

James T. Turner Jr. *On the Resurrection of the Dead: A New Metaphysics of Afterlife for Christian Thought.* Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies. London: Routledge, 2019. 243 pp. \$140.00 (hbk).

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On the Resurrection of the Dead (ORD) is a lucid and compelling introduction to the philosophical issues surrounding the doctrine of the general resurrection. Readers unfamiliar with theological anthropology, personal persistence and the philosophy of time (among other issues) will greatly benefit from Turner's meticulous and detailed research. In addition to this, ORD is very much a novel and noteworthy contribution to the literature on the resurrection and the metaphysics of persons.

The postmortem resurrection of the dead has long been taken as a non-negotiable tenet of orthodox Christianity.¹ Here Turner sets out, not to defend the doctrine of the general resurrection itself, but rather its coherence. He begins by laying down three widely held theological affirmations (TAs) which he takes to be uncontroversial and supported by scripture:

- TA1. The resurrection of the body is not a superfluous hope of the afterlife,
- TA2. There is immediate postmortem existence in paradise,² and
- TA3. There is numerical identity between premortem and post-resurrection human beings.

The aim of Turner's project is to show that certain widely held metaphysical schemes of human beings contradict at least one of these three theological affirmations. He attempts to provide a theological anthropology (together with a specific theory of time) that does not. It is a *theological* project (that uses the tools of analytic philosophy) aimed at Christian theologians who hold (minimally) to these three particular theological affirmations about the afterlife.

What follows is a brief summary of each chapter. Given the constraints of space, a short critique is reserved for chapters 5 and 6, which contain the more novel contributions of ORD.

In Chapter 1, Turner argues that the historical view of The Intermediate State (TIS), which entails that redeemed human beings continue to exist as disembodied souls, is false. If the souls of the redeemed continue to exist in a (disembodied) paradisiacal state after

¹ If not the resurrection of all humanity, at the very least, this is the case for the redeemed.

² This is so for at least some of the redeemed; Cf. Luke 16:19-31, Philippians 1:21-23, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10.

death, this renders their bodily resurrection superfluous. Thus if TIS obtains, it undermines Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15.³ Therefore, given TA1 and scripture, TIS is false.

Substance dualism (so it is usually argued) can readily account for the immediacy in TA2 i.e. it is easy to see how a person can be present in paradise immediately after death (and before resurrection) if humans are identical to their souls. But given the falsity of TIS, what follows then, says Turner, is that the main Christian motivation for substance dualism is removed on theological grounds (but not necessarily philosophical grounds). TA2 *itself* is not a theological problem – only the way that it has been traditionally construed, as it makes bodily resurrection unnecessary. Thus Turner asks us to abandon the historically held positions of TIS and substance dualism and realize that the hope of paradise *is* solely the hope of bodily resurrection.

Turner spends chapter 2 reviewing several leading physicalist theories (those which identify a person with his or her body) as candidates that can account for personal identity over time and of bodily resurrection.⁴ For various reasons, in light of the three TAs, he finds these models of resurrection wanting.

In chapter 3 Turner then discusses a physicalist view of persons that does *not* identify a person with their body, namely the constitution view. He comes to the conclusion that at best, the constitution relation is unexplained, and at worse it is false/incoherent.

The final three chapters move from the deconstructive to the constructive mode as Turner sets out to explicate an account of human beings that is compatible with TA1-TA3. Given Turner's rejection of the immaterial soul, the most obvious obstacle for such a task being TA2 – immediacy in paradise. In addition to this, accounting for TA3 is also no mean feat, given the alleged failure of the physicalist theories canvassed in chapter 3 to account for numerical identity from one time to another and over the 'gap' of death. Thus, in chapter 4 Turner takes the first step to accomplish the task of providing an account of human beings that is compatible with TA1-TA3 by explicating a broadly Thomistic hylemorphic account of human beings and trying to show how this can provide personal identity conditions from one time to another. In chapter 5, he sets out a theory of time which, when combined with the metaphysics of humans from chapter 4, attempts to explain not just the possibility of postmortem survival, but *immediate* postmortem bodily experience in paradise as required by TA2.

Chapter 4 is in itself an excellent and welcomed introduction and survey of one of the more convoluted theological anthropologies found in the literature. Turner addresses the current state of metaphysics and understandings of hylemorphism, including what it says about human beings after death. A common understanding is that hylemorphism is consistent with the existence of disembodied souls – Thomas Aquinas and many contemporary Thomists agree that such entities are possible. Turner however, believes this to be false: hylemorphism, properly construed, says he, is inconsistent with disembodied souls. According to Turner, a human is identical to his or her body but not to the metaphysical parts that make up the body; given this, the soul cannot exist apart from

³ Turner says, 'If the Intermediate State obtains, 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' (58).

