on the fate of the other (Jesus). And, the conclusion follows immediately.

But what about the (CIS) claim? After all, for the Christ in Paradise, Paradise-in-Christ argument to get off the ground, (CIS) has to be true. But (CIS) is contentious. Consider it again:

(CIS): If the doctrine of the paradisiacal intermediate state for disembodied human beings is true, then, at biological death, Christ *qua* human being went to Paradise – an idyllic place and state.

Does this assume too much? It seems to assume that Jesus is righteous, if Paradise is, indeed, reserved for the righteous. Jesus' assumed righteousness might be questionable; at least, it might be questionable when considered divorced from his being resurrected. After all, according to most exegetes and theologians, this is one of Paul's primary points: if

Christ did not resurrect, then his claims regarding his identity, righteousness, etc. are unfounded. To wit, T. F. Torrance:

In other words, it is in the resurrection of Jesus Christ that all that God had to say about our forgiveness, and all that Jesus had said about our forgiveness, became actualized in the same sphere of reality as that to which we belong. The word of pardon was fully enacted in our existence – that is why, once more, St. Paul could say that if Jesus Christ is not risen from the dead, then we are still in our sins, unforgiven and unshriven.²³

What Torrance seems to mean here is that, if Jesus has not been resurrected, he remains *dead* and, with him, the hope of forgiveness and justification. This elton echoes this sentiment by saying, ‘that without the resurrection of Christ, Christ’s death alone has no atoning, redemptive, or liberating effect in relation to human sin.’²⁴ Indeed, claims Thiselton, Jesus’ vindication *as righteous* is demonstrated through, and not apart from, his bodily resurrection. The implied point here seems to be this: if Jesus is not resurrected, he is not righteous. The dogmatic Christian documents like *WCF* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, though, indicate that *only* the *righteous* go to disembodied Paradise. So, perhaps the (CIS) claim is false – it assumes Christ’s righteousness *apart from* being validated by his bodily resurrection.

Now, Intermediate State defender, Cooper, thinks that it is perfectly consistent with Christian theology to assume that Jesus *qua* human existed as a disembodied human being (i.e., soul) in a paradisiacal intermediate state prior to his resurrection. Recall his quote previously cited:

The intermediate state account, entailing a dualistic anthropology, would generate no Christological difficulty. In fact it would solve this problem since human nature is such that persons can exist temporarily without their bodies, Jesus Christ could have existed between Friday and Sunday without his body and yet have been one person with both a divine and a human nature. Lacking a body does not entail lacking a human nature completely.²⁵

While it is true that Cooper’s statement nowhere explicitly states that Christ, while in the intermediate state, is in Paradise, Cooper, just earlier in the same monograph, denies the so-called “harrowing of Hell” (the sometimes affirmed teaching that Christ, upon death, went, as a soul, to free the faithful souls from the shackles of Hell or *limbus patrum*).²⁶ So, it is plausible to think that Cooper might agree with the (CIS).

Matthew Levering, a Roman Catholic theologian, offers a similar understanding of Christ’s post-mortem existence:

As many biblical scholars point out, the eschatology of both Second-Temple Judaism and early Christianity affirmed the existence of a conscious intermediate state in which the dead await resurrection. When Jesus died, then, he entered this intermediate state. Jesus’ resurrection cannot be separated from his solidarity *as a dead man* with those whom Hebrews calls “the great cloud of witness” (Heb 12:1)...Jesus’ entrance into the intermediate state inaugurates the liberation of the holy Israelites who were there waiting for him.²⁷

Further to this, Levering notes that ‘[b]ecause of his faith, the good thief joins Christ in the intermediate spiritual paradise...this is what Jesus means by telling the good thief, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise’ (Luke 23:43).’²⁸ But, one wonders where, if Torrance, Thiselton, et al. are correct concerning the vindictory sign of Christ’s righteous status (i.e., the bodily resurrection), theologians like Cooper,

Levering, and others find the warrant to believe Christ inhabited the abode of the 'righteous' *prior to bodily resurrection*.²⁹ This seems to me an objection that neither Cooper, nor any other intermediate state defender, has addressed. And, it seems to me an important objection.

