

BODILY RESURRECTION IN CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES

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[A growing consensus understands bodily resurrection to mean that the personal identity established in an embodied history is raised up into a transphysical reality. Ongoing debate concerns the notion of a resurrection in death that would exclude an "intermediate state" in which separated souls await bodily resurrection on "the last day." Disagreement also exists about how and at what point bodiliness is fully integrated into one's identity and whether the term "soul" should designate that which bears one's identity and bodiliness beyond death. The author reinterprets the intermediate state by suggesting that one's relationship to the world will be fully integrated into one's identity only with the completion of history.]

THE MEANING OF BODILY RESURRECTION has perennially been a matter of theological discussion. Responding to the Cathars and their negative view of the body, the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 asserted that "all will rise with their own bodies, which they now wear."¹ In his *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas maintained that, after the Resurrection of Christ, the same body, for which his soul had been the form before his death, was again united with his soul: "And because the truth of the nature of the body is from the form [i.e. the soul], it follows that the body of Christ after the Resurrection would be a real (*verum*) body, and of the same nature as before."² According to Aquinas, the body of the risen Christ was "integral" (and therefore included flesh, bones, blood, etc.) and of the same nature as before death, although it was now glorified, incorruptible,

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¹ "Qui omnes cum suis propriis corporibus resurgent, quae nunc gestant" (Lateran IV: Constitution 1, "On the Catholic Faith" in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils 1: Nicaea I to Lateran V*, ed. Norman P. Tanner [Washington: Georgetown University, 1990] 230).

² *ST* 3, q. 54, a. 1.

and no longer subject to death.³ Aquinas also considered it appropriate that the body, which the soul of Christ again took on in the Resurrection, had the wounds suffered in the passion.⁴ Although it was now “spiritual,” that body was real and solid, could be touched and seen, and was able to eat and drink.⁵

Aquinas had earlier articulated his philosophical reflections on the relationship of the bodily and spiritual dimensions of a human being. In his *Summa contra gentiles*, he argued that “intellectual substances [such as the human soul] are not composed of matter and form; rather, in them the form itself is a subsisting substance; so that form here is that *which is* and being itself is act and *that by which* the substance *is*.”⁶ That set the stage for his foundational proposition that “it is through the soul that the body becomes a being in act . . . for living is the being of the living thing. . . . Therefore, the soul is the form of the animated body.” Aquinas added that “we live and sense by the soul as the principle of life and sensation. The soul is, therefore, the form of the body.”⁷

Aquinas’s philosophical insights about the human “person” as the profound and enduring unity of a spirit with the body that it informs and actualizes remain influential. That is not the case for his more literal interpretations of bodily resurrection, especially reflected in the excerpts from the *Commentary on the Sentences* (1254–56) posthumously selected to form the *Supplement* to the *Summa theologiae* (1265–72). In those passages, which represent Aquinas’s earliest thought, before he had composed the *Summa contra gentiles* about 1260 or his commentaries on the works of Aristotle in 1261, he proposed that “all the members that were part of the human body before death” will rise in the resurrection, even the hairs and nails, the bodily fluids or humors, and that “materiality” that is necessary for the identity of the human species.⁸ He considered it fitting that risen bodies be youthful (and thus not affected by the limitations and defects of childhood and old age), that they rise with the differing statures they would have had at that more perfect age, and that they be male and female, but

³ *ST* 3, q. 54, a. 2 & 3.

⁴ *ST* 3, q. 54, a. 4.

⁵ *ST* 3, q. 54, a. 3, ad 2 & 3; q. 55, a. 6.

⁶ *SCG*, 2, 54, 7, in *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith, Summa contra gentiles 2: Creation*, trans. James F. Anderson (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image Books, 1956) 157. In the preceding chapters Aquinas maintained that “just as matter does not exist apart from *this man*, so matter does not exist apart from *this matter*” (*SCG* 2, 50, 3); “intellectual natures are subsistent forms, and are not in matter as though their being depends on matter” (*SCG* 2, 51, 1; *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith* 149 & 151).

⁷ *SCG* 2, 57, 14 & 15; *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith* 172.

⁸ *ST* 3 supplement, q. 83, a. 1–5.

without any libido.⁹ Aquinas also discussed the “impassibility” of such bodies, and whether their senses would be active.¹⁰ Having speculated about the manner in which the “subtlety” of *glorified* bodies would affect the way they occupied space, he further considered the palpability and agility of such bodies, and maintained that a glorified soul has the power to allow the transformed, glorified body either to be seen or not to be seen by non-glorified eyes.¹¹

Karl Rahner has noted that contemporary physics is teaching us more than ever to think abstractly, which means “there will be less of an obstacle . . . to our taking the existence of those in heaven very seriously in a non-pictorial way.”¹² Speaking about quantum theory, Niels Bohr said that it “forces us to adopt a new mode of description designated as *complementary* in the sense that any given application of classical concepts precludes the simultaneous use of other classical concepts which in a different connection are equally necessary for the elucidation of phenomena.”¹³ In a time in which quantum physics cannot distinguish between a “new” electron and one which was previously annihilated,¹⁴ in which we speak of the interchangeability of matter and energy, and in which we transplant hearts and other organs, it is more and more obvious that we need new ways of thinking about the meaning of “bodily” resurrection and identity. With that in mind, this study focuses on selected 20th-century Catholic theological interpretations, leaving aside any further consideration of the Scholastic debate about the resurrection of the body, particularly the contributions of Bonaventure and Durand of St. Pourçain.¹⁵

THE WHOLE HUMAN IN A PANCOSMIC RELATIONSHIP

In the second volume of his *Theological Investigations* Karl Rahner noted that “[w]hen you ask the orthodox Christian for his beliefs, he will refer you to the Catechism, where all the truths of faith which have been

⁹ *ST* 3 supplement, q. 84, a. 1–3. ¹⁰ *ST* 3 supplement, q. 85, a. 1–4.

¹¹ *ST* 3 supplement, q. 86, a. 1–6; q. 87, a. 1–3; q. 88, a. 2–3.

¹² Karl Rahner, “The Resurrection of the Body,” in *Theological Investigations* 2, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963) 203–16, at 215. In my citations from the English translations of Rahner, I retain the exclusive language rather than retranslate all the quotations.

¹³ See Max Jammer, *The Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics* (New York: Wiley, 1974) 95 as cited by George L. Murphy, “Quantum Theory and Resurrection Reality,” in *CTNS Bulletin* (The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences) 11 (1991) 25–28, at 27.

¹⁴ See Murphy, “Quantum Theory and Resurrection Reality” 27.

¹⁵ Recently analyzed in Caroline Walker Bynum’s *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University, 1995) 229–87.

expressed most explicitly and in an existentially clear manner in the history of the Faith up to date, have kept their unchanged place.” He continued, stating that “the orthodox Christian seldom stops to realize that the unprinted catechism of his heart and religious life has quite a different distribution of materials from his printed Catechism, and that in the former many pages of the latter are completely missing or have become quite faded or illegible.”¹⁶ He then locates the resurrection of the body among the truths “which are given a wide berth by the orthodox and the heretics alike.”¹⁷

Asking what is the least we mean by the “resurrection of the dead,” Rahner suggested the following reply:

‘Body’ (*Fleisch*) means the whole man in his proper embodied reality. ‘Resurrection’ means, therefore, the termination and perfection of the *whole* man before God, which gives him ‘eternal life.’ Man is a many-sided being which in (and despite) its unity stretches, as it were, through several very different dimensions—through matter and spirit, nature and person, action and passion, etc. And so it is not surprising that the process of man’s perfecting and the entrance into this perfection is not in itself a simple and identical quantity in every respect. And so it is not surprising that the ‘moment’ of completion of such a stratified being is not simply the same for every one of these dimensions. . . . [U]nion with God . . . , ‘heaven’ and ‘eternal happiness’ can already be given with death (Denz 530). Nevertheless, the deceased remains ‘united’ with the reality, fate, and hence the temporal events of the world.¹⁸

Rahner’s view was that we must fit “what we call the resurrection of the body in the strict sense” into the context of the “history of the world which will come to an end.” He emphasized that the end of the world and of history “will not be a sheer cessation, a ‘being-no-longer’ of the world itself, but the participation in the perfection of the spirit.”¹⁹ He continued: “The history—which has remained within the framework of the world—of those who by their lives have already effected their personal finality, reaches its real completion and explicit expression together with the consummation of the world. These human beings now become achieved as totalities with soul and body, and their perfection, already begun in death, becomes itself perfected, tangible in the world, embodied. We cannot really imagine the ‘how’ of this bodily consummation.”²⁰

Given the fact that we tend to think of physicality in relation to time and space, Rahner was willing to concede the use of the term “place” for heaven: “If (and in so far as) we cannot think of the physical nature and concreteness of the risen and real person (even in accordance with what

¹⁶ Karl Rahner, “The Resurrection of the Body” in *Theological Investigations* 2.203–4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 2.205.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 2.212–13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 2.210–11.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 2.213–14.

was experienced with regard to the risen Christ) in any other way than together with a definite spatial and local determination, then we must think of heaven as a place and not merely as a 'state.' In so far as there are already human beings (the risen Lord, our Lady and no doubt others: cf. Mt 27.52) who possess a glorified bodily nature, *this* place does already exist as a result, even if not as a presupposition (as the ancients thought), of this transformation of the incarnate human spirit."²¹ Yet, in conceding the use of the term "place," Rahner insisted that our present physical spatiality with its intrinsic finiteness and "the heavenly 'kind of space' are in themselves essentially different and incommensurable quantities." The "where" of heaven cannot be understood as a location in our physical spatial world: "Since we are, however, learning in physics nowadays more than ever to think abstractly, there will be less of an obstacle in this than before to our taking the existence of those in heaven very seriously in a non-pictorial way. Once the history of the Cosmos and of the spiritual world has come to its complete end, everything will be transformed. It will then be correct to call the one new reality a new heaven or a new earth."²²

In *On the Theology of Death* Rahner further developed the proposition that the soul after death retains a relationship to the materiality of the universe taken as a whole. He noted that "since the soul is united to the body, it clearly must also have some relationship to that whole of which the body is a part, that is, to the totality which constitutes the unity of the material universe."²³ Furthermore, if one accepts that the soul, "by its substantial union with the body as its essential form, also has a relationship to this radical unity of the universe," it would then seem questionable that the separation of the body and soul in death should involve "the definite cessation of the soul's relation to the world, so that the soul becomes a-cosmic, totally out of the world." Rahner instead suggested that "the termination of [the soul's] relationship to the body by which it maintains and forms the latter's structure and delimits it from the whole of the world, rather impl[ies] that it enters into some deeper, more comprehensive openness in which this pancosmic relation to the universe is more fully realized."

²¹ Ibid. 2.214–15.

²² Ibid. 2.215.

²³ *On the Theology of Death*, trans. C. H. Henkey (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961, reprinted 1972) 18. Rahner further observes: "This unity of the world, however, both metaphysically (on the basis, that is of a scholastic metaphysics of *material prima* and of a metaphysics of the very analogous concept of the "individual" material thing), as well as from the point of view of speculative cosmology, is not to be conceived as a merely conceptual sum of individual things, nor as the mere unity of an external interaction of individual things on one another. In the present context it is not possible to determine more precisely in predicamental terms in what the supra-empirical nature of this real, ontological unity consists" (ibid. 18–19).

