

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

IS RESURRECTION ATEMPORALLY SIMULTANEOUS WITH DEATH? USING AQUINAS'S THEORY OF
ETERNITY TO CONCEPTUALIZE A NEW THEORY OF RESURRECTION.

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Abstract

In debates on the metaphysics of resurrection, it seems that philosophical theology is often arguing on the wrong fronts. While some philosophers and theologians spend their time arguing the feasibility of a person's bodily numerical identity at resurrection, whether or not a human being can exist apart from their body, or whether the resurrection is physical at all (among many other points of view) this thesis seeks to argue a more foundational issue: God's eternal/atemporal existence and how it affects the resurrection of mankind. If it can be shown that God's eternal/atemporal existence allows for a person to experience simultaneity in their death and future resurrection, then physical resurrection can be affirmed along with numerical identity between the "body sown" and "body raised," and further arguments concerning a possible disembodied existence can be declared irrelevant (among other ramifications).

Motivated by two vexing passages of Scripture, Matthew 22:29-33 and Luke 23:43, this thesis wishes to provide a philosophical hermeneutic to these passages while also affirming orthodox Christian theology in its belief of a physical resurrection at the eschaton and that being physically resurrected is far better than not being physically resurrected. I will do so by (1) using Thomas Aquinas' theory of eternity and other modes of existence to account for a specific kind of simultaneity, (2) defending the Thomistic account of eternity and his other modes of existence, and (3) explaining how it is the case that, given God's eternal mode of existence, a human being's (particularly a *Christian* human being) death and future resurrection occur simultaneously. Hence, the theory to be so argued is termed "Simultaneous Resurrection."

And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God:
‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?
He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.
And when the crowd heard it, they were *astonished* at his teaching.
Matthew 22:31-33

Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him.
Luke 20:38

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In philosophical theology there are several ongoing debates with regard to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; two of the more notable debates focus on the type of resurrection that will happen (e.g. will the resurrection produce physical bodies or spiritual bodies?) and if resurrection is even possible (e.g. how is it possible for God to resurrect Jones at time t_1 if Jones has ceased to exist at time $t?$).¹ Both of these questions center on certain aspects to the metaphysics of resurrection; of which, there are a number of current studies,² including those that cover such issues as whether or not resurrection bodies will be physical, whether or not there is a “time gap” between consciousness at death and at new life, and whether a body can return from oblivion. With respect to the arguments inside the doctrine of resurrection, it is important to note that there must be satisfactory defense given of both the concept of physical resurrection of the body and of the notion that resurrection is something better than non-resurrection. In other words, there should be a reason that God is going to resurrect human beings rather than not resurrect them. While there are plenty of arguments discussing the necessity of either a physicalist view or substance-dualist view of the human person in response

¹The examples given are by no means an exhaustion of the possible questions with respect to the manner of resurrection or its possibility.

²In the bibliography see Trenton Merricks’s contribution, “The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting,” in *Reason for the Hope Within* edited by Michael J. Murray (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 261-286, Christina Van Dyke’s “Human Identity, Immanent Causal Relations, and the Principle of Non-repeatability: Thomas Aquinas on the Bodily Resurrection,” and Lynne Rudder Baker’s “The Metaphysics of Resurrection” to name a few.

to how the resurrection “works,” my aim will not be to argue for a particular construct of the human person, but rather to show that a discussion on the philosophy of time is necessary, particularly with respect to God’s atemporal existence, to get to a more grounding metaphysical concern in the doctrine of physical resurrection and greatly influence, and possibly solve, an age-old question: “where does one go when they die?”³

Throughout this paper I will simply assume a Thomistic view of the human being: a human being necessarily is the composite of form (the soul) and matter (the body).⁴ This is a dualist approach, but a dualist approach that affirms that a human is only a human when the two “parts” are combined. There is no human being without a body as there is no human being without a soul. In this paper I will not make an argument for what the human being is; rather, I will show that if Thomas’s view of the human being is correct, there is a plausible way to affirm the resurrection of the dead without thereby also affirming that, between a human being’s death and resurrection, the human being ceases to exist as a human being.

The Thomistic (i.e. composite dualist account) view is taken because, if a strict substance dualism⁵ is correct, and it is the case that a disembodied soul can interact with God

³One such other question might be: “Where exactly is the incarnate Jesus now?” If He is still incarnate, one would assume that he has location. If He has location, what location is it? If He does not have location, where is His body? How does a spatial body, such as Christ’s incarnate body, lack location? Does Christ not exist as incarnate after his ascension? If He does not, where did He dump His body? Scripture seems to indicate that Christ ascended as incarnate, so His body must have ascended somewhere. Is the answer, Heaven? What does “Heaven” mean other than “the resurrected world?” This paper should provide a cogent answer to this problem.

⁴ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*. Vol. 2, in Great books of the Western World, no. 20. Edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 381-387; henceforward “ST2.” This is not to say that the matter is at all settled with respect to arguments for and against the various forms of substance-dualism; rather, this project simply is an aid to Christians who would hold the Thomistic view (or one very close to it).

⁵By “strict dualist” I mean here a dualist who affirms that the human person is more defined by their immaterial soul rather than their body. I have in mind a more Platonic or Cartesian view of the human person.

meaningfully⁶ and can exist at death in a paradisiacal state, then it seems to me that problems lurk with respect to the *reasons for* the resurrection.⁷ As Merricks says of the strict substance dualist: "...one thing is certain: The dualist cannot say that resurrection is *necessary* for eternal life. After all, Christian dualists [in the strict, non-Thomistic way] often claim that an advantage of their theory – even *the* advantage of their theory – is that it allows humans to live on after death but before the general resurrection."⁸ It would not make any sense, then, to say that life after death occurs *before* resurrection and that life after death also *requires* resurrection.⁹ I take it what Merricks means by "life after death" (LAD) is:

(LAD): The sort of paradisiacal state in which life is at its fullness and perfected.

The problem, of course, is that if the Thomistic account is true, and human beings are only *human* beings when embodied, then on a position that holds to an intermediary state, the time between death and resurrection constitutes a time in which human beings are no longer *human* beings, but something else. If this is true, then Jesus would not have been telling the robber the truth in Luke 23:43 when He said, "Truly, I say to you, today *you* will be with me in Paradise."¹⁰ Indeed it would not have been the robber with Christ in Paradise that day, but something (or someone) else since the robber would, in fact, not exist after he died. It seems hard to imagine how the non-existence of the robber could constitute anything resembling Paradise or life in its perfected fullness. Accordingly, Jesus' statement to the robber becomes problematic in that He

⁶See APPENDIX: *Mystical Experience and Substance Dualism*.

⁷This seems to be how most substance dualist will read the account in Luke 23 where Jesus promises to the robber on the cross next to Him that today the robber will be with Him in paradise.

⁸Trenton Merricks, "The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting," in *Reason for the Hope Within*, edited by Michael J. Murray (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 281. Insert added. Emphasis his.

⁹*Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁰Emphasis mine.

would have been either lying to the robber who trusted Him or else saying something to the robber that was unintelligible.¹¹ Further, it seems that, following Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, the Christian indeed *does* want to say that resurrection is necessary for (LAD) as so defined:

“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”¹²

If the resurrection is necessary for (LAD) of a *human* being, and the human being is necessarily a composite of body and soul, what does one do with death? Is a human being, Jones for example, utterly destroyed since he vanishes from temporal existence? If so, how exactly is it possible for God to recreate an utterly destroyed Jones? Christina Van Dyke attempts to use Aquinas’s view of the immortality of the soul to posit that Aquinas’s view, regarding the eventual natural return of the departed immortal soul to the material body at resurrection, allows for immanent causal relations between the dead Jones and the resurrected Jones. If Van Dyke is correct, then God is excused of having to recreate Jones out of whole-cloth, thus solving the problem of identity over time.¹³ However, even with this proposed solution, there still seems to be a point at which the *human* being ceases to exist *at all*. The problem, however, is that with respect to Scripture, Jesus affirms that *today* the dead person (dead believing person, anyway) will be in Paradise.¹⁴ In addition to the Luke passage mentioned, another passage of Scripture

¹¹See APPENDIX: (*LAD*) and *Temporary Bodies*.

¹²1 Corinthians 15:16-18 (English Standard Version Bible)

¹³Christina Van Dyke, “Human Identity, Immanent Causal Relations, and the Principle of Non-repeatability: Thomas Aquinas on the Bodily Resurrection,” *Religious Studies* 43 (2007): 388.

¹⁴Luke 23:43 (English Standard Version Bible) - As this paper will show, while it need not be the case that Christ is referring to a temporal “today,” it not need not thereby be the case that He is indicating a huge temporal gap or a metaphorical indication relating to the believer’s next experience after death. Merricks argues something similar to the latter in his *Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting* pg. 285.

can be used as a launching point for the argument to be discussed in this paper: Matthew 22:29-33.

In Matthew 22, the Sadducees, the sect of Jews that deny the resurrection, attempt to stump Jesus on the reality of the resurrection. In reply to their rhetorical trap, Jesus attempts to offer proof of the resurrection by citing Exodus chapter 3 verse 6: “And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” To which Jesus, in Matthew 22:32, insists that God “... is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” So, it seems that Jesus is using Exodus 3:6 as proof of the resurrection. The problem, of course, is that if Jesus is using Exodus 3:6 to prove the resurrection, then this likely means that the people mentioned in the passage are experiencing resurrection life. But how can this be? After all, according to traditional Christian theism, the resurrection of the dead only happens at the end of time.¹⁵ Is it possible that both states of affairs are true? Can it be that, in a real way, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (in addition to every other dead person) are experiencing (LAD) and *will* still resurrect in a real temporal (yet to be) future? My aim, throughout, will be to answer these questions in the affirmative by arguing for a concept called “Simultaneous Resurrection.”¹⁶ That said, there are myriad complications with respect to how we approach these questions, especially

¹⁵This point is not necessarily to be taken hyper-literally or to be in anyway disaffirming the Liberty University Doctrinal Statement that reads: “We affirm that the return of Christ for all believers is imminent. It will be followed by seven years of great tribulation, and then the coming of Christ to establish His earthly kingdom for a thousand years. The unsaved will then be raised and judged according to their works and separated forever from God in hell. The saved, having been raised, will live forever in heaven in fellowship with God.” The results of this project then should fit well within the agreed upon doctrinal statement as so stated.

¹⁶Not to be confused with the Thomistic account of resurrection where all people, both believer and non-believer, resurrect at the same time (simultaneously). Discussed in Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*. Vol. 2, in Great books of the Western World, no. 20. Edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 943-947. The working definition of “simultaneous resurrection” as it pertains to this project will be discussed below.

with respect to the tenses used in their wording. I take it that the answer to the above questions is “yes”; however, in a less than obvious way.¹⁷

What does it mean to say that someone has both *already* resurrected and *will* resurrect? Might it be a more probable than not that the eschaton is an eternally present reality to God (e.g. Abraham is living resurrection life to God) and that it will still, in the temporal future, happen to all human beings (including Abraham)?¹⁸ Minimally, these questions seem to have direct consequences on the nature of time, and in particular, God’s time, which is often noted as “eternity” or some variation thereof.¹⁹

God’s particular brand of time, if one is to call God’s existence “time-like” in any way, is indeed a point of contention within the discipline of theology.²⁰ There are myriad views, some insisting that God exists in endless temporal duration and others insisting on God’s existence as an atemporal existence; some citing duration and others not (not to mention the other theories with respect to sempiternity and the like). Positing God as timeless/atemporal seems to me to be the theory of God’s existence that has the ever-present “ring of truth”; however, working out a

¹⁷The proffered theory of Simultaneous Resurrection is not to be confused, or associated, with Hans Küng’s theory whereby upon death we enter immediately into resurrection. While that wording is very similar to Simultaneous Resurrection, Küng’s thought includes not a physical resurrection but a dying into God. Simultaneous Resurrection affirms that upon death a person enters resurrection life, but in no way does it affirm a possibility of “dying into God” and whatever that might mean. Küng’s idea is explicated in his *Eternal life*, translated by Edward Quinn (Garden City, NY: Double Day, 1984), 136-142.

¹⁸By “eschaton” I mean the Christian doctrine of Christ’s second coming and the resurrection of the dead at the end of time.

¹⁹In the proceeding paper, ‘eternity’, ‘eternal’, and ‘atemporal’ will most often reference the same thing. In most of the literature concerning the philosophical nature of God’s atemporal or temporal existence ‘atemporal’ and ‘eternal’ are used synonymously; however, while for the majority of this paper it will be true that these words can be used interchangeably, there will be a specific instance where a distinction must be made (Chapter four below).

²⁰Alan G. Padgett, “God and Time: Toward a New Doctrine of Divine Timeless Eternity,” *Religious Studies* 25 (June, 1989): 209. He says the following: “...God is in time. But I do not think it is proper to say that God is in our time. God transcends time, and he is the Creator of space-time. It is theologically more proper to say that we are in God’s time...”

timeless conception largely ends up being not unlike trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

Of course, the two main views with respect to the manner of God's existence are:

- (1) God exists in time and
- (2) God exists outside of time.

If (1) is true, then, with respect to answering eschatological questions, it seems to yield a pretty straightforward conclusion. If God exists completely in time, (and if the orthodox version of the doctrine of resurrection is true) then people really will only resurrect at the end of this earth's duration and Jesus' words to the Sadducees in Matthew 22 would simply be offering some other type of evidence for scriptural proof of the resurrection not otherwise clearly seen. However, if (2) is true, then, not only are there a whole host of difficulties for which a plausible solution must be found in order to show that the idea of a timeless God is coherent, but there is also the difficulty of explaining how such a truth impacts the resurrection of temporal individuals. I take it to be a strength of holding (1) to be true that (1)'s being true helps avoid some of these complicated issues. Even so, (1)'s being true, and so God's being temporal, leads, as I take it, to an unsatisfactory and unsatisfying premise with which to begin to understand just what Christ is asserting about the afterlife in passages such as Matthew 22, Luke 23, and others.²¹ It is (2), then, that I wish to affirm and will defend.

If it happens that a salient defense of God's atemporal existence can be given, further questions remain to be asked with respect to human resurrection. After all, it is one thing to say that God exists outside of time; it seems to be quite another to say that His existing outside of time has implications for the events occurring in the lives (and next lives) of human temporal

²¹Similarly, while a defense of the B-series of time will be given in this paper, it is not the case that A-series will be undermined. The point of the paper is not to disprove or say that A-series is incoherent, but rather to imply that B-series is the best theory of time to account for the argument given by Jesus in Matthew 22 and the promise given in Luke 23.

individuals. What would it mean for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (for example), from their point of view, to die and immediately experience (LAD)? Is it plausible that, for them and other dead individuals, the eschaton is an already-experienced event even though, temporally and biblically speaking, it is an event that is going to take place thousands of years after their death? Is it coherent and philosophically responsible to posit that a temporal being has both resurrected into atemporal reality and will *still come to* resurrect in temporal reality without ever repeating the action? In other words, is it logically and metaphysically coherent to say that a person can resurrect once and for all but yet the action occur in two frames of reference? It seems to me that the answers to these questions for all practical purposes is “yes”; however, there will be much more philosophical nuancing to distinguish specifically to what this “yes” refers.

Tethered to Scripture

If the Christian’s exegesis of Scripture should also be informed by philosophical inquiry, as it seems that most of the time it must, then it is important to ask the philosophical questions surrounding the statements of Jesus in Matthew 22:31-32. It is one thing to say that we can discover, through biblical studies and hermeneutics, *that* Christ is talking about the resurrection of the dead, it is an entirely different matter to ask *how* it is the case that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob might possibly both be experiencing resurrection life ((LAD) in the eternal present) and be resurrected (in the temporal future). Further, if those who have died are already living resurrection life in the resurrected Cosmos, then this bears significant implications on theological studies concerning things like body/soul dualism, the doctrine of election/predestination, and so forth. Joseph Bracken states:

The relation between time and eternity is the crucial problem in eschatology and its solution has implications for all parts of Christian doctrine. The identity of those who will be raised with those who are now alive; the relation of the future

of God's kingdom at the end of history to its being present in the work of Jesus; the relation of the general resurrection of the dead at the return of Jesus to the fact that even at death those who sleep in him are already with him, so that their fellowship with him is not broken; the relation of Jesus himself to his earthly work; and last but not least, the relation of the eternal kingship of God and his world government to the futurity of his kingdom – all these are questions and themes that are without answers, and the substance of them cannot be understood, so long as we do not clarify the relation between time and eternity.²²

I will not discuss all of these topics, but it seems to me that the ramifications of a paper such as this one could be farther reaching than just the manner of the resurrection. After all, from a hermeneutical as well as philosophical point of view, it seems that Jesus must be saying something significant to the Sadducees in Matthew 22. If he is saying that God is the God of the living by simply indicating a future resurrection of the dead, then Jesus is being fallacious and is merely begging the question. In other words, is Jesus saying here, “The resurrection of the dead will happen because the resurrection of the dead will happen,” or is he saying, “The resurrection will happen because your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are currently experiencing resurrection life”? The first question is viciously circular, so we ought not think Jesus is saying that; however, the second question seems to be an argument from proof. I take it Jesus' argument might be along the lines of arguing something like: “The Washington Capitals have a Hart Trophy winner during the existence of the franchise. To prove it, I can point to Alexander Ovechkin, a member of the Washington Capitals, who wins the award in the years 2008 and 2009.”