This objection is important because the intermediate state is not causally related to bodily resurrection in the sense that bodily resurrection causes the paradisiacal disembodied intermediate state. It is not through resurrection that one is pronounced righteous and *then* sent to a disembodied Paradise. Only one person, according to Christian theology, has ever been resurrected: Jesus Christ. So, all those who have not been resurrected, yet are purported to be in Paradise, have not been vindicated through their own resurrections. If The Intermediate State obtains, they are, at least in part, pronounced as vindicated by having been given a place in the disembodied Paradise.³⁰ Moreover, as some stories go, The Intermediate State exists *prior to* Jesus' resurrection (e.g., purportedly, OT saints and martyrs exist/live there). So, if the doctrine of The Intermediate State is true, what does a bodily resurrection *do* for Jesus that a paradisiacal intermediate state could not? Levering says this: 'Sheol cannot hold the righteous; God rescues from Sheol. Jesus's resurrection is necessary for faith in God because Israel's God does not abandon his righteous to Sheol, and Jesus is supremely righteous'.³¹ But, given that Levering agrees that Jesus went to Paradise *qua* human *prior* to resurrection, Levering's reasoning for the *necessity* of Jesus's resurrection seems obviously false. For, if Paradise is reserved for the righteous, and Jesus went there following his bodily death and *before* his bodily resurrection, then Christ, *pre-resurrection*, has already been vindicated – he is alive, well, pronounced righteous, and living in a nigh perfect existence – all without resurrection. But, if the claim that Jesus's bodily resurrection is the action *through which* he is vindicated, then a solution to our problem becomes clear: Jesus is *not* vindicated prior to resurrection (i.e., he is not pronounced righteous and benefitting from all of the privileges that come along with that pronouncement); rather, he is, *qua* human, *dead* prior to resurrection. Here I want to affirm with I. Howard Marshall that, in Christ's case, to conquer death through resurrection is to be vindicated, and to be vindicated is to conquer death through resurrection.³² Such a solution is at odds with the widely held teaching of The Intermediate State and, in particular, its implied substance dualism. The Intermediate State can only suggest that Jesus's body is dead, but not Jesus *himself qua human*. I count this as a strong reason to reject The Intermediate State.

If it is true that Christ, *qua* human being, went to Paradise following his biological death and if it is true that Christ's fate and his followers' fates are linked, then it seems like Christ's not being resurrected implies that all of those who have 'fallen asleep' in Christ remain in Paradise – an idyllic place and state. This is exactly what the Christ in Paradise, Paradise-in-Christ argument says. And, with this sort of conclusion, there is a further consequence. Let's call the argument that demonstrates this consequence 'Paradisiacal Hope' (PH):

- P₆: Going as a disembodied human being to Paradise, at the death of one's body, implies not being dead in one's sins (nor dead at all).
- P₇: Going as a disembodied human being to Paradise, at the death of one's body, implies one's having hope beyond this life (not hope in this life only).
- P₈: Going as a disembodied human being to Paradise, at the death of one's body, implies one's not being the object of pity.
- C₄: Therefore: Going as a disembodied human being to Paradise, at the death of one's body, implies not being dead in one's sins, one's having hope beyond this life, and one's not being the object of pity.

The conclusion of this argument, unfortunately for Paul, cuts the legs out from under his argument in 1 Cor. 15. After all, Paul seems to argue that if Christ's is not bodily resurrected, then Christians are a soteriologically, eschatologically, and otherwise pitiable lot (cf. v. 19). But the conclusion of the Paradisiacal Hope argument, assuming the truth of The Intermediate State as it does, explicitly contradicts such a premise. In other words, if, at biological death, one goes as a disembodied human being to Paradise, one is not dead, let alone dead in her sins, neither is one eschatologically hopeless, nor the proper object of pity. If The Intermediate State is a true teaching, Paul is wrong.

A disembodied paradisiacal intermediate state renders resurrection qualitatively and metaphysically unnecessary and unimportant. Here is how. I'll call the following claim 'Superfluous Resurrection' (SR):

(SR): If the doctrine of the paradisiacal intermediate state is true, then the bodily resurrection is not the only hope of not being dead in one's sins, one's having hope beyond this life, and one's not being the object of pity.

If bodily resurrection is not the only hope of post-mortem life, it is not necessary for post-mortem life. Thus, resurrection is metaphysically superfluous for post-mortem life. But why think, as (SR) suggests, that The Intermediate State implies anything like the *qualitative* superfluity of bodily resurrection? After all, one might argue that bodily resurrection will bring with it important qualitative improvements to the life of a disembodied believer. Could it not be the case that, as the Westminster Divines put it, the disembodied souls of the righteous are '...waiting for the full redemption of their bodies...'?³³ In response, I think it suffices to say that I am not at all sure what one might mean by saying that the righteous disembodied are both *alive* in Paradise, an idyllic place and state, and that their position would be qualitatively *improved* by bodily resurrection to such a degree that it warrants the sort of impetus Paul seems to place on it.³⁴ And this is just to reflect precisely the point that Tyndale makes at the beginning of the paper. That is to say, it may be that The Intermediate State obtains and bodily resurrection obtains; but, it seems to follow from the arguments I have presented that, if there is such a thing as a disembodied paradisiacal intermediate state, then, at minimum, not only is the conclusion to Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15:12–19 wrong, but the bodily resurrection of those in Paradise is qualitatively and metaphysically superfluous.