Thus, rather than understanding the soul in death as “strictly transcending this world . . . by virtue of the fact that it is no longer bound to an individual bodily structure,” Rahner proposed that it entered “into a much closer, more intimate relationship to that ground of the unity of the universe which is hard to conceive yet is very real, and in which all things in the world are interrelated and communicate anteriorly to any mutual influence upon each other.”²⁴ Rejecting the notion that “lack of relation to matter and nearness to God must increase in direct ratio,” Rahner was inclined to accept “the theory that in death the soul becomes not acosmic, but pancosmic, as theologically tenable.”²⁵

Rahner remarked that the older Scholastic doctrine on the relationship of body and soul did not conceive the soul’s “informing of the body” as an act distinct from the soul, or as an *accidental* operation, but as a substantial “act” of the soul, the very reality of the soul itself. “Such an act could absolutely cease only if the soul itself ceased to exist.” For such reasons, the older Thomistic metaphysics maintained “that even after death the human spiritual soul has a transcendental relationship to matter . . . posited by the very essence of the soul.”²⁶

For Rahner, to say that the human spiritual soul will become pancosmic clearly did not mean “that at death the entire world becomes the ‘body’ of this particular soul precisely in the way in which its own body was its own.”²⁷ Observing that “even in its lifetime, the soul-animated body is an open system in relation to the world, and that in natural philosophy it is not so easy to regard the human body as ending at the skin,” he stressed that “the spiritual soul through its embodiment is in principle open to the world and is never a closed monad without windows, but is always in communication with the whole of the world.” Thus, the pancosmic relation of the soul to the world implies “that the soul, by surrendering its limited bodily structure in death, becomes open towards the universe and, in some way, a co-determining factor of the universe precisely in the latter’s character as the ground of the personal life of other spiritual corporeal beings.” In that regard Rahner found a parallel between the doctrine that “the moral quality of each individual human life, when consummated before God, becomes co-responsible for his attitude towards the world and towards all other individuals,” and the idea that “the individual person, once rendered pancosmic through death, by this real ontological and open relation to the whole cosmos, might come to have a direct influence within the world.”²⁸

Reiterating that the resurrection of the body, *at the end of the world*, is a dogma of faith, Rahner then went on to assert that death is not a pur-

²⁴ Ibid. 19.

²⁶ Ibid. 20.

²⁸ Ibid. 22–23.

²⁵ Ibid. 19–20.

²⁷ Ibid. 21.

poseless, destructive fate; it is neither simply a complete release from the body, nor a total departure from the world.²⁹ Acknowledging that in one sense it does destructively burst in upon a human from without, Rahner simultaneously affirmed that death, “as the end of man as a spiritual person, must be an active consummation from within brought about by the person himself, a maturing self-realization which embodies the result of what man has made of himself during life, the achievement of total self-possession, a real effectuation of self, the fullness of freely produced personal reality.”³⁰ After death, understood in that way, the transfigured corporeality of a glorified or spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15), which is the actual expression of a spirit divinized by grace, “remains open for maintaining or entering into free and unhampered relations with everything. In this way the glorified body seems to become the perfect expression of the enduring relation of the glorified person to the cosmos as a whole.”³¹

In a later section of *On the Theology of Death*, Rahner applied to Christ’s death what he had said about every human entering in death “into an open, unrestricted relationship to the cosmos as a whole,” so that she or he is “integrated as a constant and determining factor, into the world as a whole.” Accordingly, for Rahner, “through Christ’s death, his spiritual reality, which he possessed from the beginning, enacted in his life, and brought to consummation in his death, becomes open to the whole world and is inserted into this whole world in its ground as a permanent determination of a real ontological kind.”³² Viewing the world as the condition of the very possibility for spiritual persons to make decisions, Rahner concluded that the soul in death does not lose its substantial connection with material reality but “is in fact, for the first time rendered open to it.”³³ In Rahner’s perspective, the possibility of personal action is partly determined by the radical oneness, or non-spatial unity, in which all things in the universe communicate with each other. Thus, the reality of Christ, consummated through his death, is integrated into the unity of the cosmos as an intrinsic principle, “so that the world as a whole and as the scene of personal human actions has become different from what it would have been had Christ not died.” “[P]oured out over all the cosmos . . . [Christ] became actually, in his very humanity, what he had always been by his dignity, the heart of the universe, the innermost centre of creation.”³⁴ In his humanity, Christ in death became pancosmic.

Rahner’s Bonn lecture of 1960, “The Hermeneutics of Eschatological Assertions,” made clear a presupposition that pulsed through his theology: “Christian anthropology and Christian eschatology are ultimately

²⁹ Ibid. 25.

³¹ Ibid. 25–26.

³³ Ibid. 65.

³⁰ Ibid. 31.

³² Ibid. 63.

³⁴ Ibid. 66.

Christology, in the unity (where alone they are possible and comprehensible) of the different phases of the beginning, the present and the completed end.”³⁵ That lecture likewise summarized the tensions involved in eschatology inasmuch as it has to acknowledge the essential historicity of humans and humanity as beings involved in history. One should neither eliminate “the reference to a real future yet to come,” nor forget that humans have “a physical, spatio-temporal bodily existence, even in matters of salvation.”³⁶ Emphasizing that “all eschatological assertions have the *one* totality of man in mind, which cannot be neatly divided into two parts, body and soul,” Rahner explained that there must be both a universal and an individual eschatology, “because man is always both individual and member of society and neither can be completely absorbed in the other, nor can everything be said in one statement alone.”³⁷ Given this intrinsic complexity, eschatology “must speak of man as personal spirit and as corporal being and hence express his fulfilment as spirit-person and corporal being. . . . Eschatology is concerned with the fulfilment of the individual as individual spirit-person which comes with death as the end of the individual history. Eschatology is also concerned with the fulfilment of humanity in the resurrection of the flesh as the end of the bodily history of the world. But in each case it is concerned in a different way with the *whole* man.”³⁸

These tensions are evident in the progression of Rahner’s reflections on bodily resurrection. The earlier Rahner avoided *explicitly* saying that the identity of the glorified body and the earthly body does not require that some material fragment of the earthly body be contained in the glorified body. He simply proceeded to reinterpret the resurrection of the body, *at the end of the world*, which he considered a dogma of faith, by means of his theory of the human soul becoming pancosmic in the final consummation. That approach did have the benefit of not forgetting his eschatological assertion about humanity’s historicity, which emphasized that humanity “has a physical, spatio-temporal, bodily existence, even in matters of salvation and that the nature of man and of his one and total fulfilment must also be envisaged in the light of these things.”³⁹ In asserting that “the ‘resurrection of the flesh’ in the creed of the Church means the definitive salvation of man as a whole,” the earlier Rahner still insisted that one could not deny an intermediate state in the destiny of man between death and bodily fulfilment, or that a human reaches personal maturity or “a full

³⁵ *Theological Investigations* 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) 323–46, at 335.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 4.331.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 4.341.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 4.340–41.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 4.331.

ripening of the whole man” in that ‘intermediate state’ after ‘death’.”⁴⁰ As we shall see below, the later Rahner reconsidered his earlier insistence on an intermediate state and his identification of the resurrection of the body with the notion of a soul resurrected into *pancosmicity* at the *end* of history. He will have become open to an *individual* resurrection in death, characterizing it “as one element of a progressive transformation of world history and the cosmos in general.”⁴¹

RESURRECTION OF THE “SELF/PERSON”

In his *Introduction to Christianity*, Joseph Ratzinger acknowledged that the article in the creed about the resurrection of the body puts us in a curious dilemma: “We have discovered anew the indivisibility of man; we live our corporality with a new intensity and feel it as the indispensable mode of realization of the one being of man. From this angle we can understand afresh the biblical message, which promises immortality not to a separated soul but to the whole man.”⁴² Ratzinger moved through a brief analysis of texts, whereby he distinguished the biblical doctrine of resurrection, which presupposes the undivided unity of a human, with “no word denoting *only* the body (separated and distinguished from the soul),” from the Greek notion of the immortality of the soul. He then concluded: “The real heart of faith in the resurrection does not consist at all in the idea of the restoration of the body, to which we have reduced it in our thinking; such is the case even though this is the pictorial image used throughout the Bible.”⁴³

Ratzinger instead proposed that “the real content of the hope symbolically proclaimed in the Bible” is “an immortality of the person, of the *one* creation man” that “as such goes on existing, even if transformed.” That immortality “proceeds not from the personal force of what is in itself indestructible but from being drawn into the dialogue with the creator.”⁴⁴ In Ratzinger’s understanding, immortality is “dialogic,” the conversation with God which is life, which opens us to community with others, and outlasts death. Thus, the essential content of the biblical pronouncements about the resurrection is “not the conception of a restoration of bodies to souls after a long interval; their aim is to tell men that they, they them-

⁴⁰ “The Life of the Dead,” in *Theological Investigations* 4.347–54, at 352–53.

⁴¹ “The Intermediate State,” in *Theological Investigations* 17, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 114–24, at 118.

⁴² *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970) 268–69; originally published as *Einführung in das Christentum* (Munich: Kösel, 1968).

⁴³ *Ibid.* 270.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 270–71.

selves, live on; not by virtue of their own power but because they are known and loved by God in such a way that they can no longer perish.”⁴⁵

Ratzinger noted that the Greek term *soma* can mean not only “body” but also “self.” Moreover, “‘*soma*’ can be ‘*sarx*’, that is, ‘body’ in the earthly, historical, and thus chemical, physical, sense; but it can also be ‘breath’ [or] ‘spirit’; in reality this means that the self, which now appears in a body that can be conceived in chemico-physical terms, can, again, appear definitively in the guise of a trans-physical reality.” Ratzinger further observed that in Paul’s language it is not “body” and “spirit” which are opposites, but rather “fleshy body” and “body in the fashion of the spirit.”⁴⁶

In Ratzinger’s view, “both John (6.53) and Paul (1 Cor 15.50) state with all possible emphasis that the ‘resurrection of the flesh’, the ‘resurrection of the body’ is not a ‘resurrection of physical bodies.’” He thus argued that “the Pauline sketch is far less naïve than later theological erudition with its subtle constructions on the question how there can be eternal physical bodies.” For, according to Ratzinger, “Paul teaches not the resurrection of physical bodies but the resurrection of persons . . . in the different form of the life of the resurrection, as shown in the risen Lord.” In Ratzinger’s understanding, Paul expressly describes the idea of “the return of the ‘fleshy body’, that is, the biological structure” as impossible: “the perishable cannot become imperishable.”⁴⁷

Embracing the theme developed in Rahner’s *Theology of Death*, Ratzinger did relate resurrection to matter, in the sense that “if the cosmos is history and if matter represents a moment in the history of spirit, then there is no such thing as an eternal, neutral combination of matter and spirit but a final ‘complexity’ in which the world finds its omega and unity. . . . [T]here is a final connection between matter and spirit in which the density of [humanity] and of the world is consummated.” On the “last Day,” the destiny of each individual human “becomes full because the destiny of [humanity] is fulfilled.” Therefore, “the goal of the Christian is not private bliss but the whole.” She or he believes not just in her or his own future but in the future of the world, which “is more than he himself can create.”⁴⁸

RESURRECTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL/PERSON

Edward Schillebeeckx struck a very similar note in *Church: The Human Story of God* while discussing the kingdom of God as already and not yet. Referring to “present day experience of the kingdom of God as the foundation of a firm hope in a final consummation planned by God,” Schille-

⁴⁵ Ibid. 273.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 277.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 276–77.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 277–78.

beeckx described that kingdom as “the definitive salvation or the radical liberation of humankind for a brotherly and sisterly society and community in which there are no longer any master-servant relationships, in which pain and tears are wiped out and forgotten, and in which ‘God will be all in all’ (I Cor. 15.28).”⁴⁹ What then followed is especially pertinent to our present discussion.

Noting, in parenthesis, that the individual is “called *sarx*, body or flesh, in the Bible,” Schillebeeckx observed that “in the Christian tradition of faith the achievement of the salvation and happiness of the individual within this perfected society [the kingdom of God] is called ‘resurrection of the body’, i.e. of the human person including his or her human corporeality.” Thus identifying resurrection of the body with “resurrection of the *person* including corporeality,” Schillebeeckx went on to explain that corporeality here means “the visible orchestration, the personal melody, of a person which others also enjoy.” He made it clear that “this glorified corporeality has nothing to do with the body which is left behind [but] has everything to do with the personal corporeality in which I lived on earth.”⁵⁰ Unfortunately, Schillebeeckx did not linger to unpack such statements, but instead moved on with his discussion of eschatological consummation and Jesus’ role in it.

In his earlier *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (Dutch, 1974), Schillebeeckx argued that the core of the disciples’ Easter experience was a concrete experience of forgiveness which broke in upon and regathered or reassembled the disciples after the death of Jesus.⁵¹ He proposed that through their reflection upon this renewed offer of salvation, which effected a profound experience of conversion, the disciples returned to Jesus in a “present fellowship” and came to a fuller understanding of his meaning. They finally concluded that Jesus “is alive. . . . A dead man does not proffer forgiveness.”⁵² In reporting what had occurred, the conversion experience of the disciples was presented in the form, guise or model of an appearance vision.⁵³ Providing a complex analysis of the accounts of the empty tomb and of the appearances, and particularly invoking the description of Paul’s *experience* of the risen Jesus, in Acts of the Apostles (chapters 9, 22 and 26),⁵⁴ Schillebeeckx further suggested that both the very term “resurrection” and the narratives about “appearances” reflect the process of interpretation wherein the disciples developed the *language*, within

⁴⁹ *Church: The Human Story of God*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 132–33.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 133.

