

# Immediate or Intermediate? The State of the Believer upon Death

JOHN YATES

## 1. Introduction

Probably the best solution is the view that the moment of death for the believer is the last day for him or her because *in death the Christian moves out of time, so that death is experienced as the moment when Christ returns.*<sup>1</sup>

These words were penned by a prominent Australian Anglican Evangelical scholar in a text committed to helping contemporary Christians 'get to grips with the basics of their faith.'<sup>2</sup> Their significance lies not in their novelty<sup>3</sup> but rather as an indicator of the growing influence of a (as yet) minority view about the timing of the resurrection.<sup>4</sup> This position seeks through biblical exegesis and reasoned analysis to eliminate any need for postulating an 'intermediate state', that is a period of human existence between the death of the body and its resurrection. My purpose in this paper is threefold.

(a) To demonstrate by exegesis that the *locus classicus* of New Testament interpretation on this subject, viz. 2 Corinthians 5:1–10, is at least compatible with the traditional view.<sup>5</sup>

(b) To show that theological and metaphysical considerations, especially the nature of time and eternity, compel us to retain the classical position.

(c) To draw some conclusions for the methodology of Evangelical theology by reflecting upon the results of (a) and (b).

## 2. The Interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:1–10<sup>6</sup>

In the epistles that precede the writing of 2 Corinthians Paul always speaks about himself as one who will survive until the *Parousia*.<sup>7</sup> It is not that he had never previously considered the possibility of death<sup>8</sup> but that an opportunity of escape had always offered itself in the midst of his trials. Now however, with the passage of time, the problem of the fate of dead Christians had become a more pressing one, and he himself had endured an experience in proconsular Asia where death seemed certain, 'we despaired of life itself . . . we felt

that we had received the sentence of death' (2 Corinthians 1:8b,9a). The burden of affliction pervades the whole of the epistle and forms part of the immediate context of the key passage.

In verses 16 to 18 of chapter four we are presented with a series of antitheses—'outer'/'inner', 'momentary'/'eternal', 'seen'/'unseen'. The Apostle speaks about how the constant external pressure of his ministry is preparing him, by virtue of an inner moral transformation, for eternity. It is in this setting of felt physical weakness, but acknowledged spiritual strength, that Paul recounts the consolation he knows to be his if death should come.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter 5, verse 1: 'For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'<sup>10</sup>

Paul commences this section of his teaching with an expression (*Oidamen gar*), 'we know', which he frequently employs of material common to the early Christian tradition.<sup>11</sup> Even if here the expression meant only 'intuitive knowledge'<sup>12</sup> there is nothing in the introduction to suggest that he is about to make a major departure from the doctrine he had already made known to his readers in 1 Corinthians.<sup>13</sup> The particle *ean* when followed by the aorist subjunctive in the New Testament (here, *kataluthē*) usually has the simple conditional sense i.e. 'if'. Whilst it is grammatically possible for a meaning approximate to *hotan* ('when'),<sup>14</sup> it is safer to take it in its usual meaning unless the context disallows this.<sup>15</sup>

'The earthly tent' (*hē epigeios hēmōn oikia tou skēnous*) is a widely used metaphor for the corruptible body (Wisdom 9:15 cf. John 1:14; 2 Peter 1:13 f.). Paul contemplates the consequences of its destruction (*kataluthē*), something which could only occur through a death before the Parousia. In this eventuation 'a building from God' shall be his possession. This *oikodomē ek theou* is certainly a new body.<sup>16</sup> It is located in the heavenly realm as part of a durable order.<sup>17</sup> Our critical question however is *when* is this spiritual body received, immediately at death or only at the *Parousia*?

The *crux interpretatum* is the precise force of 'we have' (*echomen*). Either the verb can be taken as a simple present, meaning that at death the believer receives a new body,<sup>18</sup> or it can be treated as having the force of a future possessive indicating certainty.<sup>19</sup> In favour of the first position the following has been argued.

1. Such an anticipation accords with a line of thought implicit in 1 Corinthians 15:35–49, where Paul uses the analogy of the 'death' of a grain of wheat and the appearance of new life to explain that the earthly body is superseded by the spiritual body. It is argued that there is an immediacy of change in both cases.