⁴ The physicalist views (which Turner calls 'body identity physicalism') of resurrection investigated here include Peter van Inwagen's 'Simulacrum Thesis', 'The Falling Elevator Model', and Trenton Merrick's 'Anti-Criterialism'.

body. Turner writes that such an account provides a jointly necessary and sufficient condition for diachronic identity that does not presuppose the identity of the body in question. 'Jones is identical to her body, but not identical to the bits of matter or the form' (137).

Though there is no space here to do justice to the ground Turner covers, in summary he argues that the hylemorphist who posits disembodied existence faces a trilemma and has to affirm one of the following three things:

- A - humans are identical to their souls,
- B - though the human person ceases to exist, their soul persists in a disembodied state, or
- C - humans are constituted by their souls and via constitution continue to exist in a disembodied intermediate state.

Option A puts the hylemorphist on the horns of an alleged further dilemma, brought out by the question, 'at death, what state does the disembodied soul find itself in?' If it is TIS, then the arguments from Chapter 1 apply, but if she denies that there is immediate postmortem existence, then she is not a theologian to which Turner is addressing his arguments toward. Option B, says Turner, cannot accommodate TA2 given that even if Jones's soul reaches paradise upon death, Jones's soul is not Jones, and therefore Jones does not find herself in paradise. The problem with option C (which is the line Eleonore Stump takes) is that there is no informed account of constitution, as Turner contends in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5, as Turner himself points out, is the most ambitious and tendentious chapter in ORD. It offers a theory of time to account for how '... a human being can move from her bodily death immediately to her eschatologically future bodily resurrection' (185). This view of time is called Eschatological Presentism (EP), and it is a modified version of compound presentism presented by Barry Dainton in *Time and Space*.⁵ About Compound Presentism (CP), Dainton writes:

...the sum total of reality consists of two coexisting but non-simultaneous very brief reality-slices (each spatially three-dimensional). Suppose A and B are two such, and that A exists at time t_1 , and B at time t_2 . One of these slices, A, is annihilated and a new slice of reality, C, comes into existence, and with it a new time, t_3 . Slice B is annihilated and D is created, along with t_4 ; and so it goes on (*Time and Space*, 95-96).

Turner maintains that reality, and therefore human beings also, are compound entities made from two non-overlapping 'slices', but unlike in CP, the two 'slices' that compose a human are not temporally contiguous. He writes: 'Immediately following the moment she dies, she exists at the *eschatological* resurrection – a time that I will suggest is "compoundly present" with each pre-eschatological present moment' (186). Turner adds that in CP 'the present ... is AB, then BC, then CD, and so on This is a "slice" thesis, like four-dimensionalism, but this is ... dynamic ... because these reality-slices come into and go out of existence Compound Presentism suggests that *present realities are spread out across*

⁵ Dainton, Barry. *Time and Space*. Second Edition. Durham, UK: Acumen, 2010.

two adjacent temporal moments' (200). For EP however, the latter slice of a given moment is not contiguous with the present but rather, that reality slice 'R' is at the intersection of T_{Ω} , that is, the time of the eschatological resurrection, the *parousia* of Christ. On this view, human beings are ontologically 'thick' things, they are spread out over two compoundly 'present' times. An important thing to note however is that while the sum total of reality, S_1 , consists of two present times, T_1 and T_{Ω} , there are not two series of Ts, rather it is a distinction within the same timeline.

The final chapter merges the broadly Thomistic hylemorphic conception of human beings discussed in chapter 4 with EP. Turner concludes by arguing that the combination of this theological anthropology and EP's unique view of time allows the Christian theologian to account for a human's numerical identity through death and bodily resurrection all the while being consistent with the three TAs alluded to throughout the book.

ORD most definitely gives the substance dualist something to think about – Turner's arguments that TIS is unscriptural and false are, to this reader's mind, sound. But is that sufficient reason to abandon the immaterial soul? That depends partly on whether you think his proposed theory of time and persons are successful in accommodating TAs 1-3, as is Turner's goal from the outset. Though he has made tremendous efforts to flesh out a model of the general resurrection, there are some questions that loom about whether EP can truly accommodate TAs 2 and 3 in particular.