⁵¹ See *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Seabury-Crossroad Book, 1979) 321–97, 518–25, and 644–50.

⁵² *Ibid.* 391.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 390.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 360–79.

given models of comprehension, to articulate their original experience of conversion.⁵⁵ Emphasizing that intermediary historical factors are always involved in occurrences of grace, Schillebeeckx asked “what would a straight appearance of Jesus in the flesh prove? Only *believers* see the one who appears; a faith motivated interpretation enters into the very heart of the event.” Thus, in his opinion, we should not insist on grounding faith in “pseudo-empiricism, thereby raising all sorts of false problems: whether this ‘Christological mode of seeing’ was a sensory seeing of Jesus, whether it was ‘objective’ or ‘subjective’ seeing, a ‘manifestation’ or a ‘vision’. . . . To the New Testament all such questions are alien.”⁵⁶ For Schillebeeckx, “each and every Easter experience, in whatever guise, really is the faith-motivated experience and confession of the power of God that has brought the crucified One to life again.”⁵⁷

In the clarifications added to the third Dutch edition (1975) of *Jesus*, Schillebeeckx observed that “without being identical with it, the Resurrection of Jesus—that is, what happened to him, personally, after his death—is inseparable from the Easter experience, or faith-motivated experience, of the disciples; that is to say from their conversion process in which they perceive the work of the Spirit of Christ.” Unlike Aquinas, who had argued that glorified bodies could be seen by the eyes of non-glorified bodies,⁵⁸ Schillebeeckx further asserted that “apart from this experience of Christian faith the disciples had no organ that could afford them a sight of Jesus’ Resurrection.”⁵⁹

Schillebeeckx did make it clear that “besides this subjective aspect it is equally apparent that (according to Christian conviction) no Easter experience of renewed life was possible without the personal Resurrection of Jesus—in the sense that Jesus’ personal-cum-bodily Resurrection (in keeping with logical and ontological priority; a chronological priority is not to the point here) ‘precedes’ any faith-motivated experience.” But Schillebeeckx said even less here about what he intended by “personal-cum-bodily Resurrection” than he would later in *Church: The Human Story of God*. He simply concluded that to say “Jesus is risen, in his own person, therefore entails not only that he has been raised from the dead by the Father . . . but also—and just as essentially—that in the dimension of our history God gives him a community (Church, as was to be said later on); at the same time it means that the Jesus exalted to be with the Father is with us, in an altogether new way.”⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Ibid. 392–96, also 645; see also his *Interim Report on the Books Jesus and Christ*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 78–86.

⁵⁶ *Jesus* 710 n. 119.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 397.

⁵⁸ *ST* 3 supplement, q. 88, a.2.

⁵⁹ *Jesus* 645.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 645–46.

In the subsequent *Interim Report*, in the context of responding to his critics, Schillebeeckx notes the exegete A. Descamps's concession that the risen Christ "did not show himself physically in any single 'sign,'"⁶¹ and affirms that was precisely the reason why he had "deliberately kept silent about possible visual elements in the process of conversion or the Easter experience." He says that his "intention was to relieve this visual element of the deep dogmatic significance which some people attach to it, namely of being the foundation of the whole of the Christian faith." Schillebeeckx concedes that he "would have done better if [he] had discussed this visual element [and had] pointed out that whatever its historical and psychological significance, it was unimportant for dogma."⁶² He clarifies that when he was asked whether he would "deny all the visual elements as a historical and psychological event in what the New Testament calls 'appearances of Jesus'," he always rejected that as an option, "though adding that this visual element was not the foundation of Christian belief (in the resurrection)."⁶³ For Schillebeeckx, "the fact that Jesus is risen 'is evident' in the experience of his saving presence: it 'presents' itself to the eyes of *believers*." The all-embracing cognitive aspect of the Easter experience viewed as a conversion is "the experience of the new (spiritual) presence of the risen Jesus in the gathered community."⁶⁴ He insists that in his conversion hypothesis all the initiative originates from the risen Christ, and reaffirms his position concerning "the logical and ontological priority of Jesus' personal and corporeal Resurrection to belief in the resurrection."⁶⁵ But Schillebeeckx does not further explain what "corporeal" means. The closest he comes to any kind of clarification is his observation that Descamps's statement that "a vanished corpse is not the same thing as a risen body" expresses "an intolerable dualism if it does not mention the *person* involved."⁶⁶

In an official letter discussing the reality of life after death, addressed to the world's bishops and dated May 17, 1979, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated that the Church understands resurrection "as referring to the whole person" and affirmed "that a spiritual element survives and subsists after death, an element endowed with consciousness and will, so that the 'human self' subsists." (As Peter Phan has noted,⁶⁷ the text published in *Osservatore Romano* surprisingly added, "though deprived for the present of the complement of its body," a phrase not contained in the

⁶¹ In A. L. Descamps's review of Schillebeeckx's *Jezus, het verhaal van een levende*, in *Revue théologique de Louvain* 6 (1975) 212–23, at 221.

⁶² *Interim Report* 82.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 148 n. 46.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 80, emphasis mine.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 83.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 86, emphasis mine.

⁶⁷ Peter C. Phan, "Current Theology: Contemporary Context and Issues in Eschatology," *Theological Studies* 55 (1994) 507–36, at 524.

official text in *Acta apostolicae sedis*.) The letter then explained that “to designate this element, the church uses the word ‘soul’ . . . not unaware that this term has various meanings in the Bible,” and added “there is no valid reason for rejecting it; . . . the use of some word as a vehicle is absolutely indispensable.” The letter also emphasized the unique meaning of the Assumption of Mary, “namely the fact that the bodily glorification of the Virgin is an anticipation of the glorification that is the destiny of all the elect,” but said no more about the nature of that glorification. It did acknowledge that “neither scripture nor theology provides sufficient light for a proper picture of life after death,” and affirmed both “the fundamental continuity, thanks to the Holy Spirit, between our present life in Christ and the future life . . . [and] the radical break between the present life and the future one.” It likewise counseled bishops to provide the faithful “with the means to be firm with regard to the essence of the doctrine [of after-life],” and called for them at the same time to be “careful not to allow childish or arbitrary images to be considered truths of faith.”⁶⁸

One might wonder whether Schillebeeckx’s “conversation” about the nature of the experience of the Resurrection appearances with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith might have proceeded differently, if it had taken place after Ratzinger became prefect on November 26, 1980, rather than during the previous tenure of Cardinal Franjo Seper.⁶⁹ For, certainly, the nature of the appearances has to be rethought if resurrection of the body means that the *self* (Ratzinger), or the *individual* or *person*, including the “melody” or identity created while embodied within history (Schillebeeckx), goes on existing in a transformed mode, without the restoration of the physical/material body.

A TOTAL EMBODIED HISTORY TRANSFIGURED

While acknowledging that Schillebeeckx clearly accepts the personal, bodily Resurrection of Jesus, Gerald O’Collins was strongly critical of Schillebeeckx’s reconstruction of the manner in which this Resurrection *became known* to the disciples.⁷⁰ Arguing that the New Testament shows a massive preference for *the language of sight*, O’Collins maintained that “it took an objective encounter with the risen Jesus to catalyse the disciples’ faith in him and proclamation of his Resurrection.” He rejected that the

⁶⁸ *Origins* 9 (August 2, 1979) 131–33; Latin text in *Acta apostolicae sedis* 71 (1979) 939–43.

⁶⁹ See *The Schillebeeckx Case: Official Exchange of Letters and Documents in the Investigation of Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P. by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1976–1980*, ed. Ted Schoof, O.P., trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York: Paulist, 1984) 33–34, 62–64, 131–33.

⁷⁰ *Interpreting Jesus* (New York: Paulist, 1983) 120.

appearances were any kind of internal vision, and insisted upon objective, external visions, saying that “in biblical Greek ‘to see’ normally involves some kind of seeing with the eyes. This suggests that the Easter visions included some kind of sense perception of something (or rather Someone) ‘out there’.”⁷¹

O’Collins did concede that the appearances could be characterized as eschatological visions, since they “were much more than visions that remained totally *within* history and the structures of the present world.” He also allowed that the appearances might be called Christophanies, because they depended upon the initiative of the risen Christ, and emphasized that they “did not dispense the Easter witnesses from faith.”⁷² To Schillebeeckx’s question and statement, “What would a straight appearance of Jesus in the flesh prove? Only *believers* see the one who appears,” O’Collins replied that “it would at least ‘prove’ that he was risen from the dead and truly living. It is more accurate to say that ‘only those who *become* believers’ see the one who appears.” Schillebeeckx’s suggestion that a focus on visible manifestations involved a pseudo-empiricism which diminished faith was dismissively attributed to “certain prior convictions [which] control his interpretation of the New Testament texts.”⁷³

In discussing the empty tomb, O’Collins spoke of God taking Jesus’ corpse and using it “as the raw material for the new creation.” For him, “God is no throw-away God.” “In the incarnation matter is personally united to the Son of God. In the Resurrection the corpse of Jesus is raised and transformed to become the risen Christ.” O’Collins did concede that “it may be hard to refute in principle those who imagine a scenario with a risen Christ enjoying a new, glorified, bodily existence, even though his corpse decays in the tomb.” O’Collins came closest to revealing what he understood by a new, glorified, bodily existence when he said that the empty tomb (which for him implies that “the corpse had been taken up into the glorified existence of the risen Christ”) “very powerfully expresses *the personal continuity* between the earthly Jesus and the risen Christ. Alongside or even despite all the transformation of a Resurrection that makes the risen Christ the anticipated beginning of the end of the world, he remains

⁷¹ Ibid. 116–118. For his response to PHEME PERKINS, who “downplays the language of sight,” in proposing “a *spiritual* experience,” see Gerald O’Collins, *Interpreting the Resurrection: Examining the Major Problems in the Stories of Jesus’ Resurrection* (New York: Paulist, 1988) 11–17. Earlier O’Collins had proposed the explanation that Christ’s meeting with Paul is presented as occurring without any sense perception because Luke had already described how the risen Christ is withdrawn from such contact through the Ascension” (*The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* [Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson, 1973] 35).

⁷² Gerald O’Collins, *Interpreting Jesus* 119.

⁷³ Ibid. 123–24.

personally identical with the Jesus who lived and died. He does not appear as some kind of replica in his place. There is a genuine identity in transformation.”⁷⁴ However, in *Jesus Risen*, responding to Hans Küng’s position that “[t]here can be identity of the person even without continuity between the earthly and the ‘heavenly,’ ‘spiritual’ body,” and that “[t]he corporeality of the Resurrection does not require the tomb to be empty,”⁷⁵ O’Collins accuses Küng of dispensing with any *bodily* continuity between the earthly and risen existence of Jesus: “The totally new ‘spiritual’ body comes into existence without any continuity with the former, earthly body, and yet without imperiling the genuine personal identity of Jesus. In his risen state he is identical with, and no mere substitute for, the person who died on the cross and was buried.” O’Collins arguably, as we shall see below, declares that “Küng seems to locate Jesus’ continuity simply at the level of soul or spirit. The new, ‘heavenly’ body totally replaces the one which ended in the tomb.”⁷⁶

The emphasis on an external, sensible vision sometimes clouds the nuances in O’Collins’s interpretation of the resurrection. In stating that “Schillebeeckx rejects any actual appearances in the sense of meeting Jesus alive after his death and burial,” he does not seek to clarify whether that meant in a physical sense.⁷⁷ Yet, in commenting on John 17:20 (“Do not hold me”), O’Collins observes that the text does not say “Do not cling to my feet,” or “to my body.” “The point at issue is her way of relating to him rather than the state of his risen body (and the possibility of touching it).”⁷⁸ In *Interpreting the Resurrection*, he concedes that it does not follow from Luke’s account (24:42–43) of an appearance to the apostolic group on the occasion of their being together for a meal “that the risen Jesus quite literally ate (and drank) with his disciples (stage one of the tradition).”⁷⁹ Earlier, in *What Are They Saying about the Resurrection?*, O’Collins declared that the raised and exalted Christ “emerges from his invisible state to encounter some privileged witnesses. His body is ‘spiritual’ not ‘physical’. ‘Flesh and blood,’ Paul declares roundly, ‘cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 15:44, 50).’” After discussing Lukan and Johannine *realism* in the passages about eating and touching, he concluded: “If they emphasize [Jesus’] *physical* presence to counter ‘spiritualizing’ aberrations, they also allow for a certain ‘heavenly otherness’ to prevent crassly materialistic views which would reduce the resurrection to the reanimation of a

⁷⁴ Ibid. 127–29.

