Department of Philosophy
The University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-4619
219-631-5910 dept/ 219-277-7427 home
Fax: 219-631-8209
Email: peter.vaninwagen.1@nd.edu

"I Look for the Resurrection of the Dead and the Life of the World to Come"

Peter van Inwagen

Most people in most cultures believe in a life beyond the grave. They tell stories about it. But not all cultures tell the same story. Some cultures tell stories of reincarnation or metempsychosis. In our western culture there is a tendency to tell stories of the sort we see in the movie Ghost (you may remember it: Whoopi Goldberg, Patrick Swayze, and Demi Moore).

In this movie, dead people rise from their corpses, and have a kind of diaphanous existence. They look like human beings (to anyone who can see them at all), but they are able to pass through living people and walls and other solid things. (Why don't they fall through the floor, then? You may well ask.) And, of course, they are for the most part invisible to the living. Eventually, bright beings summon them to ascend a beam of light to heaven, or dark, gibbering creatures drag them screaming off to hell. This is, I am afraid, exactly the picture of the afterlife that is current among undergraduates at Notre Dame, although they might be willing to admit that the visual representation of disembodied souls in the movie was either symbolical or what might be called cinematic license. Most of them, every Sunday and major feast day, say the words, "I await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." And every time they are present at the baptism of a child, they promise to help the parents and godparents of the newly baptized bring the child up in a faith one of whose tenets is (they say these words), "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." But these words mean nothing to them. They say them, but they are getting no more meaning out of them than a famous six-year-old did from another well-known text; reciting the Lord's Prayer, he said, "And lead us not into Penn Station." A few days ago, I heard a speech by the President of Notre Dame about the difficulties of teaching theology to Notre Dame undergraduates. President Malloy remarked sententiously that we cannot presuppose, as we once could, that our students will bring some degree of catechetical formation to the study of theology. I don't think he knows the half of it.

This picture of death and immortality, the Hollywood-and-Notre-Dame-undergraduate picture, is, I believe, very far from the biblical picture of death and immortality. According to the bible, God formed us out of the dust of the earth and breathed life into us. When, in punishment for our rebellion against him we die and return to the dust out which he raised our first parents, we're just, well . . . dead.

The Council of Trent may say, “He who teaches that death is but a sleep, let him be anathema.” But the psalmist says this of temporal rulers, and then extends it to every “child of earth” (Ps 146:3)

When they breath their last, they return to earth
And in that day their thoughts perish.

That’s Revised Standard. Admittedly, the Jerusalem Bible, which you can usually rely on for a deflationary translation of some favorite passage, has “and all their schemes perish,” which is no doubt true but is irrelevant to my thesis. On the other hand, the New English Bible, itself no slouch in the deflationary translation department, has “and all their thinking comes to an end,” which I, natually, like even better than ‘their thoughts perish’.

Well, enough. If I tease this verse any more, I’ll be accused of treating a text that, although inspired, represents the literary form “liturgical prayer” as if it represented the literary form “metaphysical essay,” a practice I’ve complained of when others do it. Still, it can hardly be denied that in the Hebrew bible we are represented as living dust, dust into which the spirit of God has entered. And when we die—this is the Hebrew picture—this dust becomes once more ordinary dust, and, as the Preacher says, “the spirit returns to God who gave it.” (A phrase curiously quoted by some as implying the immortality of the soul. But the spirit referred to here is the breath that God breathed into Adam’s nostrils, the spirit, that, as the Preacher had said a moment a few verses back, comes to the bones in the womb of the woman with child—or that’s one translation.) **If anyone asks about 3:21, remind him of whole passage.** It is the spirit or breath of which the following is said in the second poem of Elihu in the book of Job (34:14, 15):

If [God] should take back his spirit to himself
And gather to himself his breath,
All flesh would perish together,
And man return to dust.

In the New Testament, there is only one change in this picture, a piece of good news. None of the inspired descriptions of the nature of death in the Old Testament was wrong, the NT says, but these descriptions were not the whole story. In Christ, death retains its nature but its sting is drawn, for through his saving action, the dead will live again. And not (at least in the case of the saved) with the old Adamic life, but with a new resurrection life. And, as we all know, a part at least of this good news had been believed by many Jews for hundreds of years before Christ.

