

# The Ontology of Time and Hope in the Resurrection

A Critical Examination of Eschatological Presentism

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## Abstract

In this article I shall briefly describe the Christian hope in resurrection. I will explain that certain conditions must be in place in order for this hope to be realized. These are conditions about the ontology of time and personal identity over time. After articulating these conditions, I will examine a recent proposal called eschatological presentism, and see how it fares with The Problem of No Afterlife.

## §1. Hope and the Standard Christian Story

C.S. Lewis' classic *Mere Christianity* works from the premise that there is a basic Christian story. This Christian story is stripped of various bells and whistles that different theological systems will wish to affirm, but contains a core that ought to be able to be agreed upon by all Christian theological systems. After devoting several years to the study of Christian theology, I sometimes find myself at a loss to say what the standard Christian story ought to be. Some theologians will insist that certain obscure medieval doctrines are essential to the story. Others will argue that different aspects of the ecumenical creeds are not only unbiblical, but also unnecessary to the standard Christian story. Basically, Christian theologians disagree on many things. In full awareness of this, I shall hazard an attempt at telling the standard Christian story. It goes something like this:



There eternally exists a triune God. From all eternity, this God has existed alone. This God freely decided to create a universe for a particular purpose. Part of this purpose includes fulfilling the intent to enter into everlasting friendship with human persons, who are immaterial souls with physical bodies. In order for the friendship to be genuine, God ensured that human persons have rationality and freedom. These human persons rebelled against God, but God had anticipated this, and already had a plan to ensure that His purposes for creation would come to fruition. Part of this plan involved establishing covenants with particular groups of humans, as well as sending prophets to teach the people the ways of the Lord. The most dramatic part of this plan involved one of the divine persons becoming incarnate in human flesh in order to establish solidarity with humanity, as well as redemption. The reality of death might seem to go against God's intent for everlasting friendship, but God has accounted for this by offering an afterlife that comes in two stages. The first stage is called the intermediate state. This is where a soul goes after it undergoes bodily death. The soul resides in the intermediate state until the second stage of the afterlife occurs. The second stage is the general resurrection of the dead in which all human persons are given new bodies, judged by God, and given everlasting life. At that point, sin and death shall be no more for God has completely defeated evil.

Notice that the standard story refers to various Christian doctrines. It contains the basic claims about the doctrines of God, creation, providence, anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology. I have tried to keep the standard story as generic as possible in order to allow different theological systems to add whatever details they would like. Allow me to point out some examples of how one might add to the content of the story, depending on one's own theological beliefs about these different doctrines.

With regards to the doctrines of God and creation, I have stated that the triune God exists from all eternity, and that God creates a universe for a purpose. This eternity could be timeless or temporal, depending on one's theological commitments. This doctrine of the Trinity could be a social model, a Latin model, or even some kind of Arian model. I have also not specified what God's ultimate purpose is for creating the universe. I have merely stated that part of the plan involves entering into everlasting friendship with creatures. God's ultimate plan might be for His own glory, or to increase value, or something else. Again, one can add to the story according to one's own theological proclivities.

Another key component of the standard Christian story involves God's plan for ensuring that the created universe satisfies God's purposes. This refers to the doctrine of providence. I have left the standard Christian story generic enough so that many different models of providence can be added on to it. Some views offer a very meticulous level of providence where God pre-ordains every detail of history, whereas others offer a more general providence where God sets basic goals for creation and guides history accordingly.

A further key factor of the story that can be extended is the final judgment or eschatology. I have merely stated that there is a final judgment and everlasting life. I said nothing about the quality of this everlasting life. If one believes in a doctrine of hell on which the damned suffer eternal conscious torment, one can say that the quality of this everlasting life will not be pleasant for certain individuals. If one affirms universal salvation, one will say that the quality of this everlasting life is going to be pretty great for everyone involved. Again, additions to the standard story can be made according to one's theological system of beliefs.

Thus far I have not explicitly mentioned hope, but I have stated several themes that ought to be sources of hope for Christians. God's goal of everlasting friendship with humans, and His providential plan to achieve that goal is a source of hope for the Christian. Christian believers often say that they look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and a life in perfect harmony with God and creation. That is certainly something to be hopeful about. However, I believe that certain philosophical positions about the nature of time and human nature must be true in order for this hope to be possible.

One will notice that the standard story has certain commitments that might not seem standard. For example, I state that human persons are souls with bodies, and that resurrection occurs after the intermediate state. This is the majority view throughout Church history.<sup>1</sup> However, there are theologians who deny that human persons are souls with bodies, and who deny the intermediate state. These theologians openly acknowledge that they are arguing against fairly standard Christian claims.<sup>2</sup> In which case, they are not extending the standard story, but rather are amending the standard Christian story. In labelling these as amendments, I am not saying that these theological beliefs are mistaken. Theologians in every generation have made amendments they deemed necessary. There are interesting reasons for making different amendments to the standard story. In second half of this paper, I will consider one example of such an amendment from James T. Turner. To understand Turner's position and my critiques, I need to first discuss various issues related to time and human nature.

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<sup>1</sup> Farris, "Christianity."

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Turner, *Resurrection of the Dead*.

## §2. Time and Human Nature

Turner says that there are three theological affirmations within the standard story that most Christians affirm. He states them as follows.

TA1: That bodily resurrection is not a superfluous hope of afterlife.

TA2: There is immediate post-mortem existence in Paradise.

