

THE FALLING ELEVATOR AND RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD¹

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Abstract. In the paper I argue that the falling elevator model once proposed by Dean Zimmerman to improve some drawbacks of Peter van Inwagen's account of how a belief in Christian resurrection could be made compatible with a materialist understanding of human persons is not satisfactory. Christian resurrection requires not only survival, but also true death of a person, while the falling elevator can merely provide us with an account of how a material person is able miraculously to escape her own death.

I. INTRODUCTION

A central issue in contemporary philosophy of religion is whether a materialist metaphysics of the human person is compatible with the Christian doctrine of resurrection. Christian materialists, most notably Peter van Inwagen, claim that it is.² According to van Inwagen, I am a living organism, that exists as long as a self-maintaining event he calls a life continues over time. It is impossible for me to come into existence a second time when I have once ceased to be alive. Even God could do no more than create a replica of me, which would not be numerically identical to me. Van Inwagen suggests, however, that God could resurrect my body by replacing it at the moment of death with a simulacrum and hiding my original body in a distant part of the universe before the day of resurrection. If something like this were the case, however, God could be accused of being a deceiver, as He pretends as if the simulacra we carefully entomb are true remains of human animals that were living before. Against this backdrop, Dean Zimmerman proposed a model of the resurrection, the "falling elevator model of survival," to improve upon this drawback of van Inwagen's account. The name should remind us of "cartoon physics" where "it is possible to avoid death in a plummeting elevator simply by jumping out in the split second before the elevator hits the basement floor".³ According to this model, for a purely physical living thing it is possible to have a kind of "gappy existence" if the states of this thing are connected over an interval of time by immanent causality. So, a living human organism is able to jump the time between death and resurrection.

In contemporary literature on the metaphysics of the resurrection, the falling elevator model is widely accepted as one of the possible, albeit controversial, accounts of the Christian resurrection from the dead which is attractive primarily to philosophers who sympathize with van Inwagen's style Christian materialism.⁴ Nevertheless, it seems to me, that this model ignores a key aspect of what Christians believe resurrection to be like, namely that resurrection involves not mere survival, but true death as well. A human person cannot be said to have been resurrected unless she has passed through real death. This seems to be a salient feature of the Christian theology of resurrection. In what follows I argue that the falling elevator model cannot count as a model of Christian resurrection, since it is not able to account for true death.

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2 Peter van Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9, no. 2 (1978).

3 Dean W. Zimmerman, "The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival", *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (1999): 196.

4 Jeff Green, "Resurrection", <https://www.iep.utm.edu/resurrec/>; James T. Turner, "On the Horns of a Dilemma: Bodily Resurrection or Disembodied Paradise?", *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 75, no. 5 (2014).

II. THE VARIETIES OF FALLING ELEVATOR SURVIVAL

Suppose that I am nothing but a material living organism and I am about to die. To be a material living organism is to be made only out of atoms, or material simples, arranged in such a way that the activities of these atoms constitute a life. A living organism remains the same as long as the activities of the simples composing it constitute the same life.⁵ In the next moment, when there will be no set of atoms whose activities would constitute my life, it will be irrevocably over. Consequently, one instant more, and I would pass way forever. Fortunately, God prevents this by conferring upon each of the atoms composing my body at the time just before my death a miraculous power to immanently cause a perfect duplicate at some distant place and/or time, which are worthy of being called “the next world”⁶. Call this new entity my next-world body. While receiving such extraordinary powers the atoms of the dying body don’t lose, however, their ordinary capacities, so that in the next instant they, following the normal course of events in this world, turn out to be a dead body or a heap of lifeless matter usually called my corpse. The first state of my corpse is also immanently caused by the very last state of my animal body before my death. My corpse is dead, but my next-world body is as safe as before so that it can be improved, healed and otherwise look forward to the general resurrection of the dead.