Perhaps there is a third option. Jesus might be saying, “The resurrection of the dead is a true fact because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are currently in a spiritual state, are waiting to be resurrected.” But an argument like that seems weak, at best. Indeed some Jewish scholars, argue against Jesus' use of Exodus 3:6 in the above passage; they say that Jesus' argument for

²²Joseph A. Bracken, SJ, “A New Look at Time and Eternity,” *Theology and Science* 2 (April, 2004): 77.

the resurrection, in this passage, is false because they take it that He speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as being resurrected.²³ However, if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *really are* experiencing (LAD) with God and are also to be resurrected in the future, then Jesus is supplying both evidence for the biblical doctrine of resurrection and providing future hope in the coming of the resurrected Cosmos. In light of the skepticism regarding Jesus' words, my attempt herein will be to help Christians gain insight into the hermeneutical difficulties presented by Jesus' somewhat cryptic words by both backing Jesus' argument and giving Christian theology a further means by which to *insist* on physical resurrection.

Further, the argument just may give *existential* grounding to the necessity of physical resurrection and why life in the *particular* bodies that we have on this earth matters. To wit, what will be attempted in the forthcoming pages is an explication and explanation, in a philosophically rigorous manner, of just how it is possible for a person to be both resurrected into the eternal "now" and at some future time resurrect in the temporal "then." The attempt will be made in the following way: first, I will demonstrate that it is God's mode of existence that ensures this possibility (which will entail an affirmative defense of God's existence as timelessly-eternal/simultaneous-whole). I will then move to show that because God's mode of existence is atemporal, and He exists in a simultaneous-whole existence, that upon death and the ratification of the relationship between the human and the Creator, it follows that death and resurrection have eternal-temporal simultaneity.²⁴ Before I can proceed, however, I must clarify some terminology.

²³Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "Jesus' Defense of the Resurrection of the Dead," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (April 1981): 65-66.

²⁴Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *The Journal of Philosophy* 78 (August 1981): 429-458.

Clarifications

Since the novel topic of this project is termed “Simultaneous Resurrection,” perhaps it is appropriate to begin unpacking what this means.²⁵ While SR, with respect to physical resurrection, is a brand new concept (at least there do not seem to be any publications on it specifically) it is not completely out of whole cloth. The idea of Simultaneous Resurrection rests not on the idea of temporal simultaneity whereby events occurring simultaneously are happening at one and the same *time*; rather, SR attempts to express, in a cogent manner, a coherent ontology with respect to a person’s death happening in *real* time, and that *same* person simultaneously experiencing (LAD) at the moment of death, in some mode of existence that is not quite in time and not quite out of it. To be clear, what is not being argued for is something like the following:

(RF): On February 12, 2012 Jones dies in a car accident and, in the next temporal moment, experiences waking up in his post-resurrection body.

but rather something like,

(RS): On February 12, 2012 Jones dies in a car accident and simultaneously experiences full-resurrection life (LAD).²⁶

Additionally, it needs to be clear that this concept is not arguing that Jones’s life on earth is going on *temporally* simultaneous with his resurrected life in the Kingdom of God because, as will be spelled out in the forthcoming chapters, Jones’s resurrection life is something other than temporal. Accordingly, SR does not wish to suggest the omnipresence or dual presence of a finite human being or any violation of the law of non-contradiction/law of identity. If the concept of Simultaneous Resurrection were to say something to that effect, then a whole new

²⁵The Simultaneous Resurrection theory will be referred to primarily as “SR” from henceforward.

²⁶By “full-resurrection life” this project means to say: active life in the resurrected cosmos with the fullness of persons concurrently existing *as if* all of resurrected humanity had been there for all time.

discussion about self-identity over time, duality or non-duality of a person over time, etc. would open up. As it currently stands, and as will be seen in the subsequent chapters, such discussion is not necessary because Simultaneous Resurrection absolutely affirms that a person, such as Jones, exists only in time when he indeed exists in time. So:

(RF*): Jones's death and resurrection are temporally simultaneous
is false while

(RS*): Jones's death and resurrection are simultaneous eternal-temporally²⁷
is true.

But then (RS*) introduces an interesting concept. Eternal-temporal simultaneity. In brief, this concept expresses the idea that, because God exists outside of time, having in his possession both all of eternity and all of time in their ontological reality (i.e. simultaneously-whole), it follows that Jones's death and resurrection (e.g. as two temporal events) are equally real to God, occurring simultaneously in the eternal-temporal sense. This concept will be much more thoroughly addressed in chapter two in order to show exactly why God's simultaneously-whole existence affects Jones's resurrection experience.

We must also clarify Simultaneous Resurrection, by way of definition, as a sort of outgrowth of an expression of the popular medieval concept of 'eternity' that will be heavily relied upon in this paper. This definition is, after all, the theory that this entire argument rests upon. If the forgoing definition of eternity is proven false, the entire argument is in shambles. Philosopher-theologian, Boethius, most famously gives his expression of perhaps the most popular medieval view of God's eternity when he says:

God is eternal; in this judgment all rational beings agree. Let us, then, consider what eternity is. For this word carries with it a revelation alike of the Divine

²⁷Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity," 436.

nature and the Divine knowledge. Now, eternity is the possession of endless life whole and perfect at a single moment. What this is becomes more clear and manifest from a comparison with things temporal. For whatever lives in time is a present proceeding from the past to the future, there is nothing set in time which can embrace the whole space of its life together. To-morrow's state it grasps not yet, while it has already lost yesterday's; nay, even in the life of to-day ye live no longer than one brief transitory moment. Whatever, therefore, is subject to the condition of time...it yet is not such as rightly to be thought eternal. For it does not include and embrace the whole space of infinite life at once...Accordingly, that which includes and possesses the whole fullness of unending life at once, from which nothing future is absent, from which nothing past has escaped, this is rightly called eternal...²⁸

Boethius' definition is then explained more simply by Thomas Aquinas as: "The simultaneous-whole and perfect possession of interminable life."²⁹ While this is a more condensed version of Boethius' statement, it is not the case that Aquinas left it at that. In fact, he spends the course of the next several pages (broken up in articles, answers and objections) plotting out exactly what he believes Boethius (and perhaps others like Plotinus and Augustine who used similar versions preceding Boethius) may have meant.³⁰ It is for this reason that the Thomistic theory of eternity will be used as the main definition of eternity to help argue for the concept of Simultaneous Resurrection.³¹

²⁸Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Boston, MA: Indypublish, 2006): 125.

²⁹Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*. Vol. 1, in Great books of the Western World, no. 19. Edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 40-41. Henceforward, *ST*.

³⁰Wolfhart Pannenburg, "Eternity, Time, and Space," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 40 (March 2005): 102.

³¹It might also be asked: "why not use a more modern conception of eternity?" To that I might answer that it seems most modern theories of atemporal eternity are really just attempts to understand what the medievals have already done. Additionally, it seems that the medievals tended to be more careful in backing their theories with Scripture as opposed to making philosophical advantages/disadvantages of a theory their primary starting point. Other versions of "eternity" that begin to posit a God who changes I find to be wholly unsatisfactory and a slippery slope to Open Theism, Presentism, and a whole host of other views that do not seem to square with orthodox Christian theism.

However, with this definition come other confusions with regard to the nature of possessing interminable life as a simultaneous-whole. Wolfhart Pannenburg, though not an atemporalist in the way Aquinas is, says rightly that: “God, who has the future in himself, is eternally present to the whole of creaturely life, to present and future.”³² Existence as a simultaneously-whole being is going to at least mean that much and also mean that God is in perfect possession of the entirety of His life (which will be argued is eternal and therefore not temporal) as well. Accordingly, because this is suggesting that all times are apparently grasped and present to God, a B-series account of time will have to be given. While a more complete outworking of B-series time will be discussed in forthcoming pages, suffice it to say the main difference between A-series and B-series time is that B-series time insists that all points in time hold ontological equivalency; that is, all points in time are equally real to God (i.e. do not cease to exist). That said, A-series time is not rejected because of incoherence but, as is stated earlier, because it is unsatisfactory and lacks explanatory power for the difficult statements in Scripture that this project seeks to discuss.³³ I will now formally state the argument that I will address in the subsequent chapters.

The Argument for Simultaneous Resurrection

We proceed then to the formal statement of the argument for Simultaneous Resurrection.

The argument goes as follows:

(PR1): God exists in an atemporal, eternal, simultaneously-whole existence.

(PR2): Anything that exists in a simultaneously-whole existence simultaneously experiences every temporal and eternal event and entity.

³²Wolfhart Pannenburg, “Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 39 no. 1 (2000): 9.

³³As new terminology occurs throughout the paper, accompanying definitions will also.

- (PR3): Jones's death and resurrection are temporal events to God and all who know Jones.³⁴
- (PR4): Jones participates in the temporal resurrection of believers by virtue of his being a believer and by virtue of his resurrection.
- (PR5): Any entity that God is present to and has consciousness experiences the "nowness" of God.³⁵
- (PR6): It is possible that, though dead on this earth, a person continues on in conscious fullness of being.
- (PR7): At temporal death, if Jones is a disciple of Christ, then his sanctification and glorification are complete.
- (PR8): If Jones's sanctification and glorification are complete, then his natural being is not subject to change.
- (PR9): Any being (other than God) whose natural being is not subject to change is æviternal.
- (PR10): Because æviternal existence shares in God's eternity, a human's æviternal existence includes experience of the temporal physical resurrection event and so (LAD); therefore,
- (CR1): Jones experiences the "nowness" of God when participating in the resurrection of believers (from (PR1)-(PR5)).
- (CR2): Jones experiences the "nowness" of God when he dies (from (PR1)-(PR6)).
- (CR3): God simultaneously experiences both Jones's temporal death and temporal resurrection (from (PR1)-(PR4)).
- (CR4): If Jones is a believer and Jones is temporally dead, Jones is æviternal (from (PR7)-(PR9)).
- (CR5): If Jones is æviternal, Jones experiences (LAD) (from (PR1)-(PR10)).

³⁴Is Jones's death an event for Jones? See APPENDIX: (PR3): *Is Jones's Death and Event for Jones?*

³⁵The "nowness" carries a specific meaning. While it is perhaps not possible to fully nuance the entirety of its meaning, suffice it to say that "nowness" connotes both relational and participatory presence. This should not be thought of in a temporal "now" sense; but rather, a sense where, for God, every point on the timeline is "now." As such, temporal individuals will experience God's "nowness" at every point in time that the temporal individual exists. Conversely, God experiences the temporal individuals "thenness" as eternally now to Him.

(SR): At temporal death, Jones then experiences æviternal (LAD) (from (CR1)-(CR5)).

Seemingly, this argument is sound for Simultaneous Resurrection. The main conclusion that is supposed to point the way toward a new theory of resurrection is (SR) which logically follows from (PR1) all the way through (CR5). That said, a whole host of truth claims abound in premises (PR1) – (PR10) and conclusions (CR1) – (SR) and so the nature of the forthcoming discussion will be an attempt to defend each of these premises (save for obvious ones like (PR3) – (PR5)).³⁶

A large portion of this paper is admittedly pure philosophical speculation; there are concepts here of which it simply must be conceded we do not have a complete grasp. In fact, it might as well be said that we may *never* have a complete grasp of them. Inability to fully comprehend the nature of an infinite being and His impact on a finite world should be fully satisfactory for the finite human. As Henri Blocher states: “[we] should not grieve over the good limitation our wise and gracious eternal God decided to grant to us.”³⁷ If this is truly as much of a “bold move,” as Blocher thinks such an argument would be, I hope that I will do it justice.³⁸

I have chosen the Thomistic view of *eternity* because it seems to give the most robust account of the concept (i.e. it gives a thorough fleshing out of the medieval concept of eternity), and it also seems to allow for an intriguing and hopeful solution to the question: “where do *we* go when *we* die?” Further, it seems to me, that – though it may be less than obvious to the reader at this stage – the Thomistic view, because of said reasons, leads to a more robust view of God’s

³⁶(PR5), it might be said in a Christian context, is nothing more than a paraphrase of Romans 1:19-20.

³⁷Henri Blocher, “Yesterday, Today, Forever Time, Times, Eternity in Biblical Perspective,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 52 no. 2 (2001): 201.

³⁸*ibid.*, 194.

eternal existence as well as a more robust view of (LAD) because of the way God's manner of existence affects temporal creatures. I have serious doubts, however, that simply asserting the Thomistic view of God's eternity will satisfy many. Let us, then, turn to the task of discussing whether or not the Thomistic account really is worth noting.

CHAPTER TWO

Aquinas's Theory of Time With Respect to God's Eternity

Having explained the reason for selecting Thomas Aquinas's particular explication of God's eternal existence, and so the nature of time, it is time now to explain some of the particulars that make St. Thomas's theory not only more robust than those of some of the other medievals' but also more helpful in giving a solid speculative foundation for the conclusion of this project. In particular, the way in which St. Thomas expresses God's atemporal/eternal existence and his expansion on the Boethian idea of eternity as "The simultaneous-whole and perfect possession of interminable life"³⁹ figures prominently in having a full understanding of his view. Moreover, a proper understanding of eternity will help defend (PR1) which states:

(PR1): God exists in an atemporal, eternal, simultaneously-whole existence.

In question ten of the first part of the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas raises a question with respect to "The Eternity of God."⁴⁰ In his introduction to the question, he offers up the classic expression of God's eternal existence from Boethius in the form of an objection: "We proceed thus to the first article: It seems that the definition of eternity given by Boethius (De Consol.v) is not a good one: 'Eternity is the simultaneously-whole and perfect possession of interminable

³⁹ST, 40-41.

⁴⁰ibid., 40.

life.’’⁴¹ Not only that, but he proceeds over the next several articles to explain why he thinks that the Boethian definition is an accurate portrayal of God’s mode of existence. As is the case with most medieval theologians,⁴² Aquinas hangs his theory of God’s eternal existence on the doctrine of God’s divine immutability. He does not state this outright in his definition, and defense of the definition, of eternity *qua* eternity; rather, he states that what is eternal must be immutable because eternity is not the same as the measure of time. In other words, where time measures the movement from before to after, and so on, eternity does nothing of the sort.⁴³ Expanding on that notion, Thomas asserts that eternity can be known and defended by identifying the two identity conditions of *eternity*. They are: interminability (i.e. lack of beginning and ending) and lack of succession.⁴⁴ Admittedly those two identity conditions seem to reduce to the same condition, but perhaps that is what Thomas intends here. Either way, the bottom line is that the idea of eternity *qua* eternity rests in the idea of immutability, the inability to change.⁴⁵

It appears fairly obvious that whatever does not have or cannot have succession or change cannot thus be measured by time. According to Thomas, who relies heavily on Aristotle, time is the measure of before and after, so if a thing does not and cannot change and has no beginning or

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 40-41. He cites here Boethius’s classic definition of God’s eternal existence found in *The Consolation of Philosophy* book V prose VI.

⁴²E.g. Boethius, Anselm, and Augustine to name a few.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁵The term ‘inability’ here is used loosely. Rather it may simply be stated, as Christian philosophers of religion are wont to say regarding God’s power to do the logically impossible: “it’s not that God cannot do these things, but rather, that they simply cannot be done.” In other words, we may assert that whatever is immutable cannot change of logical necessity.

ending, then it is atemporal in the *eternal* sense.⁴⁶ This is altogether different from arguing that God is an *eternal* being; instead, it is simply that Aquinas is arguing for the definition of eternity as made famous by Boethius. In order to move from a proper definition of eternity to God's eternal existence, Aquinas needs to make another argument concerning the definition of eternity. He furthers his argument for God's *eternal* existence in his second objection to question ten article one. The objection reads thusly:

Further, eternity signifies a certain kind of duration. But duration regards being rather than life. Therefore the word life ought not to come into the definition of eternity.⁴⁷

The nature of duration and life in atemporality in the eternal sense then becomes his next argument and clarification. Interestingly enough, Aquinas anticipates much of the same arguments that plague his theory today.⁴⁸ There are huge implications in human language when terms like 'life' and 'duration' are invoked. 'Duration,' in particular, is a term that ought to be used very carefully when discussing any notion of atemporal existence. That said, the topic of duration will be covered more fully in chapter three; as for now, a better understanding of how Aquinas counters the objections he raises in the above text needs to be addressed.

What does Thomas mean when he affirms that that which is eternal has duration? I take it that he means that that which is eternal has duration in *act*⁴⁹: "the protraction of duration seems

⁴⁶Aquinas uses Aristotle's definition found in his Physics Treatise, book IV. This can be found in Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle* Vol. 1., in Great books of the Western World, no. 8. Edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins, translated by R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 299.

⁴⁷*ST.*, 41.

⁴⁸See Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *The Journal of Philosophy* 78, (August 1981) and William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

⁴⁹I use the word 'act' purposively. Action, it seems to me, implies forward moving and therefore changing act. God's eternal act then seems to be one with His will in that His will does not change and has been established from eternity.

to belong to operation....”⁵⁰ By “operation,” if he is to be consistent, he must therefore be referring to *continual act* and the *lack of potentiality* in the eternal being. In other words, ‘duration’ for Thomas holds an understanding and meaning that may fall outside the traditional usage of the term. Not only that, but Thomas has already said in his First Way that God is *pure act* having nothing potential as the Unmoved Mover.⁵¹ It seems to me that Aquinas is both affirming duration and non-succession in eternity, but how is this possible?

Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann spend some time analyzing this question. They indicate that they “...understand this part of [Boethius’ definition] to mean that the life of an eternal entity is characterized by beginningless, endless, duration;” a “duration of a special sort.”⁵² That “special sort” seems to be the combination of duration in act and lack of potentiality. Fittingly, Stump and Kretzmann conclude that on Aquinas’s view “the life that is the mode of an eternal entity’s existence is thus characterized not only by duration but also by atemporality.”⁵³

So, what does all this mean? It seems to mean something that our language is limited in its ability to connotatively express. Perhaps in the case of eternal existence, if an eternal entity is said to have life and not just being, and God is that sort of eternal being, then He has a kind of duration that is unlike ours.

On this particular point, Garrett DeWeese makes a poignant insight: “At least intuitively it would seem that life must involve some duration, that a life lived instantaneously is not

⁵⁰ST., 41.

⁵¹ibid., 13.

⁵²Stump and Kretzmann, “Eternity,”: 433. [Insert added]

⁵³ibid., 433-434.

anything like what we would mean by ‘life.’”⁵⁴ While combining atemporal “duration” and DeWeese’s insight might not give an intellectually pleasing or easily decipherable concept, it seems that such paradoxical concepts find fast friends in discussions on the nature of God (e.g. discussions on the hypostatic union, the Trinity, etc.).

Simply stated, an eternal entity’s existence is pure act; therefore, if this being is to be the first mover, and so possesses life that is pure act and lacks potentiality, this being’s duration must therefore not be duration of succession but simply duration of act.⁵⁵ Reading Aquinas in this way concerning duration of unchanging action (i.e. act) seems compelling, given his statements with respect to immutability. Thomas holds to a very strict sense of divine immutability whereby:

God is infinite, comprehending in Himself all plenitude of perfection of all being, he cannot acquire anything new, nor extend Himself to anything to which He was not extended previously. Hence movement in no way belongs to Him.⁵⁶

Since there is no movement in God, in the sense of changing from point *a* to point *b*, a number of truths follow; however, for my present purposes, the most germane truth that follows is atemporal existence. That is, God’s not containing any succession or movement renders Him outside of time. Invariably, people may bring up the common understanding of God’s movement in history. What Thomas will simply say is that the usages of the word “movement” and “moves,” with regards to God, must simply be metaphor or other figurative language.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Garrett J. DeWeese, *God and the Nature of Time* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 135. DeWeese’s point here is not necessarily agreeing with mine; however, his insight is critical in understanding why positing God’s life as an “instant” is not something desirable: it must also be clearly stated that agreement with DeWeese here is only in an understanding of his term “instantaneously” to be a temporal understanding of “instantaneously.”

⁵⁵‘Act’ is, again, used purposively.

⁵⁶*ST.*, 39.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 39.

To Paul Helm, the more classical understanding of divine immutability is the quintessential way of expressing a robust doctrine of the nature of God:

To many, the idea that God is subject to the vicissitudes of temporal passage, with more and more of his life irretrievably over and done with, is incompatible with divine sovereignty, with divine perfection and with that fullness of being that is essential to God. The temporalist view may be intelligible, but it does not do justice to the nature of God's being.⁵⁸

Because divine immutability is the ground of the possibility of atemporal existence, chapter four will discuss this idea further. For now, however, it simply needs to be said that the Thomistic view of eternity is posited to be endless duration of a special sort (as described above) and an essential property of any entity that does not change (since by definition, time is the measure of before and after (i.e. change)), namely, God. There remains, however, one aspect of the Boethian definition of eternity that must be explored and drawn out in the Thomistic account, as well as his usage of the said definition. It is this aspect that is, perhaps, the crucial piece of the eternity puzzle: the notion of the “simultaneously-whole.”

Simultaneously-Whole and the B-series of Time

What does it mean for a being to have a simultaneously-whole existence that has complete possession of interminable life? For an answer to this question, we need to look back to the definition stated previously concerning the word *simultaneous*. In particular, it is helpful to remember that most people take for granted that, as Eleonore Stump points out, ‘simultaneous’ typically means “existence or occurrence at one and the same *time*.”⁵⁹ However, ‘simultaneity’

⁵⁸Paul Helm, “Divine Timeless Eternity,” in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 31.

⁵⁹Stump and Kretzmann, “Eternity,”: 441. Emphasis added.

in this project will be defined more simply than that; herein, it is defined only as “existence or occurrence at once (i.e. together).”⁶⁰

Of course anything that is an eternal “event” will be occurring at once with all events in the eternal present. If the eternal present is as the atemporalists wish to define “eternity” in that there is no sequence in time, then there *is* just what there *is*. Unfortunately though, many philosophers balk at the idea that events in time can occur simultaneously (i.e. at once) with any type of present other than the temporal type of present. In other words, on the view that ‘simultaneity’ means “occurrence at one and the same time,” if a temporal event occurs at $t1$ and another temporal event at $t2$, then those two temporal events are not simultaneous unless they both occur at $t1$. Or, if $t1$ and $t2$ are both simultaneous and $t1$ happens to be simultaneous with $t3$, then so is $t2$ simultaneous with $t3$ since temporal simultaneity is transitive. If simultaneity is transitive in this way and eternity insists on this type of simultaneity, then Anthony Kenny’s objection still reigns:

Indeed, the whole concept of a timeless eternity, the whole of which is simultaneous with every part of time, seems to be radically incoherent. For simultaneity as ordinarily understood is a transitive relationship. If A happens at the same time as B , and B happens at the same time as C , then A happens at the same time as C . If the BBC programme and the ITV programme both start when Big Ben strikes ten, then they both start at the same time. But, on St. Thomas’ view, my typing of this paper is simultaneous with the whole of eternity. Again, on his view, the great fire of Rome is simultaneous with the whole of eternity. Therefore, while I type these very words, Nero fiddles heartlessly on.

Fortunately, there have been wonderful strides in the discussion on simultaneity. While additional objections will be raised concerning eternal existence as a simultaneous-whole, we

⁶⁰ibid., 435.

must move on to a current understanding of ‘simultaneity’ by those who hold to an eternalist perspective.⁶¹

Perhaps the most significant achievement, with respect to understanding an eternalist perspective of simultaneity, has been made by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann in their 1981 article, “Eternity.” In this article they clarify the medieval notion of eternity, and in particular Thomas Aquinas’s; however, their most important contribution (especially given the thesis of this paper) seems to be their efforts to loose the effects of transitivity from the definition of simultaneity in the eternal perspective (i.e. existence or occurrence at once). How they do this is quite ingenious. Their complicated model is predicated on the Special Theory of Relativity (STR), as posited by Albert Einstein, in an attempt to both call God the grounding of all reality (and so *not* relative) and also to call into question the idea that simultaneity has to be transitive due to a single vantage point (the vantage point of temporal existence). The crux of their argument has its foundation in the distinction between temporal simultaneity (T-simultaneity), eternal/atemporal simultaneity (E-simultaneity), and what they call eternal-temporal simultaneity (ET-simultaneity).⁶² They make their distinctions in the following way:

T-simultaneity = existence or occurrence at one and the same time.

E-simultaneity = existence or occurrence at one and the same eternal present.⁶³

These definitions are all well and good, but the main issue here is how two things can be simultaneous to each other while one is in a temporal frame of reference (i.e. temporal point of view) and the other is in an eternal frame of reference (i.e. eternal point of view). In order to

⁶¹‘Eternalist’ and ‘Temporalist’ will be used to distinguish the opposing views. ‘Eternalists’ obviously hold to an atemporal existence for God while ‘temporalists’ do not. There are also hybrids like William Lane Craig. See his *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

⁶²Stump and Kretzmann, “Eternity,”: 436.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 435.

combat conventional wisdom which says that one ought to come up with another “existence or occurrence at one and the same ____” statement, Stump and Kretzmann argue that, according to the concept of having two different frames of reference from which to view an event, it is theoretically impossible to define a single mode of existence for the two *relata* of which one is eternal and one is temporal.⁶⁴ So, then, it is:

...not conceptually possible to construct a definition for ET-simultaneity analogous to the definition for the other two species of simultaneity, by spelling out ‘at once’ as ‘at one and the same ____’ and filling in the blank appropriately. What is temporal and eternal can co-exist, on the view we are adopting and defending, but not within the same mode of existence; and there is no single mode of existence that can be referred to in filling in the blank in such a definition of ET-simultaneity.

Though at first glance this statement comes across as unsatisfactory and explanatorily vacuous, they are quick to point out that the concept of T-simultaneity is just as vacuous. They do this by explaining a thought experiment where there exist two observers. One observer is on a train going extremely fast (just barely slower than the speed of light) and the other is standing stationary relative to the train on the dock. As the train is screaming down the track, two lightning bolts hit it, one on the front of the train and one on the back. From the observer on the dock’s point of view, the lightning bolts hit the train simultaneously, at one and the same time. However, according to the observer on the train, the lightning bolts hit at different times. The lightning bolt that hit the back of the train hit before the one on the front of the train because the train was moving very quickly toward the bolt that hit the front. So, essentially, the argument is that the bolts both *did* hit the train at one and the same time and they *did not* hit the train at one and the same time. Were there only one temporal reference frame this thought experiment would lead to a contradiction; however, this shows, instead of demonstrating a contradiction, that each respective observer’s reference frame determines the truth of their statement. So, it is not correct

⁶⁴ibid., 436.

to say then, on STR and this given example, that the lightning bolts hit at one and the same time; but, rather, that the bolts occurred at the same time within the reference frame of only one of the given observers (the observer on the dock).⁶⁵

In an effort to define what an ontological reality might mean to this manner simultaneity, Stump and Kretzmann offer the following definition and characterization of ET-simultaneity:

(ET) For every x and for every y , x and y are ET-simultaneous iff

- (i) either x is eternal and y is temporal, or vice versa; and
- (ii) for some observer, A , in the unique eternal reference frame, x and y are both present-i.e., either x is eternally present and y is observed as temporally present, or vice versa; and
- (iii) for some observer, B , in one and the infinitely many temporal reference frames, x and y are both present – i.e., either x is observed as eternally present and y is temporally present, or vice versa.⁶⁶

Of course these guidelines are meant only to impact the way in which all temporal events can be said to be simultaneous to an eternal entity – God -- and not be simultaneous with each other. In other words, so stated, ET-simultaneity avoids the transitivity objection. More will be argued on this in chapter three, especially with respect to the questions surrounding what it means for an eternal entity to observe an event as temporally present (Stump and Kretzman's (ii)) but the Stump/Kretzmann position has been stated simply to show that there are modern seemingly coherent theories which argue for the atemporal nature of God's existence. More will be said on the ET-simultaneity theory in the next chapter because of its importance in backing premises (PR2),

⁶⁵This thought experiment taken from Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity," 437-439.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 439.

(PR2): Anything that exists in a simultaneously-whole existence simultaneously experiences every temporal and eternal event and entity,

and (PR10),

(PR10): Because æviternal existence shares in God's eternity, a human's æviternal existence includes experience of the temporal physical resurrection event and so (LAD)

in the argument for SR, but the preceding explanation cleared the way for a good opportunity to now explain why God's having a simultaneously-whole existence necessitates a B-series view of time.

The B-series theory of time is a much-derided theory in contemporary philosophy of religion, and though it is the view held by a vast minority in the current literature, it seems to have been the predominant view of the medievals, particularly with respect to the idea of eternity consisting of a simultaneously-whole existence. Additionally, B-series time is the undergirding ontology behind the following premises in the argument for SR:

(PR1): God exists in an atemporal, eternal, simultaneously-whole existence,

(PR2): Anything that exists in a simultaneously-whole existence simultaneously experiences every temporal and eternal event and entity,

(PR10): Because æviternal existence shares in God's eternity, a human's æviternal existence includes experience of the temporal physical resurrection event and so (LAD),

(CR3): God simultaneously experiences both Jones's temporal death and temporal resurrection,

(CR5): If Jones is æviternal, Jones experiences (LAD), and

(SR): At temporal death, Jones then experiences æviternal (LAD).

Not surprisingly then, as with the majority of the medieval theologians, Aquinas too seems to be a B-theorist since he holds that all future contingent beings are fully present to God in his eternally present existence. This eternal presence gives God the ability to experience these

contingent beings as they are in the temporal now and as they will be in the temporal “then,” all in one non-sequential, non-temporal, durative experience. In other words, He sees them as they are fully in their being *and* existence.⁶⁷

Though the medievals may not have formally categorized themselves as B-theorists, it seems that the B-series view is really the only theory that can give a robust and satisfactory account for how it is the case that God is present to all things temporal, even the things that, temporally speaking, are not yet. In short, the B-series of time argues that all points on the temporal line are ontologically equivalent and that there is no ontological priority to the temporal now, rather than earlier today or later down the temporal road.

So, in stark contrast to the more normative A-series of time, B-series does not take tensed expressions of language as seriously as the A-series proponents do. That is to say, B-series proponents use terms like “earlier than” and “later than,” among others, whereas A-series proponents use words like “past” and “future.” Though this difference may come across as insignificant to those new to the language-game of time, the significance in this distinction cannot be missed. On this point, the B-theorist would say that the events of 1970 are just as real as both the events going on this instant and the events going on in 2012.

Using an example more relevant to the SR thesis, a person’s temporal death and temporal resurrection are equally and occurrently real and ontologically equivalent. We must be clear, however, that this does not imply that these events are continually temporally occurring; rather, all events are atemporally and eternally existent to God. If God is the grounding of all reality, then God co-exists with all times earlier and later than the current time, albeit in a different *mode* of existence than we inhabit. This means then, that in some real way, events normally

⁶⁷ST., 87-88 or St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Vol. 1, translated by Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 220.

considered by finite beings to be dead and gone are not ontologically dead and gone, for they are still existent to God. This does not mean that God is currently watching, in a temporally present sense, some event *E*; rather, he sees *E* atemporally knowing full-well just when it *did* occur *in* time.

William Lane Craig offers a critique that ought to be addressed immediately with respect to God's seeing some event *E* atemporally. Craig seems to think that a B-series view of time has catastrophic implications, specifically, for major theological truths:

[What B-Series] implies for events like the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is very troubling. In a sense Christ hangs permanently on the cross, for the dreadful events of AD. 30 never fade away or transpire. The victory of the resurrection becomes a hollow triumph, for the spatiotemporal parts of Jesus that were crucified are buried and remain dying and dead and are never raised to new life.⁶⁸

But why must this be so? Take particular note of Craig's usage of certain temporally tensed words. For example, Craig says that on a B-series view of time "Christ hangs permanently on the cross." Surely, however, Craig does not believe that those who hold to a B-series view believe such nonsense. Instead, it might be better said that on a B-series view, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is always a present truth to God, one that He atemporally experiences. Is the victory of the resurrection rendered hollow? I do not see why this should be.

The victory of the resurrection is fully accomplished in the temporal effects of God's triumph through His will for the sake of humanity (who exists in the temporal) and for His glory; glory that is never diminished nor could be diminished. The victory only means *victory* (whereby "victory" means something like: "a forthcoming success against temporally current opposition") to the temporal individual. The victory given to humanity and declared by the

⁶⁸William Lane Craig, "Response to Paul Helm," in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 66.

resurrection of Jesus is not a victory for God *qua* God as if He were in some kind of contest. In other words, even before Christ came to earth, God always eternally has victory.⁶⁹ What must be distinguished is that in the temporal existence of the created order God declared victory to humanity through the resurrection of the Son. Because the created order is viewed by temporal individuals from a temporal reference frame (though more than one), the victory is not hollow. To those existing in the temporal mode of existence, that which was to be accomplished *was* accomplished in time at the resurrection of Christ. In this sense, because to those in temporal existence the resurrection of Christ is a past event, it is an everlasting⁷⁰ victory for humanity.

It is a wholly-other matter for God since God's victory in the resurrection of Christ does not hang in the balance of time, but rather finds its fulfillment in the eternal will of God that cannot be thwarted. Further, Christ's spatiotemporal parts indeed *do* resurrect and do not remain buried. To 'remain' is to be temporal, and as was discussed, temporally, Christ most certainly did resurrect. Atemporally, the ontological truth of Christ's life, death, burial, and resurrection is being experienced by God, but temporally they have passed. The atemporal experience of God in this instance does not seem to be analogous to the temporal experience of man. For, by definition, *atemporal* is the negation of time, a mode of existence for which humans have no experience. With respect to the believer's death and resurrection, God experiences both simultaneously and in the same fashion in which He experiences Christ's death and resurrection. If this is true, then we should have support for:

⁶⁹Perhaps understanding God's victory in Christ in this atemporal way can help solve the hermeneutical problems surrounding Revelation 13:8 where most English translations assume the passage is discussing God's foreknowledge of the saints; however, some more literal translations of the Greek seem to indicate that the sentence ought to read "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the World." If we interpret the passage in this way, then we can see a glimpse of God's timeless victory found in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

⁷⁰By "everlasting" I mean to say "time without end." The temporal individual thus sees Christ's resurrection as a victory without end.