⁷⁵ *On Being a Christian*, trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976) 366.

⁷⁶ *Jesus Risen: An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ’s Resurrection* (New York: Paulist, 1987) 91.

⁷⁷ *Interpreting Jesus* 121.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 117.

⁷⁹ *Interpreting the Resurrection* 51.

corpse.”⁸⁰ Subsequently acknowledging the modern understanding of the interchangeability of matter and energy, and noting that five hundred million cells are renewed every day in the human body, O’Collins went on to say that “in being raised from the dead, Jesus was liberated to enter into a web of relationships ‘with the universe of men and things’. . . . In his bodiliness he was freed from the ordinary limitations of space, time and matter to enjoy relations with all times and places.”⁸¹

In a later chapter of *Jesus Risen*, O’Collins proposes that all matter, including all *human* matter, “has something spiritual about it” and adds that “all the atomic material in our universe is at least potentially human matter.” He asserts that the resurrection of the dead will mean “the full personalizing and spiritualizing of matter, not its abolition. Through the Holy Spirit the human spirit will completely dominate matter. The body will clearly express and serve the glorified spirit of human beings.”⁸² O’Collins then proceeds to discuss “participation, communication, continuity and salvation” as four points “which may help us leap imaginatively from our present to our future bodiliness.” In regard to *participation*, bodies are said to insert us into the material world making us part of the cosmos and the cosmos part of us; as participants in the universe we are also related to God. In regard to *communication*, it is through our bodies that we act, express ourselves, and communicate. “Being subject to the constraints of space and time, our bodies [also] set us apart and restrict our chances of relating.” A growing bodily loneliness through sickness, old age and imprisonment “finds its ultimate expression when the tomb encloses a newly-buried corpse.” In regard to *identity*, “despite our constant and massive bodily changes, personal identity and continuity are somehow bound up with bodily identity and continuity. We are/have the same body, and therefore remain the same person.” With regard to *salvation*, O’Collins says “we experience our bodiliness as the ‘place’ and means of grace,

⁸⁰ *What Are They Saying about the Resurrection* (New York: Paulist, 1978) 49–51; also *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* 84–85.

⁸¹ *What Are They Saying about the Resurrection* 76–78; O’Collins cites Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Resurrection and the Message of Easter* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975) 239–40. In those pages, Dufour defines “bodily resurrection” as meaning that “a being who is dead is called to everlasting life.” The dead body “returns to the undifferentiated universe of matter.” The object of the divine action of resurrection “is not a ‘spiritual soul’ and a ‘material body’ in turn, but a being who was a living body, a person who was previously maintained in being throughout a continual transformation of the parts which composed him. . . . He was glorified in that [his historical body] by which he personally entered into a relationship with the universe of [humans] and things. . . . The precise way in which [his corpse] was taken up again is beyond our understanding.”

⁸² *Jesus Risen* 181–82, and 225–26 n. 4.

happiness, sin and misery.” He further proposes that “all human happiness has something bodily about it.”⁸³

Applying these four categories to the risen life, O’Collins first notes that “resurrection brings matter its most intense participation in the life of God. By being raised from death, human beings as *embodied* spirits will not only belong again to the universe but also in a new way will share in divine life.” Resurrection will also maximize our capacity to relate and communicate, “freeing us to go far beyond the limitations and triviality of so much communication in this world.” Citing the passage from Irenaeus (*Adversus omnes haereses* 5.13, 1), that the dead will rise with the *same body* in which they died, O’Collins asks “in what sense?” “What counts here as bodily sameness or identity?” How far is it correct “to speak of someone being ‘the ‘same’ body at six, sixteen, and sixty?” In response, he connects the statement “I am my body” to “I am my history,” noting that humans also need to add “I have my body; I have my history,” since we also *transcend* or “are more than our bodies and our history.”⁸⁴

“Through our bodiliness we create and develop a whole web of relationships with other people, the world and God. . . . As bodies we have our history—from conception to death.” Thus, if one asks “What has made me what I am?” O’Collins’s answer is “my particular embodied history and not, for instance, merely the millions of molecules which in a passing parade have at different moments constituted my particular physical existence. . . . [M]y whole bodily history is much more ‘me’ than the body which breathes its last at seventy or eighty years of age.” O’Collins concludes that it is the particular bodily or embodied history, “which makes up the story of every person,” that will be raised from the dead and brought to new life: “In a mysterious, transformed fashion the risen existence will express what embodied persons were and became in their earthly life.” O’Collins therefore proposes that the passage from Irenaeus may be interpreted as meaning that the dead will rise “with the same bodily history at the end of which they died; otherwise those who rise would not be the same persons who previously died.” In that view, “we will rise with our integral history,” shaped by our sex, language, culture and other factors. “My remaining in resurrection the particular person I had been depends on *my* particular embodied history being raised from death to new life.” It is not clear, however, whether O’Collins intends that to be the extent of matter’s intense participation in the life of God, given his statement about God’s using the corpse “as the raw material for a new creation,” and also considering what he says in regard to the body and salvation: “our risen

⁸³ Ibid. 182–84.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 184–85, and 226 n. 6.

bodies will be the 'place' where we will experience the full freedom and happiness of heaven."⁸⁵

In his volume *Christology*, published in 1995, O'Collins retains his emphasis on the element of sight and some visual component in the appearances: "We are dealing with a claim about a bodily resurrected person appearing to other persons who exist within our space-time world and see him." He thus declares it "difficult to imagine how a purely spiritual, interior seeing could be reconciled with the NT terminology."⁸⁶ In emphasizing that Jesus' Resurrection "also manifested the transformed being which the glorified humanity of Jesus now enjoyed," O'Collins re-presents the position found in *Jesus Risen*, namely, that "[Jesus'] human life or total embodied history rose with him and was transfigured into a final mode of existence."⁸⁷

Taking all of his positions into account, there is some ambiguity in O'Collins's reflections about "bodiliness." One wishes that he would struggle more with distinguishing, as Ratzinger did above, between "body conceived in chemico-physical terms" and a risen body conceived as "a transphysical reality," and (to use the language of the Congregation of Faith) also be more specific about "the radical break between the present life and the future one" in regard to his understanding of the relation of "bodiliness" and "matter" beyond death.

RESURRECTION IN DEATH

In 1969, Gisbert Greshake introduced his concept of a "resurrection in death," into the European continental debate about "resurrection of the body."⁸⁸ He challenged the prevailing notion of "an intermediate state," in which a soul separated from the body has already received its definitive state (e.g. Beatific Vision) through a particular judgment immediately after death, but awaits the general judgment to be reunited with the glorified body. In Greshake's view, that position rooted in Benedict XII's dogmatic constitution *Benedictus Deus* of 1336, had supported an unacceptable dualism between body and soul, since, contrary to the biblical understanding of resurrection as involving the whole or entire person, it posited the existence of a soul without the body in the interval between death and a

⁸⁵ Ibid. 185–86.

⁸⁶ *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus Christ* (New York: Oxford University, 1995) 93.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 99.

⁸⁸ *Auferstehung der Toten: Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen theologischen Diskussion über die Zukunft der Geschichte*, *Koinonia* 10 (Essen: Ludgerus, 1969) 360–414.

general judgment. Greshake instead invoked the Christian belief that at death one enters *immediately* into fellowship with Christ (Phil 1:2 ff.; 2 Cor 5:1 ff.).⁸⁹

Rooting his eschatological reflections in a theology of the relatedness of creation to God, Greshake proposes that it is God's fidelity which grants the human "continuum" the "identity between earthly and post-mortem existence."⁹⁰ Just as death affects the entire human who is essentially both an individual and a social being, so too the perfection of resurrection must impact the totality. For Greshake, "resurrection in death" means that, as the whole person (not just a part, or the body) dies, God raises that whole person in the moment of death. There is thus neither a disembodied soul existing in an interval between death and general resurrection, nor a moment in which the person ceases to exist until recreated by God (as in the theory of recent Protestant theology).⁹¹

Only God's power revealed in Jesus' Resurrection can give humans hope "that those things in life thrusting toward meaning, perfection and wholeness can in fact find fulfillment." And, in Greshake's view, real perfection and completion lie in resurrection of the body which does not, however, mean the actual resuscitation of dead bodies and the opening of graves.⁹² According to Greshake, "matter will be perfected, not in itself or by itself, but rather in 'the other,' namely, in the spirit, or the person."⁹³ Holding that the human person cannot be divided into components, he spoke of the body as the "expression" of the spirit, by virtue of which a "subject" expresses itself in and to the world.⁹⁴ Through the body, one establishes the many relationships by which one grows into the world, and also takes the world into self, thereby shaping oneself as a person. The body is one's "being-in-the-world." In death, what one has become, the personal "inter-

⁸⁹ See Greshake, "Death and Resurrection," *Theology Digest* 26 (1978) 16–18, at 17. This is an abstract of his "Tod und Auferstehung: Alte Probleme neu überdacht," *Bibel und Kirche* 32 (1977) 2–11.

⁹⁰ See Gisbert Greshake and Jacob Kremer, *Resurrectio mortuorum: Zum theologischen Verständnis der leiblichen Auferstehung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986, reprint 1992) 251–53; and Gisbert Greshake, "'Seele' in der Geschichte der christlichen Eschatologie: Ein Durchblick," in *Seele: Problembegriff christlicher Eschatologie*, Quaestiones disputatae 106, ed. Wilhelm Breuning (Freiburg: Herder, 1986) 107–58, at 146–47.

⁹¹ See Franz-Josef Nocke, "Eschatologie," in *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, ed. Theodor Schneider (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1992) 2.377–478, at 458.

⁹² See "Death and Resurrection" 17.

⁹³ "Die Leib-Seele-Problematik und die Vollendung der Welt," in Gisbert Greshake and Gerhard Lohfink, *Naherwartung, Auferstehung, Unsterblichkeit: Untersuchungen zur christlichen Eschatologie*, Quaestiones disputatae 71 (Freiburg: Herder, 1982) 156–84, at 162.

⁹⁴ *Resurrectio mortuorum* 264; "Seele" 151.

pretation” or history of oneself in the world, in and through one’s “bodiliness,” is not shed. Rather, according to Greshake, resurrected bodiliness is precisely the entire organic ensemble of relationships and dependencies—one’s body as the essential stamp of a particular individuality—open to the whole of reality. The bodiliness resurrected in death is the history of a subject or self shaped within the process of many interactions with the world, wherein one has also left one’s effects on the world; it involves the “world-reference” of an individual whose personality is not totally separable from the world.⁹⁵ The resurrected person is indelibly stamped by interaction with the world, and has left a permanent mark on history and human society.⁹⁶

For Greshake, “resurrection in death and resurrection on the last day are nothing but two successive event points, united together through a dynamic progressive process.” Every individual “body” thus becomes a member moving toward the completion and fullness foreshadowed by the Resurrection of Christ.⁹⁷ We ultimately bring before God what we have each done in love, which is inscribed on the person or self we have become, and also on the process of the world inasmuch as it is affected by our actions.⁹⁸

FULFILLMENT OF THE WHOLE INDIVIDUAL

As Peter Phan has noted,⁹⁹ Karl Rahner began to reconsider his earlier theory of the soul becoming pancosmic. In his foreword to Silvano Zucal’s *La teologia della morte in Karl Rahner*,¹⁰⁰ Rahner stated that he had adopted the view Greshake proposed in *Naherwartung, Auferstehung, Unsterblichkeit*. He likewise modified his earlier position regarding the “intermediate state.” In his article “Jesus’ Resurrection,” in volume 17 of *Theological Investigations* Rahner allowed that, “depending on the particular philosophical and anthropological interpretations . . . we choose,” there could be considerable variation in the interpretation of what resurrection could mean for the “body.” He likewise declared the question whether temporality is to be objectively included or not to be, theologically speaking, open to debate: “In other words, it may remain an open question whether the perfecting of an individual takes place ‘later’, as his personal perfecting, or whether it takes place when he dies; i.e. whether we have to

⁹⁵ See *Resurrectio mortuorum* 258; “Seele” 151–52; “Death and Resurrection” 17–18.

⁹⁶ “Death and Resurrection” 18.

⁹⁷ “Seele” 152.