This “just-so story” once told by Zimmerman is intended to explain how we can think of the bodily resurrection if we are both Christians and materialists in the way van Inwagen is.⁷ According to Zimmerman, the falling elevator model imposes some constraints upon those who are likely to accept it. First, a proponent of the falling elevator model has to accept that “immanent causality” is a necessary and nearly⁸ sufficient condition of my survival. In a nutshell: if stages of a living organism are connected by immanent causality then they are stages of a single living organism even if they are not connected by spatiotemporal continuity. By ‘immanent causality’ here are meant those causal connections that obtain inside of the organism itself as opposed to causal interactions of the organism with its environment. This principle seems to be an essential feature of the falling elevator model, because it is the only way to secure that a material human organism could jump over the spatiotemporal gap between death and resurrection.⁹ Second, she is committed to the closest continuer theory of personal identity, according to which the relation of numerical identity between a person existing at an earlier time t_1 and a person existing at a later time t_2 could obtain only in the absence at t_2 of any other person that is an equally good or a better candidate for being identical with the person existing at t_1 . The reason for the second constraint is that it is possible that the original animal undergoes fission not only at the time just before its death but at some earlier time in its history as well, or that fission will result in more than just one duplicate. While the first clause seems to be a *conditio sine qua non*, the second constraint is thought to be more controversial. Some philosophers who look sympathetically toward Zimmerman’s initial idea have tried to improve it by eliminating the commitment to the closest continuer clause. Hud Hudson has developed a four-dimensionalist version of the falling elevator model.¹⁰ And more recently, Timothy O’Connor and

5 Peter van Inwagen, *Material Beings* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1995), 145.

6 “The next world” could be thought of either as “heaven” or as a kind of “intermediate state.” The possibility of thinking of “the next world” as “an intermediate state” was suggested by Kevin J. Corcoran, “Persons and Bodies”, *Faith and Philosophy* 15, no. 3 (1998): 335.

7 Zimmerman, “The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival” Dean W. Zimmerman, “Bodily Resurrection: The Falling Elevator Model Revisited”, in *Personal Identity and Resurrection: How Do We Survive Our Death?*, ed. Georg Gasser (Taylor and Francis, 2010).

8 Timothy O’Connor and Jonathan D. Jacobs, “Emergent Individuals and the Resurrection”, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2, no. 2 (2010) deny that immanent causality alone is sufficient for survival. Nevertheless, their account of survival seems also to imply that if two stages of a human individual would be connected by immanent causality they would be stages of a single human individual, because the immanent causality would also sustain the particularity which is necessary for the identity of a human individual.

9 Zimmerman, “The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival”, 202–4.

10 Hud Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person* (Cornell Univ. Press, 2001).

Jonathan Jacobs have offered a three-dimensionalist version of the falling elevator model that, according to them, is also not committed to the closest continuer theory.¹¹

Hudson claims that once a four-dimensionalist metaphysics is adopted we are in no way committed to the closest continuer theory. According to him, all we need to improve Zimmerman's original proposal and get rid of its undesirable consequence is simply to apply the well-known four-dimensionalist solution of standard fission puzzles to the case of resurrection.¹² Assume, e.g., that Sarah underwent an unnoticed fission at age of 10. Now one of her successors, call her Sarah₁, is about to die and get resurrected in the falling elevator fashion. Will resurrected Sarah₁ be identical with Sarah before the fission? According to the account Zimmerman proposed on behalf of van Inwagen's materialist position, the answer depends on what happens to the other branch of the fission, Sarah₂. If Sarah₂ died earlier than Sarah₁ did, then she, but not Sarah₁, would be identical to Sarah. If Sarah₁'s death preceded that of Sarah₂, however, then the person resurrected at Sarah₁'s death would be identical with Sarah before fission. No such competition for exclusive identity with Sarah occurs on Hudson's account. Both resurrected bodies just stage-share Sarah as their common temporal part.

O'Connor & Jacobs' model of the resurrection does not presuppose the truth of four-dimensionalism. Rather, it is based on a peculiar metaphysics of emergent individuals. O'Connor & Jacobs claim that the emergent individual I am identical to is essentially a particular system made of a large number of material simples none of which belongs to it essentially and a special sort of particular — they call it a particularity — that particularizes the complete object making it *this* object. In the case of a person her particularity is distinct from those of the simples that constitute the person in question because the person has a set of emergent properties which are essential to her nature. O'Connor & Jacobs' metaphysics of resurrection deviates from Zimmerman's falling elevator model in three significant ways. First, it rejects van Inwagen's metaphysics of living beings.¹³ According to them, my identity is dependent not merely upon the continuation of the same life, but rather upon my possessing the same particularity. Second, they claim that the budding powers are not just miraculously added to my body's atoms by God from the outside. They think instead of these powers as latently present in the emergent individuals from the very beginning.¹⁴ Third, they hold that even if multiple fissions are possible they don't threaten my survival in the next world, since immanent causation is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition of my persistence. My particularity which is the warrant of my identity must be preserved as well.¹⁵ For this reason they claim that their account of the resurrection doesn't entail a commitment to the closest continuer theory of personal identity.