TA3: There is numerical identity between pre-mortem and post-resurrection human beings.<sup>3</sup>

In this section, I will argue for some philosophical conditions which need to be true in order for TA1, TA2, and TA3 to obtain. The main issue is a human person's numerical identity over time. In particular, an individual's identity over the stretch of time that spans from death to resurrection. This raises several important questions about philosophical anthropology, personal persistence over time, and temporal ontology.

Philosophical anthropology focuses on the metaphysical question "what is a human person?" For the purposes of this essay, I assume that a person is a center of consciousness that is capable of being self-aware—i.e. a thing with a first-person perspective.<sup>4</sup> A *human* person is a person that is appropriately related to a human organism or body. What is that appropriate relationship to a human body? The view that I have stated in the standard Christian story is substance dualism. On substance dualism, a human person is a soul with a body.<sup>5</sup> A person is identical to an immaterial substance (a mind) that has the capacity to think, feel, and act. The appropriate relationship that one has to a human body that makes one a human person is to be understood in terms of satisfying various conditions for being embodied.<sup>6</sup>

The next two issues to discuss are personal persistence over time and the ontology of time. The questions that focus debates here are, "how do objects persist from one moment to the next?" and, "what moments of time exist?" I will start with the ontology of time.

The two most popular views on the ontology of time are presentism and eternalism. A moment of time is the way things are but could be subsequently otherwise. A moment is *when* events happen or occur. Moments can be either abstract or concrete. This is because there are many possible moments that can be successively ordered into coherent timelines. These possible moments are abstract objects that God can consider actualizing or make concrete if God so

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<sup>3</sup> Turner, *Resurrection of the Dead*, 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Lowe, "The Probable Simplicity of Personal Identity," 144.

<sup>5</sup> For recent defenses of substance dualism, see Swinburne, *Mind, Body, and Free Will*, and Goetz and Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul*.

<sup>6</sup> For details on the conditions for embodiment see, Mullins, "Physicalist Christology and the Two Sons Worry."

chooses. As some theologians understand things, God is able to freely choose to create a presentist ontology of time or an eternalist ontology of time. Say God decides to bring about a timeline with a presentist ontology. What would that look like? Presentism says that only the present moment of time exists as concrete or actual. Past moments are no longer actual, and future moments are not yet actual. On this view, it would be false to say that all moments of time are co-eternal with God in the sense of concrete moments. This is because only the present moment of time can co-exist with God. God cannot co-exist with non-existent things. Now imagine that God decides to bring about a timeline with an eternalist ontology of time. What would that look like? Eternalism says that all of the moments of the timeline are concrete/actual and are successively ordered in earlier-than and later-than relations. On this view, one can say that all moments of time are co-eternal with God. In fact, on this view, there is no state of affairs where God exists without the created universe and the entire concrete timeline. As I have explained in *The End of the Timeless God*, the Christian tradition overwhelmingly affirmed a presentist ontology of time. It is only in more recent years that theologians and philosophers have adopted eternalism.<sup>7</sup>

Next, consider the issue of personal persistence over time. The first view is called endurantism, and it has historically been affirmed alongside presentism. Endurantism says that objects persist through time by existing as a whole, or all at once, at whatever times they exist. Numerically one and the same object exists at each time that it exists, and it does not have parts at other times. To illustrate endurantism, consider a woman named Morag at age 2 and Morag at age 25. What makes it the case that the Morag at age 2 is the same person as the Morag at age 25? The endurantist will say that nothing makes them the same person. This is because the endurantist affirms something called the simple theory of personal identity. On the simple view, there are no non-trivial or non-circular conditions for personal identity over time.<sup>8</sup> This is because personal identity is a primitive notion that is not subject to a deeper analysis.<sup>9</sup> The numerically one person that is Morag simply is identical to herself. The numerically one person that is Morag simply does persist from one moment to the next. Endurantism and substance dualism have a nice fit with TA3 because TA3 demands numerical identity over time. As I have argued in *The End of the Timeless God*, endurantism has been the traditional view. In fact, it is assumed in arguments for the claim that the timeless God exists as a whole or all at once in a timeless present that lacks a before and after.

That is endurantism, but it is not the only view of personal persistence over time. The other main view is called four-dimensionalism, which is the doctrine of temporal parts.<sup>10</sup> Four-dimensionalism is typically combined with an eternalist ontology of time. Instead of numerically one object

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<sup>7</sup> Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God*, chapters 4 and 6.

<sup>8</sup> Noonan, *Personal Identity*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Swinburne, "Personal Identity."

<sup>10</sup> Rea, "Four-Dimensionalism," 247.

persisting through time, four-dimensionalism says that objects are spread out over time by having different temporal parts located at each time. Four-dimensionalists will often invoke a spatial analogy to help people understand the claim that is being made here. Objects have spatial parts that are extended throughout the three dimensions of space. For instance, my body is currently spread throughout a particular region of space. I have parts at different places in this spatial region. My feet are on the ground, my hands are on my desk, and so on. In a similar way, the four-dimensionalist says that objects have temporal parts that are extended throughout time, or the fourth-dimension.<sup>11</sup>

To complicate matters a bit, four-dimensionalism can come in two different forms: perdurantism and stage theory.<sup>12</sup> My main interest is in stage theory because it is the most popular form today, as it is said to solve various problems that perdurantism cannot.<sup>13</sup> Each form shares the same underlying story, but differs over what counts as the ordinary object. I start with the underlying story of four-dimensionalism.