⁹⁸ “Death and Resurrection” 18.

⁹⁹ *Eternity in Time: A Study of Karl Rahner’s Eschatology* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University, 1988) 114 & 236 n. 102.

¹⁰⁰ Silvano Zucal, *La teologia della morte in Karl Rahner* (Trent: Istituto trentino di cultura; Bologna: EDB, 1982) 6.

expect the resurrection of the individual 'in the body' as part of a general resurrection of all men at the end of history, or whether it is 'co-existent' with historical time, which meanwhile continues to run its course."¹⁰¹

Rahner unequivocally rejected the idea "that the one resurrection of men and women takes place *after* a period of complete non-existence on the part of the dead. . . . because it would make it impossible to talk seriously . . . about a true identity between the person who has died and the person who is raised." He proposed that "'the resurrection' in its theologically valid sense refers primarily to the acquiring of a final and ultimate form by the whole, individual person in his own history of freedom; it applies to his body only in a secondary and derivative sense."¹⁰²

Concerning the Resurrection of Jesus, he remarked that "the empty tomb ought rather to be judged as an expression of a conviction which had already spread for other reasons—the conviction that Jesus was alive," and he noted that "the 'facts' of Jesus' Resurrection must simply be determined in the light of what we have to understand by our own 'resurrection'." He further added: "If we began by taking our bearings from the notion of the revival of a physical, material body, we should be bound from the outset to lose sight of the general meaning of 'resurrection' . . . [and] the meaning of Jesus' own resurrection. For unlike everything which the Old and New Testaments report elsewhere about the raising of the dead, the Lord's resurrection means the ultimate deliverance of actual human existence by God and before him. This means that human history acquires its real validity for the first time; it neither simply goes on continuing into vacuity, nor is it simply destroyed."¹⁰³

According to Rahner, in considering the meaning of resurrection, we cannot separate the person from the activity or cause that animated his earthly life. "The real activity or 'cause' . . . is always whatever is brought to fulfilment in the actual existence of the human person. . . . [W]hat is permanently valid is the validity of the person himself."¹⁰⁴

In his essay "The Intermediate State" published in the same volume of *Theological Investigations*, Rahner agreed that one can hold "the view that the single and total perfecting of man in 'body' and 'soul' takes place immediately after death; that the resurrection of the flesh and the general judgement take place 'parallel' to the temporal history of the world; and that both coincide with the sum of the particular judgements of individual men and women," provided that such a statement of theological eschatology "does not mean that the time scheme of world history itself can also be

¹⁰¹ *Theological Investigations* 17.16–23, at 17. The original German dates from 1975.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 17.20.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 17.21.

eliminated.”¹⁰⁵ In that regard, he pointed out that “in the Scriptures ‘the resurrection of the flesh’ is not understood as being the final destiny of the body as such. On the contrary, the statement always means the destiny of the one and total person who as such *is* ‘flesh’.”¹⁰⁶ He further notes that “in interpreting the liberation from Sheol of the people who died before Christ by the dead and risen Christ himself, the great majority of the Fathers understood it in the light of Jewish teaching . . . as a *physical* resurrection, not as the freeing of the soul alone for the contemplation of God.”¹⁰⁷

With regard to the notion of an “intermediate state,” Rahner came to consider its genesis in the Middle Ages as a stage in the history of theology: “it is the attempt to reconcile the collective and the individual view of eschatological perfection.” He very much emphasizes that we still need to think about the nature of collective, cosmic perfection, even if we want to bring together the collective aspect, in the resurrection of the dead, and the individual blessedness of the individual soul, without any intermediate state: “For we ought at least to read what we have said about the individual into the concept of the final consummation, as one element of a progressive transformation of world history and the cosmos in general.”¹⁰⁸

Rahner went on to confront the dilemmas raised by postulating an *anima separata*, a soul separated from the body in an intermediate state or *aevum*. Especially “if we take as our premise the doctrine of the soul which defines it as being the *forma corporis*, and which also asserts the substantial unity of body and soul,” how can there be a soul separated from the body? “The informing is identical with the soul itself.” He noted that he had earlier tried to resolve that problem by postulating a cosmic relation between the finite human spirit “and the *one* matter of *the world*.” In that pancosmic perspective, the soul’s relation to matter would still remain and be preserved even when the precise way the body is formed during its earthly life, through this relation of matter and spirit, ceased to exist.¹⁰⁹

Rahner admitted that the whole problem becomes much easier “if [the] enduring relation between spirit and matter is expressed scholastically as the enduring ‘informedness’ of the glorified body by the perfected spiritual soul.”¹¹⁰ Rahner then immediately went on to acknowledge a need to rethink the materiality of the resurrection body:

[P]robably no metaphysically thinking theologian would continue to maintain today (for either philosophical or theological grounds) that the identity of the glorified body and the earthly body is only ensured if some material fragment of the earthly body is found again in the glorified body. For this kind of identity cannot even be

¹⁰⁵ *Theological Investigation* 17.114–24, at 115.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 17.116.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 17.118.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 17.119–20.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 17.117.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 17.119.

found in the earthly body, because of its radical metabolic processes. And this kind of thinking is completely inconceivable with a modern conception of matter. . . . How would it in any way serve the identity between the earthly and the glorified body if we were to think into the resurrection body a material particle of this kind, which had earlier been the “property” of the earthly body? . . . For us, identity consists, now and in the future, of the identity of the free, spiritual subject, which we call “the soul”. That is why even empirical evidence of the corpse in the grave can no longer provide an argument for there having been no “resurrection.”

Having said all that, Rahner asked: “So why should we not put the resurrection at that particular moment when the person’s history of freedom is finally consummated, which is to say at his death?”¹¹¹

Rahner further observed that what we traditionally have distinguished “(talking about the immortality of the soul on the one hand, and the resurrection of the body on the other) can only be grasped as *being one*.” Consequently, given its understanding of the unity of the human, modern metaphysical anthropology finds it difficult to accept the possibility of an intermediate state, or an absolutely non-material mode of existence on the part of the spiritual subject. Yet, in Rahner’s view, the Scholastic teaching about the soul as a self-subsisting form, which can then also exist as separate (*separata*), can remain correct and meaningful “provided it is no longer intended to mean more than that through . . . death man is not destroyed, but arrives at perfection.” To say, however, that the soul goes on existing just by itself without the body “rests on an assumption for which there is no evidence.” Moreover, “a *forma in se subsistens*, which can be free of the body, has no sound reason in itself.”¹¹² Rahner concedes that the notion of an intermediate state may never have been more than “a conceptual aid,” to make clear, in the frames of reference of an earlier viewpoint, that “a Christian may be responsible before God for the final nature of his own free history.” From the standpoint of a contemporary anthropological understanding, one cannot exclude from this promised finality, “*a priori* and platonically, what we know as man’s specific historical character, which is to say his body.”¹¹³

To those who would defend the notion of an “intermediate state” by arguing that the dogma of Mary’s Assumption proves that other humans are not granted such a destiny immediately after death, Rahner responds that the definition of Assumption does not tell us that this privilege “was reserved for her alone.” Acknowledging that there are texts within the tradition that do not reckon with the possibility that the human body could already be glorified at death, Rahner asks whether they presuppose an intermediate state because “they were formulated in the aftermath of Pla-

¹¹¹ Ibid. 17.120.

¹¹² Ibid. 17.121.

¹¹³ Ibid. 17.122.

tonism and under the influence of a naively empirical view of the corpse in the grave.”¹¹⁴

In *Foundations of Christian Faith*, published in German in 1976, two years after the first Dutch edition of Schillebeeckx’s *Jesus*, Rahner observed that “we miss the meaning of ‘resurrection’ in general and also of the resurrection of Jesus . . . if our original preconception is the notion of a resuscitation of a physical, material body.” Rather than a resuscitation, Rahner considered resurrection to be “the final and definitive salvation of a concrete human existence by God and in the presence of God, the abiding and real validity of human history, which neither moves further and further into emptiness, nor perishes altogether. In this respect death is precisely the essential renunciation and the radical relinquishing of any imaginary model of the ‘how’ of this finality, whether this model is related to the ‘body’ or to the ‘spiritual soul’ of this single human existence.”¹¹⁵

Relating resurrection to every person’s hope, and thus a “transcendental” hope to survive in some final and definitive sense, Rahner insisted that “resurrection is not an additional assertion about the fate of a secondary part of man.” “Resurrection is rather the term which, in view of man’s concrete situation, promises the abiding validity of his single and entire existence. Resurrection of the “flesh” which man *is* does not mean resurrection of the body which man *has* as a part of himself.” In Rahner’s understanding, persons who affirm their existence as “permanently valid and redeemable,” and do “not fall into the misunderstanding of a platonic anthropological dualism,” are affirming their resurrection in hope.¹¹⁶

Rahner allowed that “we can admit without any qualms that the reports which are presented to us at first glance as historical details of the event of the resurrection or of the appearances [of Jesus] cannot be harmonized completely. Hence they are to be explained as secondary literary and dramatic embellishments of the original experience that ‘Jesus is alive,’ rather than as descriptions of the experience itself in its original nature.”¹¹⁷ He further asserted that:

So far as the nature of this experience is accessible to us, it is to be explained after the manner of our experience of the powerful Spirit of the living Lord rather than in a way which either likens this experience too closely to mystical visions of an imaginative kind in later times, or understands it as an almost physical sense experience. There is no such sense experience of someone who has really reached fulfillment, even presupposing that he must indeed have freely ‘manifested’ himself.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 17.122–23.

¹¹⁵ *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury, 1978) 266–67.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 268.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 276.

For this manifestation to imply sense experience, everything would have to belong to the realm of normal and profane sense experience.¹¹⁸

Like Schillebeeckx, Rahner also emphasized that the Easter experience presupposed by “the texts which dramatize [it] under the most varied theological motifs” was not produced from within but came “from without.” The witnesses of that experience, which was *sui generis*, were given the unique task of sharing it with others. One can refuse to believe them, but not “by pretending that one understands their experience better.” As Rahner observed, “it can be said that by ‘historical’ means we would not reach the resurrection of Jesus, but only the conviction of his disciples that he is alive.” The Resurrection of Jesus as “the assumption of the fruit of our ongoing history into its final and definitive state” goes beyond the realm of our empirical world, but is inextricably related to “our own transcendental hope in resurrection.”¹¹⁹

A COMPLETELY NEW MODE OF EXISTENCE

In *On Being a Christian*, published in German in 1974, the same year as Schillebeeckx’s Dutch edition of *Jesus*, Hans Küng pointed out that “people too easily forget” that both ‘resurrection’ and ‘raising’ are metaphorical, visual or pictorial expressions and terms.¹²⁰ Schillebeeckx took a position that generalized or did not fundamentally differentiate “the structure of the experience of the first witnesses to the resurrection event” and modern believers’ experience of Jesus as risen and present, “making every allowance for the admittedly special, ‘once only’ character of the first—and for our faith likewise determinative—Easter experience and faith experience of the apostles, who had after all known Jesus prior to his death.”¹²¹ Küng, by contrast, argued that “We moderns have neither the empty tomb nor an Easter experience on which to base our faith. . . . We are *thrown back on the testimony of the first, foundational witnesses*. . . . [and] on the word of proclamation.” While conceding that the Easter stories are meant to be related as such and we should let them be told today, he added: “What is non-visual—and raising to life as the beginning of the consummation, like creation, is just that—cannot be made visual in concepts, but must be made so in the form of pictures which tell a story.” “The Easter narratives are not to be eliminated from the proclamation, but interpreted with discriminating criticism and in such a way that they are not merely privately edifying but stir people to follow Christ in both personal and public life.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 276–78.

¹²⁰ *On Being a Christian* 350 and 379. ¹²¹ *Jesus* 647.

¹²² *On Being a Christian* 379.