III. What do we do now?

Recall that the superfluity of bodily resurrection for those in Paradise is exactly the conclusion of the (RR) argument I offer at the outset of this article:

- P₁: If The Intermediate State obtains, then bodily resurrection is superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. (Premise)
- P₂: The Intermediate State obtains. (Widely held Church teaching)
- C₁: The bodily resurrection is superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. (MP from (P₁) and (P₂))

I submit that this conclusion is undesirable for Christian doctrine and any kind of biblically grounded theology. Further, given what I take to be Paul's argument and that I assume the truthfulness of Paul's conclusions vis-à-vis resurrection, I assume that *any* Redundant Resurrection argument *must* be unsound. And, from the arguments I've given

here, its being unsound is not due to its first premise, but its second. So, we must reject The Intermediate State. Moreover, we should reject the metaphysics it entails, viz., substance dualism, because it is either false (conflicting as it does with Paul's argument) or unmotivated for Christian theologians (because there's no The Intermediate State). Instead, Christian theologians should affirm the Necessary Resurrection argument:

(NR):

- P₁: If the Intermediate State obtains, then bodily resurrection is superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. (Premise)
 P₃: The bodily resurrection is not superfluous for those in the paradisiacal state. (Widely held Church teaching)
 C₂: The Intermediate State does not obtain. (MT from (P₁) and (P₃))

At this point, I cannot agree more with N. T. Wright than when he says:

To speak, as many Christians have done, of the body dying, and the soul going marching on, is not only a travesty of what Paul says. It has encouraged many to suppose that the victory over death is the escape of the soul from the dead body. That is a dangerous lie. It is resurrection that is the defeat of death...Let us not collude with the enemy.³⁵

I propose we heed Wright's warning. In so doing, the task facing theologians and exegetes who affirm that a paradisiacal existence follows *at some point* after a human's biological death is now clear: figure out a way to talk about paradisiacal post-mortem existence *only* in the context of eschatological bodily resurrection.

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Notes

1. Juhász, "Resurrection or Immortality of the Soul?" 523.
2. From now on, The Intermediate State denotes the conjunction of (SD) and (PS) *and both conjuncts are true*. As to my use of the word 'doctrine', I simply mean it in the sense of 'teaching', not in the sense that the word denotes a position advocated in one of the ecumenical conciliar statements or creeds. To this end, John Cooper, The Intermediate State's most prominent Christian defender, notes: 'Most traditional Christians would affirm something like Answer 57 of the *Heidelberg Catechism*: 'Not only my soul will be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head, but even my flesh, raised by the power of Christ, will be reunited with my soul and made like Christ's glorious body' and '[t]raditional views of the afterlife necessarily assume a dualistic anthropology...If dualism is mistaken, then so is the belief that we exist with Christ between death and resurrection.' Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 105. For Roman Catholics, in his *Benedictus Deus* of 1336, Pope Benedict XII taught a view consistent with The Intermediate State. See: Phan, "Roman Catholic Theology," 216. Additionally, it's useful to note that an Intermediate State position relevantly like the one I give here (and further explained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* – cited just below) is formalized at the Fifth Lateran Council of 1513. Eastern Orthodox Christians also seem to hold a position consistent with The Intermediate State; they hold that on the fortieth day of a soul's release from its body the soul can, depending on a judgment, go to Paradise: 'On the fortieth day, the soul undergoes its particular judgment and then is assigned to an intermediate state, a state of waiting in Paradise or Hades...' Louth, "Eastern Orthodox Eschatology," 240.