I concede that the falling elevator model is an ingenious account of how a human being could survive its death were it a wholly material thing. I grant that each variety of the falling elevator survival has its own advantages and even that commitment to the closest continuer clause can be successfully avoided. But the falling elevator model fails to account for resurrection because resurrection requires more than mere survival. A successful account of resurrection should explain not only how a person can preserve her bodily identity through death, but also how a person's body which is already dead can be made alive again. By "made alive again" I don't mean a simple return to the earlier biological life; rather, I mean "everlasting life," whatever that may be like.¹⁶ I think, however, that a bodily resurrection from the dead presupposes that the very same body that once suffered death will come to life again. I call this requirement *the true death clause*. So, I am going to argue, first, that we have good theological reasons to maintain the true death clause, and, second, that the falling elevator model doesn't satisfy it.

11 O'Connor and Jacobs, "Emergent Individuals and the Resurrection".

12 Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, 187. I ignore here some salient features of Hudson's account of materialist resurrection which follow from his general metaphysics of human persons, but are irrelevant for the argument I try to develop in what follows.

13 O'Connor and Jacobs, "Emergent Individuals and the Resurrection", 73.

14 *Ibid.*, 79.

15 *Ibid.*, 81.

16 A resurrected body also may require a significant transformation, see William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1999), 214.

III. THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS THE TRUE DEATH CLOSE

Consider the words of the Apostle Paul: “... what you sow is not made alive unless it dies” (1 Corinthians 15: 36 NKJV). This passage appears to express the true death clause. The body of a human person has to suffer real death in order to be resurrected. If we take the passage at face value — and not in the sense of a pure spiritual experience — we should acknowledge that biological death is a necessary condition of the resurrection, at least for those of us who will have to die before the Last Day.¹⁷ And not only must the body die, the resurrected body must also be the same as that which was once dead. Thus, the true death clause could be formulated as follows:

A human person's resurrected body has to be the same body as her body that was dead.

Note that whatever the sameness of a human body consists in, the true death clause claims that if bodies indeed will be resurrected then one and the same body should pass through three successive states: living – dead – living again (resurrected). When I speak here of three successive states the human body should pass through I don't presume that necessarily there should exist such things as dead bodies in any metaphysically strong sense. My claim is perfectly compatible with a nihilistic account, according to which, after death human bodies cease to exist. In this case being dead means for a human body being annihilated, and being resurrected means being restored from the non-existence to new life. Thus, the resurrection is more than mere survival. Rather, it is a “revival” of one person's body after it underwent death.

Why should Christians accept the true death clause? Besides 1 Cor 15: 36, there is in the Scriptures the description of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the most straightforward example that shows what the resurrection is like. As the Apostles' Creed sums up the Scriptures: Jesus “was crucified, died and was buried; <...> on the third day he rose again from the dead...” All the Gospels convey the story of the “empty tomb” (Matthew 28: 1–10; Mark 16: 1–8; Luke 24: 1–8; John 20: 1–13). They explicitly claim that Jesus' body was not found in the place where it was buried. From this it is quite plausible to conclude that the body that once was a corpse and the body that rose from the dead was one and the same. *Prima facie*, this circumstance witnesses against the falling elevator model of the resurrection. According to the falling elevator model, it was to be expected that the corpse of Jesus would still remain where it was left. Thus, we have to conclude that there was, at least, one person that was resurrected in a way different from that which the falling elevator model predicts.

There are in the Bible, as well as in early Christian tradition, some departure narratives which are of a different kind and may superficially appear as evidence against the true death clause. These are the biblical narratives about Enoch (Genesis 5: 24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2: 8), and some versions of the Dormition legend. They assert that Enoch, Elijah and the Blessed Virgin Mary reached heaven (with their bodies) without passing through death. It is instructive to consider the debates on the final lot of Mary in order to understand that the resurrection implies death.

¹⁷ It may be a matter of controversy whether literally *all* people will die including those who will be still alive on the very Day of Judgment. In 1 Cor 15: 51–53 (NKJV) the Apostle Paul writes: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” There are, however, different possibilities how the words of the Apostle can be understood. In 1 Thess 4: 15–17 (NKJV) he also speaks about the fate of the Christians which will remain alive until Christ's second coming: “we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.” Commenting this passage St. Ambrose says: “In that very taking up, death shall take place, as it were, in a deep sleep, and the soul, having gone forth from the body, shall instantly return. For those who are alive shall die when they are taken up that, coming to the Lord, they may receive their souls from His presence; because in His presence they cannot be dead” (*In I epist. ad thessal.*, cap. 4). Thus, according to the opinion of St. Ambrose, all people, even those who will remain alive until the Last Day, will die and be resurrected. Another possibility is that those who remain alive will not die but will be substantially changed in a way that will make their mortal bodies immortal so that this change will be not a resurrection, but *like* a resurrection. I thank Prof. P. van Inwagen for suggesting the latter option (e-mail message to author, October 2, 2018).