2. The use of a present tense where a future might have been used (for either death or the *Parousia* are in the future) is designed to indicate the instantaneous acquisition of a new habitation as soon

as the old has been demolished.

3. The combination of the conditional ('if') and the sure receipt of the spiritual body which occurs only at the *Parousia* (according to the second interpretation of *echomen*) is a contradictory one. If there is a genuine uncertainty it must relate to the time the spiritual body is received, death or *Parousia*, whichever comes first.

4. The moment when the consolation is needed must be the moment when the consolation is given; and the consolation received at death cannot simply be identical with that assurance of the future acquisition of the resurrection body that is teaching about what must wait until the *Parousia* is no comfort to those about to die.

Although these arguments are considerable they are by no means insuperable.

1. The analogy of the seed must not be pressed into use as though it were a piece of logic. Rabbinical examples can be cited where this same analogy certainly refers to the possession of a glorious new body at the general resurrection.<sup>20</sup>

2. That the present tense of *echō* can be used to emphasize immediacy of subsequent events may be granted (Romans 6:22; 1 Corinthians 9:17?); but examples seem lacking (apart from the disputed text in question) which illustrate the use of *echō* to express this where a future tense would have been expected. Paul is however able to express certitude of a future state by the use of even a past tense, Romans 8:30 'have been glorified' (*edoxasen*), and in 1 John 5:15 *echomen* is used to express assurance that prayer will be answered.

3. The conditional can be combined with certainty of possession because although it is certain that the believer will receive a new body at the *Parousia* it is uncertain whether the 'earthly house' will be put off in death, that is whether death will precede the *Parousia*.

4. If consolation must be given at the very point of need, theology becomes subordinate to human desire. That Paul thought otherwise is illustrated by 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15, where he provides consolation over those who have died before the *Parousia* only in terms of a future general resurrection. The onus is on those who maintain that Paul has had a radical change of mind that amounts to a contradiction between 1 and 2 Corinthians (a period of barely a year) to produce indisputable evidence for this contention; the use of *echomen* in 2 Corinthians 5:1 is no such proof.<sup>21</sup>

5. There is no real evidence in the epistles subsequent to 2 Corinthians that the believer 'rises' at death. Romans 8:22-24 emphasizes a future hope, and Philippians 3:20-21 places the transformation of the body at the *Parousia*. If the Pastoral Epistles are accepted as Pauline we see that the Advent of Jesus remained Paul's primary expectation even up to the point of death (Titus 2:13; 2 Timothy 4:6-8)<sup>22</sup>. I conclude that the material in 2 Corinthians 5:1 is

consistent with the view that there exists an intermediate state between death and the resurrection of the body.

Chapter 5, verse 2: 'Here indeed we groan and long to put on our heavenly dwelling'. The key term in this verse is *ependusasthai*. The preposition *epi*—when added to the verb *enduō* gives the compound verb not simply the nuance of putting on but putting on over for example as an outer garment.<sup>23</sup> This would mean that Paul longs to put on the heavenly body over the earthly body, an event which can only occur at the *Parousia*. To this it has been objected that where verse 3 continues the thought *enduō* is used with the same meaning as *ependuō* and since *enduō* is employed in 1 Corinthians 15:53f. with reference to the transformation that must be experienced by any corruptible mortal man before he can experience incorruptibility, we must conclude that the verb is not a term used exclusively to describe the resurrection of the dead (*ependuō* being reserved for the transformation of the living).<sup>24</sup> In reply, it must be considered that *enduō* can function with the force of *ependuō* in verse 3 precisely because the latter already precedes it.<sup>25</sup> To the second point it must be replied that the absence of *ependuō* in 1 Corinthians 15:53f. may simply be due to a desire by Paul to maintain rhetorical effect by repeating that verb which comes first in the lines of synthetic parallelism representing the change which must affect both dead ('perishable') and living ('imperishable').<sup>26</sup> At any rate these arguments are not sufficient to over-throw the presumption that Paul used *ependuō* in its normal extra-Biblical sense.<sup>27</sup>

Chapter 5, verse 3: 'so that by putting it on we may not be found naked.' Paul is sure<sup>28</sup> that those alive at the *Parousia* will not be found 'naked' (*gumnos*). It has been argued that the apostle shies away from the possibility of fearful exposure at the last Judgment. There are definite parallels to such metaphorical imagery in Hebrew literature<sup>29</sup>. In context however, with Paul discussing the future state of *believers*, this seems a most unlikely interpretation. The other interpretation consonant with the line of argument in this paper is that *gumnos* bears the common Hellenistic sense of disembodiment.<sup>30</sup> A conclusion on this matter depends always on joint consideration with the following verse.