The four-dimensionalist says that the entire world is a collection of numerically distinct temporal parts that exist at numerically distinct moments of time. When thinking about how reality hangs together, four-dimensionalists commonly affirm *metaphysical universalism*. Metaphysical universalism is the view that any collection of objects whatsoever can form an object. Yet, four-dimensionalists will say that this is a separate issue from what composes a particular set of temporal parts to form the ordinary objects that we are concerned with like human persons.<sup>14</sup>

The four-dimensionalism in view here is not interested in just any old temporal part. They are interested in temporal parts that have a first-person perspective. These are called person stages. Person stages, like temporal parts in general, are as fine-grained as instants and possible change, so there are many numerically distinct person stages that exist in the world. When we consider a person like Morag, there are in fact many numerically distinct Morags, each of which exists at a different moment of time. At this point, the four-dimensionalist has a particular question that they wish to answer. What makes a particular collection of Morag person stages the *same* Morag? The four-dimensionalist has a complicated story to tell here in order to answer this question. The four-dimensionalist rejects the simple view of personal identity because they reject the endurantist understanding of numerical identity over time. In other words, they deny that ordinary objects can survive change and persist to a different moment of time.<sup>15</sup> Hence the *sameness* in view here is not the endurantist's numerical identity.

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<sup>11</sup> Haslanger, "Persistence Through Time, 318.

<sup>12</sup> Kaiserman, "Stage Theory," 215-216.

<sup>13</sup> For a deeper discussion see Hawley, *How Things Persist*, and Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*.

<sup>14</sup> Curtis and Robson, *A Critical Introduction to the Metaphysics of Time*, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Tallant, *Metaphysics*, 168.

On four-dimensionalism, there is the numerically distinct temporal part, or person stage, that is Morag at age 2. There is also a numerically distinct person stage that is Morag at age 25. According to stage theory, each person stage is, in fact, a numerically distinct person named Morag.<sup>16</sup> Hence, what makes the two Morags the same person is not a matter of numerical identity, but rather something that explains their continuity in a way that makes the two Morags temporal counterparts. In this regard, the four-dimensionalist adopts something called a complex view of personal identity over time. On the complex view, there are substantive conditions for personal identity over time.<sup>17</sup> The complex view says that personal identity can be explained in non-personal or sub-personal terms in order to create some kind of continuity relations between numerically distinct person stages. These continuity relations are sometimes referred to as the gen-identity relation in order to emphasize the fact that this is not numerical identity.<sup>18</sup> What the complex theorist says is that a person persists over time is nothing more than some other, non-identity facts about a particular collection of person stages. This is generally spelled out in either biological or psychological terms, but sometimes both.<sup>19</sup> I will focus on psychological continuity.

On the psychological approach, what makes one Morag person stage continuous with her later temporal counterpart is the fact that she is psychologically continuous with the later Morag person stage.<sup>20</sup> The two numerically distinct person stages share enough of the same psychology (memory, character traits, etc.) to count as the same person.<sup>21</sup> Not just any kind of psychological continuity will do the trick. There has to be what is called an immanent causal relation that connects the person stages. An immanent causal relation obtains when one person stage causes a temporal counterpart at the next instant in time to have the relevant psychological states.<sup>22</sup> This immanent causal relation rejects any sort of gap in time between distinct person stages in order to secure a tight personal continuity relation. The 2 year old Morag stage is the same person as the 25 year old Morag stage because they are psychologically continuous with one another. Further, there is an immanent causal relation between the different Morag stages. The earlier Morag stage passes on her psychological states to the Morag stage at the next instant. This Morag stage passes on her psychological states to the Morag stage at the instant after that, who in turn passes on her psychological states to the next Morag stage, and so on until we reach the 25 year old Morag stage. Thus, according to the four-dimensionalist, making the Morag temporal counterparts the “same” Morag.

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<sup>16</sup> Kaiserman, “Stage Theory,” 217.

<sup>17</sup> Noonan, *Personal Identity*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> van Inwagen, “What Do We Refer to When We Say ‘I?’,” 177.

<sup>19</sup> Gasser and Stefan, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>20</sup> Noonan, *Personal Identity*, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Wahlberg, “Can I be an Instantaneous Stage and Yet Persist Through Time?”

<sup>22</sup> Hershenov, “Four-Dimensional Animalism, 211-212.

That is the underlying four-dimensionalist story, so one might wonder what the difference is between perdurantism and stage theory. Again, the difference is over what counts as the ordinary object. In the case of Morag, the difference is over which object is properly named Morag. Is the individual stage Morag, or is something else? The stage theorist says that each person stage is a Morag. The numerically different Morags are in the right kind of counterpart relations in order to be the “same” person, where “same” means the complex view articulated above. The perdurantist sees things slightly differently. The perdurantist wants to say that the person stages are somehow fused together by these continuity relations to form a spacetime worm. The spacetime worm is Morag. The spacetime worm gets her properties derivatively from her parts. For example, Morag (the worm) has the property of *being excited about her 25<sup>th</sup> birthday* in virtue of having a person stage that has this property intrinsically and non-derivatively. Again, stage theory seems to be the most popular view today because it avoids various problems that plague perdurantism. In the next section, I shall offer a few reasons why that is the case related to the problem of temporary intrinsics. Understanding this problem will help one grasp certain criticisms I wish to raise against Turner’s view later.