The belief in a future general resurrection of the dead arose in late second-temple Judaism (see, for example, Daniel 12:2, and John 11:24). (Whether there would be a resurrection of the dead was, of course, one of the main points that divided the Pharisees and the Sadducees.) When the new Christian movement appeared—before it was clearly something other than a party or sect within Judaism—, it centered on the belief that the crucified Jesus of Nazareth had been, in a literal, bodily sense, raised from the dead (resurrectus) and that his resurrection was, in some way, the means by

which the expected general resurrection of the dead would be accomplished. Indeed, resurrection was so pervasive a theme in early Christian preaching that it was apparently sometimes thought that Christians worshipped two gods called 'Jesus' and 'Resurrection' (Anastasis). (Acts 17:18 is probably an allusion to this widespread misconception.) Belief in the resurrection of Jesus and a future general resurrection continue to be central to Christianity—although, given the sorry state of theological education, it seems that the Holy Spirit has his work cut out for him in ensuring that future Christians are even aware of this doctrine.

Christians have always insisted that resurrection is not a mere restoration of what the resurrected person had before death (as in the story of the raising of Lazarus) but is rather a doorway into a new kind of life. The status of a belief in the general resurrection in rabbinic Judaism is difficult to summarize. It should be noted, however, that a belief in the resurrection of the dead is one of Maimonides' 'thirteen principles', which some Jews regard as a summary of the essential doctrines of Judaism. A belief in a general resurrection of the dead is one of many Judeo-Christian elements that have been incorporated into Islam.

The concept of the resurrection of the body (or of the dead) is most easily explained by laying out the ways in which it differs from the most important competing picture of the survival of death, the Platonic picture. According to Plato, when one dies (that is, when one's body dies), one will continue to be what one has been all along, a soul: an immaterial center of consciousness, reason, and action. One's death is, therefore, an extrinsic change in one: being dead means simply no longer having a body to animate. Since one's death is an extrinsic change in one, one's survival of death is something that happens in the natural course of events: one continues to exist after death by the continued exercise of the same powers or capacities that enabled one to exist when one still animated a body. (This inference is natural and plausible, but, as Descartes would later point out, it is not logically valid: for all logic can tell us, animating a body might be essential to the existence of a soul.) Death is, moreover, not a bad thing, as the vulgar believe, but a liberation, for the body is a prison of the soul—or it might be likened to a millstone that drags the soul down into the world of flux and impermanence. The liberation of the soul by death will not, unfortunately, be permanent, for the soul is destined repeatedly to suffer the misfortune of embodiment.

Christians and Jews (and Muslims) who believe in the resurrection of the dead will accept two of Plato's theses about death: that the person does survive death, and that dead persons will not be forever disembodied. But everyone who believes in resurrection will dispute the following elements of Plato's metaphysic of body, soul, and death: that the body is a prison; that the soul must by its very nature survive the death of the body; that the embodied soul has been disembodied in the past and will experience a large, perhaps infinite, number of 'reincarnations' in the future. Christians, moreover, will insist that the new bodily life that awaits the soul (the saved soul, at least; perhaps this is not true of the damned) will not be of the same sort as its earlier life. The doctrine of resurrection, however, is no more than a doctrine. It is not a worked-out metaphysic of body, soul, and death. (The primary biblical data concerning the metaphysics of resurrection are found in I Cor 15:35-55. The highly poetical language of this passage, however, is open to a variety of interpretations.) There are several competing philosophical theories of the metaphysics of resurrection. Some who accept