Küng affirmed that the Resurrection of Jesus, described in the New Testament, was “a *real* event,” “but what happened bursts through and goes beyond the bounds of history. . . . [It] involves a completely new mode of existence in God’s wholly different mode of existence, conveyed visually and in need of interpretation.”¹²³ Going on to ask whether there is a corporeal resurrection, Küng recalled a personal conversation with Rudolf Bultmann, and answered yes and no:

No, if “body” simply means the physiologically identical body. Yes, if “body” means in the sense of the New Testament *soma* the identical personal reality, the *same self* with its whole history. In other words, no continuity of the body: questions of natural science, like that of the persistence of the molecules, do not arise. But an identity of the person: the question does arise of the lasting significance of the person’s whole life and fate. In any case therefore not a diminished but a finished being. . . . If God is the ultimate reality, then death is not destruction but metamorphosis—not a diminishing, but a finishing.¹²⁴

According to Küng, the Resurrection of Jesus was not a historical event in human space and human time, but neither could it be regarded “*merely* as a way of expressing the significance of his death.” “[I]t was certainly (for faith) a real event” and involves a question of the living *person* of Jesus. It is not that Jesus lives because he is proclaimed; rather, “he is proclaimed because he lives.”¹²⁵

For Küng, “the heaven of faith is the hidden invisible-incomprehensible sphere of God which no journey into space ever reaches. It is not a place, but a mode of being: not one beyond earth’s confines, but bringing all to perfection in God and giving a share in the reign of God.”¹²⁶ To speak of “life” after death in eternity means “a new life which escapes the dimensions of space and time, a life within God’s invisible, imperishable, incomprehensible domain. . . . [I]t is something definitively ‘new’: new creation, new birth, new man and new world. . . . What is meant is to be definitively with God and so to have definitive life.”¹²⁷ Resurrection thus means “dying into God”; it “*means the real conquest of death by God the Creator to whom the believer entrusts everything, even the ultimate, even the conquest of death.*”¹²⁸

In his later work, *Eternal Life?*, Küng again emphasized that “raising up” and “resurrection” are “metaphorical, pictorial terms.” Since “rising from death” involves “a radical transformation into a wholly different, unparalleled, definitive state [of] eternal life,” Küng argues “there is nothing to be depicted, imagined, objectified. It would not be a different life at all if we could give it visual shape with the aid of ideas and images from our ordi-

¹²³ Ibid. 350.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 351–52.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 358.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 351.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 352.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 359–60.

nary life.” Rather, “no eye has seen and no ear has heard” (1 Cor 2:9). “The new life remains something for which we can hope, but which is *beyond our vision or imagination*.”¹²⁹

With Paul Althaus, Küng insists that Christian faith generally speaks, “not of immortality of the soul, but of ‘immortality,’ ‘indissolubility of the personal relationship with God’; but this affects man in the totality of his mental-bodily existence. It is not a question of the ‘soul’, but of the person as a living unit of corporeal-mental being founded by God’s call.”¹³⁰ Declaring what he terms “the Platonic-Augustinian-Cartesian body-soul dualism” to have lost its influence, Küng argues that “biblical and modern anthropological thinking converge in their conception of man as a body-soul unity.” In that understanding, “living behavior can never be neatly divided between body and soul.” “[I]t is the one whole person [body and soul] who feels thinks, wills, suffers, acts.”¹³¹

Given such presuppositions, Küng concludes that resurrection in the New Testament “does not refer to the natural continuance of a spirit-soul independent of our bodily functions. What it means—following the tradition of Jewish theology—is the *new creation*, the *transformation of the whole person by God’s life-creating Spirit*. Man is not released then—platonically—from his corporality. He is released with and in his—now glorified, spiritualized—corporality: a new creation, a new man.”¹³²

For Küng, bodily resurrection is *not* a raising up of a human with his/her body understood “in physiological terms as this actual body, the ‘corpse’, the ‘remains’.” Rather it is a raising up with a body “understood in the New Testament sense as ‘*soma*,’ not so much physiologically as personally: as the identical personal reality, the same self with its entire history” (which Küng says “is mistakenly neglected in the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation”):

When we talk of the resurrection of the body, we mean then, as the Catholic theologian Franz Josef Nocke expresses it, ‘that not only man’s naked self is saved through death, when all earthly history is left behind, all relationships with other human beings become meaningless; bodily resurrection means that a person’s life history and all the relationships established in the course of this history enter together into the consummation and finally belong to the risen person.’¹³³ In other words what is at stake here is not the continuity of my body as a physical entity and consequently scientific questions like those about the whereabouts of the molecules simply do not arise. What matters is the identity of the person. The question arises

¹²⁹ *Eternal Life? Life after Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem*, trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984) 109.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 109–10, citing Paul Althaus, *Die letzten Dinge: Lehrbuch der Eschatologie*, 4th ed. (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1933).

¹³¹ *Eternal Life* 110–11.

¹³² *Ibid.* 111.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, citing Franz-Josef Nocke, *Eschatologie* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1982) 123.

then of the permanent importance of my whole life and lot. 'God loves more than the molecules that happen to be in the body at the time of death,' says the Catholic dogmatic theologian Wilhelm Breuning, rightly. '[God] loves a body that is marked by all the tribulation and also by the ceaseless longing of a pilgrimage, a body that has left behind many traces in the course of this pilgrimage in a world which has become human through these very traces. . . . Resurrection of the body means that none of all this is lost to God, since he loves man. He has gathered together all dreams and not a single smile has escaped his notice. Resurrection of the body means that in God man rediscovers not only his last moment but his history.'¹³⁴

Küng's final conclusions are reminiscent of Greshake's perspectives: "Jesus did not die into nothingness. . . . Death is a passing into God." "Resurrection means a radicalizing of belief in God. . . . that the almighty creator, who calls us from not-being, can also call us from death into life."¹³⁵

THE END OF HISTORY IS NOT SOMETHING EXTRINSIC

In *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Joseph Ratzinger expressed his hesitations regarding the stance on bodily resurrection espoused by Gisbert Greshake, even as he agreed with some of his positions.¹³⁶ Regarding the claim in Greshake's earliest work,¹³⁷ that "matter as such (as atom, molecule, organ . . .) cannot be perfected," but rather that the body, the world and the history of human freedom are permanently preserved in the definitive concrete form which human freedom, finalized in death, has taken, Ratzinger replies: "The only question is by what right one still speaks of 'corporeality' if all connection with matter is explicitly denied, and matter [is] left with a share in the final perfection only insofar as it was 'an ecstatic aspect of the human act of freedom'." Ratzinger argues that "in this model the body is in fact left to death, while at the same time an afterlife of the human being is asserted." He finds it unintelligible that the concept of soul should be disowned, given the "covert assumption of the continuing authentic reality of the person in separation from his or her body." In his view, "The idea of soul is meant to convey nothing other than this." He

¹³⁴ *Eternal Life* 111–12, citing Wilhelm Breuning, "Gericht und Auferweckung von den Toten als Kennzeichnung des Vollendungshandelns Gottes durch Jesus Christus," in *Mysterium Salutis*, ed. Johannes Feiner and Magnus Löhner (Zurich: Benziger, 1976) 5.844–90, at 882. See also Breuning, "Death and Resurrection in the Christian Message," in *Reforming the Rites of Death*, ed. Johannes Wagner, *Concilium* 32 (New York: Paulist, 1968) 7–24, at 16.

¹³⁵ *Eternal Life* 113–14.

¹³⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein, trans. ed. Aidan Nichols, *Dogmatic Theology* 9, ed. Johann Auer and Joseph Ratzinger (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1988) 108; The original title was *Eschatologie—Tod und ewiges Leben* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1977).

¹³⁷ *Auferstehung der Toten* 386–87.

labels Greshake's "amalgam of notions of corporeality and soulhood . . . a strange mishmash of ideas."¹³⁸

For Ratzinger, resurrection is "a pledge to space, time and matter. History and cosmos are not realities alongside spirit, running on into a meaningless nothingness. In the resurrection God proves himself to be the God also of the cosmos and of history."¹³⁹ Ratzinger proposes that "the anthropology desired [to understand both the immortality of the soul and resurrection] should weld together Plato and Aristotle precisely at the points where their doctrines were mutually opposed. There is a need to take over Aristotle's teaching on the inseparable unity of body and soul, yet without interpreting the soul as an entelechy, [lest it] be just as much bonded to matter as is organic life at large: dependent on matter for being what it is."¹⁴⁰ He approvingly accepts Aquinas's "twofold affirmation that the spirit is at once something personal and also the 'form' of matter, also observing that would have been unthinkable for Aristotle. Ratzinger believes that we thereby come "to a really tremendous idea: the human spirit is so utterly one with the body that the term "form" can be used of the body and retain its proper meaning. Conversely, the form of the body is spirit, and this is what makes the human being a person."¹⁴¹ As spirit, the soul is the form of the body in a much more complex manner than the form of a rock.

Ratzinger agrees with T. Schneider that the soul is "substance *as* the form of the body, just as it is the form of the body *as* substance. . . . Being in the body is not an activity, but the self-realisation of the soul. The body is the visibility of the soul, because the soul is the actuality of the body."¹⁴² He adds that "the soul belongs to the body as 'form' but that which is the form of the body is still spirit. It makes man a person and opens him to immortality." In Ratzinger's view, this notion of the soul is "a product of Christian faith" and is "quite novel" by comparison with all the conceptions available in antiquity.¹⁴³ Invoking the Thomistic perspective about "the dynamic movement of all creation towards God," Ratzinger further explains that "the *anima* . . . belongs completely to the material world, yet also goes beyond this world in going beyond itself. It is in that movement that the material world, indeed, comes into its own, by stretching forth towards God in man."¹⁴⁴ Thus, "man is defined by his intercourse with

¹³⁸ *Eschatology* 108–9.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 116.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 148.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 148–49.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 149; Theodor Schneider, *Die Einheit des Menschen: Die anthropologische Formel 'anima forma corporis' im sogenannten Korrektoerienstreit und bei Petrus Johannis Olivi* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972) 23, 27.

¹⁴³ *Eschatology* 149.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 153.

God.”¹⁴⁵ For Ratzinger, openness to relationships, with God and with others, constitutes what is deepest in a human’s being, and “is nothing other than what we call ‘soul’. . . . A being is the more itself the more it is open, the more it is in relationship.” Through openness to and relationship with all being and its Ground, God, one “becomes thereby a ‘self’ who is truly a person.” “It is not a relationless being oneself that makes a human being immortal, but precisely his relatedness, or capacity for relatedness, to God.”¹⁴⁶ “Relation makes immortal; openness, not closure, is the end in which we find our beginning. . . . What is saved is the one creature . . . in the wholeness and unity of his personhood as that appears in embodied life.”¹⁴⁷

Ratzinger looks to Aquinas’s interpretation of the formula *anima forma corporis* wherein “both body and soul are realities only thanks to each other and as oriented towards each other. Though they are not identical, they are nevertheless one; and as one, they constitute the single human being.” Declaring Greshake’s idea “that the soul receives matter into itself as an ‘ecstatic aspect’ of the realization of freedom, while leaving it forever to the clutches of the necessarily imperfectible precisely in its quality as matter” unthinkable for Aquinas, Ratzinger asserts “the soul [as the form of the body] can never completely leave behind its relationship with matter.” Only if the soul (understood in terms of openness to relationship or “the continuing authentic reality of the person,” as noted above) were dissolved would its ordering to matter be destroyed.¹⁴⁸ Maintaining that the material elements of our human physiology receive their character of being *body* “only in virtue of being organized and formed by the expressive power of the soul,” Ratzinger then proceeds to distinguish between “physiological unit” and “bodiliness.” For him, a human being is not simply a “physiological unit.”

[T]he individual atoms and molecules do not as such add up to the human being. The identity of the living body does not depend upon them, but upon the fact that matter is drawn into the soul’s power of expression. Just as the soul is defined in terms of matter, so the living body is wholly defined by reference to the soul. The soul builds itself a living body, as its corporeal expression. And since the living body belongs so inseparably to the being of a human, the identity of that body is defined not in terms of matter but in terms of soul.¹⁴⁹

In an aside, Ratzinger suggests this was what Origen was trying to get at with his idea of the characteristic form, but the conceptual tools available to him were inadequate to formulate it.