Before discussing the problem of temporary intrinsics, I want to point out the relevance of this discussion to the topic of the resurrection. As I have elsewhere argued, eternalism and four-dimensionalism do not offer any hope for the resurrection.<sup>23</sup> This is because four-dimensionalism violates TA3’s demand for numerical identity from death to resurrection. On four-dimensionalism, there is no numerical identity over time. As the four-dimensionalist Eric Steinhart proclaims, “Personal identity is *not* retained in the resurrection. It is *sacrificed*.”<sup>24</sup> Unlike Steinhart, I do not see this as a good thing. If I am a person stage located in the year 2022, I have no hope for a future resurrection because I cannot exist at a later time. On eternalism my temporal location is eternally fixed. There are other numerically distinct person stages that are connected to me that might be enjoying the resurrection at their temporal location. I guess that it is a good thing for them, but it offers me no hope for I am stuck at this temporal location. I quite literally have no afterlife to look forward to. Call this The Problem of No Afterlife.

As I understand things, the Christian hope for a resurrection relies on the truth of presentism, endurantism, and substance dualism. If God wishes to create a world in which He can offer everlasting friendship to human persons, then God will need to create a presentist world with enduring souls.

### §3. The Problem of Change and the Problem of Temporary Intrinsics

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<sup>23</sup> Mullins, “Identity Through Time and Personal Salvation.”

<sup>24</sup> Steinhart, “The Revision Theory of Resurrection,” 66-67.



I need to explain why stage theory is the most popular version of four-dimensionalism. Understanding this issue will help readers grasp the problems that I wish to identify for Turner's account of time and the resurrection in later sections. What is relevant for this section is the relationship between change, persistence over time, and temporal ontology. In particular, there is the Problem of Temporary Intrinsic. The Problem of Temporary Intrinsic starts with a fairly obvious assumption. David Lewis states it as this: "persisting things change their intrinsic properties."<sup>25</sup> Consider Morag changing from *sitting* to *standing*. These are intrinsic properties of Morag. So far, nothing seems difficult in grasping this. Yet there are more assumptions that help generate the problem. According to Jonathan Tallant, we seem to have three intuitive assumptions about persistence and change. He states these as follows.<sup>26</sup>

A1) An object can survive a change.

A2) A change in an object is understood as the object bearing incompatible properties at different times.

A3) No object can bear incompatible properties: i.e., no object can be F and also not-F.

Notice how this related to the Christian hope for resurrection. It seems obvious that Morag can survive a rather boring change from *sitting* to *standing*. But what if Morag cannot survive these general, everyday changes? If Morag cannot survive changes in general, then she has no hope in surviving the dramatic changes that occur from death to resurrection. This calls for a closer examination of these issues.

When endurantism is combined with presentism, one is able to affirm (A1)-(A3) quite easily.<sup>27</sup> Other positions on the ontology of time and persistence over time tend to reject (A1) or (A2), though there is disagreement here. To understand this issue, one must consider the Problem of Temporary Intrinsic.<sup>28</sup> The Problem of Temporary Intrinsic focuses on (A3). Say that an eternalist ontology of time is true, and assume endurantism. Morag will be wholly located at multiple moments of time, and thus have multiple intrinsic monadic properties like *sitting* and *standing*, or *being 2 years old* and *being 25 years old*. These are properties that she has simpliciter. That violates (A3) because Morag will have incompatible properties. One potential way to avoid the Problem of Temporary Intrinsic is to deny that these are intrinsic properties, and instead say that they are relational properties. In particular, the property *sitting* is a relation to a particular moment of time.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 203.

<sup>26</sup> Tallant, *Metaphysics*, 167-168.

<sup>27</sup> Wasserman, "The Problem of Change," 50; Ingram, *Thisness Presentism*, 50-51.

<sup>28</sup> Cameron, *The Moving Spotlight*, 67-68.

<sup>29</sup> Tallant, *Metaphysics*, 174.

But this is widely regarded as implausible because *sitting* is intuitively not a relational property, but instead is an intrinsic property.<sup>30</sup>

One popular option to avoid the Problem of Temporary Intrinsic is to deny eternalism and adopt presentism. If one adopts presentism and endurantism, there is an easy solution to these problems. As Tallant explains, “if only present objects exist, then objects endure by simply existing—objects do not have non-existent parts. And since times other than the present do not exist, so there is no worry about generating a contradiction.”<sup>31</sup> When one considers Morag, she is not located in the past because the past does not exist. She only has whatever intrinsic properties that she presently has.

The problem is if one tries to combine endurantism with eternalism. Endurant objects exist as a whole at all times at which they exist. If they exist at multiple times, as most would on eternalism, then objects will have multiple incompatible properties. That is incoherent, so most philosophers seek to remove the incoherence by rejecting endurantism in favour of some version of four-dimensionalism. On four-dimensionalism, persons are made up of temporal parts or person stages, the numerically distinct temporal parts are the things that bear the different intrinsic properties, and no part has incompatible properties.<sup>32</sup> Again, four-dimensionalism comes in two forms: perdurance and stage theory.

As stated before, perdurantism faces various problems that push people to adopt stage theory. Before moving forward, I will briefly highlight some common problems for perdurantism. For example, perdurantism tries to affirm (A1) by saying that objects exist by having different temporal parts at different times. This leads one to assert some rather peculiar claims. Consider the object of my door. On perdurantism, you never encounter the entire door. You only ever encounter a temporal part of my door. As Tallant points out, it seems quite odd to say that my door does not exist now, only part of it does.<sup>33</sup> That is counterintuitive to say the least.