Chapter 5, verse 4: 'For while we are yet in this tent we sigh with anxiety; because we do not want to be unclothed,<sup>31</sup> but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.'

The order of words in this verse is crucial. Paul writes *eph hō ou thelomen* ('because we do not wish'), rather than *ouk eph hō thelomen* ('not because we wish'), that is he experiences intense depression<sup>32</sup> at the thought of disembodiment. Is this distaste so great as to intimate that the intermediate state *per se* is less than this life, and so profound as necessarily to contradict and overthrow the exegesis pursued in this paper so far? Many respectable commentators have thought so. 'Paul

evidently could not contemplate immortality apart from resurrection; for him a body of some kind was essential to personality.<sup>33</sup> It is often remarked that such a conception as a disembodied spiritual state is far too Hellenistic to impose upon this 'Hebrew of Hebrews.'<sup>34</sup>

In reply it should be noticed that the despair Paul feels is relative. Disembodiment is a poor substitute for immediate participation in the general resurrection.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, there is a wealth of evidence that intertestamental and contemporary Judaism, both Palestinian and Hellenistic, could embrace the notion of a separated soul.<sup>36</sup> Finally, Paul himself can clearly entertain that a soul might exist without a body: 'I know a man in Christ who . . . was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know . . .' (2 Corinthians 12:2).<sup>37</sup> I conclude that there is nothing in 2 Corinthians 5:3–4 incompatible with the notion of an intermediate state.

Chapter 5, verse 8: 'We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.'

Proponents of an immediate resurrection see an allusion here in 'from the body' to another type of embodiment.<sup>38</sup> However it is not 'this body' which Paul says he prefers release but from 'the body' (*ek tou sōματος*). This coupled with the general expression *pros ton kurion* ('with the Lord') makes it unlikely that he refers either to an immediate embodiment or the *Parousia* as 'home', but to the 'nakedness' of verses three and four. This is a striking change of mood in a short compass, but in matters of such existential magnitude, and bearing in mind the difference in phenomena being compared in the earlier and later parts of this passage, such a fluctuation is hardly inexplicable.

Chapter 5 verse 10. 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.'

This verse need not be taken as referring to the Last Judgment subsequent to the *Parousia*. It may best be understood as a 'particular judgement of the faithfulness of the Christian's stewardship before Christ himself.'<sup>39</sup>

In concluding what can only be described as a partial and fragmentary discussion of perhaps one of the most difficult sections of the New Testament, I am left with a conviction that the degree of certitude that one would ideally seek from exegesis seems in this case to be particularly elusive. Though I believe that the argument adopted above is certainly defensible, only an immediate synthetic judgment, viz the ability to hold together at once all the matters under discussion, with a simultaneous decision on them as a whole, would produce certainty.<sup>40</sup> I now intend to demonstrate that our degree of certainty can be vastly increased by a consideration of more theological and philosophical issues.

### 3. Resurrection, Time and Eternity

The position of those biblical theologians who take 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 as teaching immediate re-embodiment upon death is compatible with two views concerning the General Resurrection.

1. That the General Resurrection encompasses only those who are alive at the time of the *Parousia*, the remainder having already been resurrected at death.