It is also important to note, here, that an intermediate state conception in which the dead *only* exist in a purgatorial or unconscious suspended state is not what I have in mind. I don't have these in mind because most traditions that affirm purgatorial states still affirm that at least *some* of the dead go immediately to Paradise. Moreover, most affirm that after purgation, a soul can and does go to Paradise/Heaven. Even Jerry Walls, who argues for a purgatorial state, affirms The Intermediate State for at least some biologically dead human beings; he even affirms it as a position to which the New Testament points. Walls, "Heaven," 399–412. Traditions that deny conscious awareness in the time between biological death and bodily resurrection hold to what might be called (and has been) 'soul sleep'. A paper taking on this position would be a whole other venture. So, again, I'm using The Intermediate State as a very specific proper noun. Those who hold that at least some biologically dead humans are in a paradisiacal (i.e., qualitatively excellent) intermediate state (which, again, takes up the majority position in Christian theology) should find the following arguments relevant, even if not persuasive. For information on the historical use of the term 'Paradise' in Christian theology, see note 21.

3. Baker and Goetz, *The Soul Hypothesis*, 2.
4. For a recent argument for this, see: Goetz, "Is N.T. Wright Right?" 83–191. I say this, but it is right to acknowledge that not everyone in the theological discussion concerning the resurrection and The Intermediate State has always meant the same thing by 'body', 'soul', and the like (Tertullian, for example, would disagree with Aquinas who would, in turn, disagree with Descartes' well-known position on in what a soul consists). I make no specific claims here in that regard. All I need for the following arguments is that there is, *at least*, a metaphysical and qualitative distinction between being bodily resurrected and being in the not-yet-resurrected Intermediate State – *sans* body. Moreover, that those who hold to the disembodied existence of persons following biological death agree with (1) and (2) above and that there is a metaphysical distinction between one's body and one's soul. I do, though, think that most of the Christian tradition has in mind a 'glorified' body post-resurrection; however, the quality of 'glorified' and 'embodied' works out. Note, also, that Aquinas's views on intermediate existence seem to me ruled out by (SD). But, discussing Aquinas's view seems an entirely other discussion. For more on the 'glorified' resurrection body, see Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 546; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1210 and Farrow, "Resurrection and Immortality," 216. For Tertullian's view on the soul see, for example: Tertullian, "A Treatise on the Soul." For Aquinas, see Aquinas, *The Soul*, 188–282, Art. XV – XXI.
5. "The Confession of Faith," 98.
6. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 234. My emphasis. My insert. Thus the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* states: 'Acc[ording] to Catholic doctrine, these are the souls who, having died in a state of grace...have passed into heaven, where they enjoy *perfect* bliss... these souls still await reunion with their bodies at the general resurrection of the dead, after which both body and soul together will enjoy the life of heaven eternally.' Cross, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 613–614. Note here that Catholic Theologian, Peter Phan, says:

[T]he article "I believe in Life Everlasting," the CCC deals with six last things: (1) the particular judgment ("Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven – through purification, or immediately – or immediate and everlasting damnation" [no.1022]); (2) heaven ("the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness" [no. 1024]);...(4) hell...(5) the last judgment ("the Last Judgment will reveal even to its further consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life" [no. 1039]; and (6) the new heaven and new earth ("the final realization of the unity of the human race" [no. 1045], "the profound destiny of material world and man" [no. 1046]. Phan, "Roman Catholic Theology," 220. His inserts

This outline is important because it details the ways in which, and this is key, the immediate entrance into the 'blessedness of heaven' in point (1) is a separate event from point (6) what seems to be the time of the general resurrection and the revealing of the new heaven and earth. So, 'heaven' in Article 12 Section II of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (cited above) is precisely *about* the disembodied intermediate state of points (1) and (2) in Phan's outline.

7. Thanks to Carlton Wynne for guidance on this language in personal discussion.
8. Luther, "Table Talk," 446.
9. Tyndale, "Answers vnto Sir Thomas More," 118.
10. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1216ff; Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia*, 41ff.
11. Given Christian theism, since it turns out that Jesus Christ is identical to God the Son, Christ's 'being dead' can only ever apply *qua* human being. However, the logic of this (DCDiC) argument need not make this explicit since, if C₃ obtains, then, as St. Paul kindly notes in 1 Corinthians 15:14-15a and 17-19, Christian theism is false.
12. It is my contention that the argument in verses 12 to 19 is logically equivalent to (DCDiC). That said, Holleman argues that Paul's argument is "quasi-logical" in that the rhetorical elements take the lead over the logical. Says Holleman:

This premise ['if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised.'] is embedded in rhetoric. By showing the consequences of not accepting this premise Paul tries to force the premise upon the Corinthians. The denial of the premise would mean that Paul's message is false (vv. 14, 15); that the faith of the Corinthians is empty and ineffective (vv. 14, 17); moreover, that there is no hope at all of life after death (vv. 18 - 19). These consequences are not related to the premise in any formal logical way; they simply appeal to the common sense of the Corinthian Christians. Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia*, 42.