Another major problem for perdurantism is the too many thinkers objection. On perdurantism, the spacetime worm is said to be the person Morag, and not the individual person stages that the worm is composed of. Yet, notice two things. First, the worm gets its properties from the parts. Meaning, the worm Morag only gets her thoughts because of the individual temporal parts that think. Second, what we have is the worm Morag thinking “I am Morag,” and the individual temporal parts thinking “I am Morag.” The perdurantist wants to say that only the worm is the person, but something seems to be off about this analysis. This is because we have too many thinkers for there to be only one person, and the one person gets all of her thoughts derivatively from other thinkers

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<sup>30</sup> Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 204; Wasserman, “The Problem of Change,” 53.

<sup>31</sup> Tallant, *Metaphysics*, 175-176.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 204.

<sup>33</sup> Tallant, *Metaphysics*, 171.

more fundamental than her. Surely something has gone wrong here. Moreover, the only reason that the worm has a moral status is because the individual temporal parts have a moral status. Which leads to worries about why one should value the worm more than its parts.<sup>34</sup>

Stage theory is the more popular view today because it is said to avoid all of these problems. Instead of saying that the entire worm is the person, this view says that each individual stage is a person. There are not too many thinkers on this view. There is the appropriate number of thinkers at any given time. For each instant, there is a numerically distinct Morag who does the thinking. The different Morags are related by a counterpart relation. To be clear, this view explicitly rejects (A1), which says that objects can survive change.<sup>35</sup> So that is a cost, but one the stage theorist is willing to accept. However, this has negative consequences for Christian theology since it entails the Problem of No Afterlife. In order to have hope for an afterlife, Morag must be able to survive changes in general, but stage theory has denied that this is possible. If Morag cannot survive changes in general, then she has no hope in surviving the dramatic changes that occur from death to resurrection.

#### §4. Turner's Amendments: Eschatological Presentism

Thus far, I have been arguing that the standard Christian story needs substance dualism, presentism, and endurantism in order for one to be hopeful in the resurrection of the dead. Amending the story to include four-dimensionalism and eternalism is unacceptable because it encounters the Problem of No Afterlife. At this point in the paper, I wish to offer a closer examination of an alternative set of amendments from Turner.

Turner and I agree that TA1, TA2, and TA3 are part of the standard Christian story. However, Turner argues that certain parts of the standard Christian story are false. In particular, he rejects substance dualism, presentism, endurantism, and the intermediate state. Turner offers a series of interesting arguments against the intermediate state. These rely on interpretations of particular biblical passages, examining the philosophical motivations for substance dualism, and more.<sup>36</sup> For example, Turner denies the intermediate state because he thinks that it undermines TA1. A disembodied existence in paradise would make the resurrection superfluous according to Turner. He denies that human persons can exist as disembodied souls, in part, because of a commitment to a hylemorphic philosophical anthropology. On hylemorphism, a soul is not a substance, but rather the form of a body. A human person is not an immaterial soul with a body, but instead an informed body. On hylemorphism, if a body and form are separated, the human person ceases to

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<sup>34</sup> Johnston, "Is Hope for Another Life Rational?," 57.

<sup>35</sup> Tallant, *Metaphysics*, 168.

<sup>36</sup> Turner, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, 20-73.

exist.<sup>37</sup> Personally, I find the idea that the soul is the form of the body difficult to understand. There are various debates today over what that could mean. The correct understanding of hylemorphism is a mystery to me and others who work on philosophical anthropology, so I shall have no more to say about the view.<sup>38</sup>

Given that Turner is committed to TA1, TA2, and TA3, he has admittedly put himself in a bit of a pickle. Consider again Morag and a standard presentist ontology of time. Say that Morag dies at a moment of time  $t^1$  that is earlier than the second coming of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead at a moment of time  $t^\Omega$ . Further, say that  $t^\Omega$  is significantly far off in the future and not immediately after  $t^1$ . What happens to Morag between  $t^1$  and  $t^\Omega$ ? Since  $t^\Omega$  is not immediately after  $t^1$ , Morag cannot have immediate post-mortem existence in Paradise. That is a problem for anyone wishing to affirm TA2, which says that Morag does have immediate post-mortem existence in Paradise. It might make one wish for the intermediate state again.

As Turner admits, “The Intermediate State is intuitive. It gives an easy account for “where” dead humans are *before* the eschatological bodily resurrection. It gives theologians a way to think about “where” dead humans are *now*. Dead humans are, according to The Intermediate State, in Heaven/Paradise, in the time between death and the eschatological bodily resurrection.”<sup>39</sup>

What shall Turner do? Turner offers a view that he says is “counterintuitive.”<sup>40</sup> I shall leave it up to readers to make their own judgments as to whether or not Turner’s account is counterintuitive. Turner considers work on a view called compound presentism, and develops something he calls eschatological presentism (EP). On EP, reality as a whole can be cut up into slices that can be successively ordered. For example, slices S1, S2, S3, and so on. Turner does not want to make these slices of reality temporal moments nor hyper-moments because he does not wish to introduce a second temporal dimension into his book of the world.<sup>41</sup> However, these slices appear to function just like hyper-moments. This is because these slices serve as a *when* certain moments of time exist, and can be successively ordered. They are even described as being subject to temporal becoming.<sup>42</sup> As far as I can tell, Turner is working with a hyper-presentist ontology of time because he describes reality as consisting of only one slice, with past slices no longer existing, and future slices not yet existing.<sup>43</sup> However, I shall set that aside, and stick to describing EP without hypertime.

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<sup>37</sup> Turner, 139-182.