2. That the individual's embodiment at death is in fact a participation in the General Resurrection.

Position 1. entails an embodied intermediate state.<sup>41</sup> Its strength is that it recognizes the difficulty in suggesting that the termination of individual life coincides with the universal consummation. Its weakness is that it diminishes the significance of the *Parousia*.<sup>42</sup> Both psychologically and theologically it seems inevitable that if such an eschatological profile were seriously adopted for faith we would be left with a two-fold expectation—intermediate state and *Parousia*. This becomes increasingly problematical the more that content is given to the first expectation, for the New Testament will allow no diminishment of the content of the latter.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, this perspective raises tensions between the place of the individual and the entire community of faith in the purposes of God,<sup>44</sup> and seems largely to abolish the 'already—not yet' polarity which characterizes the entire period between the two advents of Christ.<sup>45</sup> Since none of these theological problems arise with position 2. it would seem that if an immediate resurrection can be established at all it will be in this form.

But what about the individual, and what about the death of the believer? . . . When the believer dies he goes to be with Christ and is in his immediate presence . . . that is to each believer the *Parousia* of Christ to him. Yet when this is regarded as the plane of history and of the on-going processes of the fallen world, the death of each believer means that his body is laid to sleep in the earth, waiting until the redemption of the body and the recreation of all things at the final *Parousia*. Looked at from the perspective of the new creation there is no gap between the death of the believer and the *Parousia* of Christ, but looked at from the perspective of time that decays and crumbles away, there is a lapse between them.<sup>46</sup>

Torrance is not altogether clear here, but what he presumably means<sup>47</sup> is that if time is only a this-worldly entity death means a deliverance from our space-time system, so that the notion of an in-between time bracketed at one end by death and at the other end by the *Parousia* is misplaced.<sup>48</sup> The consequence of this is that all the dying (and all the living) participate in the events of the End together.

Such a resolution preserves intact what has always seemed to me the most wonderful prospect for the departing saint, namely, immediate

passage into the presence of the Lord and immediate participation, with all other saints from Adam to the end of the age, in the Lord's return to the earth in glory.<sup>49</sup>

It cannot be denied that this perspective combines existential attractiveness and logical neatness. However, when closely examined I believe it to be theologically dangerous and philosophically incoherent. In the first place it seems inappropriate to suggest that God's purposes for man fall under two spheres, a temporal and dispensable mode and a timeless and indispensable mode of existence. It is more in accord with the unity of God's plan that he who was created and redeemed in time should be perfected in time. To place the *Parousia* outside of our time stream sunders the salvation-history thread of the Bible, in many ways its unifying thread, at a critical point. (The suggestion that time *per se* is a problem for human existence has its origin in Platonic dualism and not in Christian thought.<sup>50</sup>) Perhaps most alarming is the implicit suggestion that man could experience supratemporality at all. For Christian orthodoxy of all shades, there has been a consistent insistence that eternity as atemporality is the sole prerogative of God.<sup>51</sup> Even to contemplate that a human being could somehow be elevated to a timeless sphere hinges on the divinization of man. Temporal finitude is of the very essence of creatureliness.<sup>52</sup> Eternity, for man, cannot be the negation but the fulfilment of time, not its supersession in his experience but its enrichment.<sup>53</sup> Philosophically, it is impossible to conceive of 'timeless change'. As far as we are able to think change is constitutive of time.<sup>54</sup> Certainly the general resurrection<sup>55</sup> must be thought of as an event, a process, and as such something in time. Is it coherent to suggest a transition from a host of individual times via a 'movement out of time' back into a common (resurrection) time? Given the nature of time suggested above, movement, as a form of change, must necessarily be in time, hence the expression 'movement out of time' is self-contradictory.<sup>56</sup> If the thought of a transition to timelessness is baffling the concept of an atemporal entity entering time is equally confusing.<sup>57</sup>

The notion of a simultaneous resurrection 'immediately' after death can be maintained by seeing expiration as annihilation and resurrection as recreation.<sup>58</sup> (But the great problem with this theory is that there is nothing to re-create, survival demands continuity).

There seems to have been one matter of paradigmatic importance which none of the theologians who subscribe to an immediate mass resurrection seems to have specifically addressed: what happened to Jesus between his death and resurrection? If Jesus,<sup>59</sup> as with the rest of us, experienced resurrection (and his own *Parousia* ? ?) as the next event after his death, then the New Testament narratives and credal Christianity, which represent Jesus' resurrection as occurring after a

delay of three days, must be mistaken. The body which lay in the tomb could not have been the same body as that of the ('already') risen Lord, for the risen Lord received his glorified body immediately at death. The glorified body of Jesus which the disciples beheld could not have been the transformed corpse but a whole new corporeality. This is completely at odds with both the emphasis of the resurrection narratives and the teaching of traditional Christianity. I take this to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the view under discussion.