(PR2): Anything that exists in a simultaneously-whole existence simultaneously experiences every temporal and eternal event and entity

and

(CR3): God simultaneously experiences both Jones's temporal death and temporal resurrection,

two premises crucial for the conclusion that, at temporal death, a believer experiences SR

((LAD)).⁷¹

Modes of Existence

Perhaps one of the most interesting parts of Aquinas's doctrines regarding God and His relationship with time is the way in which Thomas sees the impact of an eternal God on all of temporal creation. Given that there are different modes of being: corporeal, incorporeal (angels), and immutably incorporeal (God); there are, to Thomas, distinct ways in which these beings interact with time. I have already dealt with God and the corporeal (i.e. humans and other physical beings); however, I have not yet dealt with the incorporeal non-eternal/finite beings, like the angels. Admittedly, the concept that Aquinas is going to explicate here is rather difficult, but it is not impossible.

The three modes of existence that appear in Thomas's work are eternity, time, and æviternity. Eternity applies to God alone since there is no change in Him in any regard; time is given to those who do change and are measured by change, and æviternity is given to those who do not change but can have change annexed to them.⁷² Some philosophers disagree that Aquinas is explaining three modes of existence; however, while the objection is noted, I wish to point out

⁷¹(LAD): The sort of paradisiacal state in which life is in its fullness and perfected.

⁷²ST., 44-45.

a few reasons why this objection is a mistaken one.⁷³ To begin, Aquinas makes remarks differentiating the three. For example: he says, “others assign the difference between these *three*,” and then goes on to give three sets of rules for differentiating between the three modes of existence and for determining who and what are measured by which mode of existence.⁷⁴ While it may be said that Thomas’s distinctions between the three modes may be lacking (he is apparently borrowing from “others”), he in no way concludes that there are only two modes of existence.⁷⁵

This is not to say that his explications of all three modes of existence are easy to follow. The clearest explanation that he gives for the medieval concept of *æviternity* is a simple explanation that may or may not explain much of anything at all when he says that “[*æ*]viternity differs from time and from eternity as the mean between them both.”⁷⁶ But what does he mean: “the mean between them both?” While it is hard to get at the exact meaning, it appears that St. Thomas is doing his level best to explain what defies explanation in human language. He seems to vacillate between positing simultaneous-wholeness to *æviternal* existence on the one hand and, on the other, positing contingency and changeability.

Even so, perhaps we can get a proto view of what Thomas is trying to capture in his view on *æviternal* existence. To do this, let us think back to Matthew 22 in which Jesus states that at the resurrection we are to be made like the angels in Heaven. This engenders at least two probing questions. First, what kind of existence do the angels have and, second, what manner of

⁷³Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 501. Stump states in an endnote 23 of her fourth chapter: “The medieval concept of *ævum* and *æviternitas* is complicated but does not seem to be the concept of the third mode of existence, on part with time and eternity.”

⁷⁴*ST.*, 44.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 45. In particular, Aquinas cites Boethius’ *The Consolation of Philosophy* book III.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 44.

existence will human beings have post-resurrection if we are to be *like* the angels? I take it that Christ was almost certainly not indicating a disembodied existence (after all, on the Christian account, the resurrection is a bodily one); however, might He be indicating something more than the mere fact that humans will not be married like the angels are not married? Perhaps N.T.

Wright is onto something when he says that:

Neither here nor anywhere else in the early Christian literature is it suggested that resurrected people have turned into angels. They are *like* them, as a trombone is like an oboe in that both are wind instruments though one is made of brass and the other of wood.⁷⁷

Aquinas, himself, adds further potential insight into his idea of æviternal existence when he says:

Spiritual creatures as regards successive affections and intelligences are measured by time. Hence also Augustine says, that to be moved through time is to be moved by affections. But as regards their natural being they are measured by æviternity; as regards vision of glory, however, they have a share in eternity.⁷⁸

Could it not be said then, that this explanation might be the explanation of human beings' mode of existence after the resurrection? To explain more fully what Thomas is saying here, and to perhaps nuance some of the tricky language, let me simply restate some of the elements. We can restate æviternal existence (Æ) in the following way:

(Æ): Spiritual creatures (all creatures having personal relationships with God) will always grow in their knowledge of God and their affections toward Him. These growths in knowledge as well as the decisions made by man and angels are measured and will always be measured by time; however, for Christian *human* beings, in their relational status, though they grow closer and closer to Christ, their sanctification and glorification are completed at death allowing them to behold glory with unveiled faces.⁷⁹

⁷⁷N.T. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God* (Great Britain: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003), 422. I wonder just how else we are *like* them.

⁷⁸ST., 45.

⁷⁹Everyone does not agree upon this point in Christianity. Jerry Walls, for instance, though agreeing that persons must be sanctified and glorified to completion before fellowshiping with God in Heaven, does not agree

This completed sanctification and glorification, the Christian human beings' natural being, is not measured by time because it does not fade away: it is æviternal. This, of course, speaks more to the transformation of the human being than it does to anything else; but it seems to also describe a similar current status of the angels.⁸⁰

Completed sanctification (whereby the human has been made holy) and glorification (whereby the human has been made capable to inhabit the best of all creatable worlds and see Christ without an epistemological and relational "veil") are two parts of the salvation process that Christian theism requires in order for human beings to find themselves in Heaven. Hence Jerry Walls states: "That is why salvation must involve changing us so that we come to love God as we ought. The aim of salvation is to make us holy, and this is what fits us for Heaven."⁸¹ This is why it is fitting to list completed sanctification and glorification as necessary and sufficient conditions for æviternal existence and so also (LAD) which states:

(LAD): The sort of paradisiacal state in which life is in its fullness and perfected.

With respect to the implications of æviternal existence on the mode of existence in Hell (and being cast out of the presence of God), perhaps it is plausible to say that the æviternal existence obtains for those resurrected to the second death, but that the quality of that existence

that sanctification and glorification are completed at death. Rather he posits Purgatory as a state between Heaven and Hell whereby people can come to complete sanctification. The Protestant Reformation notwithstanding, Purgatory finds no foundation in Scripture either explicitly or implicitly. Further, the logical conclusion is that if Walls is correct, then it follows that persons are responsible for coming to completed sanctification and can actually reach a particular destination. What would that look like? Scripture seems to indicate that sanctification and glorification are acts of God and can only be completed by God's miraculous work whether overtime or instantaneously (e.g. Hebrews 9, Philippians 3). See: Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Chapter two in particular covers Wall's argument for Purgatory. See particularly page 54 as well.

⁸⁰By using the word 'current' in this sentence I do not mean to suggest the temporal 'now' of their existence. Rather, what is being suggested is that this is how they are as they exist.

⁸¹Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 39.

will be ever-increasingly horrible and without hope. Or, perhaps those resurrected to the second death will be forever trapped in the hopelessness of time without partaking in the consummation and making-right of all things, including the *harsh* gnawing of time.

There are then two major principles to take into the next chapter. First (1), God's existence as a timeless eternal existence will be discussed by way of arguments against. This should allow for more explication on the broad sweeping strokes that abound in the previous pages of this paper. Again, arguing for God's timeless existence is crucial for the SR theory because without the ontological grounding of God's atemporal existence, no atemporal existence is possible. (PR9), (PR10), (CR4), (CR5), and (SR) all require the possibility of atemporal existence.⁸² Without the possibility of atemporality, SR cannot get off the ground.

Second (2), God's atemporal existence necessitating a B-series view of time will be attacked and defended, thereby showing that if the B-series of time is coherent so too is God's atemporal existence. Again, various premises in the SR argument require a B-series view of time. Without B-series time being coherent, SR cannot get off the ground.

⁸² (PR9): Any being (other than God) whose natural being is not subject to change is *æviternal*.

(PR10): Because *æviternal* existence shares in God's eternity, a human's *æviternal* existence includes experience of the temporal physical resurrection event and so (LAD).

(CR4): If Jones is a believer and Jones is temporally dead, Jones is *æviternal*, (CR5): If Jones is *æviternal*, Jones experiences (LAD).

(SR): At temporal death, Jones then experiences *æviternal* resurrection life (LAD).

CHAPTER THREE

Criticisms of Aquinas's View of God's Eternal Mode of Existence

Before an argument in favor of what I am calling "Simultaneous Resurrection" can be fleshed out, there are two main items that need to be addressed, namely,

- I. Defending the atemporalist's view of an eternal God and
- II. Defending the B-series theory of time as it is seemingly correlative and essentially involved with the reality of God's being atemporal.

While it is not my intention to destroy all potential defeaters to I and II, I do wish to argue that I and II are coherent. Moreover, I hope to show that they do not lead to internal contradictions and, instead, offer a basis for rational belief in God's having an atemporal mode of existence.

The atemporal mode of existence is required for (PR1), (PR2), and (CR3), thus, we now turn to a defense of God's having this mode of existence.⁸³

Defending God's Atemporal Existence

The idea of an eternal God is fraught with all sorts of theo-philosophical hang-ups, and difficulties abound. These are a few such questions. Can God act in time? Does God know what time it is? Does God live in a static instant or is His future and being dynamic, moving ever forward? What about God's quality of life? What sort of effects does an understanding of God as atemporal have on understandings of His incarnation in Jesus and His traditional traits like

⁸³(PR1): God exists in an atemporal, eternal, simultaneously-whole existence.

(PR2): Anything that exists in a simultaneously-whole existence simultaneously experiences every temporal and eternal event and entity.

(CR3): God simultaneously experiences both Jones's temporal death and temporal resurrection.

omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence and personhood? Often, these sorts of questions are raised in the form of objections. In order to keep the grounding of SR intact, I will begin to defend the notion of God's atemporal existence against such objection. To do this, I will attempt to address the arguments undergirding these questions and, as an added bonus, will deal with some less obvious arguments by way of dealing with the more obvious ones.

In the preceding chapter, a classic objection by Anthony Kenny was raised. This objection argues that the transitivity of simultaneity leads to the incoherent idea that, if all temporal events are simultaneous to God, all events are temporally present. By looking at the transitivity objection addressed by Richard Cross (a restatement of an argument by Duns Scotus, one of Aquinas's medieval contemporaries and forerunner to Kenny's objection) in "Duns Scotus on Eternity and Timelessness," we can view the argument in the following way: If we accept

(A) All temporal things are eternally present to God,⁸⁴

(B) If x is present to y , then both x and y are present, and

(C) It is not the case that the whole of flowing time is present,

we can then see that (A) actually entails the falsity of (C) which in turn entails

(1) All things are temporally present.⁸⁵

(1) of course is false; thus, the transitivity objection. Explicitly, the objection is that if (A) entails (1), then (A) is also assumed to be false. But does (A) entail (1)? It does not seem so. To

⁸⁴ST., 88.

⁸⁵Thought experiment taken from Richard Cross, "Duns Scotus on Eternity and Timelessness," *Faith and Philosophy*, 14 (January 1997): 5. This is a helpful restatement of an argument that can be found in Duns Scotus' *Lectura*. Scotus's presentation is given more in prose form and so this particular layout helps with narrowing down the particulars of the argument, which is why this was chosen over the primary source.

see why not, it will help to make (B), an ambiguous premise, clearer. In order to strengthen the argument, perhaps we can reword (B) in the following way:

(B*) If x is present to y and y is present to z , then x and y are both present to z .

The point of the original (B) premise is to show a symmetry and transitivity between simultaneously present events to a third party (represented by z in (B*)); however, (B*) might articulate the point more clearly.⁸⁶ With (B*) in hand, perhaps we can look back at each premise in the above argument. For the atemporalist (A) and (C) are true and the conclusion, (1), is false. What about that new premise, (B*)? While (B*) more clearly explains the transitivity of simultaneity than (B), it does not do not explain quite as well just what *species* of simultaneity is being addressed. Perhaps a further clarification of (B*) might be accomplished in one of the following ways:

(B**) If x is temporally present to y and y is temporally present to z , then x and y are both temporally present to z or

(B***) If x and y are eternally present to z , then x and y are both eternally present.

It should be fairly obvious by looking at the differences in (B**) and (B***), that if (B***) were to be added into the above argument it would then entail the falsity of (1), thus saving the atemporalist's view. The transitivity and symmetry of premise (B) is rendered false in that a limitless *relatum* has been entered into the equation thereby negating transitivity.⁸⁷ This insight, in addition to the previously stated insights from Stump and Kretzmann in chapter two,⁸⁸ should complete a thorough working over of the standard Scotus and Kenny objection just seen. Suffice

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁸ Stump and Kretzmann, it will be remembered, avoid the transitivity argument by positing ET-simultaneity, whereby a specific temporal event or entity is simultaneous to a temporal reference frame and the eternal reference frame without it following that it is also simultaneous with all other points in time.

it to say, all temporal things might be present to *eternity* without it following that they are *temporally* present.⁸⁹ On both the Stump/Kretzmann view and the Scotus view, on which Cross is expanding, “eternity is sufficient to block the inference from the simultaneity of all temporal items with God to the simultaneity of all temporal items with each other.”⁹⁰ With the transitivity objection addressed, I will now discuss God’s essential “omni-properties” and how they might be affected.

I take it for granted that God’s omni-properties can be reduced to His omnipotence. So, when asking whether or not certain of God’s omni-properties might be “diminished” or affected in some way by an atemporal existence, the question is really about whether or not God’s *power* is somehow “diminished” or affected on such a conception. William Lane Craig offers one such objection regarding God’s knowledge with respect to tensed propositions. He states rather plainly that, on the atemporalist conception, there are perhaps limitless facts (tensed facts) to which God is ignorant; he says: “[t]emporal persons know that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor is over; God [if atemporal] has no idea whether it has occurred or not...He merely knows that for people on December 8, 1941, and thereafter, it is a fact that the attack is over” and so “[s]ince he does not know what time it actually is, he does not know any tensed facts.”⁹¹ Further for Craig: “This is an unacceptably limited field of knowledge to qualify as omniscience.” How is the atemporalist to respond to this kind of charge? Here Paul Helm is particularly helpful. He states: “It might be argued that the failure of a timeless God to ‘know’ tensed facts is not a failure of knowledge-that but of know-how, of *divine power*, just as a failure to smell the

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 13.

⁹¹ William Lane Craig, “Timelessness and Omnitemporality,” in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 151. [Inserts mine.]

characteristic smell of Marmite while knowing its chemical composition is not a case of ignorance but a lack of know-how, the ability to discriminate immediately the smell of Marmite from, say, the smell of honey.”⁹² What Helm is saying, in effect, is that this particular situation is similar to age-old conundrums such as whether or not God can commit deicide. The same way God cannot commit deicide is the same way He cannot know tensed facts in the way Craig, presumably, thinks He should.

There are, it seems, more propositions than time-tensed propositions that God does not know. For instance, God cannot know person-perspectival truths such as “*I am hungry*” or “*I slept in late,*” etc. It seems doubtful that Craig would think God lacked knowledge because God does not know the proposition “*I was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on April 2, 1981.*” God of course knows *that* I was born on that date and in that location, but He does not know that proposition from the first-person perspective. There seems to be no problem or lack in God’s power due to the fact that God lacks the knowledge that only *I* have. Presumably there are then billions upon billions of facts just like that that God does not know. Does that make Him somehow less powerful? I do not see why. It surely does not follow that God’s “failure” to know such person-perspectival truths results in a diminution of His divine power. All that is entailed by God’s failure to have this sort of knowledge is that God does not violate the law of identity. In order to know the proposition “*I was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on April 2, 1981*” God would have to be me in my being and existence. If that were the case, God would not be God; He would be me.

God, of course, cannot both be me and not me in the same time and in the same way by rule of logic. Does God’s ignorance of billions of “*I am*” statements un-define the classic

⁹² Paul Helm, “Response to William Lane Craig,” in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 162. [Emphasis mine]. The term ‘failure’ of course is not to be taken as a lack of anything substantive; rather, more of a logically necessary lack.

definition of God's omniscience? I take it that the answer is no, and here is why: if God knows the truth value of all propositions and believes only true ones, then it can accurately be stated that God has knowledge *that* of all propositions. We can look at it this way: suppose I were to say "I am hungry." God knows *that* I am hungry, but He has a different sort of knowledge that I do. Though I would know the truth-value of that proposition experientially, God knows the truth-value of that proposition as a state of affairs, and the state of affairs is the exact same regardless of how it is stated. So,

α : I am hungry (my knowledge of the experience) is the material equivalent of

β : J.T. is hungry (God's (and any third party) "knowledge that" of *my* experience).

These are just two different ways of expressing the exactly the same fact: the entity known as "J.T." is hungry.

If the above is correct, it does not seem difficult to imagine that, while God knows the truth-value of the state of affairs: "the attack on Pearl Harbor is now over," He could have a non-experiential knowledge of that state of affairs (i.e. God does not experience the fact *in time*) without it diminishing His omniscience. While those who experienced it might express the fact, "The attack on Pearl Harbor concluded on December 7, 1941," in various ways, God knows exactly the same fact that they do. The only difference is that if God is atemporal, He did not experience it in the same way that the temporal beings did in 1941. So the argument that God's omniscience is somehow limited by God's atemporal existence is negated. Many other arguments regarding God's omniscience seem to be right along these same lines, and they all fail for similar reasons.⁹³

⁹³See: Norman Kretzmann, "Omniscience and Immutability," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 63 (July, 1966). Here Kretzmann, prior to becoming an atemporalist, argues against an immutable God if omniscience is supposed to be a correct property of God. The argument centers around a *reductio ad absurdum* whereby Kretzmann concludes

Even so, perhaps a prudent question to ask is this: even if we are justified in “limiting” God to propositional knowledge, is God’s relational ability, then, some how lacking? Does God, so conceived, lose His personality, His personhood? Even more to the point, if God only has propositional knowledge, are human beings just objects to God rather than subjects? I do not see why that would follow. Firstly, it seems appropriate to say that most of a human being’s knowledge of other persons is propositional in largely the same way that God’s knowledge of human beings is propositional. Relational knowledge between persons, it seems to me, is more about alignment and knowledge of their wills and affections, which are matters of the heart, than about the number of propositions they know about each other. In the same way, God’s relationship with mankind is defined, identified, and cultivated in the alignment of the human’s will with God’s. In that way, there is knowledge of the heart that is not limited to the propositional. Further, it is important to note that the personhood of God the Father is something of a mystery. After all, the one through whom we relate with the Father is, in fact, a *human* person: the God-man, Jesus Christ.