<sup>38</sup> Olson, *What Are We*, 172-176.

<sup>39</sup> Turner, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, 187.

<sup>40</sup> Turner, 187.

<sup>41</sup> Personal correspondence.

<sup>42</sup> Turner, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, 211-212.

<sup>43</sup> Turner, 212.

What exists at any given slice of reality? It depends. For particular segments of the history of the world, there exists only one moment of time. Yet for another segment of history, for any slice of reality there are two moments of time. These two moments of time are the so-called compound present because they are compounded together to form the present.<sup>44</sup> On standard presentism, the present moment is simply a single moment of time. Whatever exists at the present moment exhausts reality. On EP, the present is comprised of two temporal moments that stand in the relation of *being compoundly present with*. Whatever exists at this compound present exhausts reality.

What are these two present moments on EP?  $T^{\Omega}$  is the important moment for EP.  $T^{\Omega}$  is the Parousia, or the second coming of Jesus and the general resurrection of the dead. Any other temporal moments prior to  $t^{\Omega}$  will be other moments of earthly life on the standard Christian story. I take it that a narrative will help one picture this view.

Imagine a temporal, triune God whose eternal present maps onto the totality of reality. Prior to the existence of the created universe, God existed alone. Call this slice of reality, S1. At the second slice of reality, S2, God creates the universe. What all does God cause to exist at the second slice of reality? At S2, God creates the first moment of time. Call it  $t^1$ . God also creates  $t^{\Omega}$ , which again includes the second coming of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead. At  $t^{\Omega}$ , all humans exist with either glorified resurrected bodies, or not so great damned bodies. I know it sounds odd for the second coming of Christ to exist when there has not been a first coming, but bear with me. At S2, these two temporal moments exist:  $t^1$  and  $t^{\Omega}$ .  $T^1$  and  $t^{\Omega}$  together make up a compound present. Further, these two moments are on the same timeline.  $T^1$  is an earlier moment than  $t^{\Omega}$ . After all, the Big Bang happened before the return of Christ, though both exist at S2. As reality moves forward, the compound present also changes. At the third slice of reality, S3,  $t^1$  does not exist because God is no longer sustaining that moment in existence. Yet  $t^{\Omega}$  does exist along with  $t^2$ . Things do not progress beyond  $t^{\Omega}$  because the timeline has not yet reached  $t^{\Omega}$  but is instead only at  $t^2$ . At this slice of reality, God is omnipresent to both  $t^{\Omega}$  and  $t^2$  because God is causally sustaining both in existence.

Things carry on like this for quite some time. After several billions of years, evolution eventually gives rise to human persons. Let us say that this happens at  $t^h$  (the time of humans). At this particular slice of reality, notice that all of humanity exists at  $t^{\Omega}$  with either resurrected or damned bodies. Yet also notice that at this slice of reality, some of humanity also exists at  $t^h$ . What are we to make of this? According to Turner, objects can be ontologically thin or thick. An object is ontologically thin if the object is not spread out over multiple moments of time. An object is ontologically thick if the object is spread out over multiple moments of time.<sup>45</sup> The people who

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<sup>44</sup> Turner, 205-206.

<sup>45</sup> Turner, 207.

are spread out across two temporal moments are ontologically thick. Turner calls them “spacetime pill bugs” because they are comprised of two temporal parts.<sup>46</sup> These temporal parts are not like the standard temporal parts that we saw above with stage theory, perdurantism, and eternalism. These temporal parts are numerically distinct, yet they endure through time. Consider an early human named Adam who exists at this particular slice of reality. At this slice of reality, Adam is ontologically thick because he has a temporal part at  $t^h$  and  $t^\Omega$ . These temporal parts are numerically distinct. At the next slice of reality,  $t^{h1}$  and  $t^\Omega$  exist. The temporal part of Adam at  $t^\Omega$  is there doing nothing new because anything new would progress the timeline beyond  $t^\Omega$ . The temporal part of Adam at  $t^h$  is the numerically same temporal part that exists at  $t^{h1}$ . This temporal part of Adam is an endurant object that persists from birth until death and is numerically distinct from the temporal part of Adam that exists at  $t^\Omega$ .

Fast forward a few years to when Adam dies. Turner says that Adam experiences an immediate resurrection.<sup>47</sup> How does this take place? Say that at a slice of reality SD, there exist two moments:  $t^d$  which is the moment of Adam’s death, and  $t^\Omega$ . At the next slice of reality, SD1, there are two moments of time that exist:  $t^{d1}$  and  $t^\Omega$ . At SD1, Adam does not exist at  $t^{d1}$ , and only exists at  $t^\Omega$ . This is because the temporal part that died ceases to exist. Only the temporal part that exists at  $t^\Omega$  remains. Adam is said to experience an immediate resurrection because Adam does not exist in an intermediate state between  $t^{d1}$  and  $t^\Omega$ . Adam simply exists at  $t^\Omega$ .