I conclude that there are seemingly insuperable theological and philosophical objections to any view which would place the resurrection of individual believers at their death.

#### 4. Some Remarks on Evangelical Theology

In summing up this paper it is important to notice how many of the authors with whom I have differed write from an Evangelical-Reformed perspective: Bruce, Custance, Giles, Harris, Schwarz, Torrance, Travis. What is it that has led this notable band away from such a widely received doctrine as that of an intermediate state?<sup>60</sup> *Prima facie* one would accept a reply of commitment to the outcome of biblical exegesis. However, is it not possible, especially when such a tortuous passage as 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 is concerned, that more subtle influences may be at work? Most important of these would seem to be a wide-spread hesitation amongst Evangelicals to have recourse to philosophical argument in matters of theology. In the present instance an aversion to 'Hellenistic anthropology' may have easily influenced exegesis. Looking at the case discussed as exemplary, that is, being honest about how difficult such exegetical work can be, and considering the tenor of Evangelical theology generally, might it not be time to consider a more harmonious relationship (practically) between revelation and reason?<sup>61</sup> Much could be gained both ways by breaking down the barrier between the disciplines of Biblical and philosophical theology. In this case it would become more explicitly recognized that the boundaries of acceptable exegesis are not formed alone by considerations of grammar and context<sup>62</sup> but must cohere with the pooled deliverances of theological orthodoxy.<sup>63</sup> In practice this would make it less likely that long-held doctrines (like that of the intermediate state) would be overthrown.

#### Conclusion

In returning to the question of the intermediate state we are left with two major conclusions:

1. Exegetical, theological and philosophical considerations combine to lead us to accept that such a state indeed exists and that its content is as has traditionally been maintained. That is, after death the believer not only enters into a temporally interim existence but also an existentially penultimate one. The controlling theme is the



'with the Lord' motif (2 Corinthians 5:8) which assures of a superior blessedness, richer fellowship, and a more intimate approach to Christ than anything possible in this obstacle-ridden present existence. It is the being-with-Christ which fills this state with meaning. Yet this stage must be penultimate for it precedes not only the completion of our total humanity through bodily resurrection but also the apotheosis of the whole Body of Christ which awaits the *Parousia*.

2. Our results then leave the *Parousia* where it has always been, as the primary Christian expectation. The consummation of both individual life and the divine plan for creation hinges in no manner upon a contingent event in the life of a creature, viz. my death, but upon the sovereign timing of God.<sup>64</sup> It is inappropriate even to tie our anticipation of the ultimate to a phenomenon whose boundaries lie within creaturely reality.<sup>65</sup> In no case, neither for our heads nor for our hearts, for doctrine nor for expectation, must any shadow be allowed to be cast over the supreme significance of the Return of Christ.<sup>66</sup>

To what then does the Christian look forward? With joyous anticipation he knows he will soon be 'with Christ'. Properly understood nothing else needs to be said, for this is the full content of his life both here and hereafter (Philippians 1:21).

**JOHN YATES** is engaged in Ph. D. studies (Dept. of Studies in Religion), University of Queensland, Brisbane.

#### NOTES

- 1 K. Giles, *Understanding the Christian Faith*, Canberra, Acorn, 1982, p.73 (my emphases).
- 2 *Ibid.*, p.iv.
- 3 Though I have not found an English work consistent with this view before J.C. Earle, *The Spiritual Body*, London, Longmans, 1876.
- 4 For a bibliography regarding this opinion see M.J. Harris, *Raised Immortal*, London, M.M.S., 1983, p.255.
- 5 There is little original in this part of the article. Nevertheless, it is an indispensable component of any project whose methodology would seek to maintain Holy Scripture as the primary source of authority in matters of faith.
- 6 The treatment here concentrates on points salient to the timing of the resurrection.
- 7 E.g. 'We who are left alive until the Lord comes shall not forestall those who have died.' 1 Thessalonians 4:15 cf. v.17.  
'we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed . . . the dead shall be raised imperishable and we (the living also) shall be changed.' 1 Corinthians 15:51f.
- 8 See 1 Thessalonians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 6:14.
- 9 On the immediate context generally see E.E. Ellis, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1967, pp. 36-40., and on the significant polemical background to 2 Corinthians 4:16 - 5:10. A.T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp.55-60.
- 10 English Text used is the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