The possibility of atemporal propositional knowledge in the divine mind, however, does not entirely eliminate the difficulties in reconciling God’s omniscience and His atemporal existence. If God’s creation not only can change but is essentially changing and potential, then is it not also true that God must be in some way changing along with His creation even if only by virtue of His ever changing knowledge of changing individuals? Here is an example. It appears, *prima facie*, that if God knows at t_1 that Jones is not swimming but then knows differently at t_2 , then God’s knowledge of Jones must have changed and, therefore, brought God into time. Put another way, God would have to know the state of affairs concerning Jones at t_1 and also see and

the following: “Therefore, if God is omniscient, theism is false; and if theism is true, God is not omniscient.” Pg. 421. Paul Helm deals with the absurdity of this kind of an argument in “Timelessness and Foreknowledge,” *Mind Association*, 84 (October, 1975): 516-527.

know that the state of affairs concerning Jones *changes* at *t*₂. It seems to follow; therefore, that as Jones changes so, too, does God's knowledge of Jones.

It should be clear, *ceteris paribus*, that such an argument falls short of tripping up the atemporalist understanding of God's omniscience and immutability. Remember, Thomas says that "although contingent things [or events/actions] become actual successively, nevertheless God knows contingent things not successively, as they are in their own being, as we do, but simultaneously"⁹⁴ because "God sees not only the being they [contingent facts and entities] have in their causes but also the being that they have in themselves in so far as His eternity is present in its indivisibility to all time."⁹⁵ Here Thomas presents quite a difficult concept because the human mind is deeply entrenched in successive thoughts and thought formulation. Change is something that seems essential to the human understanding of knowledge.

In epistemological discussions, philosophers invariably discuss their methodologies and how exactly they *came* sequentially to any justified true belief or any sense of warrant. However, for God, this analogue seems nearly vacuous. Given the nature of the discussion, God is to be thought of as containing all knowledge in His divine mind limitlessly and eternally without ever having to index, categorize, or sequence His thoughts. God's thoughts do not change; He simply knows. It is true that God's creation changes in time, but that particular change is not intrinsic to God in any way, it is *extrinsic*, perhaps, but the change is only intrinsic to the temporal individual thing that is changing.⁹⁶ William Lane Craig argues that a notion of

⁹⁴ST., 87. (Insert added).

⁹⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Vol. 1, translated by Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 220. (Insert added).

⁹⁶In William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 31.

extrinsic change is in some sense a “weaker” view of immutability.⁹⁷ This bit of nitpicking aside, what seems patently obvious is that immutability can *only* recognize extrinsic change since, by definition, that which is strongly immutable will never suffer intrinsic change. Further, it does not seem helpful to discuss such a thing as “extrinsic” change with regards God. While it can be said that His creation changes, the fact that, on an atemporalist view, God beholds the totality of each individual’s being all at once negates any possibility for God to experience any kind of change, even extrinsically. Yes, God can be said to know that Jones changes from t_1 to t_2 ; however, God does not *experience* that change. God simply knows, in the eternal present, the fact that events occur for Jones at t_1 and t_2 . This is not to say that God does not experience Jones. It is quite plausible and likely that if God is a person, as Christians believe, then God does have relational experience with Jones, only atemporally so. It does not follow, however, that God’s relational experience with Jones is very much at all like our own, human-to-human, experience with Jones.

If God’s eternity, immutability, and His omniscience can all remain compatible, then what kinds of implications are there for an eternal God acting in time with His creation? Does this not contradict both His immutability and thereby His atemporal existence? There are a few possible reasons why one might think there is inherent incoherence in the idea of a timeless deity acting within time. First, one might assume that just as an eternal entity cannot *exist* in time, so also an eternal entity cannot *act* in time. Second, it might also seem that temporal actions necessarily have temporal causal agents and third, an atemporal being cannot hold together the

⁹⁷ibid., 31.

existence of anything temporal because doing so would require that the atemporal being have temporal duration.⁹⁸

Nelson Pike offers a classic version for the second reason for rejecting an atemporal being's acting in time:

Let us suppose that yesterday a mountain, 17,000 feet high, came into existence on the flatlands of Illinois. One of the local theists explains this occurrence by reference to divine creative action. He claims that God produced (created, brought about) the mountain. Of course, if God is timeless, He could not have produced the mountain *yesterday*. This would require that God's creative-activity and thus the individual whose activity it is have position in time. The theist's claim is that God *timelessly* brought it about that yesterday, a 17,000 feet high mountain came into existence on the flatlands of Illinois...[But] the claim that God *timelessly* produced a temporal object (such as the mountain) is absurd.⁹⁹

At this point Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann prove tremendously helpful. In their opinion there is great confusion in all three of the considerations that argue against an atemporal being's acting in time.¹⁰⁰ The first consideration brings with it confusion over whether an atemporal being's *actions* can be located in time or whether the *effect* of their actions can be located in time.¹⁰¹ There *seems* to be no contradiction in asserting that the effects of an eternal being's actions can find location in time whereas there most definitely is a contradiction if one is to say that the eternal being's *actions* are similarly located.¹⁰² If indeed there is no contradiction for an atemporal being's actions to have effects in time, then for an omnipotent being, such a situation is not at all outside the realm of possibility.

⁹⁸All three conditions taken from Stump Kretzmann, "Eternity,": 448.

⁹⁹Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 104-105. Stump and Kretzmann also specifically address this quote in their "Eternity" article on page 448.

¹⁰⁰Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity,": 448.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 448.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, 448.

Paul Helm echoes a similar point when he makes the distinction between time and contingency:

There is a tendency to confuse time with contingency. Scripture implies, if not affirms, the contingency of the universe in two respects: that its existence is not logically necessary, and that it owes its existence to the agency of God – it depends on Him. But it does not follow from the contingency of the universe in these senses that there was a time when the world was not, only that there might not have been a universe.¹⁰³

Helm's insight should give us adequate pause when considering whether or not Pike's argument is well founded. That said, with regard to Pike's objection, there might yet be room for the objector to say that an atemporal being's actions cannot have temporal effects. Stump and Kretzmann reformulate Pike's basic argument thusly:

- (9) "If God is timeless, He could not have produced the mountain *yesterday*."
- (10) The claim that God *timelessly* produced a temporal object (such as the mountain) is absurd."¹⁰⁴

Because Stump and Kretzmann see Pike's (9) and (10) as rather ambiguous they clarify with four possibilities:

- (9a) If God is atemporal, he cannot yesterday have brought it about that a temporal object came into existence.
- (9b) If God is atemporal, he cannot (atemporally) bring it about that a temporal object came into existence yesterday.
- (10a) It is absurd to claim that God atemporally brings it about that a temporal object came into existence.
- (10b) It is absurd to claim that God brings it about that a temporal object came into existence atemporally.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Paul Helm, "Divine Timeless Eternity," in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 50.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 449.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 449.

Clearly both (9a) and (10b) are true and, as Stump and Kretzmann note, Pike seems to be intending (9a) and (10b) instead of their (9) and (10).¹⁰⁶ The problem for Pike is that, while (9a) and (10b) are indeed impossible for an atemporal God, there is not much by way of consideration or argument to explain why (9b) or (10a) is similarly impossible.

Is there some necessary condition in causality that requires a temporal effect to have a temporal cause? Though this is more commonly seen in temporal life, there does not seem to be anything logically or metaphysically contradictory about positing different types of cause and effect relationships (e.g. atemporal causes and temporal effects).¹⁰⁷ In effect, the first two considerations can be rejected because, while (9a) and (10b) are true, (9b) and (10a) are false or at least have not at all been proven. Perhaps a plausible defense can be given for (9b) and (10a) if there exists some kind of cause and effect that must be temporally simultaneous (perhaps there are some examples like that; it could be that mountain creation is one of them). Stump and Kretzmann correctly point out that if the necessity of temporal simultaneity is being argued by Pike, and others who might launch the same critique with respect to cause and effect relationships, then it completely begs the question. Further, if simultaneity *simpliciter* is needed in *some* cause and effect relationships (including mountain creation), then *via* ET-simultaneity it can easily be said that *all* temporal actions (i.e. cause and effect relationships) have ET-simultaneity with their eternal causes.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, because the first two considerations are defeated, so too, is the third. If it is the case that an atemporal being can have its effects happen

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 449.

¹⁰⁷What about temporal causes and atemporal effects? Does the temporal work of man influence the æviternal existence? See APPENDIX: *Causality*.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 450.

in time, then that same atemporal being can have the effect of sustaining temporal individuals in time.¹⁰⁹

At this point, I will remind the reader why a defense of God's atemporal existence is being made. Remember that most of the premises of the argument for SR rely heavily the fact that there is such a thing as atemporal existence. It follows that if God is not atemporal, then nothing is since God is the grounding of all reality. Accordingly, if God is not atemporal, then discussion of the æviternal existence is meaningless. To that end, I have attempted to defend God's eternity, omniscience, and immutability. That said, the only other specific omni-property that is left to be discussed is omnipresence.

Richard La Croix thinks that God's omnipresence renders Thomas' idea of God's eternal existence incoherent.¹¹⁰ He says:

...if God is indeed omnipresent then it would appear that he must have been in the United Nations Building *yesterday* as well as the day *before yesterday*. And if God was in the United Nations Building *both yesterday and* the day before, then it would appear that he is in time and that temporal predications do actually apply to him. So, it would appear that God is *not* a timeless being if he is omnipresent and that two doctrines crucial to the theology of Aquinas (or any eternalist) are logically incompatible.¹¹¹

Are the classic positions of God's omnipresence and His eternal atemporal existence really logically incompatible as La Croix thinks they are? To see why not, let us examine his argument premise by premise. It goes this way:

P1: If God is omnipresent then God was in the United Nations Building yesterday.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 450.

¹¹⁰Richard R. La Croix, "Omnipresence and Timelessness," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 42 (March, 1982): 391-399.

¹¹¹Ibid., 391.

- P2: If God is omnipresent then God was in the United Nations Building the day before yesterday.
- C1: God was in the United Nations Building yesterday and the day before yesterday (from the conjunction of P1 and P2).
- C2: Therefore, God is in time and not timeless.

The argument is most definitely cogent. After all, the conclusion follows with high probability, at least *prima facie*, from P1 through P2. However, is the argument strong? The answer must be a resounding “no”! Simply put, both premises are false. God was not, in fact, *in* the United Nations Building yesterday, the day before, or today. God, it might said, is not *actually* anywhere. God is an in-corporeal being. God does not have location.¹¹²

What is more, if La Croix is going to accuse Thomas of committing a logical contradiction in his views of God’s timelessness and omnipresence, then La Croix ought to consider what Thomas says regarding God’s omnipresence in particular:

...in *some* way God is in every place, and this is to be everywhere. First, as He is in all things as giving them being, power, and operation, so He is in every place as giving it being and power to be in a place. Again, things placed are in place in so far as they fill a place: and God fills every place; *not*, indeed, as a body, for a body is said to fill place in so far as it excludes the presence of another body; but by God being in a place, others are not thereby excluded from it; rather indeed, He Himself fills every place by *the very fact that He gives being to the things that fill every place.*¹¹³

It appears fairly obvious that Thomas is being metaphorical and analogical by saying things like “He is in every place,” “fills every place,” etc. Since omnipresence is a negation, in the sense that omnipresence really means, “not limited by space or location,” it follows that what Aquinas expresses is merely the fact that God sustains everyone and everything. If that is the case, then La Croix’s argument is similar in scope to the objection already handled concerning God’s

¹¹²See APPENDIX: *Is God Present to States or Concrete Events?*

¹¹³ST., 35. (Emphasis added)

eternal actions having temporal effects. This is particularly true with respect to an atemporal entity upholding a temporal entity. The argument against omnipresence simply reduces to an argument against God's actions having their effect in time (and we have already seen that the latter fails). So then, if the omni-properties of God can be defended in an atemporal account of God's existence, the SR argument remains plausible.

Condition (ii) Revisited

It was mentioned previously (in chapter two) that we would need to revisit the claim by Stump and Kretzmann, in condition (ii) of their ET-simultaneity formula, that there must be an observer in the eternal reference frame who observes a temporal event (either x or y) as being temporally present. More specifically condition (ii) is stated this way:

- (ii) for some observer, A , in the unique eternal reference frame, x and y are both present – i.e., either x is eternally present and y is observed as temporally present, or vice versa.

Not only does Craig call Stump and Kretzmann's definition of ET-simultaneity vacuous on condition (ii),¹¹⁴ Paul Helm, Stump and Kretzmann's fellow atemporalist, also finds this particular condition of the ET-simultaneity theory to be "obscure."¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, neither Stump nor Kretzmann have gone on to defend this particular condition involved in ET-simultaneity, so speculation seems to be the operative approach at this juncture.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴William Lane Craig, *God, Time, and Eternity* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 96.

¹¹⁵Paul Helm, "Divine Timeless Eternity," in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 37.

¹¹⁶Obviously since Norman Kretzmann is no longer with us it makes sense that he would not be contributing to the contemporary discussion. However; Stump has as recently as 2003 put out a newer publication of this same "Eternity" article with minor modifications as a chapter of a book titled *Aquinas* referenced in this paper elsewhere and listed in the bibliography. The entire fourth chapter is on ET-simultaneity with no further update to the conditions required for events to be ET-simultaneous.

The appropriate question then is this: “what does it mean for God, the eternal entity, to observe an action (either x or y) as temporally present?” Quite simply, it seems to mean that God knows that a particular action is temporally present relative to a temporal observer. Since God is omniscient, He knows full-well all the temporal reference frames (though He does not experience these temporal reference frames, He does know who is experiencing them and what data they are receiving) and so He knows exactly what events can be said to be temporally present as they are temporally present to temporal individuals. There is, however, one corollary to this argument that Garrett DeWeese addresses. He says this:

What would it mean to say that B observes (or perceives) an event or an entity as eternally present? It is clear, assuming a causal theory of perception, that temporal beings can only perceive events or entities within their past light-cones—that is, events or entities, by definition, do not exist in the temporal series. Given that time and eternity are different modes of existence, how can a temporal being observe an event in a timeless mode of being?¹¹⁷

Simply put, this question is wrong-headed. The inherent difficulty in the wording of (ii) notwithstanding, it seems completely far-fetched to assume that Stump and Kretzmann refer to “observation” in a strict visual or auditory sense whereby “light-cones” or other such accoutrement would at all be needed. Further, no such actual observer needs to exist since these thought experiments are merely hypothetical. However, if it did need a particular temporal “observer” one might say that a “rock” is an observer qualified enough to help in the particular condition given for ET-simultaneity. All that condition (ii) is really asking for is an event occurring in a temporal reference frame relative to one of the many temporal reference frames and occurring simultaneously to the one eternal reference frame.¹¹⁸ If a tree falls in the woods in

¹¹⁷Garrett J. DeWeese, *God and the Nature of Time* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 164.

¹¹⁸I take it that there exists only one eternal reference frame because there is only one eternal (in the way we have been using “eternal”) entity.

temporal reference frame x with no sentient observer, it could still be said that its falling had ET-simultaneity with the eternal present of God. A correct understanding of Stump and Kretzmann's wording and intent appears to be all that is needed.

At any rate, it seems that most detractors cannot positively say that the ET-simultaneity theory is incoherent; perhaps they might simply say that they have a hard time understanding it.¹¹⁹ In all honesty, statements that assert that ET-simultaneity is difficult to comprehend only against the above types of objections, it is now time to address God's occurrence in time as the man, Jesus Christ.

The Problem and Solution of Jesus Christ

When God incarnated Himself in time as the man, Jesus Christ, did He not step into time and thereby negate His atemporal and immutable existence? Admittedly this is a tricky question and probably one well beyond my ken; nevertheless, because it is an appropriate question and objection to God's eternal existence it must be addressed. Certainly it can be said that God did come in the form of man in the fullness of *time* (Gal 4:4). However, does that mean that God in His deity became temporal? Scripture does, after all, say that in Christ the "fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col 1:19). So then, if the fullness of God is pleased to dwell in the temporal Christ, is it not the case that God is then bound by time and therefore temporal? If the atemporalist takes the hypostatic union seriously, then the answer to the previous question might well be "no."