There is a peculiar oddity about  $t^\Omega$  throughout this series of reality slices. Turner says that  $t^\Omega$  remains stuck or paralyzed in a certain sense. This is because  $t^\Omega$  is simply occurring. It is not ceasing to exist, nor is it followed by subsequent moments of eschatological bliss. Yet Turner makes it clear that this moment is not really paralyzed. The stuckness of  $t^\Omega$  is not eternal.<sup>48</sup>  $T^\Omega$  is only stuck for a particular stretch of reality slices. Once the timeline catches up to  $t^\Omega$ , then things progress after that. Consider the slice of reality where things catch up with the second coming of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead. Call it  $S\Omega$ . At  $S\Omega$ , only  $t^\Omega$  exists. Call  $S\Omega-1$  the slice of reality immediately before the general resurrection, and  $t^{\Omega-1}$  the moment before the general resurrection. At  $S\Omega-1$  two moments of time exist:  $t^{\Omega-1}$  and  $t^\Omega$ . At the next slice of reality, only  $t^\Omega$  exists. And at the next slice of reality,  $S\Omega1$ , only  $t^{\Omega+1}$  exists. After that, at  $S\Omega2$ , only  $t^{\Omega+2}$  exists, and so on forever after.

What happens to the temporal part of Adam and other humans at  $t^\Omega$ ? They endure onto  $t^{\Omega+1}$ , and then to  $t^{\Omega+2}$ , and so on forever after. They are no longer stuck, but are now able to do any number of things with their glorified bodies, or suffer in any number of ways with their damned bodies.

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<sup>46</sup> Turner, 208.

<sup>47</sup> Turner, 210.

<sup>48</sup> Turner, 209.

## §5. Critical Analysis of Eschatological Presentism

It is not clear to me how eschatological presentism gets around the Problem of No Afterlife. On EP, an enduring human person stage comes into existence, lives, dies, and ceases to exist. This enduring person stage is numerically distinct from the human person stage who exists at  $t^{\Omega}$  with a resurrected body. That seems to fall victim to No Afterlife. However, according to Turner, these two temporal parts are united in a particular way that avoids these problems. These two temporal parts each share the numerically same substantial form.<sup>49</sup> The idea seems to be that if there is numerically one substantial form, personal identity is retained. Further, there are no criteria for the identity of this substantial form. In this way, the hylemorphist can try to affirm the simple view of identity instead of the complex view of gen-identity that we encountered before.<sup>50</sup>

Yet, I don't understand how this could be the case since this substantial form would need to be located at two different times, and would thus encounter the problem of temporary intrinsics discussed earlier. For example, consider a slice of reality in which Adam is being born and Adam is being resurrected. Those are incompatible intrinsic properties, thus numerically one form cannot have them both at one slice of reality. That brings us back to numerically distinct temporal parts with some kind of continuity relation that is short of numerical identity. What seems to be going on here is that the Adam temporal part that lives and dies just ceases to exist. It is only the resurrected temporal part that enjoys resurrection, and this temporal part is numerically distinct from the other temporal part. It is difficult to see how this squares with TA3, the claim that there is numerical identity from death to resurrection.

I also cannot understand how this is consistent with TA2, the claim that there is immediate post-mortem existence. Here is why: when I think of immediate, I think of things being one way at a particular moment, and then being another way at the next subsequent moment. I do not think of immediate as one enduring object ceasing to exist while a numerically distinct, pre-existent object continues to exist. Perhaps, then, Turner is right to say that his account is counterintuitive.

To see how counterintuitive this is, consider again the standard Christian story. God exists all alone, and then creates a universe with a presentist ontology. At the first moment of the universe, there is a Big Bang. That is all. There is no other moment with resurrected bodies floating around in reality. There is simply the Big Bang. Later on, human persons come into existence. These are souls with bodies. These souls are enduring beings who persist with numerical identity over time. When these souls die, they are separated from their bodies and are relocated to the intermediate state while they await the general resurrection of the dead. Later on, God brings about the general resurrection of the dead. Compared to EP, this is a rather simple and straightforward story.

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<sup>49</sup> Turner, 224.

<sup>50</sup> Thanks to Turner for pointing this out to me.

In light of this, I say that EP is not only counterintuitive, but it is also less probable than the standard story. The standard story is more intuitive and less complicated, and thus more likely to be true. EP complicates things considerably, thus lowering the probability of EP obtaining. EP is a very complicated hypothesis that introduces multiple moments of time existing at a single slice of reality, ontologically thin and thick objects, spacetime pill bugs, and so on. That is much more complicated than a bog-standard presentism and enduring souls embodied in human flesh.

### §6. Puzzles About the Coherence of EP

Not only do I find EP counterintuitive and improbable, and I have my doubts it can avoid the Problem of No Afterlife, but also I have further worries about the coherence of EP. There is a very real sense in which  $t^\Omega$  is co-present with moments of time that are earlier than  $t^\Omega$ . That is puzzling to say the least. As mentioned before,  $t^\Omega$  is when Christ returns. At the slice of reality in which creation begins, Christ is returning at  $t^\Omega$ , and  $t^\Omega$  is co-present with the Big Bang. It is puzzling to figure out how  $t^\Omega$  can properly be called the second coming of Christ when Christ has not yet come the first time around.

This brings me to a related puzzle about two temporal moments being compounded together to form the compound present. It would seem that  $t^\Omega$  cannot be compounded together with a successive series of other temporal moments without  $t^\Omega$  itself undergoing change. Yet, this is impossible because a moment cannot itself undergo change since change occurs over a series of moments. A moment is the way things are but could be subsequently otherwise. Yet EP seems to allow that  $t^\Omega$  can undergo extrinsic or relational changes as it becomes successively co-present with subsequent moments of time. A similar worry can be raised about the contents of  $t^\Omega$ . The person stages that exist at  $t^\Omega$  seem to undergo changes across different slices of reality. Yet, this cannot be possible since any change to a person stage at  $t^\Omega$  would bring about  $t^{\Omega+1}$ . Here is the main problem. If  $t^\Omega$ , or the contents of  $t^\Omega$ , undergo an intrinsic or extrinsic change, then  $t^\Omega$  will cease to exist because things will be subsequently otherwise. In other words, a change would bring about  $t^{\Omega+1}$ .