- 11 Cf. 1 Corinthians 8:1, 4; Romans 2:2; 3:19; 8:28.
- 12 A. Plummer, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1915, p.141.
- 13 R. Berry, 'Death and Life in Christ: The Meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:1-10', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 14, 1, 1961, pp.60-76, p.62; Ellis, *ibid.*, p.41.
- 14 M.J. Harris, '2 Cor. 5:1-10: Watershed in Paul's Eschatology?' *Tyndale Bulletin*, 22, 1971, pp.32-58, p.35 footnotes 11, 12, 13, for examples.
- 15 To accept the alternative translation would indicate that Paul considered it certain, or a serious possibility, that he would die before the *Parousia*.
- 16 *Contra* Ellis, *ibid.*, pp.41-42, J.A.T. Robinson, *The Body*, London, S.C.M., 1957, p.76, the context, especially 2 Corinthians 4:16a where the 'outer nature' clearly refers to the physical body, makes it patent that individual corporeality and not participation in the Body of Christ is under discussion.
- 17 The expression 'not made with hands' (*acheiropoiētos*) became almost a technical term in Christian usage for the spiritual and heavenly realities of the new order (cf. Colossians 2:11, and for negative formulations using *cheiropoiētos* Acts 7:48; 17:24; Hebrews 9:11, 24).
- 18 So R.H. Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life*, London, A. and C. Black, 1913, p.458; W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, Philadelphia, Fortress 4th ed., 1980, p.309 ff.; Harris, *Watershed*, pp.41 ff.; J.V. Pitcher, *The Hereafter in Jewish and Christian Thought*, London, S.P.C.K., 1940, p.167; D.E.H. Whitely, *The Theology of St. Paul*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1964, p.259 etc.
- 19 So G.E. Ladd, *The Last Things*, Eerdmans, 1978, pp.35-36; Lincoln, *ibid.*, pp.63-64; Plummer, *ibid.*, p.143; H.N. Ridderbos, *Paul*, tr. J. de Witt, London, S.P.C.K., 1977, p.501; G. Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1961, p.188.
- 20 Davies, *ibid.*, p.292 f.
- 21 That this problem is acute for those who subscribe to the conviction that Paul changed his mind is exemplified by the fact that no fewer than ten explanations have been offered to account for it. See Harris, *Raised Immortal*, p.101.
- 22 *Contra* F.F. Bruce, 'Paul on Immortality', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 24, 4, 1971, pp.457-462, pp.471-472; Davies, *ibid.*, pp.319-320; Harris, *Watershed*, p.53 ff.; R.F. Hettlinger, '2 Cor. 5:1-10,' *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 10, 2, 1957, pp.174-194, pp.191-194. Even if in his later epistles Paul uses less apocalyptic imagery this does not vitiate his clear earlier teaching unless it can be shown that a change in doctrine, rather than his personal circumstances and those of the recipients of these letters, is responsible for such a diminished interest.
- 23 See, for example, F.F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, London, M.M.S., 1971, pp.202-203; P.E. Hughes, *2 Corinthians*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1962, pp.168-170; A. Oepke, *ependuō*, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, tr. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1964, vol.II, pp.318-321, pp.320-321.
- 24 Harris, *Watershed*, pp.43-44.
- 25 J.H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, vol.I Prolegomena*, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1908, p.115.
- 26 Here I accept J. Jeremias's interpretation of the meaning of 1 Corinthians 15:53 f., 'Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God,' *New Testament Studies*, 2, 1955-56, pp.151-159.
- 27 See especially Ascension of Isaiah 9:16 ff.
- 28 Paul begins this verse with a combination of particles (*ei ge*) which in all but one (Galatians 3:4) of its other New Testament occurrences denotes certainty in an assumption (Ephesians 3:2; 4:21; Rom. 5:6, with variants, Colossians 1:23). For a contrary view see M.E. Thrall, *Greek Particles in the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1962, pp.87-91.