the doctrine of resurrection deny the existence of a separable, immaterial soul. (Tertullian, for example, or, in the present day, the Scottish computer scientist D. M. MacKay and the English physicist J. C. Polkinghorne.) Others accept the existence of an immaterial soul, but differ on the question whether the person, the 'I', is the immaterial soul. Aquinas, for example, sees the human person as essentially a composite of a human soul and a human body. According to the 'composite' theory, a person cannot exist without a body: for one to exist is for one's soul (always numerically the same) to animate some human body or other. (In the interval between one's death and one's receiving a new body at the time of the general resurrection, one's soul exists and thinks and has experiences, but one does not, strictly speaking, exist.) Others who believe in a separable soul, however—most of the Fathers of the Church, and, probably, most Christians who have not given the matter much thought—, accept a metaphysic of soul and body that is deceptively similar to Plato's: one is an immaterial soul, and one will exist and think and have experiences throughout the interval during which one is without a body. But even the members of this party—the theologically well instructed among them, at any rate—would accept the following anti-Platonic theses: that the death of one's 'first' body is not a natural consequence of the impermanence of material things, but is rather a result of the Fall; that the soul's survival of death is not a natural consequence of its immateriality or simplicity, but is rather a miracle, a special gift from God; that existing without a body is not a good thing for the soul, an essential part of the telos of which is to animate a body; that the life of the 'spiritual' or 'glorified' body that the saved soul will be given at the general resurrection will be qualitatively different from (and superior to) the life of the soul's first or 'natural' body. (It must be emphasized that, whatever 'spiritual body' may mean, it does not mean 'immaterial body'.)

According to this picture we have from the Fathers, the soul of a newly dead human being goes, or is sent, to heaven or hell. I think it is important to point out that there is no mention in the NT of "heaven"—not as a place one might go to upon death, or even, more abstractly, as a spiritual condition one might enter into upon death. In the NT, the word 'heaven' (and it often occurs in the plural: 'the kingdom of the heavens'; 'Our father in the heavens'; my impression is that the singular is used only in opposition to 'the earth') seems to me mainly to mean—apart from its literal meaning, 'the skys'—that part of creation where God is perfectly obeyed: at the present time, the abode of the blessed unfallen angels. (Of course, whatever Christians of the first century may have thought, today we must concede that an angel can have an 'abode' only in some very abstract sense of the word.) When we have been raised imperishable, heaven in this sense will have been extended to comprehend the earth—even, we are told, the kosmos—, and those who have been raised, who will then be in some respects like angels and who will be given authority over angels, can certainly say they are in heaven. But this idea is not the idea of a place to which bright beings can lead one via a shaft of light upon one's death; nor is it the idea of a spiritual condition entry into which might be symbolized by a picture of bright beings leading one up a shaft of light upon one's death.

And neither is hell a currently existing place or condition, according to the NT—unless, perhaps we use the word to refer to the abode of the rebel angels. Not that the word hades is ever used in this sense in the NT, but the plain sense of the NT is that there is such a person as Satan and that he is the prince of devils; so there is room for

the concept. Those human beings who refuse salvation will, after the general resurrection, be thrust into a condition that the NT describes by a mixture of three images: exclusion (the “outer darkness” parables), pain, and refuse. The last two of these images are associated with pictures of fire, since burns are very painful and burning is one very common way to dispose of trash. We learn from Revelation, if nowhere else, that the damned will come to share the condition of the rebel angels, so, if we use ‘hell’ in the sense I have suggested, the damned will be able to say “We are in hell.” But this idea is not the idea of a place to which dark, gibbering creatures can drag one upon one’s death; nor is it the idea of a spiritual condition the commencement of which could be symbolized by a picture of dark, gibbering creatures dragging the newly dead person screaming away.

I will remark in passing that I have discussed the two NT texts that raise the greatest difficulty for the view I am defending—the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and the words of Christ from the Cross to the penitent thief—elsewhere, and I’m not going to return to them here.

The picture I have presented strikes me as the biblical and creedal picture. As I have said elsewhere, if you have a more Platonic picture of the Christian afterlife, a picture of a disembodied soul facing the particular judgment immediately after death, I do not call you a heretic. I ask you only not to call me one either.

I now return to metaphysics. I must address a difficult metaphysical question. Is resurrection possible, given materialism? It can be plausibly argued that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead presupposes some form of dualism. For if human persons are not immaterial souls, if they are living animals, then it would seem that death must be the end of them. A living animal is a material object. A material object is composed, at any given moment, of certain atoms. But if one is composed of certain atoms today, it is clear from what we know about the metabolisms of living things that one was not composed of those same atoms a year ago: one must then have been composed of a set of atoms that hardly overlaps the set of atoms that composes one today—and so for any living organism. This fact, the fact that the atoms of which a living organism is composed are in continuous flux, confronts the materialist who believes in resurrection with a grave metaphysical difficulty.