Why should one think that  $t^\Omega$  or its content undergo change? There are several reasons, but I shall limit myself to two. First,  $t^\Omega$  itself is constantly changing with regard to its temporal relations to other moments. Second, the denizens of  $t^\Omega$  also undergo change with regard to their relations to other moments of time and temporal parts. I will take each argument in turn.

It would seem that  $t^\Omega$  itself undergoes change. On EP, the second slice of reality contains  $t^1$  and  $t^\Omega$ . At this slice of reality,  $t^\Omega$  is in the relationship of *being compoundly present with*  $t^1$ . The totality of facts at this slice of reality are represented by tensed propositions that are true simpliciter. For example, the proposition  $\langle \text{At } S_2, t^\Omega \text{ is compoundly present with } t^1 \rangle$ . At the next slice of reality,



S3, the totality of facts changes because  $t^1$  does not exist, and  $t^\Omega$  is compoundly present with  $t^2$ . At each subsequent slice of reality,  $t^\Omega$  stands in a new relation to different moments of time, and tensed propositions about  $t^\Omega$  change in truth-value accordingly. This is a problem since a moment of time cannot undergo a change, and yet EP clearly has  $t^\Omega$  undergoing changes over a successive series of reality slices.

The second problem is that the occupants of  $t^\Omega$  also undergo a series of successive changes. At S2, the occupants of  $t^\Omega$  are ontologically thin. Recall that Turner says an object is ontologically thin if the object is not spread out over multiple moments of time. An object is ontologically thick if the object is spread out over multiple moments of time. At various points throughout history, every single human occupant of  $t^\Omega$  will become ontologically thick when their temporal counterpart is born. At other various points throughout history, every single human occupant of  $t^\Omega$  will become ontologically thin when their temporal counterpart dies and ceases to exist. Every single human occupant of  $t^\Omega$  undergoes a change from *being thin* to *being thick*, and a change from *being thick* to *being thin*. Another way to think of this is that every single occupant of  $t^\Omega$  goes from *not being a spacetime pill bug* to *being a spacetime pill bug*, and then to *not being a spacetime pill bug*. This is a serious problem because any change in an occupant must bring about the next moment of time. And yet EP wishes to say that  $t^\Omega$  and its occupants remain unchanging over the different successive series of reality slices. This calls into question the coherence of EP.

### §7. Problems for Causation and Free Will

There is another puzzle concerning causation and free will. Turner assures us that causation works as normal on EP—there is no retroactive causation. He says that what happens at  $t^\Omega$  is causally dependent on what happens at earlier times, just as it would be on standard presentism.<sup>51</sup> For example, Adam's acceptance of God's grace is earlier than Adam's resurrection, and thus causally explains Adam's resurrection at  $t^\Omega$ .

Yet I struggle to see how this could be true. Consider the second slice of reality, S2. At S2,  $t^1$  and  $t^\Omega$  exist. The Big Bang and the general resurrection of the dead come to exist at the same slice of reality of God's initial creative act. God causally produces both of these moments at the same slice of reality. How can  $t^\Omega$  causally depend on what takes place at  $t^1$ ? They both come into existence at the same slice of reality, and what takes place at  $t^\Omega$  is ontically settled because  $t^\Omega$  exists. What takes place at  $t^\Omega$  is also alethically settled, for the truth of propositions about  $t^\Omega$  supervene on  $t^\Omega$ . It would also seem that  $t^\Omega$  is epistemically and providentially settled because God knows what is happening at  $t^\Omega$  because He has providentially caused  $t^\Omega$  to exist at S2. Notice that I said providentially *caused*. God's causing  $t^\Omega$  to exist seems to causally settle  $t^\Omega$ . If God's causing  $t^\Omega$  to

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<sup>51</sup> Turner, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, 212.

exist does not causally settle  $t^\Omega$ , then I do not know what else will. In which case,  $t^\Omega$  is causally settled.

Given the full causal settled state of  $t^\Omega$  at the second slice of reality, I fail to see how  $t^\Omega$  could causally depend on any earlier moment that has yet to come into existence. When  $t^\Omega$  comes into existence, it is too late for any earlier moments of time to causally influence  $t^\Omega$ . Especially given the fact that almost all of these earlier moments do not yet exist. Long before Adam comes to be born, his eschatological fate is alethically, epistemically, providentially, causally, and ontically settled.<sup>52</sup> How could Adam possibly contribute anything to  $t^\Omega$ , let alone *freely* contribute anything to  $t^\Omega$ ?

## Conclusion

On my view of the world, the Christian hope for resurrection depends on several metaphysical conditions. Those are substance dualism, presentism, and endurantism. Think of it this way: prior to creation, God is able to consider a wide range of possible universes that He can create. Some of these universes would fulfill God's intent to establish an everlasting friendship with creatures. Other possible universes would not fulfill God's intent to establish everlasting friendship with creatures. Among these possible universes are ones with different ontologies of time, a different metaphysical makeup for human persons, and so on. As I see things, the possible universes with an eschatological presentist ontology of time will not fulfill God's purposes. Instead, God will need to select a presentist universe in order to fulfill His intent to create humans that can enter into everlasting friendship with Him.

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<sup>52</sup> For more on the future being open or settled, see Rhoda, "The Fivefold Openness of the Future."

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