- 29 Isaiah 47:3; Ezekiel 16:37; 23:29; Matthew 22:11; *Shabbat* 114a on Isaiah 20:2; *Exodus Rabba* 46, 4 on Ezekiel 33:26.
- 30 E.g. Plato, *Cratylus*, 403B; *Republic*, 577B; *Gorgias* 523D, 524D; Philo, *Legum Allegoriae*, II, 57, 59; Porphyrius; *De Abstinencia*, I, 31.
- 31 For the change to the R.S.V. text see below.
- 32 So the import of *stenadzō bareō*. See G. Schrenk, *bareō*, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, tr. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1964, vol. I, pp.558–561, pp.559–560.
- 33 Bruce, *Immortality*, p.469.
- 34 E.g. Ellis, *ibid.*, pp.43–45; Hettlinger, *ibid.*, p.179; Oepke, *ibid.*, pp.774–775; Schrenk, *ibid.*, p.560.
- 35 'Paul is not in the ordinary sense afraid of death, he dreads it precisely for the reasons he proceeds to give—because it would be a much happier thing to survive to the *Parousia* that is, not to die, be buried, pass some time "naked", and then be raised up, but to be transformed immediately . . .'. C.K. Barrett, *2 Corinthians*, London, A. and C. Black, 1973, p.156.
- 36 E.g. 'The soul lives on after death' *Pseudo-Phocylides* 105 ff., cf. Apocalypse of Ezra 7:3; Testament of Asher 6:5 f.; Tobit 3:6; Baruch 2:17; 1 Enoch 22:5–7; Philo—*De Aeternitate Mundi* 84; *Berakoth* 186, *Hagigah* 156, 166.
- 37 *Contra*, especially, R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, tr. K. Grobel, London, S.C.M., 1951, vol. I, pp.184, 234–236. With this passage may be compared many other parts of the New Testament which associate death with the departure of the *pneuma* ('spirit') from the body, e.g. Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; Matthew 27:50; Acts 7:59 cf. 'For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.' (James 2:26).
- 38 Harris, *Raised Immortal*, p.99.
- 39 Cf. Hughes, *ibid.*, p.182.
- 40 It must be doubted in this case if anyone is capable of such a feat.
- 41 Bruce, *Immortality*, pp.471–472; Harris, *Watershed*, p.53 ff.
- 42 Harris, *Watershed*, p.54 effectively admits this ' . . . Paul's eschatological expectation became more mystical in content . . . The Advent has become . . . essentially the open manifestation of a presently hidden state rather than the inauguration of a new era.'
- 43 On this matter see the excellent treatment by G.C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, tr. J. Van Oosterom, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1972, pp.32–64.
- 44 Cf. F.D. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, tr. H.R. Mackintosh, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1960, p.712.
- 45 In my opinion irrevocably established as a part of Christian self-understanding by O. Cullman, *Christ and Time*, tr. F.V. Filson, London, S.C.M., 1951.
- 46 T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection*, Edinburgh, T. and T. Clarke, 1976, p.102.
- 47 Cf. The Interpretation of Stephen H. Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future of Man*, London, I.V.P., 1980, pp.111–112.
- 48 So, H. Schwarz, *On the Way to the Future*, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1972, pp.185–187.
- 49 A.C. Custance, *Journey Out of Time*, Brockville, Doorway, 1981, p.248.
- 50 Cf. Berkouwer, *ibid.*, pp.40–42. It is the corrupt character of this present age and not transition itself that is a problem.
- 51 Even this is a philosophical construct for neither *aiōn* nor *aiōnios*, whether predicated of God or man in the Bible, has a meaning beyond endless duration. See H. Sasse, *aiōn, aiōnios*, in T.D.N.T., vol. I *ibid.*, pp.197–209.
- 52 'The temporal is just as much a part of our creaturely existence as the finite . . . The temporal is the essence of that which is created; as creatures we are temporal, all is temporal.' E. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption. Dogmatics, vol. II*, tr. O. Wyon, London, Lutterworth, 1952, p.15.
- 53 'It is not a case of losing a dimension, time for example. "Timeless life" is a