The first set of issues revolve around the question, 'how does a person come to have experience of paradise?' There are two aspects to this, the first pertaining to TA3 and the stream of consciousness that a human experiences.⁶ In CP, when Jones is alive, presumably her mental life supervenes on the person slices that are immanently causally connected to each other from one time to the next – first on slice A at T_1 , then on the adjacent slice B at T_2 , then C at T_3 . CP is akin to a combination of temporal part theory and presentism. In EP though, it is less clear how one's mental life is connected from one slice to the next given that one of the two person slices that composes Jones *endures* through pre- T_{Ω} times while her corresponding T_{Ω} slice is compoundly present with this enduring pre- T_{Ω} slice. When Jones dies, how does her consciousness move from the former to the latter slice such that she can come to have immediate experience of postmortem paradise? How is this possible given that these two slices are not spatially contiguous? While she is alive (presumably) Jones has no experience of postmortem paradise, though mereologically she is composed of a slice that is located in the eschaton and a slice in the pre- T_{Ω} time. If there is no postmortem experience of paradise (for pre-eschaton Jones), in what way are the two slices part of the same person? If it is only the first time slice that Jones's consciousness supervenes on, then the slice in the eschaton appears to be no more than an unrelated facsimile of pre-eschaton Jones (if there are two person-slices having distinct experiences, it looks like they are not the same but two numerically distinct individuals). On the other hand, if the slice in the eschaton *is* Jones, then upon death Jones does not find herself immediately in paradise – she was simply there all along. TA2 does not obtain in either case.

Addressing the first of these problems, Turner might be tempted to use the commissurotomy cases that are popular in discussions of split consciousness. However,

⁶ Turner does point out that he does not address how hylemorphism accounts for the existence of mind and consciousness - 'how these living substances work, though, is a matter for another project' (158).

that would also violate TA2 – it may explain why there are two instances of conscious experience attributed to a single person, but it would still not be immediate postmortem experience. It would be an ongoing current experience that one of Jones's streams of consciousness (while alive on earth and living in the pre-eschaton state) is unaware of/has no access to.

Given these problems, it might also be pointed out that given how time is construed in EP, following death, there can be no *immediate* experience in the eschaton at all. This is the second aspect of the question, 'how does a person come to have experience of paradise?' For EP the sum total of reality S_1 consists of two present times, T_1 and T_Ω . There are not two series of Ts; they belong to the same timeline. Thus until the current pre-omega $T_{\Omega-1}$ 'reaches' T_Ω there is no temporal succession in the latter 'present' time since there are not two series of Ts, only one. Thus, even if we grant that Jones finds herself in paradise upon death, she has no experience of paradise as this requires temporal succession.⁷ Thus, it seems that on EP, TA2 does not obtain – Jones may find herself in paradise immediately after death but she has no experience of it until pre- T_Ω time merges with T_Ω time – Jones, it might be said, is in a state of suspended animation. (Call this the Han Solo problem.⁸) This state of affairs (from a first person perspective) might be thought to be similar to soul sleep where there is no immediate experience after death until the resurrection.

A last thing to note is that if EP can be shown to be successful (for TAs 1-3) with hylemorphism, in theory this blows the door open for other theological anthropologies, perhaps even substance dualism.⁹ If a physicalist metaphysics of persons can explain diachronic identity over time, it should, in principle work with EP. Turner's criticism of van Inwagen is not that it is not coherent with respect to EP, but rather that he does not think it provides a good account of identity over time at all.¹⁰ This is the same with Trenton Merrick's Anti-Criterialism. If a physicalist (with respect to humans) can show that their metaphysics of persons provides a robust explanatory criteria of identity over time, there is no reason why it could not be compatible with Turner's EP. After all, Turner is happy to say it does not bother him if 'Merricks or (someone like him) finds his view convincing and finds Eschatological Presentism an easy bedfellow' (222).

ORD is a rich and highly engaging read from start to finish. It is an exciting piece of analytic theology that makes a genuine contribution to the literature and challenges the presuppositions of both substance dualist and physicalist alike. It ought to be mentioned that Turner offers a promissory note for a forthcoming thorough defense of EP which this reader is most certainly looking forward to!

⁷ At least, *human*, bodily experience seems to require temporal succession – I make no comment about the nature of divine experience.

⁸ This label is used given the similarities of experience between Jones in the afterlife immediately after her death, and Hans Solo, immediately being encased in carbonite by Jabba the Hutt.

⁹ The issue Turner has with substance dualism is not philosophical as he outlines on pp. 11-15 – it is that substance dualism entails TIS which for reasons previously stated, is false. But if one can explain how the soul (which is usually thought to be metaphysically simple) can be compatible with EP (perhaps by migrating from one person slice to the other), then a substance dualist might not necessarily be committed to TIS.

¹⁰ Turner says, '... he provides no informative criteria for the diachronic identity of a life' (220).