This difficulty is embodied in the following well-known argument. Suppose that God proposes to raise Socrates from the dead. How shall he accomplish this? How shall even omnipotence bring back a particular person who lived long ago and has returned to the dust?—whose former atoms have been, for millennia, spread pretty evenly throughout the biosphere? This question does not confront the dualist, who will say either that there is no need to bring Socrates back (because, so to speak, Socrates has never left), or else that Socrates can be brought back simply by providing his soul (which still exists) with a newly created human body. But what shall the materialist say? From the point of view of the materialist, it looks as if asking God to bring Socrates back is like asking him to bring back the snows of yesteryear or the light of other days. For what can even omnipotence do but reassemble? What else is there to do? And reassembly is not enough, for Socrates was composed of different atoms at different times. If someone says, ‘If God now reassembles the atoms that composed Socrates at the moment of his death, those reassembled atoms will once more compose Socrates’, there is an obvious objection to his thesis. If God can reassemble the atoms that

composed Socrates at the moment of his death in 399 BC—and no doubt he can—, he can also reassemble the atoms that composed Socrates at some particular instant in 409 BC. In fact, if there is no overlap between the two sets of atoms, God could do both of these things, and set the two resulting men side by side. And which would be Socrates? Neither or both, it would seem, and, since not both, neither.

It might be objected that God would not do such a frivolous thing, and this may indeed be so. Nevertheless, if God were to reassemble either set of atoms, the resulting man would be who he was, and it is absurd, it is utterly incoherent, to suppose that his identity could depend on what might happen to some atoms other than the atoms that composed him. In the end, there would seem to be no way round the following requirement: if Socrates was a material thing, a living organism, then, if a man who lives at some time after Socrates' death and physical dissolution is to be Socrates, there will have to be some sort of material and causal continuity between the matter that composed Socrates at the moment of his death and the matter that at any time composes that man. (St Paul seems to suggest, in the passage from I Corinthians cited above, that this will indeed be the case.) But 'physical dissolution' and 'material and causal continuity' are hard to reconcile. To show how the continuity requirement can be satisfied, despite appearances—or else to show that the continuity requirement is illusory—is a problem that must be solved if a philosophically satisfactory 'materialist' theory of resurrection is to be devised.

Before I was a Christian, or a theist of any sort, when I was a sort of fellow traveler, I proposed a solution to this problem that has, let us say, not won wide assent. (This was in an essay called "The Possibility of Resurrection.") I suggested that God could accomplish the resurrection of, say, Socrates, in the following way. He could have, in 399 BC, have miraculously translated Socrates' fresh corpse to some distant place for safe-keeping (at the same time removing the hemlock and undoing the physiological damage it had done) and have replaced it with a simulacrum, a perfect physical duplicate of Socrates' corpse; later, on the day of resurrection, he could reanimate Socrates' corpse, and the reanimated corpse, no longer a corpse but once more a living organism, would be Socrates. Or, I suggested, he might do this with some part of the corpse, its brain or brain-stem or left cerebral hemisphere or cerebral cortex—something whose presence in a newly whole human organism would insure that that organism be Socrates.

No one, as I say, was convinced. Some said, in effect, that the suggestion must be wrong because it was a very silly suggestion. I'm inclined to grant that very silly suggestions are at best very rarely correct. But I've never seen a defense of the premise. Some have made a more interesting objection: that my story represents God as a deceiver. But a deceiver about what? It's true that Socrates' friends believed that the corpse before them was Socrates' corpse, and that this belief was based upon a correct use of the sensory and cognitive apparatuses that God gave them. And if my story is true, their belief was false. Still, it must be remarked, we often do form false beliefs under just such optimal conditions, and I'm not, like Descartes, willing to say that each such case represents an abuse of free will. If God does replace each fresh corpse with a simulacrum, he does thereby show us an important truth: what death means, or what it would mean if he had not gone beyond justice, beyond mercy, and drawn death's sting in Christ. He shows us this, so to speak, counterfactually, but it is a

counterfactual situation he's showing us. He's showing us what would have been if he were no more than a God of justice and had left us to the situation we had earned for ourselves by our rebellion against our creator. And that is a very important thing to be shown.