- contradiction in terms—but gaining one; and to gain is to open up vistas of experience as unimaginable to us now as climbing a spiral staircase would be to dwellers in two dimensional space'. T.W. Manson, 'The Bible and Personal Immortality,' in C.S. Duthie, ed., *Resurrection and Immortality*, London, Bagster, 1979, pp.35–48, p.46.
- 54 'It is said that everything arises and passes away in time . . . But everything does not appear and pass in time; time itself is this becoming, arising and passing away . . . It is the process of actual things which constitutes time . . .' G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Nature*, tr. M.J. Petry, vol.I, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1970, pp.230–231.
- 55 Considered as the transformation of persons and their endowment with spiritual bodies.
- 56 Time and timelessness (being 'out of time') are not analogous to two ends of a continuum but to two intrinsically unconnected dimensions.
- 57 Cf. Nelson Pike, *The Timelessness of God*, Ithaca, Cornell, 1970, pp.97–120. This problem has of course been tackled in terms of God's relationship with the world, but the standard solutions involving Deity are inapplicable here.
- 58 E.g. J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life*, Glasgow, Collins, 1976; A. Richardson, 'Soul', in *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, London, S.C.M., 1969, p.316.
- 59 Represented so strongly in the New Testament as the 'first fruits' of the resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).
- 60 The following remarks have differential relevance to the authors named.
- 61 It is difficult to go beyond the stated Thomist principle in this matter 'Since grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it, natural reason should minister to faith.' *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, 1, 8. Here 'faith' must be taken as *fides quae creditur* (assent and content) rather than *fides qua creditur* (self-commitment), for reason does not establish but upholds saving faith.
- 62 Which in so many cases provide us only with a negative assurance of what is *not* possible lexically, plus a number of possible interpretations. This reality does not impugn our confidence in the perspicuousness of Scripture, but only describes our difficulties.
- 63 The notion of a positive rôle in the interrelationship between theological tradition and biblical interpretation should not be seen as a regression to the sort of position adopted officially by the Roman Catholic Church. In practice there is already a real *consensus fidelium* amongst Evangelicals, without which the concept of an 'Evangelical theology' would be meaningless. (Part of this consensus is of course *sola scriptura*.) cf. D.G. Bloesch, 'Certainly we need also to recover the salutary rôle of tradition in the interpretation and understanding of Scripture. Scripture interprets itself, to be sure, but tradition can aid us in discerning how Scripture interprets itself. We agree with the Roman Catholic theologian Geiselmann that the rôle of tradition is not to supplement Scripture but to help us to understand it correctly.' *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, New York, Harper and Row, 1978, p.280.
- 64 Doubtless those who link death with the *Parousia* in the manner discussed and rejected above would deny that such a schema in any way limits the sovereign freedom of God. But in placing the *Parousia* outside of time they endow it with the inflexible necessity of all timeless and unchanging acts. Indeed, looked at from this angle it must cease to be the act of the Word *incarnate*—cf. the earlier remarks on the relationship between time and creatureliness.
- 65 To be able even to think with certainty 'When I die God must absolutise what he has begun in me' would be to reverse the totally one-sided nature of the Creator-creature relationship. That God will absolutise his work, of this I am certain, and that he will do so under certain circumstances, viz. the *Parousia*, of this too I am certain (cf. Romans 8:18 ff.) but that he must necessarily do it when I expire this I dare not utter, for the act is wholly in his hands.
- 66 If the thesis of an embodied intermediate state were accepted I cannot see how the

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psychological impulse for the believer to place his dominant expectation in the events immediately subsequent to his death could be avoided. That many contemporary Christians already think this way may be true, but this does not seem to be the case for any of the writers of the New Testament. (A deeper recognition that the *Parousia* bears its value independently of the span of any human generation(s) might also help to dispel what so often seems to be useless speculation about the consequences of the 'delay' of the Second Advent.)