Most Orthodox and Catholic theologians maintain a “mortalist” view, according to which, “the Holy Virgin underwent, as did her Son, a physical death, but her body – like His – was afterwards raised from the dead and she was taken up into heaven”.¹⁸ Other theologians, primarily Catholic, argue for an ‘immortalist’ view, according to which, the Blessed Virgin didn’t share the fate of all other people, because she was free from original sin, and was taken to heaven without passing through death. All the more interesting from our point of view is that whereas the mortalists point to the wish of Mary to share the lot of her son by being similar to him in all things including death and resurrection, the immortalists explicitly invoke the distinction between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Assumption of Mary, claiming that she could not be said to be resurrected because she was never dead.¹⁹ Thus, both sides of the debate seem to agree that resurrection necessarily implies death.

It is also worth noting that something in the vicinity of that what I called the true death clause, namely, the claim that resurrection implies death, is shared by virtually all theological traditions, despite their drastic disagreements over other aspects of resurrection, for example, on the existence of the so called intermediate state in which a deceased human person or her soul is supposed to remain after her death and before her final resurrection. In the 20th century within German Protestant theology an influential stream emerged, subsequently labelled the “theory of total death” (Ganztodthese). The proponents of the total death theory, especially Eberhardt Jüngel, deny that human beings are constituted by an immortal soul and a perishable body, and that the soul of a deceased person looks forward to the resurrection of her body. They maintain instead that in death a human person suffers a total annihilation as she, alien to herself, is constituted by multiple relationships above all to God. Since death is a consequence of sin, i.e. the desire for freedom from God, it renders a human person devoid of all her relationships, including that towards God, and thus makes her to nothing.²⁰ The total death theorists typically emphasize that their understanding of death and resurrection is closer to the biblical anthropology of the first Christians in contrast to the teachings of the (Roman) Catholic and Orthodox Christians whose dualistic accounts of human person was developed under heavy influence of Hellenistic philosophy.

In a similar vein, a contemporary analytical theologian James T. Turner contrasts the bodily resurrection with a person’s survival as a disembodied soul in the intermediate state which he takes to be an (incoherent) Platonist addition to the early Christian teachings. Relying on Luther’s and Tyndale’s criticism of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the intermediate state he claims that if a person could survive her death as a disembodied soul and enjoy thereafter a life in the paradisiac state then her bodily resurrection would be superfluous. Arguing further for this claim Turner points out that “Christ’s not being bodily resurrected implies Christ’s remaining dead”²¹ which in turn means that the resurrection entails the necessity of the death of the resurrected. Although I don’t think that the radical opposition between resurrection and soul’s survival in the intermediate state which Turner and the total death theorists insist on is correct against the background of the New Testament eschatology,²² I believe, however, that they rightly stress the inextricable link between resurrection and death.

The opposing sides of debates on the intermediate state, the traditional Roman Catholic and/or Orthodox theology, don’t reject the claim that death is necessary for resurrection, but understand it in very different way. The Roman Catechism issued especially to clarify the Roman Catholic stance on many controversial questions raised by the Reformation theologians advertising the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, at same time reminds of the necessary connection between resurrection and previous death: “... a man cannot be said to return to life unless he has previously died” (Roman Catechism, part I, art. XI).

18 Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia, *The Festal Menaion* (Faber and Faber, 1969), 64.

19 Bertin Farrell, “The Immortality of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Theological Studies”, 16. no. 4 (1955), 604 ff.

20 Markus Mühling, *T&T Clark Handbook of Christian Eschatology* (T & T Clark, 2015), 190ff.

21 Turner, “On the Horns of a Dilemma”, 410.

22 Jean-Baptiste Guillon, “Heaven before Resurrection: Soul, Body, and the Intermediate State”, in *Heaven and Philosophy*, ed. Simon Cushing (Lexington Books, 2018), 48–49.