Keeping in mind that Jesus Christ has two full, yet distinct, natures, there then must be attributes that can be attributed solely to Christ's deity and other attributes solely to his

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 166. DeWeese goes on to say that he cannot find ET-simultaneity to be explicitly incoherent but offers up, seemingly in frustration of the very thing discussed above: "if ET-simultaneity is an incoherent concept, the incoherence cannot be masked behind a definition."

humanity. For instance: Jesus Christ in His humanity needed to sleep, eat, bathe, exercise, etc; however, Jesus Christ in His deity does not need to do those things; rather, He is completely sustained by His perfect relationship with the Father. So too it might be suggested that Jesus Christ in His humanity is bound to a temporal existence and not so in His divinity.¹²⁰ While this may answer one question, it does not answer the question of how God *became* human. Does God becoming human not imply the negation of God's immutability on account of the change that accompanies becoming? If it does imply the negation of immutability, then it also will imply the negation of God's eternal existence (as defined atemporally) because by definition that which changes is measured by time.¹²¹ While this topic is nearly inexhaustible and deserves a more thorough look than is available in this project, I take it that the atemporalist can give a cogent response to this objection.

Suppose that it might be said of Jesus Christ that He exists atemporally in an incarnate state. Notice that this does not say "Jesus Christ has *always existed* in an incarnate state." The latter could be false while the former remains true. In other words, the physical body of Jesus Christ, in either its pre-resurrection state or post-resurrection state, did not exist *prior* to His earthly and temporal incarnation; rather, He exists atemporally in His resurrected state. Put another way, Christ's pre-resurrection incarnation occurs temporally and his resurrection body exists atemporally. If these statements are coherent, and I take it that they are, then it seems that God's atemporal existence has been cogently defended (though perhaps not *ultimately* as the debate still rages). This includes, I take it, a coherent understanding of the temporal incarnation of Jesus Christ. As a corollary to God's being atemporal and God's incarnation in time in the

¹²⁰More will be explained in the next chapter with respect to Christ's post-resurrection existence and whether or not it can properly be said to be temporal (in his human nature).

¹²¹ST., 41.

man, Jesus Christ, it seems fitting to address God's particular mode of existence, viz., whether God's mode of existence is in the A-Series (dynamic) or B-Series (static) view of time.

God's Static Existence

Given all that has been said in this chapter, it seems the only thing left to discuss is whether or not the type of life that God lives is one of stasis or one of dynamics. While A-series view of time may be coherent, it does not seem to allow for the atemporal simultaneity of death and resurrection. Therefore, A-series is not being rejected because it is incoherent, but because it answers eschatological questions unsatisfactorily. If A-series is correct, then we have serious hermeneutical problems in Scripture with regard to resurrection as is noted in chapter one. I take it to be clear that my arguments for God's eternal existence must be in light of a B-series view of time. The B-series view of time does not sit well for some philosophers because they assume it will lead to a quality of life not fit for the most perfect being:

What exactly is the alternative to our present mode of existence that we are being invited to consider?...What I'm being asked to imagine is that all I would ever experience would be just one momentary slice out of my present life...it seems mad to me to suppose that such a life would be preferable to my actual [dynamic] life.¹²²

Why such a negative reaction to the static view of time? Yes, stasis does seem to have rather boring and unfulfilling connotations with it (perhaps analogous to a job where one literally did the same thing day in and day out), but it does not seem quite correct to assume of an atemporal deity, in whom rests the perfection and whole of being, that the quality of His existence might suffer. Ironically, William Lane Craig comes to the aid of the atemporalist in

¹²²Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Response to William Lane Craig," in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 162. Wolterstorff asserts "unqualified temporalism" as his particular view where God is definitely temporal at the creation of the world. With respect to before the world and after the world was created, he chooses not to speculate.

this discussion: “Even if my life is better temporal than atemporal, that is irrelevant to whether God’s life is better temporal than atemporal...Even if creaturely life is better temporal than atemporal, that says nothing about the life of an infinite, uncreated being.”¹²³ This is why the “duration of a special sort” is noted chapter two. God’s static existence seems altogether different than the normal idea that temporal individuals have in their mind when they think of a static, changeless existence. To the temporal and contingent creature, most of what they know is change and changing. There is an unquenchable desire and need to grow and learn and change and experience. God has no potentiality, so the idea of change and dynamics as humans know it is something completely other to Him. What exactly it (God’s static existence) is most likely cannot be adequately expressed in temporal and finite language, but God, who is all in all and lacks nothing has more of a fulfilling experience, one would imagine, than any we will ever have. Still, though, He retains His personality and relationality with humanity through His dynamic existence in God the Son, Jesus Christ.

¹²³William Lane Craig, “Response to Critics,” in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 176. Though it is ironic that Craig offers this up, it is not totally unwarranted. Craig’s particular view does require that God exist atemporally before the foundation of the world and then existing temporally once the world, and therefore time, is created. See his *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

CHAPTER FOUR

How Tota Simul Affects the Resurrection of the Dead

At this point, it should be clear that the idea of a timeless God as the grounding of reality is not only logically coherent, but plausibly true. Because of this, we can now focus our attention on the main thesis of this project. It must be remembered, going forward, that the aim of this paper is to shed philosophical light onto the contents of such Scripture passages as Matthew 22:29-33, Exodus 3:6, and Luke 23:43 by describing what I have been calling “Simultaneous Resurrection.” Simultaneous Resurrection, if you will recall, is simply the theory that, given the truth of the Christian understanding of physical resurrection, when a person dies that same person simultaneously experiences resurrection life in the resurrected world, (i.e. (LAD)).¹²⁴ Before we explicate what this might coherently mean, it is helpful to look again at some of the passages in question.

In Matthew 22:29-33, the context of Jesus’ argument is the literal and physical resurrection of the dead:

But Jesus answered them [the Sadducees], “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they [the resurrected] neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.¹²⁵

¹²⁴(LAD): The sort of paradisiacal state in which life is at its fullness and perfected.

¹²⁵Matthew 22:29-33 in the English Standard Version Bible (inserts added).

In Exodus 3:6 (the verse Jesus quotes in the above passage) God makes the following statement to Moses:

And he [God] said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”¹²⁶

What exactly is Christ implying in Matthew 22:29-33? Is He implying that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were resurrected all the way back in Exodus 3:6? If He is, that certainly does not seem to be the popular view. In fact, it seems that the scholars on the cutting edge of resurrection scholarship have an *a priori* assumption that, while Christ is addressing physical resurrection here, he is not at all implying that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have already, *temporally*, resurrected.¹²⁷ We can take it to be the case, then, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, at the time God spoke to Moses, had not yet temporally resurrected. Yet, we can also take it to be the case (at least, we can take it to be the case if the notion of an atemporal, timeless God is coherent) that the past, present, and future all have existence to God as a simultaneous-whole. What we must now investigate are the ontological implications of God’s simultaneously-whole existence on human (temporal) resurrection. Put another way, we must answer the following question: “If a person’s post-resurrection self is atemporally simultaneous to God, how then does that affect the person’s post-resurrection existence?”

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, Exodus 3:6 (insert added).

¹²⁷ N.T. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God* (Great Britain: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, (2003), 425-426. In this particular discussion it does not seem to be a thought for N.T. Wright that other types of simultaneity or reference frames in which the resurrection might be a reality is at all possible. It does not appear as if he is rejecting them, but more that he has not even begun to consider any such possibility as being described here. However, this paper does fully affirm and agree with Dr. Wright that Christ is not asserting that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have *resurrected* in the past temporal sense.

It seems to me that the answer to this question will be found in the æviteral mode of existence (Æ). This is the mode of existence that we discussed in chapter two.¹²⁸ It is summarized as follows:

(Æ): Spiritual creatures (all creatures having personal relationships with God) will always grow in their knowledge of God and their affections toward Him. These growths in knowledge and the decisions made by man and angels are measured and will always be measured by time; however, in their relational status, though they grow closer and closer to Christ, their sanctification and glorification are complete at death allowing them to behold glory with unveiled faces. This completed sanctification and glorification, their natural being, is not measured by time because it does not fade away; it is æviteral.

This seems to be *simpatico* with the Thomistic definition of æviteral existence that those existing in æviterality do not experience change of being.¹²⁹ What I think Thomas is expressing when he says that an æviteral entity is not “subject to change” is that if such an entity exists, then this entity’s being must be *essentially* unchanging.¹³⁰ Put another way, æviteral entities are not subject to the change of their *being*. Even so, they can be subject to change in their *affections* toward God and so, by that, be measured by time.

Suppose it is the case that a person, post temporal life, is æviteral. What follows from this? (PR10) indicates the following:

(PR10): Because æviteral existence shares in God’s eternity, a human’s æviteral existence includes experience of the temporal physical resurrection event and so (LAD).

At minimum, two assumptions are made in (PR10):

(A1): Æviteral existence shares in God’s eternity and

¹²⁸It is this æviteral existence that is implicit in (PR6), founded on (PR7) and (PR8), affects the argument for SR in (PR10) and follows into (CR4) through (SR).

¹²⁹ST., 45.

¹³⁰I do not mean, however, that an æviteral entity cannot cease to exist. An æviteral entity is still logically and ontologically dependent on God for its existence.

(A2): An æviternal being's sharing in God's eternity includes experience of the temporal and physical resurrection (a requirement of (LAD)).

Given these two assumptions, I take it that two pressing questions could be asked. First, on what grounds do we base the assertion that the æviternal being shares in God's existence as (A1) states? Secondly, regarding (A2), how does an æviternal being's share in God's eternity imply that a resurrected person will actually experience her death and resurrection in a non-temporally simultaneous way? In other words, why does it follow from God's atemporal existence, and the plausible idea of persons in the æviternal mode of existence, that the æviternal (resurrected) person will in some sense already be experiencing resurrection life (LAD) in the reality of God's *tota simul* from the moment of death?

To begin to answer these questions, perhaps it might be best to unpack (A2) a little more, and, in particular, (LAD). Recall that (LAD) is the sort of paradisiacal state in which life is at its fullness and perfected. As I argued in chapter one, if the Thomistic account of the human being is true (whereby human beings are only *human* beings when both body and soul are combined), then it seems odd to assume that a *paradisiacal* state could include any state in which a human being is not fully a *human* being. After all, if "Paradise" can be had without a body, then why resurrect at all? Paradise, as I take it, is as (LAD) says: life in its fullness and *perfected*. If Paradise can be had immediately upon death, as Jesus indicates in Luke 23, and it is the case that Paradise can be had without a body, then resurrection seems completely superfluous. I take it that on a conception where non-embodied existence allows for life in its fullness and perfected, resurrection would be a meaningless addition.

What manner of thing is (LAD) implying then? Though (LAD) may only be stated analogically, perhaps we can think of it as something akin to Jones's waking up from death into a world where he actually is living the resurrection life partaking in æviternity. So, something like

Jones's participation in the general resurrection of the dead (or resurrection of believers) will be a past memory, but not in a temporal way.¹³¹ (Even though this thought project uses tensed language, it cannot be taken too strictly. It should be clear that the idea I am trying to express here is one in which Jones is, with fullness of being, present in the resurrected world and all without any sort of "I am new here" feeling.) Again, Jones will not have *always* been resurrected, for *always* is temporal; what I mean, instead, is Jones's natural being will not have experienced a passage of time.¹³² Now that I have established an idea of what (A2) asserts, we can begin to discuss its plausibility; we can start by examining Thomas's claim that those who live the æviternal existence have a share in eternity.¹³³

What does it mean to have a share in eternity? Jesus, after all, promises to those who will resurrect to life that they will raise to *eternal* life (Matthew 25:46, John 3:16, etc.), so there must be *something* to the claim that those resurrected will have a share in eternity. If what has been argued so far is true (and I think that it is), I think we can best understand Jesus' claims as an indication that eternal life is the experience of the resurrected person in the remaining æviternal "duration" of everlasting life. Further, if it is the case that the resurrected person's natural being (i.e. her sanctification and glorification) does not experience change, then it may be the case that her natural being is sharing in eternity by virtue of being, in a particular sense, atemporal. In other words, her natural being is no longer measured by time. If time is the measure of before and after, and there no longer exists 'before and after' for the post-resurrected person *in their*

¹³¹It might also be possible that the general resurrection of the dead will be experienced by all at death in such a way that at death we are dying in the same atemporal sense that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dying and resurrecting at the same "time"...or "at once."

¹³²Here the theory that is being posited is insisting upon a resurrection life that is not diminished in such a way that when dead we are awaiting people to resurrect into our resurrection world. What SR is saying is that, to the dead, the resurrection of the dead has happened, *but not without us*. Also, see APPENDIX: *Is Æviternity Durative?*

¹³³*Ibid.*, 45.

natural being, then it follows that the post-resurrected person's natural being is atemporal. It is by this fact that the resurrected person has a share in eternity in a very real way. If this is true, then (A1) is true.

La Croix, though he does not ultimately agree with Aquinas on the concept of æviternity, is able to break down the distinction between that which is eternal and that which is æviternal:

It [æviternity] would be essentially different from time and so be timeless, according to Aquinas, by virtue of the fact that [æviternity], like eternity, is *tota simul* while time is not *tota simul*. It would be essentially different from eternity on his view by virtue of the fact that it is possible for [æviternity] to be connected to or associated with (*conjugi*) before and after or beginnings and ends while before and after or beginnings and ends are not compatible (*neque compatitur*) with eternity; that is, it is not possible for eternity to be in any way connected to or associated with before and after or beginnings and ends. In short, time has beginnings and ends *in* it, [æviternity] has no beginnings and ends *in* it though it can be connected to or associated with them. It turns out, then, that on Thomas's view the necessary *and* jointly sufficient conditions that a measure must satisfy in order to qualify as eternal are that the measure *itself* have neither a beginning nor an end, that there be no beginnings and ends *in* the measure, and that it be impossible for the measure to be in any way connected to or associated with beginnings and ends...¹³⁴

If La Croix is right, then it follows that æviternity does not have a beginning or ending *in* it. This does not mean that the æviternal existence does not have some sense of a beginning *to* it; rather, there are no beginnings and endings *in* it. More particularly, there are no beginnings and endings *in* the natural being of the æviternal person. The unchanging *natural being* of the resurrected person is simply the result of completed sanctification and glorification. In other words, 'natural being' here is a relational term with respect to a person's relationship to God. If justification is already complete, and sanctification and glorification will be complete at the resurrection, then it follows that the *being* of the resurrected person will, in a very real sense, be complete. This is

¹³⁴Richard R. La Croix, "Omnipresence and Timelessness," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 42 (March, 1982): 394. In his article he refers to æviternity as "demeternity"; hence the changes for consistency's sake. Insert added.

then what it means to say that the natural being of the æviternal person has no beginning or end *in* it but it has a beginning *to* it. It is a similar way that the resurrected person has a share in eternity but is not in himself eternal; he is æviternal.¹³⁵ Though La Croix's (and so, likely, Thomas's) definition of æviternity seems to rule out entities who have temporal parts, it may be the case that *Aquinas's* understanding of the soul, as the substantial form of the human, gives the conduit through which æviternal existence supervenes upon the human's unchanging natural being.¹³⁶

Montague Brown also wishes to ascribe æviternal existence to the human at death. The difference between La Croix and Brown, however, is that in Brown's affirmation of Thomas's "temporary disembodiment" (as Brown calls it) theory of death and resurrection, is his insistence that the human soul is æviternal.¹³⁷ It needs to be remembered, however (and I think Brown misses on this point), that, for Thomas, the *human* being does not exist if the form is separated from the matter.¹³⁸ If the previous statement is true, and matter (i.e. the body) is combined with a now unchanging substantial form, the sanctified soul, it seems that the notion of an æviternal human being is not only coherent, but quite plausible.¹³⁹ Here is why: if a person is essentially embodied, as Thomas thinks, and the physical æviternal existence is false, then at death human beings are no longer *human* beings but must wait to become *humans* again at the future resurrection.

¹³⁵See more in APPENDIX: (PR8): *Further Exposition on "Natural Being" and Being "Subject to Change."*

¹³⁶*ST.*, 473-474.

¹³⁷Montague Brown, "Aquinas on the Resurrection of the Body," *The Thomist* 56 (April 1992): 196.

¹³⁸*ST.*, 381-387.

¹³⁹Defending the Thomistic account of the human being and the soul/body distinction is beyond the scope of this paper. This idea is simply stated to offer a plausible answer to objections that may arise given æviternal existence and the human body.

There is, however, at least one problem with the Thomistic view of things, as La Croix (above) notes.¹⁴⁰ Aquinas thinks that the æviternal being exists *tota simul*. But how can this be? It is at this point that La Croix's criticism of Aquinas seems spot on: "(with respect to time measuring the affections of the æviternal being)...since changes do occur to [æviternal] things and those changes are measured by time and occur in time because they begin and end in time, it would appear to follow that...time and [æviternity] are *not* mutually exclusive."¹⁴¹ If time and æviternity are not mutually exclusive, then this means that æviternity cannot be *tota simul* since *tota simul* and time are indeed mutually exclusive. The whole point of the simultaneously-whole existence is to free God from the bondage of time. Any creature who exists in a simultaneously-whole existence therefore will also be free from time, but there is only one eternal being, God.¹⁴² (It is important to remember at this point that, although æviternal beings share in eternity, they are not eternal in the way we have been using 'eternal' throughout this project. Eternity is the simultaneously-whole and perfect possession of interminable life; the æviternal being does not have that, though it may be said that she has a diminished share of it.)