Some protest that this suggestion confuses resurrection with resuscitation, that it neglects the fundamental theological fact that the resurrection is a doorway into a new kind of life, and not the restoration of the old, Adamic life. But when I speak of God restoring a corpse to life, I mean to imply only that he causes a dead organism to become a living organism. I do not say that the once-more living organism lives with the old kind of life. The resurrection life, as the post-resurrection stories of Jesus show, is a physical life, the life of an organism. After the resurrection, we shall still be composed of up-quarks, down-quarks, and electrons; but they will be organized somewhat differently. We shall be like a badly functioning mechanism that has been repaired and now functions perfectly—that is, functions, on a physical level, as its perfect designer intended it to function. I should mention that it is very hard to separate the idea of the resurrection life from the idea of the Beatific Vision. There will be, I believe, a physical substrate to the life we shall live after the resurrection (this is why I used the words, 'functions, <u>on a physical level</u>, as its perfect designer intended it to function'), but the most important feature of that life will be the fact that we who live with that life enjoy a direct vision of the divine life. The "physical substrate" is, I would suppose, a necessary condition for the enjoyment by the organism of this vision of God, but that is to say that it is of extrinsic rather than intrinsic importance; it is a necessary condition for something more important than itself.

Another objection to my story, and a serious one, one I had not considered (after all, I was not a Christian when I made this suggestion) is that its truth would make nonsense of the Pauline principle that a corpse is a temple of the Holy Spirit. If the suggestion is right, we never actually encounter any of these temples, and we might just as well (if we knew the truth) treat corpses with the same indifference as that which Socrates said was all <u>his</u> corpse would merit: dispose of them, literally without ceremony, in some sanitary and ecologically sound manner, and forget about them. I wonder, though, if this objection cannot be met by the version of my story according to which God has removed not the whole corpse, but only some small, identity-bearing part of it. After all, we still treat corpses with reverence, and properly so, when the undertaker has removed much larger parts of them than God removes according to this version of the suggestion.

I should like to remind you that, in any case, I did not say that the story I told about how God could achieve the resurrection was the true story, the story of what he actually did. My words were, the words "He could do it this way <u>if no other</u>." I did not really emphasize this point, however. In fact, I said, speaking of the corpse-removal-and-simulacrum story, "I think this is the <u>only</u> way [God] could accomplish [the resurrection]." This was probably because I was not a Christian and was not discussing the doctrine of the resurrection with the same sense of attendant intellectual responsibility that would be felt by someone who actually accepted the doctrine. Now that I do feel this sense of intellectual responsibility in respect of what I say about the resurrection, I will explicitly say something a little more nuanced about the way I regard the story I told. The way I regard the story is best understood by considering the familiar

distinction, familiar to students of the problem of evil, between a theodicy and a defense—these terms being used the senses that Plantinga has given them. The story I have told is analogous to a "defense," not to a theodicy.

Speaking on the metaphysics of resurrection today, as a believing Christian, I should not make any such definite statement as "I think this—the story of the corpse and the simulacrum—is the only way God could accomplish the resurrection." My goal in "The Possibility of Resurrection," was to argue for the metaphysical possibility of the Resurrection of the Dead. My method was to tell a story, a story I hoped my readers would grant was a metaphysically possible story, in which God accomplished the Resurrection of the Dead. But I was, I now see, far too ready to identify the reality of the Resurrection with what happens in the story I told to establish its possibility. I am now inclined to think that there are almost certainly other ways in which an omnipotent and omniscient being could accomplish the Resurrection of the Dead than the way that was described in the story I told, ways I am unable even to form an idea of because I lack the conceptual resources to do so. An analogy would be this: a medieval philosopher, or even a nineteenth-century physicist, could have formed no idea of the mechanisms by which the sun shines, not because these mechanisms are a mystery that surpasses human understanding, but simply because some of the concepts needed to describe them were not available before the twentieth century.