It might be also rightly asked about the nature of the linkage which is supposed to exist between resurrection and the previous death of the resurrected individual. In my view, this linkage must be of a conceptual nature, because it represents one of the few aspects in the understanding of resurrection in which the parties that disagree with each other, both in terms of the theological interpretation and in terms of defending completely different metaphysical views, coincide. So, I conclude that the testimony of the Bible and the different Christian traditions confirms the true death clause or something in the vicinity of it so that every successful account of Christian resurrection must accommodate that clause. Thus, any theological and/or metaphysical account of that what it is for a human being to be resurrected faces the question: whether and how it can meet the true death condition?

IV. THERE IS NO STATE IN WHICH I AM TRULY DEAD

Taking it as given that the true death clause is correct, I will now present a purely philosophical argument that the falling elevator model of the resurrection is unsatisfactory. My argument aims to show that if the falling elevator resurrection model were true, then my history would contain no state in which I am truly dead.²³ On the falling elevator model, I jump from the last state of my earthly life directly into the first state of my future heavenly life, so there is no state of mine in which I am truly dead.

Here is the argument in a more formal way:

1. If my first state in the next world immediately follows after my last state before death, then there is no state of mine that is located between them.
2. According to the falling elevator model of the resurrection, it is true that my first next world state immediately follows after my last state before my death.
3. Hence, there is no state of mine in between (from 1, 2)
4. Neither the last state before my death nor any earlier state of mine is a state in which I am truly dead.
5. Neither the first state after my resurrection nor any later state of mine is a state in which I am truly dead.
6. In my history there is no state in which I am truly dead (from 3, 4, 5).

The defenders of the falling elevator model may object that this argument presupposes a false metaphysics, because no one could ever be a corpse, i.e. no one could ever be in a dead state. Remember that according to van Inwagen, as well as to Hudson, “corpse” is nothing more than “a plural referring expression which picks out suitably arranged particles at a time at which they do not compose anything at all”.²⁴ And if this is true, then it is not possible for there to be a state in which I am truly dead. Thus, the problem is not the falling elevator account of the resurrection but a misunderstanding about the nature of composition.

This objection can be answered in many ways. First, we could simply say that if van Inwagen’s and/or Hudson’s metaphysics of constitution is indeed true, then the resurrection is impossible, because the doctrine of the resurrection implies that there must be a corpse that can be resurrected. If a metaphysics excludes this possibility it excludes the possibility of resurrection as well. Thus, the metaphysics on the basis of which the falling elevator model is developed is at odds with the very idea of resurrection. I think, however, that this answer is too easy. The questions whether corpses do exist and whether a human

²³ The expression “the state in which I am truly dead” may appear suspicious for those who deny that I could ever be a corpse. But I use it in the present context in a quite innocent sense which implies neither the existence of such things as corpses or dead bodies in any metaphysically salient sense, nor my being identical with one of them.

²⁴ Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, 184.

person or a human animal which was once alive can become a corpse are indeed very controversial.²⁵ Besides this, it is also unclear whether the Bible is committed to one special metaphysics rather to another. In my view, one who wishes to be committed to biblical revelation should not *ipso facto* be forced to deny all metaphysical accounts claiming that after my death the particles which composed a living animal before now fail to compose anything. What the true death clause really requires is not a special metaphysics, but a plausible account of what it is for me to be dead before I will be resurrected. If we accept the true death clause, we have to provide an explanation of how death affects our lives in a salient way. I think this is the motivation which originally was also a proper motivation of the defenders of the falling elevator model.²⁶ Zimmerman proposed this model as an improvement on van Inwagen's account of the resurrection according to which the corpse is a mere simulacrum, not a person's true remains. This is why the proponents of the falling elevator model claim that the corpse which is left on Earth is one's true remains, not a simulacrum. Thus, according to them, death is something real even if I do not undergo it in the way many of us used to think. Unfortunately, the falling elevator model falls short of fulfilling its own desideratum, as I'll now try to show.

V. WHY THE FALLING ELEVATOR DOESN'T PASS THROUGH DEATH

It might be conceded that if one leaves a corpse then this is indication of one's death. Consider, however, the question of whether the corpse left after my fission is truly my corpse. The proponents of the falling elevator model claim that it is, because it is immanently caused by the state of my body which immediately precedes. But immanent causality is not enough to justify this claim. Admittedly, the notion of "corpse" or "dead human person/body" and its relationship to the person whose corpse it is supposed to be, is rather puzzling. But what seems, at least, to be plain is that one's corpse is the immediate result of one's death.²⁷ Hence, whatever the precise relationship between living person or human animal and her corpse is it is necessary that the corpse of a person or a human animal results from the death of that very person.