It does seem possible to give a critique concerning the æviternal entity's atemporal natural being (which makes the entity æviternal) and the ramifications *atemporality* has with respect to existence *tota simul*. For example: it seems plainly obvious that if a being is in any way atemporal, then, by necessity, it experiences life *tota simul*. However, if it is the case that æviternal beings, by virtue of their atemporal natural being, have life *tota simul*, then this objection creates a major problem for the plausibility of simultaneous resurrection into æviternal

¹⁴⁰Aquinas does say this in *ST.*, 45.

¹⁴¹Richard R. La Croix, "Omnipresence and Timelessness," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 42 (March, 1982): 396.

¹⁴²Here the discussion is limited to beings and not things like abstract entities that are said to be eternal.

existence. Since it has already been determined that only one being can experience life *tota simul*, namely, God who holds all temporal entities in His eternal present by virtue of His timeless existence as well as His omnipotence, it follows that if æviternity necessitates existence *tota simul*, then the concept of æviternity is faulty. Here is the objection, premise by premise:

- (a) Anything that is eternal is atemporal.
- (b) Anything that is æviternal is atemporal.
- (c) Anything that is atemporal exists in a simultaneously-whole existence.
- (d) x is atemporal; therefore,
 - (1) x is simultaneously whole.
 - (2) If x is eternal, then x is simultaneously-whole.
 - (3) If x is æviternal, then x is simultaneously-whole.

The above argument appears valid, but if it is sound then the whole concept of æviternity, the third mode of existence (a supposedly *different* mode) that leads to simultaneous resurrection, is defeated. But is the argument sound? First, we know that the argument is valid since (1) follows from (c) and (d), (2) follows from (a) and (d), and (3) follows from (b) and (d). Further, we know that (2) and (3) indicate an equal mode of existence based on (a), (b), and (d). The only hope then is that at least one of the premises is false.

So let us take each premise in turn. Premise (a) is true by definition.¹⁴³ Premise (b), we have seen, is true as well. Premise (c), it seems to me, is the hang-up. Premise (c) states:

- (c) Anything atemporal is in a simultaneously-whole existence.

Based on a straightforward definition of “atemporal,” (c) will most likely hold true if no modification is made with respect to the nature of atemporality (definitions (a) and (b)). So far,

¹⁴³Or, at any rate, (a) is true by the definition used in philosophical theology to refer to atemporal existence.

what has been addressed in this project is the simple definition of “atemporal” whereby anything that is “atemporal” exists completely outside of time, and, thus, (c).

It would be a mistake, however, not to mention that there is indeed an *implicit* difference in eternal atemporality and æviternal atemporality. Ultimately, then, a modification is needed not for only for (c) but also both (a) and (b).¹⁴⁴ Let us modify them this way:

(a*) A thing x is atemporal in the *eternal* sense iff

(M) x is not measured by time and

(M1) x has no beginning and no ending and

(M2) x is immutable

and

(b*) A thing x is atemporal in the *æviternal* sense iff

(N) x is not measured by time and

(N1) x has a beginning and no ending and

(N2) x , though unchanging in natural being, is mutable.

As can be seen, it is by virtue of (M) that (a*) is atemporal and by virtue of (M1) and (M2) that (a*) is eternal. Similarly, it is by virtue of (N) that (b*) is atemporal and by virtue of (N1) and (N2) that (b*) is æviternal. All this really amounts to is that neither the eternal nor the æviternal are measured by time. This should be obvious since eternity and æviternity are separate measures of existence.¹⁴⁵ Thus with these definitions in place, the concepts of æviternity and æviternal existence appear to be logically coherent. If this concept is coherent, then SR’s

¹⁴⁴(c) is really false since “atemporal” is ambiguous in the given premise.

¹⁴⁵ST., 44.

premises (PR6) through (PR10) and conclusions (CR4) through (SR) are plausible and might well be true.¹⁴⁶

Let us suppose that SR is true. If SR is true, what follows with respect to the resurrection of Christ? Does it follow that He resurrects into æviternal existence? If what I have argued so far is true, and the hypostatic union is taken seriously, then it follows that the *humanity* of Jesus Christ resurrects into an æviternal existence, *while* His divinity never fails to exist atemporally in the eternal sense.

Finally, the coherence of the working theory of æviternal existence gives us the ability to look back again to Stump and Kretzmann's ET-simultaneity theory and its affects on the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. It is a truth of the Christian religion that the resurrection of the dead at the return of Jesus Christ is a future temporal event. If that is the case, then that temporal event is also ET-simultaneous to the eternal present of God. What is more, *all* temporal events are that way.¹⁴⁷ Suppose that Jones is a born-again Christian and he dies on February 12, 2012. Let us also suppose that Jesus Christ returns for the consummation of His Church and restores the world and His people through resurrection on April 2, 3015. Jones, then, dies on February 12, 2012 and resurrects on April 2, 3015. According to ET-simultaneity, both of these dates are eternally present to God, who is fully ET-simultaneous with the whole of measured time (of

¹⁴⁶(PR6): It is possible that, though dead on this earth, a person continues on in conscious existence.
 (PR7): At temporal death, if Jones is a disciple of Christ, then his sanctification and glorification are complete.
 (PR8): If Jones's sanctification and glorification are complete, then his natural being is not subject to change.
 (PR9): Any being (other than God) whose natural being is not subject to change is æviternal.
 (PR10): Because æviternal existence shares in God's eternity, a human's æviternal existence includes experience of the temporal physical resurrection event and so (LAD).
 (CR4): If Jones is a believer and Jones is temporally dead, Jones is æviternal.
 (CR5): If Jones is æviternal, Jones experiences (LAD).
 (SR): At temporal death, Jones then experiences æviternal (LAD).

¹⁴⁷Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity,": 442.

which Jones's death and resurrection are a part) and eternity.¹⁴⁸ So then it would be true to say that Jones's death and his resurrection -- though separated temporally -- are ET-simultaneous to God by virtue of God's eternal existence.

From the preceding argument concerning the nature of æviternal existence, it might also be fair to say that Jones, by virtue of resurrecting into æviternal existence, experiences resurrection ET-simultaneous with his death (conclusion (SR)). Here is why it is fair to say this. If it is true that the æviternal entity, Jones, has existence that shares in God's eternity (though æviternal beings are *not* eternal), and God is ET-simultaneous to Jones's death and resurrection, then it seems to follow that in some real sense Jones experiences the ET-simultaneity of his death and resurrection. If Jones resurrects to æviternal existence, it is not that he then experiences every temporal moment he has ever had as ET-simultaneous with his death; rather, he experiences a share of God's ET-simultaneity with respect to his *resurrection* since *it* is Jones's only next temporal moment. After all, Jones's sharing in God's ET-simultaneity is dependent on his sharing in God's eternity that only comes after Jones's move from temporal being to æviternal being. This does not negate the temporal resurrection of the dead Jones.

All that has been argued so far is that, by virtue of Jones's æviternal existence, Jones experiences (in his share of God's eternity) his death and resurrection's ET-simultaneity with God. While some, like Trenton Merricks, may wish to claim a time-gap in the existence of a human being at death, Simultaneous Resurrection posits not a gap, but ET-simultaneity.¹⁴⁹ The

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 442. Stump and Kretzmann make a similar argument concerning the life and death of Richard Nixon.

¹⁴⁹Trenton Merricks, "The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting," in *Reason for the Hope Within*, edited by Michael J. Murray (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 271. On 285 Merricks offers that Jesus' pronouncement to the robber on the cross "today you will be with me in paradise" might reflect the robber's next experience but not ontological reality. As a physicalist, Merricks believes that once a person dies they no longer exist; there is a gap of time between when a person ceases to exist and when they come back into existence at the resurrection.

same then might be argued in the case of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as referenced by both God the Son in Christ (Matthew 22) and by God the Son in the burning bush (Exodus 3:6). If it is true that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob resurrect into æviternal existence, then (if the argument holds) it is also true that they are, in a very real sense, experiencing resurrection life, and so are alive to God as God of the living and not of the dead.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

With all of the arguments for the simultaneous-whole existence of God, his mode of existence and its effect on other entities, and a proper understanding of æviternity, it seems that it may be relevant to revisit the formally stated argument. The argument, formally stated, goes like this:

- (PR1): God exists in an atemporal, eternal, simultaneously-whole existence.
- (PR2): Anything that exists in a simultaneously-whole existence simultaneously experiences every temporal and eternal event and entity.
- (PR3): Jones's death and resurrection are temporal events to God and all who know Jones.
- (PR4): Jones participates in the temporal resurrection of believers by virtue of his being a believer and by virtue of his temporal resurrection.
- (PR5): Any entity that God is present to and has consciousness experiences the "nowness" of God.
- (PR6): It is possible that, though dead on this earth, a person continues on in conscious fullness of being.
- (PR7): At temporal death, if Jones is a disciple of Christ, then his sanctification and glorification are complete.
- (PR8): If Jones's sanctification and glorification are complete, then his natural being is not subject to change.
- (PR9): Any being, other than God, whose natural being is not subject to change is ævital.

(PR10): Because æviternal existence shares in God's eternity, a human's æviternal existence includes experience of the temporal physical resurrection event (LAD); therefore,

(CR1): Jones experiences the "nowness" of God when participating in the resurrection of believers (from (PR1)-(PR5)).

(CR2): Jones experiences the "nowness" of God when he dies (from (PR1)-(PR6)).

(CR3): God simultaneously experiences both Jones's temporal death and temporal resurrection (from (PR1)-(PR4)).

(CR4): If Jones is a believer and Jones is temporally dead, Jones is æviternal (from (PR7)-(PR9)).

(CR5): If Jones is æviternal, Jones experiences (LAD) (from (PR1)-(PR11)).

(SR): At temporal death, Jones then experiences æviternal (LAD) (from (CR1)-(CR5)).

As we said earlier, the argument in its current form appears to be logically valid; however, the point and purpose for the heretofore discussion has been to demonstrate that the argument is not only valid but, more importantly, sound. To see more clearly that this is the case, I will now attempt to give an explicit defense of each premise starting with premise (PR1).

(PR1) is simply a restatement of Thomas's definition of eternity that I have been using throughout.¹⁵⁰ Chapter three was my attempt to rigorously defend this definition against a number of objections. The first objection that is thwarted is the argument from the transitivity of simultaneity. Here I pointed out that Stump and Kretzmann's theory of ET-simultaneity is of tremendous help in that it allows for events to be simultaneous from two different reference frames and, thereby, negates any notion of transitivity. The rejoinder to the transitivity objection goes, basically this way. It is a negation of the idea that if x is simultaneous to y and y is simultaneous to z , then x *must* be simultaneous to z . The crux of the argument hinges on a proper

¹⁵⁰ST., 40-41.

understanding of ‘simultaneous.’ When the atemporalist (such as Aquinas or any other contemporary atemporalist) says “simultaneous” in the atemporal sense, what he really means is not that x , y , and z all occur simultaneously *in time*; rather, what he means is that x , y , and z are all simultaneously present to God who is in the eternal reference frame. If the transitivity objection can be overturned, as I argued in the third chapter, then the simultaneity of a plurality of different events, located at different times on the space-time continuum can be coherently said to be occurring simultaneously to God in the eternal present. Cross, who has great insight regarding the transitivity objection (as we above), also correctly points out that the matter of x , y , and z ’s being simultaneous to an eternal being is not the same as being simultaneous with each other in their temporal condition.¹⁵¹

I attempted to turn away the attack against God’s omniscience, *vis a vis* His eternal existence, in a different manner. Recall that the argument against God’s omniscience really amounts to an argument against his omnipotence. It is said that God lacks omniscience, due to His atemporality, because He does not know *when* events are occurring or have completed (ala William Lane Craig (et. al.)).¹⁵² What I offered as a rejoinder to this objection is that the objection is founded on a category mistake. Rather than positing God’s lack of *experiencing* that it is currently 2:15 p.m. EST as a lack of knowledge, it ought to be said, instead, that He simply knows *that* it is currently 2:15 p.m. EST *for* J.T. Turner (and all other temporal individuals in the Eastern Standard Time Zone). God knows this fact by virtue of His knowing *all* facts that do not require a first-person experiential knowledge. He simply does not have the same *experiential* knowledge of time as a temporal entity does. The conclusion is the same as it would be for a

¹⁵¹Richard Cross, “Duns Scotus on Eternity and Timelessness,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 14 (January 1997): 12.

¹⁵²William Lane Craig, “Timelessness and Omnitemporality,” in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 151.

defense of omniscience *simpliciter* against the charge that God does not know *everything* since He does not know first-person facts (e.g. “I am hungry”). Put more simply, this is not a lack of knowledge, this is simply a lack of know-how, not knowledge-that.¹⁵³ It seems clear, then, that God’s omniscience is in no way affected by his atemporal existence. The same, I think, can be said with respect to God’s personhood – His being a Person. We need not think that God’s being a Person, or His ability to relate to humans personally, is at all affected by His omniscience.¹⁵⁴

With respect to God’s immutability, we saw earlier that Craig finds it obvious that, if God has knowledge of changing individuals, then by virtue of *their* changing God’s noetic content He also changes.¹⁵⁵ It has been demonstrated, however, that the objection is false. The objection is false because it hangs on the belief that *extrinsic* change to God is still change.¹⁵⁶ But, that does not seem to be true at all. Remember that if God, on the ET-simultaneity view, is viewing the whole of both the temporal landscape and eternal landscape without succession, it must follow that while God knows *that* a contingent being changes, His knowledge of that individual remains whole and does not change. In other words, the countless changes that a contingent entity goes through are seen, in their totality, in the *who she is* that God knows. This totality of *who she is* includes her particulars and the specific points in time that the temporal entity changes.

¹⁵³Paul Helm, “Response to William Lane Craig,” in *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 162.

¹⁵⁴It needs to be said unequivocally that it is most likely that our knowledge, and relation with, God as a Person is accomplished through the God-man, Jesus Christ. (I leave for discussion the personhood of the Father for far more experienced theologians.)

¹⁵⁵William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 31.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 31.

Possibility and actuality need not be undermined here. If possibility and actuality, with respect to human beings, still *actually occurs* in time – and it does – then God still knows *that* a person has both possibility and actuality in time. In addition to God’s relation to a human’s possibility and actuality, there are also instances of God’s possibility and actuality (e.g. God’s choosing world W over World W*). What I wish to say, on this point, is that God’s possibility and actuality are not temporal but are, instead, logical.¹⁵⁷ If that is the case, then God’s “choosing world W over world W*, for example, is done atemporally.

Similarly, the arguments insisting that God’s atemporality affects His ability to act in time (by Pike, for example), have been countered by means of a clarification (via ET-simultaneity) which insists that causes and effects *need not* both be in time. The suggestion we made was that it is quite plausible that an *eternal* cause can have a *temporal* effect. Recall that Pike’s argument starts off on the wrong footing by assuming *a priori* that events must have either *temporal* causes, or events must have simultaneous causes.¹⁵⁸ To counter Pike, I argued, using Stump and Kretzmann’s ET-simultaneity argument, that if Pike is asserting that temporal effects must have temporal causes, he makes no argument for it and simply assumes its truth. If Pike argues that events must have simultaneous causes, then God’s being ET-simultaneous to all temporal events from the eternal reference frame fulfills the need for a simultaneous cause to a temporal effect.¹⁵⁹

The objection concerning God’s omnipresence with respect to His atemporality has – as La Croix has stated it – also been defeated. This objection, as we saw, was simply a case of

¹⁵⁷A proper investigation into God’s “choice”-making and sequencing of thoughts, etc. is outside the scope of this paper.

¹⁵⁸Stump and Kretzmann, “Eternity,”: 448.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 448.

misunderstanding. In particular, the objection mistook what a theologian means when he discusses omnipresence. As I argued in chapter three, ‘omnipresence’ does *not* mean a literal spatial filling of God’s existence in a particular *place*; rather, ‘omnipresence’ must be understood analogically because the theist asserts that God is upholding every spatial location by the power of His will and being.

Lastly, with respect to the truth of premise (PR1), the discussion of Christ is brought to the fore. Scripture clearly indicates that Christ did, in fact, come into time (Gal 4:4) and in Him God’s deity is pleased to dwell in full (Col 1:19). Is it then not the case that God, as incarnate, becomes temporal and, therefore, not immutable or atemporal? I take it that the short answer to this question is “no.” It seems to me that taking the dual nature of Christ seriously requires the atemporalist Christian to take seriously the idea that, while Jesus Christ was on this earth, God, while eternal in His deity, was temporal in His humanity. Now (after Christ’s resurrection), if what I have argued to this point is true, we can say that God is eternal in His *deity* and is *æviternal* in His *humanity*. In exactly the same way that it is required for the Christian to take seriously the idea that Christ was tempted in His humanity but cannot be tempted in His divinity, the Christian must take seriously the idea that God was temporal (now *is æviternal*) in His humanity and is eternal in His divinity. Granted, finite beings may never understand exactly how all of that works out, but, perhaps, finite beings are not meant to.

With (PR1) and (PR2) accounted for, and (PR3) and (PR4) obviously true if the resurrection is true, it is now time to revisit (PR5) and (PR6) to see if they are true as well.

(PR5) states:

(PR5): Any entity that God is present to and has consciousness, experiences the “nowness” of God

while (PR6) says:

(PR6): It is possible that, though dead on this earth, a person continues on in conscious existence.