This analogy can be pressed a bit. Despite overwhelming evidence (provided by the fossil record) that there had been life on the earth for hundreds of millions of years, the great nineteenth-century physicist Lord Kelvin insisted that the sun had been shining for at most twenty million years. He maintained that the only conceivable mechanism of solar radiation was this: the sun is undergoing very gradual gravitational contraction, and solar radiation is due to the resulting gradual transformation of gravitational potential energy into radiant energy. When you plug the sun's mass, radius, and surface temperature into the appropriate equations (Kelvin contended), you will find that the sun cannot have been putting out radiant energy at anything like its current level for more than twenty million years. So (he concluded) the geologists and paleontologists—who are, after all, mere "stamp collectors" and not real scientists—have, demonstrably, drawn a false conclusion from their fossils and sedimentary layers.

Lord Kelvin's calculations were (I understand) correct: Given his premise about the mechanism of solar radiation, his conclusion follows. Twentieth-century nuclear physics, however, has supplied the real mechanism of solar radiation, and we now know that Kelvin's premise and conclusion were both wrong and that the conclusion the despised "stamp collectors" drew from the fossil record was right. Even in the nineteenth century, however, it would have been possible to show that Kelvin's premise and conclusion were not indisputable. Even within the confines of classical physics, it would have been possible to tell "just-so stories" according to which the sun had been shining for hundreds of millions of years. Here is the beginning of one: The sun is made up of rapidly spinning atoms; continual collisions between these atoms result in their kinetic energy of rotation being gradually transformed into radiant energy.

If one continues the story by specifying (for some particular moment in the past) the right average rotational kinetic energy for the solar atoms, and the right average linear velocity and mean free path of the atoms between collisions, and the right average loss of rotational kinetic energy in each collision, the resulting filled-out story

will have the consequence that the sun has been producing light and heat at its present level for hundreds of millions of years—or for any period one likes.

This is, of course, a "just-so story": although it serves to establish a possibility, it isn't true. In fact—as Kelvin would certainly have been quick to point out—it is, miracles apart, a preposterous story, for no imaginable physical mechanism could have produced the initial conditions (the enormous rotational kinetic energy of the solar atoms) the story postulates. And yet, in a way, the story is true. There is one very abstract—and very important—feature that the sun-in-the-story shares with the real sun: most of the energy that the sun gives off in the form of light and heat was not stored before it was radiated as gravitational potential energy, but rather in the inner dynamics of the atoms of which the sun is composed. (In the story as kinetic energy of rotation; in the real world as nuclear binding energy.)

I am inclined now to think of the description that I gave in "The Possibility of Resurrection" of how an omnipotent being could accomplish the Resurrection of the Dead as a "just-so story": although it serves to establish a possibility, it probably isn't true. (And it is easy to see why someone might think it was preposterous, although it might be questioned whether any of us is in an epistemic position to make a judgment of this sort.) But I am also inclined to think that even if the story is not true, even if it gets the "mechanism" of Resurrection wrong, it nevertheless is true—in a way. That is, I am inclined to think that, even if the story is wrong about the specifics of the Resurrection, the Resurrection-in-the-story, like the sun-in-the-story, nevertheless shares some important but very abstract feature of the real thing. My inclination is to believe that God will somehow—in the way I have imagined or in some way I lack the conceptual resources to imagine, "in this way or some other,"— preserve a remnant of each person, a gumnos kókkos (a naked kernel: I Cor 15:37), which will be sown in corruption and raised in incorruption.

Are there any alternatives for the materialist? Is there any other way for a materialist to make sense of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? I want to examine one alternative, that presented by Lynne Rudder Baker in a recent article in Faith and Philosophy. Baker's account of the resurrection depends on her general metaphysic of material objects, which she calls "constitution theory." I will give brief exposition of constitution theory, as it is presented in her recent book Persons and Bodies.