Suppose, for example, that at t_1 Sarah's fission results in two non-identical successors, Sarah₁ and Sarah₂. At the following moment, t_2 , Sarah₁ happens to die leaving a corpse. Suppose further, that after fission the states of Sarah₁ and the states of Sarah₂ are linked by immanent causality to a state of Sarah before fission. It seems, however, that the corpse left by Sarah₁ after her death can count only as her mortal remains, not as those of Sarah₂ and not that of pre-fission Sarah as she is identical with Sarah₂. To justify their claim, the proponents of the falling elevator model should point to an event or a condition that could be plausibly identified as my death. Unfortunately, the picture provided by them suggests rather that I myself go one way whereas a corpse which the proponents of the falling elevator model want to call "mine" goes another way. Thus, instead of passing through death I seem miraculously to escape it.

Think of a couple of hairs that fell from my head a few minutes ago. Their present state is immanently caused by the previous state of my body. When they fall from my head it seems that the particles which an instant before participated in my life and were parts of me, now don't compose anything at all. But when they fall from my head it cannot be said that I undergo death. Rather, the event called my life goes on further because I go one direction and particles, which were once my parts, go another. In the case of fission as it is described by the defenders of the falling elevator model what happens is roughly the same as in the case of hair loss. After fission I go one direction and the particles that were once my parts go another. But this is not death, it is more like a serpent's changing its skin.

25 Eric T. Olson, "The Person and the Corpse", in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Death*, ed. Ben Bradley, Fred Feldman and Jens Johansson (Oxford Univ. Press, 2012).

26 The main objection against van Inwagen's resurrection account was that God would be a deceiver if He replaced the corpse with a simulacrum. The absence of a real corpse, however, could be understood as a sign of the absence of real death which, according to Christianity, is "the last enemy that will be destroyed" (1 Cor 15: 26 NKJV). If death were a mere illusion, then God's and the Church's fight against it would be an illusion as well. Thus, God cannot be absolved of the accusation of deception unless humans are threatened by death in a salient way.

27 Olson, "The Person and the Corpse", 85.

This analogy is possibly too remote to persuade a proponent of the falling elevator model. Let us develop a more rigorous argument. On the principles of the falling elevator model, fission is not death.²⁸ I think that it is very plausible to hold that a proponent of the falling elevator model is committed to the truth of this statement. Although she would probably insist that the corpse is dead, she would scarcely say that it is dead because of the fission. The next-world body is also a result of fission, but it is not dead. If it died by fission, the continuity of living organism would be interrupted, and the next-world body would be not the same organism as the this-world body. Rather, she would say that the cause of its death is the previous course of events which happens to the living being to which the corpse bears a relation of immanent causation. The next-world body is alive from the first instant of its existence. It is identical to me and it bears a relation of immanent causation to the last state of the living being that was me before the fission. If all this is true, then it seems that I survived the fission without passing through death. Thus, my fission cannot be the same as my death. Consequently, a defender of the falling elevator model cannot plausibly claim that I undergo death by fission.²⁹

Well, could she then say that nevertheless I was dead because there exists a corpse which is not me, but mine? As I see it, this option is also not available to her. There are three main possibilities for how the next-world body and the corpse are related to each other in space and time. The first is that the corpse and the next-world body begin to exist at the same time, which immediately follows after fission, but at different places: the corpse arises in the same place where the dying body once was; the next-world body in the next world. The second possibility is that the corpse begins to exist immediately after fission, while the next-world body appears not only in a distant place, but at a very distant time as well, say, at a time when our world will come to its end. The third possibility is that the spatiotemporal order of the corpse and that of the next-world body are incommensurable, so that it is impossible to say either that the time when the corpse and the next-world body begin to exist are the same, or that they are not the same.

Let us first consider the case when the corpse and the next-world body begin to exist at the same time. If this is the case, then I am a living body that is located at one place but simultaneously I have a corpse at another. This consequence seems to be quite absurd. And it seems in this case I escape death, rather than die and am later resurrected.

Consider next the second possibility. If the time when the corpse begins to exist is earlier than the time when the next-world body begins its existence, then the proponent of the falling elevator model can object that I am truly dead at the time when the corpse exists. At this time the corpse does not have any competitors for being my successor, because my next-world body is not yet in existence. I think, however, that this circumstance alone is not enough to acknowledge that I truly suffer death, because the other upshot of fission which will properly be me has escaped death and will appear at a distant time alive. In this aspect survival via the falling elevator model is similar to survival by teleportation, where I survive the teleportation to Mars only if the body entering the teleportation device on the Earth gets destroyed. I survive here only because the other upshot of the branching does not. The corpse which is left after fission could not be said to be mine, because it dies instead of me in the quite literal sense.