Essentially, these premises allow for the idea of æviternal existence. They do this first by asserting that if God is present to a conscious entity, then that conscious entity experiences it. This is not to say that the entity is necessarily cognizant of this fact, but the entity still experiences the “nowness” of God at least subconsciously. This seems to be what the Apostle Paul is implying in Romans chapter 1.¹⁶⁰ However, with respect to the argument at hand, the reality of God’s being present to someone, and her experiencing the “nowness” of God allows for æviternal existence, and (SR) in the following way. It seems plausible, given what we have said thus far, that experiencing the “nowness” of God *after* death takes a person from experiencing God in her temporal being, to experiencing God on a higher level, or at least, on another plane of being.

If it is the case that human beings, post resurrection, are *non posse peccari*, as traditional Christian theism believes, then it follows that at least *something* about their being is unable to change.¹⁶¹ Such is the crux of (PR7) – (PR8). Depending on how one reads I Corinthians 15 and II Corinthians 5, it is plausible to suppose that the “new creation” that is being sanctified (and is ultimately “raised imperishable”) points toward a condition whereby the human’s *natural* being is no longer subject to change yet still allows for the affections and intellect to be subject to change. If these conditions are met, they fill the necessary conditions of Aquinas’s notion of

¹⁶⁰Romans 1:19-21 – “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or given thanks to him, but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were hardened.” English Standard Version Bible.

¹⁶¹See APPENDIX: *Why Were Adam and Eve Not Æviternal?*

æviternity, and allow for æviternal beings, the proposition made by (PR9).¹⁶² If it is the case that æviternal existence includes a share of God's eternity, and thereby some sense of His ET-simultaneity with temporal events (as I argued last chapter), then it is probably that (PR10) is true.

If all of the above holds, then so does the argument for Simultaneous Resurrection. We have seen that the formal argument for SR is logically valid; hopefully, we can now see that the argument is sound, as well. This is wholly different than claiming that the argument for Simultaneous Resurrection eases the struggle of thinking through what an ET-simultaneous event (like the death and resurrection of an individual) might look like. However, SR at least allows for the hope that what awaits the believer, upon death, is not some ethereal existence, but rather a more perfect version of the current existence that human beings now have. Perfected earthly existence seems to be what the New Testament is talking about: Heaven instantiated simply and magnificently as a new earth containing, among other things, physically resurrected bodies. If added to this understanding of the New Testament is the theory of Simultaneous Resurrection, then we have a new and perhaps clearer understanding of what Jesus meant when He told the robber on the cross: "Truly I say to you, *today you* will be with me in Paradise."¹⁶³

¹⁶²ST., 45.

¹⁶³Luke 23:43. English Standard Version Bible. [Emphasis added]

APPENDIX

(LAD) and Temporary Bodies

Given the extraordinary nature of (LAD), it is possible that some may still have questions regarding the type of existence that is included in a life “in its fullness and perfected.” In particular, these hypothetical questions may be motivated by confusion on just why a human being’s having a numerically identical body to that which was laid in the grave is a necessary condition to their experiencing Paradise. The definition of (LAD) is quite simply “the sort of paradisiacal state in which life is at its fullness and perfected.” This definition harks back to Jesus’ promise to the robber on the cross that “today you will be with me in *paradise*.”¹⁶⁴

It seems to me Paradise is something that, at least normally speaking, is not improvable. That said, if, indeed, Paradise can be improved, it seems odd that such improvement would be of a qualitative degree, including a drastic shift from disembodied existence to embodied existence. Further, if paradise can be had without a body, then resurrection seems superfluous (as I say in chapter four). At the very least, *physical* resurrection would not qualitatively matter enough to receive the kind of importance Paul gives it in 1 Corinthians 15.

In sum, I suppose it can suffice that if Paradise can be had prior to (LAD), then I am not at all sure it matters whether there is a physically resurrected existence. I do not see that it would matter to me, or most humans, when given the choice between one stage of paradise and some other second stage – one that does not seem, given the nature of a Paradise A/Paradise B distinction, qualitatively much better. If it is the case that resurrection life is not dramatically

¹⁶⁴Luke 23:43. (English Standard Version Bible)

better than not being resurrected, why the fuss over the physical resurrection of human persons in Christianity? I think it is intuitive to us as Christians that the physical resurrection of humans is of vital qualitative importance.

The above may answer questions regarding why a physical body is necessary in Paradise, but it does not answer why a person would need a numerically identical body to the one in which they lived their earthly life. Why not allow for a temporary embodiment? Why not say that a person receives a temporary body between death and resurrection?

These questions have merit, but *prima facie* the overall idea of temporary embodiment seems to lack explanatory power for nearly every question I have addressed in this paper. It also seems like a wholly wasted move. What is the purpose of temporary bodies when bodies numerically identical to the ones we have now are *essentially* part of our *identity*?

Further, if all corporeal things also have location, then this follows: even if there were some odd intermediary state between death and resurrection, and we had temporary bodies, then we would also find ourselves in some actual temporary location. Would that be like a pre-recreated new Earth? What would that be? Again, such an idea seems like a wasted move on God's part. Why not just say that the resurrection of persons is a finished event for those who are already dead and that they are in their resurrected, numerically identical bodies finding the fullness of their identity in the recreated world? Having a "loaner" body in some "green-room" of a world seems very odd and I do not see how the idea is helpful.

Causality?

In Chapter Three I spend time defending the idea that God's atemporal action is an atemporal cause that can and does have temporal effects. However, does this mean that a

person's temporal actions can have æviternal effects? In other words, if Jones makes a decision in the temporal world, can it have an effect that is realized in an atemporal mode of existence (e.g. temporal decisions that lead to finding oneself in (LAD))?

I do want to affirm that Jones's decision toward Jesus has some effect eschatologically. However, I also affirm Supralapsarianism in that God's decree of election logically precedes His decree of the Fall. So it may be said that God causes Jones to be saved. I also hold that God is the one who moves Jones to the position of salvation; it is not at all of Jones's doing, not even the faith it takes to believe. God gives the faith, God moves Jones's heart, God puts the thought in his mind, and God makes Jones assent to the fact that Jesus is Lord.

If this is the case, then God really is the efficient cause of Jones's salvation. Jones's participation in his "decision" would be more like a pencil's participation in the writing of an author. There is some degree of efficient causation, perhaps, in man, but not much and perhaps only as illusory (at least with respect to salvation). So, here we have God's atemporal will atemporally deciding for Jones as the atemporal cause(s) that produces an atemporal effect, that is, what ends up making Jones æviternal.

Mystical Experience and Substance Dualism

In II Corinthians chapter twelve verses 1 through 4, Paul describes a time when he was "caught up to the third heaven."¹⁶⁵ The interesting thing about this instance is that he cannot remember if he was "in the body or out of the body."¹⁶⁶ Since this is the case, it may be that the substance dualist will read this passage as affirming an "out of body experience" or something similar. Since a substance dualist affirms that a person can have consciousness apart from the

¹⁶⁵ I Corinthians 12:2. (English Standard Version Bible)

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

body, they can reasonably assert that Paul must have been present with God in spirit while his (dead) body was still on earth. So, they might claim, mystical experiences like Paul's are much better explained by substance dualism.

I am not sure why this must follow. First, when we speak of mystical experiences, is it not possible to interpret them as visions and dreams, rather than *literal* moves from one type of existence to another? Is it not possible that Paul, in this temporal world with his temporal body, has a vision of the third heaven, or any other such experience, without having to be anywhere but right where he is? I take it that if he were *actually* transported to Paradise, then it was in his body. I also take it that God, by miracle, could have moved Paul from temporal existence to ævital existence, and back. I am not sure why God could not do that.

Second, and I think more probably, I find it is actually better to read this passage as Paul having a vision. I think it is underdetermined whether Paul was in some other "place," or if he was experiencing things like what Isaiah experienced in his visions of God's glory filling the temple in Isaiah 6:1. I take it those were visions. And visions, like dreams, do not actually take anyone anywhere. When I have a dream I may experience things in my consciousness through the firings of my brain, but *I* am not spatially displaced. I am still safe in my bed. I take it that visions are simply dreams while someone is awake. If we were to posit a view whereby when dreaming or having a vision our soul leaves our body, then it seems that we might call visions that cause a metaphysical displacement of one's soul as "soul-snatching." That seems absurd.

I do not, for instance, believe that John the Revelator was actually taken up into Heaven for his visions. I do, however, believe that Paul, John, and Isaiah truly did experience something. Mystical experiences, visions, and dreams are all relatively similar.

(PR3): Is Jones's Death an Event for Jones?

When I write that Jones's death and resurrection are events (in (PR3)), I mean Jones's death and resurrection are events in two different perspectives. First, Jones's death is an event for people other than Jones in that they experience his death. Suppose Jones has a relative, Smith. I take it that Jones's passing would be an event for Smith. However, I also take it that, regardless of the truth of SR or not, when Smith's loved one, Jones, resurrects and reflects back on his earthly life, he will consider his death an event in his life. He may not have experienced it (whereby "experienced" means "felt"), but it does not follow that it is not an event in the life of Jones. I hold that the same would be the case for everyone. Death is a concrete thing that happens *to a person*.

Similarly, I take it that Jones's resurrection will be an event for both Jones and any third party onlooker in the conventional way. Most likely, Jones will realize that he is resurrecting (or, as part of his experiential manifold, he will have the experience of resurrection whether or not he experiences it in the same type of temporal progression we currently find normative).

(PR8): Further Exposition on "Natural Being" and Being "Subject to Change."

"Natural being" is explained by rewording Thomas Aquinas's definition of the *æviternal* being.¹⁶⁷ I explain this initially on page 34 but more thoroughly on pages 59 and 76 (with regards to their unchanging relational condition with God). In other words, an *æviternal* being's "natural being" is formed and completed on the basis of his or her relationship with the person of God. A person's natural being prior to a perfected relationship with God is not only subject to change, but it is subject to sin. If this is the case, I take it that, with completed sanctification and

¹⁶⁷ST., 45.

glorification (and so the eradication of sin), a person's relationship with God will not change; rather, it will be perfected at death in transition to the after-life. This perfection is the only way that human being will be able to commune with God perfectly with an unveiled face.

Regarding the word "natural," I am merely using the term that Aquinas uses.¹⁶⁸ As I read Thomas, it appears that what he means by "natural" is simply a modifier to "being" the way we might use the word "core" now (e.g. core being). Theologically we may use "nature" to describe a predisposition. We might say that if someone has a "sin nature", then that someone is predisposed to sin. Sin is, in some sense, "easy" and "fitting" for them to do. Natural being, then, is similar. It is how a person *is* in their predispositions.

The idea behind the expression "not being subject to change" is addressed on page 59. Again, this language is found in *ST*. Aquinas explains that an æviternal entity is not essentially a changing being but can have change annexed to it from the outside (e.g. by God). In my estimation, æviternal existence is an appropriate measure for resurrected human beings since their being/essence will, at the point of death, be to *not* change. That is, their being and essence will be perfectly subjected to the unchanging will of God, in an unchanging perfected relationship. Change can be annexed to the human being by God with respect to affections and movements.¹⁶⁹

Following from this, I take it that "free will" in resurrection life will be the true freedom we find described in Scripture: slavery to God's Spirit and will. An æviternal person will not be making the decisions in and of themselves; rather, the person will be 100 percent dependent and motivated/moved by the Spirit. This is how God annexes change to an æviternal being.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.* This follows from Thomas's assertion regarding æviternal beings.

Completed sanctification and glorification¹⁷⁰ require atemporality because they define a person's being in such a way that their being (i.e. their relational status with God) is no longer changing. The core of who they are, at the moment of glorification, is no longer defined by the ebb and flow of the struggle of sin. God's will, at resurrection, takes over the æviternal person's will. As Christ prays in John 17, Christians will be one with the community of the Kingdom of God (i.e. the Church) and with God Himself even *as* the Father and Son are one.¹⁷¹ As I take it, it will not be *exactly* as they are one, since Christian human beings will not be God (obviously), but we will have an incredible *unchanging* unity with God.

If time is the measure of things that change (and, perhaps further than that, things that are essentially changing) then it stands to reason that another unit of measure is needed to measure those things that are not eternal, can have changed annex (applied) to them, and are essentially unchanging beings.¹⁷² That unit of measure is the atemporal measure of æviternity. Throughout this project I am not reifying æviternity, time, or eternity. They are simply units of measure to describe types of change or non-change. If a human being's being, essence, and natural being will be defined in the resurrection by the unchanging nature of their relationship with God, then it seems like another unit is needed to measure those bits of annexed change that can (and probably will) happen in the resurrected existence. I find my distinctions on page 66 helpful on this point. If we have unchanging holiness (sanctification) and unchanging glory (glorification), and those two things describe the core of who we are in the resurrection, then it seems that the

¹⁷⁰ Minimally, I take sanctification to be the immediate cause of glorification.

¹⁷¹ John 17:11. (English Standard Version Bible)

¹⁷² *ST.*, 44.

core of who we are does not change and cannot be, therefore, measured by time; hence, æviternity.

Is Æviternity Durative?

I would say the experience of the human resurrected person will have something like duration, but atemporally linear duration. Again, I do not believe that seconds or hours or minutes are things – they are measures of something that will not be the primary measure of existence in the resurrected world. I also do not see why duration or linear existence must be measured by time. Certainly it will have, as Aquinas says of æviternity, a “compatibility” with time.¹⁷³ As I take it, Aquinas means that it will not be wholly untimelike in the way that *tota simul* existence is.¹⁷⁴ Perhaps the duration will be largely phenomenological duration.

If we want to use a crude example, think of a dream state. In a dream it may be that a person participates in events for what seems like long periods of time. Days even. However, upon waking, the dreamer typically realizes they have only been asleep for a matter of minutes. I do not suppose that the linear progression of the dream and the phenomenological “feel” of the dream are less “real” to the person experiencing the dream. Nor do I assume that the actual events in the dream can be measured by time. I would say it is quite possible that our resurrected state could be somewhat like that in the sense that it feels like linear progression and duration, but not in anything we can accurately measure by time. That would be a category mistake.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Is God Present to States or Concrete Events?

In (PR2), (PR3), and (PR5) the expression “God is present to” is either stated explicitly (as in (PR5)) or implicitly (as in (PR2) and (PR3)).¹⁷⁵ The question that might be asked of these three premises is: “how can an atemporal/eternal God be “present” to anything?” Can He be present to temporal concrete events and entities or is He just present to states of affairs? There seems to be a dis-analogy between how humans experience events and how God does.

For this objection, let it be the case that some x that is concrete at time t in manner m cannot also be non-concrete at time t in manner m . If this is the case, and I believe it is, the objection might be stated like this: If some person, Martin (in space-time), is present to some concrete x , Martin, Jr. (in space-time), then God cannot be present to one or both of them unless he can be present to concrete beings.

While I do agree if some x is concrete at time t in manner m then it cannot be abstract at time t in manner m , I do not see how it follows that God cannot be present to, in a relational sense, a concrete temporal being (e.g. Martin and Martin, Jr.). I do, of course, argue that He is not literally “there,” as if God had “whereness,” on pages 49 and 50 in particular. Of course God does not have literal spatio-temporal location, but from that it does not follow that He cannot be “present to,” in a relational sense, a concrete temporal being. All I mean by “present to” is that God experiences a concrete temporal person, Jones, at every temporal moment.

Again, time is not reified. Time does not have ontological status. God experiences a person’s temporal moments in one static instant altogether. Of course this will be in a much different way than Martin experiences Martin, Jr. or is present to Martin, Jr. When we say

¹⁷⁵(PR2): Anything that exists in a simultaneously-whole existence simultaneously experiences every temporal and eternal event and entity.

(PR3): Jones’s death and resurrection are temporal events to God and who all who know Jones.

(PR5): Any entity that God is present to and has consciousness experiences the “nowness” of God.

“present to” referencing a temporal individual, we mean present in both the “now of time” sense as well as a relational sense. When speaking of God as “present,” I simply mean to say a similar thing that we mean by “omnipresent.” I do not mean a literal spatial “thereness,” but, rather, God’s relationship with the concrete being (manifested largely in the temporal effect of His atemporal will to uphold the individual).

Why Were Adam and Eve Not Æviternal?

Perhaps, given that I am not an expert theologian, this question may be beyond my ken because it assumes an expertise in the teleology of Adam and Eve in the Edenic state. However, I actually reject the interpretation of Genesis 1-2 that Adam and Eve were teleologically fulfilled. I do not believe man was teleologically fulfilled in the Edenic state prior to The Fall. Again, I affirm Supralapsarianism and that man was always intended to fall, and that if it had not been the case that God designed man and creation to fall, it would not have fallen. Only in the case of being not able to sin would Adam have been teleologically fulfilled. I find that because he did indeed fall, he was not fulfilled nor could he have been. Those who are fulfilled do not fall to temptation (hence the second Adam, Jesus Christ, is completely fulfilled teleologically in His divinity and His humanity and thus could and would not fall).

Adam and Eve, I believe, were essentially changing beings and were thus measured by time in the Garden. They were not glorified and not ratified in sanctification. Innocent, perhaps. Sanctified in the way Christians will be sanctified in the resurrection? No. We might even want to say something like this with respect to the Edenic state: in the Garden it was possible for man’s relationship with God to change. This possibility for the change of their core relationship is perhaps sufficient for a living being to be measured by time. In the resurrection, however, it will be impossible for man to change his relationship with God. It is possible that this

unchanging relationship is a sufficient condition for a living being to be atemporal, without being a sufficient condition for æviternity (though it would be a necessary condition for æviternity).

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