Ratzinger notes that Aquinas himself had held back from embracing the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 152.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 158.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 179.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 155.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 178–79.

full consequences of his theory about “the soul as the unique form of the body,” since philosophically “it denied the identity of the corpse of Jesus with him who was crucified.” Only Durandus of Saint Pourçain (c. 1275–1334) dared to base the identity of the risen body exclusively upon the identity of the soul. For Ratzinger, however, Aquinas’s synthesis of the idea of “the unity of body and soul, a unity founded on the creative act and implying at once the abiding ordination of the soul to matter and the derivation of the identity of the body not from matter but from the person, the soul,” is a signpost to follow. “The physiology becomes truly ‘body’ through the heart of the personality. Bodiliness is something other than a summation of corpuscles.”¹⁵⁰

Ratzinger insists that the proposition of a resurrection in death runs “counter to the logic of scripture and tradition.”¹⁵¹ He therefore retains an emphasis on the incompleteness of life with Christ in the time before the definitive “resurrection of the flesh,” which he says “the Church had to maintain” in clarifying the links between Sheol and the concept of immortality understood christologically.¹⁵² Ratzinger considers Greshake’s “attempt to reconcile an endlessly continuing history with the hope for Christ’s return” unacceptable because it holds that “Christ’s victory need not be a true end.”¹⁵³ It can be realized in “a dynamic unlimited succession. . . . [C]ontinuing history is [thus] both open—its future undetermined, fluid—and yet in God’s sight it is the steady procession of a triumphal march.”¹⁵⁴ In Ratzinger’s view, what precisely needs to be explained is the relationship between the ever new beginnings in history and the state of fulfilment both of the individual and of the historical process, which in Greshake’s model is “said to be already realized in the world beyond death.”¹⁵⁵

Ratzinger retains Rahner’s earlier theory that in death the soul becomes not acosmic but all-cosmic. After death, its essential ordination to the world remains, not in the mode of giving form to one organism, “but in that of an ordering to this world as such and as a whole.”¹⁵⁶ Emphasizing the real interdependence of all humans and all creation, Ratzinger insists that the end of history is not “something extrinsic” for any human being, or “something which has ceased to concern him” or her. Those who have died retain a relation to the process of becoming within history; on the “Last Day” when the total organism is complete each person is given the just place “which he can receive only in conjunction with all the rest,” when all the action, being affected, and suffering have ended.¹⁵⁷ In Ratzinger’s per-

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 180–81.

¹⁵² Ibid. 147.

¹⁵⁴ *Auferstehung der Toten* 406.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 191.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 181–82.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 188–89.

¹⁵⁵ *Eschatology* 111.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 190.

spective, “The guilt which goes on because of me is a part of me.”¹⁵⁸ Only when creation realizes the unity where all alienation is overcome will “God be all in all.” Greshake’s position that “Matter as such . . . cannot be perfected” is to be rejected because it implies a dualism in creation, “in which the entire sphere of matter is removed from the goal of creation.”¹⁵⁹ Ratzinger instead proclaims a final “situation in which matter and spirit will belong to each other in a new and definitive fashion”¹⁶⁰ For Ratzinger, matter is interiorized or integrated into the very identity of the human spirit or soul.¹⁶¹ What “matter” means in these statements, however, needs careful consideration, especially given Ratzinger’s own distinction between a “physiological unit” (atoms, molecules) and “bodiliness.”

In his reflections on the Congregation of Faith’s 1979 letter, which forms “Appendix I” in *Eschatology*, Ratzinger agrees with Greshake’s characterization of the idea of a body-free soul as “a non-starter” or “non-concept.”¹⁶² Invoking Aquinas as his starting point, Ratzinger says it is obvious that a person “throughout his life ‘interiorizes’ matter,” and consequently does not relinquish this connection in death. “Only so can his relation to resurrection be meaningful.” In a Christian conceptualization, soul “retains within itself the matter of its life.” He acknowledges that it is justified “to call the mind the continuing integration of matter-become-body in the soul.”¹⁶³ The really essential condition of life everlasting, or immortality, does not, however, inhere in a human being but rests on a relationship with God who gives the eternal. For Ratzinger, “soul is nothing other than man’s capacity for relatedness with truth, with love eternal. . . . the truth and love that we call ‘God’,” who gives humans eternity. Because matter is integrated in the spirit and soul of the human, matter thereby attains to the fulfilled completeness of the resurrection.¹⁶⁴

Ratzinger’s “Afterward to the English Edition,” which forms “Appendix II” of *Eschatology*, further clarifies the reason for his opposition to the thesis of a resurrection in death. He claims that such a notion dematerializes the resurrection, since it “entails that real matter has no part in the event of the consummation.” Christian hope would be reduced to the level of the individual. Again emphasizing a focus that includes the twin poles of the beginning and consummation, Ratzinger argues that if “men and women qua individuals can, through death, enter upon the End, then history as such remains outside salvation and cannot receive its own fulfillment.” That would involve “a spiritualistic theory of immortality, which

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 187.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 194.

¹⁶² Ibid. 258; Greshake, “Die Leib-Seele-Problematik” 180.

¹⁶³ *Eschatology* 258.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 192.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 258.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 259.

regards as impossible true resurrection and the salvation of the world as a whole.”¹⁶⁵ In Ratzinger’s view, individual persons who have died thus cannot have entered upon “the End,” for the finality of the End cannot be so disengaged from the ongoing history of the world.

Ratzinger’s concerns were clearly echoed in the International Theological Commission’s document “Some Current Questions in Eschatology” issued in 1992.¹⁶⁶ As Peter Phan has noted,¹⁶⁷ that text does present a number of universally agreed statements, namely: that “resurrection is not a return to this life or reanimation”; that “the resurrection concerns the whole individual and not only the body or the disembodied soul”; that “the resurrection is not only an event happening to the individual but also an ecclesial and cosmic event”; that “there is both radical continuity and radical discontinuity between the present life and the future.” Among points for critical questioning, Phan has identified the document’s reaffirmation of the theory of an “intermediate state,” and its so-called “eschatology of souls” existing in that intermediate state.¹⁶⁸ Given Phan’s thorough analysis of the text, I will confine myself to a few brief observations.

Appealing to dogmatic formulas in creeds, the document quotes the *Fides Damasi* (DS 72): that the resurrection will take place “in this flesh, in which we now live.” The commission then declared, “Therefore, the body that now lives and that will ultimately rise is one and the same.” It next turned to Irenaeus (*Adversus haereses* 5.13.3) who admitted the “transfiguration” of the flesh, even while emphasizing that the resurrection will take place “in the very same bodies in which they had died”; otherwise those who rose would not be the same. The commission thus affirmed that “the Fathers therefore think that personal identity cannot be defended in the absence of bodily identity,” but immediately added that “[t]he Church has never taught that the very same matter is required for the body to be said to be the same.” Then, invoking the cult of relics, “whereby Christians profess that the bodies of the saints . . . must be ‘raised and glorified’ by Christ,” the commission said this “shows that the resurrection cannot be explained independently of the body that once lived.”¹⁶⁹

In the sections immediately following, the commission expressed “pastoral” concern about Christian people being confused by a conceptual distinction between body and corpse (in German *Leib* and *Körper*), or

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 267.

¹⁶⁶ English translation in *Irish Theological Quarterly* (hereafter *ITQ*) 58 (1992) 209–43; original Latin text, *De quibusdam quaestionibus actualibus circa eschatologiam*, in *Gregorianum* 73 (1992) 395–435.

¹⁶⁷ “Current Theology: Contemporary Context and Issues in Eschatology” 513–14.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 520–27.

¹⁶⁹ Section 1.2.5; *ITQ* 58 (1992) 216.

by sermons “affirming that the dead person has already risen while his corpse is still buried.” It counseled, “In this secularized world in which the faithful are beguiled by the materialistic philosophy of absolute death, it would be a very serious matter to increase their perplexities.”¹⁷⁰ The commission was also distressed that the “community aspect of the final resurrection seemed to be dissolved in the theory of resurrection in death,” which was characterized as an “attempted atemporalism.”¹⁷¹

After invoking *Gaudium et spes*, Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (no. 14), the document proceeds from an emphasis on interiority and a spiritual and immortal soul to a further discussion of an eschatology of “twofold phase” with “a duality of elements (the ‘body-soul’ schema) which can be so separated that one of them (‘the spiritual and immortal soul’) subsists and endures separately.”¹⁷² In order to clarify the common mind of the Fathers, that the condition of a separated soul, which Tertullian termed “half a person,”¹⁷³ was problematic and called for resurrection, it quotes Augustine: “there is in it a certain natural appetite for ruling a body: . . . while there is no underlying body for that appetite to take rest.”¹⁷⁴ It speaks of the Church faithfully accepting the words of the Lord in Matthew 10:28 and thus affirming “the continuity and subsistence after death of a spiritual element, endowed with consciousness and will, so that the ‘human I’ subsists, while lacking in the interim the complement of its body.” It declares “This affirmation is rooted in the characteristic duality of Christian anthropology.”¹⁷⁵ Appealing to Aquinas,¹⁷⁶ the text, however, then quickly moves to clarify that in one sense, “inasmuch as the human soul is not the entire person, it can be said that the soul is not the ‘I’ or the person.” The separated soul is said to retain the nature of “unibility,” an appetite for the body or the resurrection.¹⁷⁷ In note 60, the document points out that “when [Aquinas] considers it erroneous ‘to say that Christ was a man during the three days of his death’ (*ST* 3, q. 50, a. 4), he holds that the union of soul and flesh are of the very meaning of man.”¹⁷⁸ But the text then immediately argues that “in another sense it can and ought to be said that ‘the human I itself’ subsists in the separated soul. Through it, since it is the conscious and subsistent element of people, we are able to hold a true continuity between the person

¹⁷⁰ Section 2.1; *ibid.* 217.

¹⁷¹ Section 2.2; *ibid.*

¹⁷² Section 5.1; *ibid.* 223–24.

¹⁷³ Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* 34,3; *Corpus Christianorum*, Series latina 2.964.

¹⁷⁴ *De Genesi ad litteram* 12, 35; *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 28.1, 432–33, cited in Section 5.2; *ITQ* 58 (1992) 224.

¹⁷⁵ Section 5.4; *ibid.* 225.

¹⁷⁶ *ST* 1, q. 29, a. 1, 5 and ad 5.

¹⁷⁷ Section 5.4; *ITQ* 58 (1992) 225.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 241.

who once lived on earth and the person who will rise; without such a continuity of a certain subsisting element the person who once lived on earth and the one who is to rise would not be the same ‘I.’ Through the separated soul the acts of the intellect and will that were done on earth remain after death. Although separated, it performs personal acts of understanding and will.” The commission finally declares that the subsistence of the separated soul is clear from the Church’s practice of directing its prayers “to the souls [!] of the blessed.”¹⁷⁹ At the least, one must recognize a certain tension in the argumentation of this document.

TERMINOLOGICAL CLARITY AND THE “INTERMEDIATE STATE”

Contemporary theology does not understand the resurrection of the body in the manner of Aquinas who said that flesh, bones, and blood would be included.¹⁸⁰ It certainly does not envision resurrection in the graphic mode of medieval portrayals of bodies bursting out of the earth for the final judgment, as on the tympanum above the main door of the pilgrimage church at Conques in southern France. Modern physics has provided both conceptual tools and an incentive for reconsidering past understandings of matter and “bodiliness.” The theological reconsideration has been equally grounded in a reappraisal or retrieval of biblical perspectives on the meaning of *soma* or body and of resurrection, for example, Ratzinger’s comment that “the Pauline sketch [on bodily resurrection] is far less naïve than later theological erudition with its subtle constructions on the question how there can be eternal physical bodies.”¹⁸¹

A consensus has emerged, across a spectrum of theologians, that a physiological understanding of bodily resurrection is inadequate for conceptualizing the transformed mode of existence that is the risen life. The eternal life of the risen in union with God is not “more of the same” in a kind of meta-world, wherein this present kind of life goes on after a “change of horses.” Resurrection is not the raising up of a body but the raising up of a whole person into eternal life. As resurrected persons we will not have physiological or fleshy bodies in eternal life. Rather we will have spiritual or pneumatic bodies, meaning that the “self” will never relinquish or be separated from the “bodiliness” and the historical process through which our individual identities were expressed and defined in the present life. To quote once again Ratzinger, “The real heart of faith in the resurrection does not consist at all in the idea of the restoration of the body, to which

¹⁷⁹ Section 5.4; *ITQ* 225–6.

¹⁸⁰ *ST* 3, q. 54, a. 2.

¹⁸¹ *Introduction to Christianity* 277.

we have reduced it in our thinking; such is the case even though this is the pictorial image used throughout the Bible.”¹⁸²

A physiological concept of bodily resurrection is problematic because it can be an obstacle to fuller acceptance of the radical difference between existence in this present life and in the eternal life of those raised from the dead. The latter will “ultimately” be “something radically withdrawn from the former temporal dimension and the former spatially conceived time, . . . a state of final and definitive completion and immediacy to God.”¹⁸³ Everything will be transformed. In that new reality “the self, which now appears in a body that can be conceived in chemico-physical terms, can, again, appear definitively in the guise of a trans-physical reality.”¹⁸⁴ Our bodiliness will be interiorized or integrated into the very core of our identity in union with God.