At this point Zimmerman's account is very sophisticated and possibly has some potential for escaping my objection. It could appeal to the principle of "temporally-closest continuer" which Zimmerman formulates as follows: "If you are looking for the next event in a given Life, and the present event is causally connected in the appropriate way to two non-simultaneous later events, but one is earlier to the other, go

²⁸ I am not claiming here that fission cannot put end to a living being. I am just holding that in the falling elevator scenario it does not do this. Surprisingly enough, in this scenario it is precisely the existence of a corpse as one of the results of the original organism's branching that secures my survival: in the case of symmetrical fission, I – according to van Inwagen – would not survive at all.

²⁹ One possible exception is O'Connor & Jacobs' account. According to them, I go wherever my distinctive particularity goes. If it were to perish by fission, I would go out of existence as well (O'Connor and Jacobs, "Emergent Individuals and the Resurrection", 81). But, I think, they don't assume that this is what happens in a case of fission. Rather, they think that my distinctive particularity together with the simples composing me are transferred to the next world.

to the earlier of the two.”³⁰ So, the proponent of the falling elevator could say that since the corpse is the “temporally–closest continuer” of mine it represents the state of my being truly dead only after which I will be resurrected. The problem with this move is that the corpse and the next–world body are not connected to each other so that the corpse is not that which is resurrected after being in the state of death.

Take finally the last possibility, according to which the spatiotemporal orders, where the corpse and the next–world body exist, are absolutely incommensurable. Is it then conceivable that I am a living body in the next world, and nevertheless I have a corpse in this world? I think that even in such a case this should strike us as implausible. Because a corpse, whatever its metaphysical nature could be, is “mine” in virtue of being an immanent–causal result of my death. That is, in ordinary life we take a corpse as evidence for someone’s death because we believe that the corpse was caused by her death. The death is the cause of the corpse, and not vice versa. But in the falling elevator scenario this is not the case, since I have survived the fission and I didn’t die thereafter. Consequently, the mere presence of a corpse on the earth while I am safe in the next world cannot make me to have suffered death backwardly even if the corpse is immanently caused by my last state before the fission. Leaving a corpse on the earth after fission, as the falling elevator story describes it, is more like leaving some hairs in the room after going out than like dying there. Thus, I conclude, I cannot be said to have died in virtue of leaving remains which are immanently–causally connected to my last state before my fission. So, none of three possibilities mentioned above allows us to assert that the corpse left after the branching is mine.

And there is one further reason why we shouldn’t take falling elevator survival as a possible way in which I could be resurrected. Even if the reasons I gave above are incorrect, and the corpse left on the earth after fission is truly mine, it is not the subject of the future resurrection as is required by the true death clause. It will not be resurrected! I just survived the fission, that’s all that the falling elevator can say about my future lot. This is good enough for a materialistic hope for survival, but the Christian hope for the bodily resurrection does not fit with this picture.

Surprisingly, van Inwagen’s idea of my dead body’s replacement, no matter how fantastic in itself, is more consistent with the idea of the resurrection.³¹ Assume that the fission would happen not just before but rather an instant after my death. In this case if God would miraculously preserve my corpse in some special place in order to resurrect it later this would be perfectly consistent with the hope for the future resurrection³². Moreover, this story bears some similarity to the narratives available from early Christian literature describing the Blessed Virgin Mary’s body as transferred to “a hidden place where it awaits reunion with her soul at the end of time.”³³ Yes, van Inwagen would deny that a soul is needed for resurrection. There is, however, another salient difference from van Inwagen’s account. According to the old Christian narratives, no corpse of Mary is left on the earth. Can the leaving of a corpse be explained in a

30 Zimmerman, “The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival”, 201.

31 van Inwagen, “The Possibility of Resurrection”.