Now, on the one hand, Holleman is correct - Paul's emphasis on the massive theological implications riding on the prospect of the conditional's truth is a bit of rhetoric. However, the logic of (DCDiC) still seems implied. The massive rhetorical device - the plea to the emotional gravity - only has any purchase *if* the logic of (DCDiC) is included in Paul's argument and is valid.

13. Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 135.
14. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 140.
15. *ἀπόλωτο* is the third-person aorist middle indicative of *ἀπόλλυμι*, which means variously 'I ruin', 'I destroy'. So, conjugated the way it is in v. 18, it could just as well read 'have been/were destroyed', 'were ruined', 'were lost'. See the next note. Thus I say it is a much more 'violent' sort of word than *κοιμάω* (out of which we get *κοιμηθέντες*), which seems to be a euphemism for death, hence: 'fallen asleep'.
16. Anthony Thiselton translates this phrase this way: 'those who were laid to sleep in Christ are lost for good.' He goes on to add: "but Paul has in mind the emptiness and waste of *irretrievable loss...utterly* lost, or, above, lost for good. They will never 'awake' from sleep." Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1214 and 1221 respectively.
17. I am unaware of *any* text dealing with a Christian theological/philosophical defense of substance dualism that does not reference Cooper's book as something like the 'best' defense on offer. Joel Green notes that the contemporary literature is riddled with mistakes due, in part, to an overdependence on Cooper's material. Green, "Eschatology and the Nature of Humans," 44 note 34.
18. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 132. Stephen Davis lists this as the "traditional view". Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 88. See also: Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death*, 24.
19. Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 135.
20. "The Confession of Faith," 98.
21. As I say in a previous note, the Westminster Divines use Luke 23:43 to buttress this claim. Also, see McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, 40 and especially p. 43 regarding the biblical use of 'Paradise' and its reception through church history. Though the word has been used with *some* variation, its being understood as an idyllic place and state is, from its earliest use, quite common. At any rate, the language of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* does not leave much room for doubt about what the Westminster Divines thought about the word. Describing Paradise as a place in which a human person, having been made perfect, beholds the face of God in light and glory seems quite obviously to be one of the better (if not *the* best) plane of existence. The same is true of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. And in this respect, the catechism stays just in line with Augustine, "Sermon 232," 27 for he, too, taught that, according to Luke 23:43, the believing dead go immediately to a disembodied Paradise.
22. C₃ in (DCDiC).

23. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, 62.
24. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1220.
25. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 132.
26. *Ibid.*, 130–131.
27. Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death*, 15–16. Here the ‘inauguration’ language plays off the ‘harrowing of hell’ scenario in which Jesus frees the righteous captives and opens the doors of Paradise. But, the important point is this: Jesus enters Paradise *before* bodily resurrection. If this is true, his vindication and righteousness – if the *WCF* and *CCC* statements about the necessary soteriological condition of those who enter Paradise is to be believed – is likewise prior to his bodily resurrection.
28. Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death: Resurrection*, 24.
29. ‘...had Jesus not actually been resurrected, then a crucified Messiah whose death seemingly changed nothing could hardly have been acclaimed by Jews as victorious over evil and as inaugurating the kingdom’. *Ibid.*, 32.
30. Though, if The Intermediate State thesis is correct, I argue that the disembodied saints have been vindicated *in full*. There is simply nothing meaningful left for bodily resurrection to accomplish. See my following arguments.
31. Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death*, 37.
32. Marshall, *Aspects of the Atonement*, 70.
33. “The Confession of Faith,” 98.
34. As C_6 in the Paradisiacal Hope argument puts it, going to Paradise implies not being the object of anyone’s pity. Who rightly pities a person in Paradise? In 1 Corinthians 15:12–19, though, Paul seems to paint an ugly picture for the dead *sans* resurrection. Even if one takes a more qualitatively minimal account of disembodied Paradise, like, for example, N. T. Wright, it is hard to see how one could be, in his words, in “happy rest” *and* the proper object of pity or the subject of any of the other horrible predicates Paul rhetorically applies to those falsely hoping in bodily resurrection. As minimal as Wright’s understanding of ‘heaven’ hopes to be, though, he suggests this: ‘...it is a state in which the dead are held firmly within the conscious love of God and the conscious presence of Jesus Christ while they await [resurrection]. There is no reason why this state should not be called heaven...’ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 172. My insert.
35. Wright, “Mind, Spirit, Soul and Body,” 10.

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