The modern authors we have considered all agree that a human is not annihilated by death, and that “what” is resurrected is not the chemico-physical body we had in life, but the same personal “self” or identity. All acknowledge the need for a new way of understanding matter and bodiliness. There is debate about how to explain and to name “what” it is that continues to exist and to carry on our identity beyond death. Greshake rejects the idea of a separated soul existing in an “intermediate state” beyond death, awaiting reunion with a body at the end of the world and time. Ratzinger insists on retaining the term “soul,” since he sees that as a good name for the “something” that bears bodiliness beyond death.¹⁸⁵ He affirms that there is an integration of “matter become body in the soul” and that matter is “interiorized” in the soul.¹⁸⁶

Ratzinger concedes that the continuity of our identity beyond death does not depend on having the same chemico-physical body. Even in life, a human being is not simply a “physiological unit”: “The individual atoms and molecules do not as such add up to the human being. The identity of the living body does not depend upon them, but upon the fact that matter is drawn into the soul’s power of expression.”¹⁸⁷ But in reacting to Greshake’s espousal of a “resurrection in death” and his earlier statement that “matter as such (as atom, molecule, organ . . .) cannot be perfected,”¹⁸⁸ Ratzinger replies: “The only question is by what right one still speaks of ‘corporeality’ if all connection with matter is explicitly denied, and matter [is] left with a share in the final perfection only insofar as it was ‘an ecstatic

¹⁸² Ibid. 270.

¹⁸³ Karl Rahner, “Ideas for a Theology of Death,” in *Theological Investigations* 13, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1975) 169–86, at 174.

¹⁸⁴ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* 277.

¹⁸⁵ *Eschatology* 252.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 258.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 179.

¹⁸⁸ *Auferstehung der Toten* 386.

aspect of the human act of freedom’.”¹⁸⁹ In his earlier writings, Greshake did not see the concept of the soul as necessary for preserving the identity of the human beyond death, but one cannot discount the fact that he said the human returning to God at death brought not simply an immortal soul “but his person on which is inscribed what he has done in love.”¹⁹⁰ In Greshake’s view, it is through the body that one establishes the many relationships by which one grows into the world, and also takes the world into self, thereby shaping oneself as a person. As one reads point and counterpoint in this debate, the need to standardize the meaning of terms such as matter, corporeality, soul, self and person becomes clear. One again appreciates the fourth-century Cappadocians’ effort to get everyone to use the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* in the same way. As in ecumenical dialogues about justification, mutually acceptable meanings of bodiliness and corporeality, and the interrelationship of terms such as soul, self, and person have to be hammered out, before deciding whether saying that “matter is interiorized in the soul” better preserves “corporeality” than saying that the world is taken into “self” through one’s relationships. Unfortunately, the International Theological Commission’s document bemoaned the application of the distinctions between the terms “body” and “corpse,” but never analyzed the complex meanings of terms such as “matter,” “body,” “soul,” “self” and “person” in contemporary theological usage.

Ratzinger acknowledges that “the New Testament does not provide any clearly delimited concept of ‘soul’.” It holds that the dead live on “with the Lord” after death, and that living on with the Lord “is not yet identical with the Resurrection which comes only ‘at the end of days’.” He further admits that the Christian concept of a human as a body-soul unity was formulated “as a result of a very slow process.”¹⁹¹ It is thus surprising that Ratzinger should claim that “the tortuous hermeneutical considerations” necessary for understanding the formula resurrection in death “could never be incorporated into actual proclamation.” Equally unexpected is Ratzinger’s characterization of the academic theologian who advocates the formula resurrection in death as having “taking up residence in a ghetto whose language and thought are only available to other theologians, and where linguistic and intellectual communication with the wider community has been shut down.”¹⁹² That seems a questionable statement, given the fact that Rahner admitted he had changed his mind about the existence and necessity of an “intermediate state” in which the soul is separated from the body, and that he now considered the issue an open question. Convinced that the speculations of those who hold for a resurrection in death are confusing to believers, Ratzinger and the International Theological Com-

¹⁸⁹ *Eschatology* 109.

¹⁹¹ *Eschatology* 246.

¹⁹⁰ “Death and Resurrection” 18.

¹⁹² *Ibid.* 254.

mission's statement are adamant in their opposition to a resurrection in death and in their defense of "an intermediate state."

Yet I am convinced Ratzinger is correct (together with the "reconstructed" Rahner on the issue of "intermediate state") and understands a crucial dimension more clearly than Greshake. Ratzinger best summarized his understanding when he wrote that "the guilt which goes on because of me is a part of me."¹⁹³ An individual's influence on history may be like the impact of a coin dropped on the floor, rather than the force produced by colliding nuclear particles, but every individual does nevertheless have an effect on the universe, for good or ill. For that reason, an individual's personal (bodily/spiritual) identity or "self" (which is shaped within history, through which "I" come to know "myself" by the way others are affected by "me" and see me) will not be complete until the End. Only at the End will I realize how I was affected by all those who came before me, and how I affected, positively and negatively, all those who came after me.

Given the modern consensus that bodily resurrection refers not to corpuscles or material particles being raised beyond death, but rather to the personal "self" or identity forged through a lifetime of personal/bodily relationships within the material world, or to matter interiorized in our soul through our corporeality, there is need to develop a mediating position on the intermediate state. I propose applying the medieval distinction between particular and general judgment to bodily resurrection, thereby distinguishing "a particular resurrection in death" from "the general resurrection of all the dead" at the end of history and time. The concept of a "particular resurrection in death," recognizes, on the one hand, that the "self" does bring its bodiliness or historical identity with it beyond death. For even if one retains the term soul, one should keep in mind Rahner's observation that what we traditionally have distinguished "(talking about the immortality of the soul on the one hand, and the resurrection of the body on the other) can only be grasped as *being one*."¹⁹⁴ It is not a soul separated from bodiliness or corporeality (*anima separata*) that bears the "self" beyond death, but a soul that has integrated or interiorized bodiliness or corporeality. The concept of "general resurrection" takes into account, on the other hand, the fact that every resurrected individual "self" has a continuing impact on an unfinished history and creation. As Walter Kasper has succinctly put it, "The perfection of the individual and that of all mankind cannot be complete until the cosmos, too, is included in that completion."¹⁹⁵ In that regard, no human identity will be *fully* complete until the "end" of material history and creation. Only at the end, in the general

¹⁹³ Ibid. 187.

¹⁹⁴ "The Intermediate State" 121.

¹⁹⁵ Walter Kasper, "Hope in the Final Coming of Jesus Christ in Glory," *Communio: An International Catholic Review* 12 (1985) 368-84, at 378.

resurrection, will the final place of each in the whole be determined. For our ultimate destiny is determined “only in conjunction with all the rest”: “What happens in one individual has an effect upon the whole of humanity, and what happens in humanity happens in the individual.” Therefore the destiny of the whole is the proper destiny of each.¹⁹⁶

The notion of an “intermediate state” beyond death would thus be retained, not in the sense of a soul separated from a body, but rather in the sense that the eternity of created beings retains a relationship to the ongoing progressive transformation of world history and the cosmos.¹⁹⁷ Admittedly, there is no “before” and “after” for God, and God’s eternity does not involve time, but the eternity of humans has a beginning and thus is not the same as God’s eternity. By birth, humans come into existence, and exercise freedom within a world to which God has given a certain autonomy (*Gaudium et spes* nos. 36, 41, 56). Given God’s decision to “risk” creating a world of possibility in which free human choices shape an ongoing creation, and to become fully human to share the human condition through Jesus, there is a problematic tone in the position summarized by Gerhard Lohfink: “If there is no longer earthly time with God, then my death is the last day; and at my death the resurrection of the body has already taken place.” In that way of thinking, the “resurrection in death” of any individual is “the last day,” because “everyone, even those who died at quite different points in time, meet God ‘at the same time,’ that is, in the individual and yet eternal ‘moment’ of eternity.”¹⁹⁸ That means that humans enter a timelessness beyond death in which the end result of human freedom in creation is already established, even though decisions are still being made within an unfinished history! By contrast, if one accepts that the eternity of created beings retains a relationship to the free decisions of a still ongoing history, the intermediate state can be understood as a transitional process, beginning with a “particular resurrection in death,” in which our “bodiliness” and our relationship to history are already integrated into our identity, to the degree that our direct, active impact upon history has ended with death. But an individual’s “particular resurrection in death” is not “the last day,” and a human does not become absolutely timeless at death. The reverberations of our decisions, for good or ill, continue to affect the human, animal, vegetative, and physical world, and

¹⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Eschatology* 190.

¹⁹⁷ Regarding the related concept of *aevum*, see Gerhard Lohfink, “Zur Möglichkeit christlicher Naherwartung,” in *Naherwartung, Auferstehung, Unsterblichkeit* 38-81, at 64-67, and “Das Zeitproblem und die Vollendung der Welt,” *ibid.* 131-55, at 145-51; Ratzinger, *Eschatology* 110-11, 182.

¹⁹⁸ Gerhard Lohfink, *Death Is Not the Final Word*, trans. Robert J. Cunningham (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1977) 40; see also his “Zur Möglichkeit christlicher Naherwartung” 77.

the ongoing history we have left behind. Only in the “universal resurrection,” when the material world and its history will have achieved the fullness of finality, will our contributions and relationship to that world be finalized and fully realized, and integrated into our identity, which will thereby have achieved wholeness. Such a mediating position takes seriously Ratzinger’s concern about positing a final consummation while there are still “new beginnings” in history. It likewise responds to the International Theological Commission’s concern that the “community aspect of the final resurrection” seems dissolved in the theory of resurrection in death.

Ratzinger’s concern lest ongoing history be devalued by collapsing the final, general resurrection into a resurrection in death also provides a signpost toward answering the objection that the dogma of the Assumption requires that Mary’s final condition be distinguished from that of other humans who have died. Given his insistence that even beyond death every human person has an ongoing relationship to material history, Ratzinger’s own statement that “Mary is fully in the Father’s house since no guilt came forth from her to make people suffer”¹⁹⁹ is inadequate, since it does not acknowledge that the good which goes on because of Mary’s free choices is also a part of her. In that perspective, rather than excluding a “particular resurrection in death” for other humans, the dogma of the Assumption may be understood as proclaiming that Mary’s “distinctive,” ongoing relationship with humanity and history, from and in her union with God beyond death, is typological for all humans. There is a need further to ponder Mary’s participation in the “universal resurrection.”

Wilhelm Breuning’s observation that “only a personalist understanding of the resurrection of the body can save us from unsatisfactory presentations and at the same time give us a deeper understanding of the reality of the body” is on the mark. Belief in the resurrection of the body also says something significant about the personalist meaning of the world: “The bodily condition derives its whole meaning from the mutual attraction that reigns between man and world. The body is the bridge that has its foundation in both. The body is man in so far as with his whole being, including his relationship toward God and fellow men, he stands in the world and in this way lifts the world itself into the sphere of personal existence.”²⁰⁰ Thus, in life beyond death, in union with the God whose great love keeps us in existence, we humans will always be related to the world which we have shaped.

“Resurrection of the body means that man does not find in God only his

¹⁹⁹ *Eschatology* 187.

²⁰⁰ “Death and Resurrection in the Christian Message” 16-17.

last moments, but his whole story.”²⁰¹ But each person’s whole “story” is inextricably intertwined with the whole story of human history and the world, and will be fully complete only in the final consummation. To expand Schillebeeckx’s metaphor, what is resurrected beyond death, and taken into union with God, is “the melody” of an individual person’s life. But the refrain of that melody will likewise still resonate within the new beginnings or new movements within human history, taking on new tonalities. All the notes which form “the melody” of an individual person’s life, echoing through the movements of an unfinished symphony within history, will, in the resurrection of all the dead, become fully integrated within the once unfinished but now once and for all completed symphony of history and creation. In the final consummation, we will all together experience the entire symphony of all our histories—after the final note has been written and played. All the *notes* of our individual melodies will have been composed within an embodied history, like molecules of ink on a material score, but in the completed cosmic symphony echoing in eternity in union with God each individual, personal melody will resonate, together with all the others, the whole identity of our embodied history with a deeper reality than the molecules of the body in which the identity of our life was originally composed. In that dynamic finality, “matter and spirit will belong to each other in a new and definitive fashion.”²⁰²

²⁰¹ Ibid. 16.

²⁰² Ratzinger, *Eschatology* 194.