32 It is worth noticing that from the point of view of van Inwagen’s metaphysics, if a living organism once ceases to be alive then every revival of its corpse would produce merely its replica, not the original organism. Van Inwagen himself is, however, not entirely consistent on this point. In “Possibility of Resurrection” he writes: “The atoms of which I am composed occupy at each instant the positions they do because of the operations of certain processes within me (those processes that, taken collectively, constitute my being alive). Even when I become a corpse — provided I decay slowly, and am not, say, cremated — the atoms that compose me will occupy the positions relative to one another that they do occupy largely because of processes of life that used to go on within me, or this will be the case for at least some short period. Thus, a former corpse in which the processes of life have been “started up again” may well be the very same man who was once before alive, provided the processes of dissolution did not progress too far while he was a corpse.” (van Inwagen, “The Possibility of Resurrection”, 119). This claim seems to be inconsistent with that what he asserts in *Material Beings*: “If a life has been disrupted, it can never begin again; any life that is going on after its disruption is not *that* life” (van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 147). I am inclined to hold that the account of “Material Beings” is more tenable than that of “Possibility of Resurrection.” On the other hand, the picture provided in “Possibility of Resurrection” fits more easily with our natural understanding of what resurrection would be like. For further details, see Jonathan Loose, “Materialism Most Miserable: The Prospects for Dualist and Materialist Accounts of Resurrection”, in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge and J. P. Moreland (Wiley, 2018), 476–79.

33 Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 3.

satisfactory way? Possibly, yes. But it is not easy to do.³⁴ But even so, there is still this question: How could a corpse, no matter how well it is preserved, be resurrected so that it would be identical to me? Because, according to van Inwagen, the corpse is nothing more than a plurality of material particles that don't compose anything at all, and there is no soul that would be a warrant for my identity in the next life. The event which was my life ended before the corpse was transferred to heaven. What can ensure that the new life conferred to the preserved corpse would be the continuation of my life rather than a life absolutely alien to me?³⁵ Thus, I think, the materialist, — be she a proponent of falling elevator model or a follower of van Inwagen's account³⁶ — is rather in trouble if she wants to be a believer in Christian resurrection.

VI. CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion I would like to highlight a dilemma which the proponent of the falling elevator model is faced with if my former arguments are correct. Van Inwagen's style of materialist metaphysics of the human person combined with the falling elevator model of survival forces us to choose between escaping death, and thus never being in a state of true death or dying forever without any possibility of being resurrected. Choosing either way appears to be incompatible with the Christian doctrine of resurrection.

At this point it seems appropriate to address very briefly the question if the proponents of dualist or hylemorphist metaphysics can meet better the true death clause? I don't believe that it is possible to deliver a single answer to this question because there is a variety of different metaphysical accounts of human person under the label of 'dualism'.³⁷ In my view the two best options for successfully meeting the true death clause are compound dualism³⁸ and Thomistic hylemorphism. According to compound dualism, the human person is the union of two substances—a soul which after death looks for the resurrection of its body in an intermediate state, and a body which, after death, is supposed to suffer temporal corruption. According to Thomistic hylemorphism, the human person also is a soul–body compound. In contrast to compound dualism, however, the soul and the body are regarded not as two separate substances, but as form and matter of the unique substance. An obvious advantage of dualist and hylemorphist views of the human person is that *prima facie* they are able to provide a quite natural account of what it is for a human being to suffer a real death. In terms of both accounts, death can be thought as separation of the soul from the body. However, it is more difficult to explain the resurrection of the very same body which, after death, may be subject to decay or even total destruction. Nonetheless, the prospects for dualism and hylemorphism also look better in this respect than those of materialism. For example, Christine van Dyke recently suggested an interesting proposal how combining hylemorphism with the idea of immanent causality to show the possibility of resurrection. According to her, the persistence of the soul after person's biological death can secure the appropriate causal connection between the pre-mortem and resurrected body of person so that it can be said to be identical to each other in the sense of being a body of the same human person.³⁹ In saying this, I do not deny that dualism and hylemorphism have their own

34 One possible answer is that God doesn't like to show his power in an overwhelming way, in order to give space for human faith.

35 O'Connor & Jacobs could object to this that the distinctive particularity which as they believe is necessary for my identity could successfully substitute for the soul. I think, however, that if my particularity is immanently caused by the activity of the simples composing me, then were this activity once stopped and then renewed it is rather improbable that the newly caused particularity will happen to be the same as the former.

36 It is worth noting that van Inwagen himself doesn't believe that the resurrection would proceed in the way he describes.

37 Igor Gasparov, "Substance Dualism and the Unity of Consciousness," *Forum Philosophicum* 18, no. 1 (2013); Guillon, "Heaven before Resurrection".

38 For defense of the claim that Cartesian compound dualism can provide a better account of Christian account of afterlife, see Guillon, "Heaven before Resurrection".

39 Christina van Dyke, "Human Identity, Immanent Causal Relations, and the Principle of Non-Repeatability: Thomas Aquinas on the Bodily Resurrection," *Religious Studies* 43, no. 4 (2007): 387–89.

difficulties in explaining resurrection. I believe, however, that they can better meet the true death clause, at least at first glance.⁴⁰

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