Baker is a materialist as regards human persons: in her book, you and I and everyone we know is a material thing. But then how are we material persons related to our bodies, which are also material things? Unlike many materialists, including myself, she rejects the following answer to this question: We are identical with our bodies (or with some part of them, such as the brain). What, then is her answer to what she calls the "person-body question"? I will summarize her answer. My summary will use language very different from hers, since it will rely heavily on the language of parthood, and she is extremely hostile to any attempt to use the concept "part" in connection with her theory. Nevertheless, the use I make of this concept is innocuous, and my representation of her answer to the person-body question is accurate (as far as it goes: much is left out).

Recall our definition of mereological summation: x is a mereological sum of the ys at t just in the case that all the ys are parts of x at t, and, at t, every part of x shares a

part with at least one of the ys. The population of the natural world consists of fundamental particles and such mereological sums as any of the subsets of the set all of particles may have. For any particles whatever, there is a unique object that has the following modal properties: necessarily, it exists when and only when all those particles exist, and, necessarily, whenever it exists it is then a sum of those same particles. Such objects are called aggregates (of particles). Consider those particles—the Ps—that are my ultimate parts at the present moment. It follows from the definition of 'sum' that at this moment I am a sum of the Ps. But I am not an aggregate, for my temporal extent and my modal properties are not those of any aggregate. And yet, if Baker is right, the Ps now have a sum that is an aggregate, and have at every moment at which they all existed had that very same aggregate as a sum. (A year ago that aggregate was no doubt "smeared" across the terrestrial biosphere.) So, if Baker is right, the Ps right now have at least two sums: one of them is I, an object that began to exist in 1942, and which has only very recently (perhaps within the last fraction of a second) become a sum of the Ps; one of them is an aggregate, which has, no doubt, existed for millions of years, has always been a sum of the Ps, and which, until recently—when it began the process, completed only a few seconds ago, of shrinking and congealing into a man-shaped, man-sized, solid object—has been an attenuated spherical shell of particles about eight thousand miles across and maybe a few hundred yards thick. What is the (present) relation between me and this aggregate? Well, the two of us are now composed of the same particles (and are therefore now spatially coincident). Can more be said? A great deal, according to Baker. The aggregate and I, she says, are now related by the ancestral of a relation (irreflexive, asymmetrical, and intransitive) called constitution. The aggregate now "constitutes" an object we have not yet mentioned, a third current sum of the Ps, a living animal: my body. And my body, in its turn, now constitutes me. Each of these three current sums of the Ps has different persistence conditions: the aggregate antedated both me and my body by millions of years and will outlast us; my body antedates me (it was once a fetus and I have never been a fetus: for I am essentially a person, and a human body, when it is a fetus, does not yet have the right causal capacities to be—or to constitute—a person) and may outlast me (it will if it becomes a corpse or a "vegetable").

What is this "constitution"? According to Baker, it is not a relation that holds only between bodies and human beings or aggregates and bodies. It is, she says, a relation that is ubiquitous in the material world. (Its relata are always mereological sums of particles. Baker appears to deny this vehemently in the section of her book called "Constitution and Mereology." Her and my apparent disagreement on this point is only verbal. It arises because she builds much more into the meaning of 'mereological sum' than actually follows from the above definition.) A certain piece of marble bears it to Michelangelo's David; a certain piece of cloth bears it to the U.S. flag that flies on the courthouse; a certain piece of colored paper bears it to this ten-dollar bill. (All these items are, at every moment at which they exist, then sums of certain fundamental particles.) When certain appropriately structured sums of particles are placed in appropriate circumstances, another sum of those same particles can be brought into existence, and the "new" sum will then be constituted by the pre-existent and continuing sum. Depending on how the law is written, for example, it may be that at the moment I hand a legally mandated fee to a clerk at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, a piece of

colored plastic will begin to constitute a driver's license; that is, there will begin to exist an object, a driver's license, that is made of the same particles as the preexistent piece of plastic. But this statement requires qualification, for it suggests that the pre-existent piece of plastic is not a driver's license. Baker's position is this: at the moment it comes to constitute a driver's license, the piece of plastic will become a driver's license. But it will differ from the "new" object it constitutes in this way: the new object will be a driver's license non-derivatively, and the pre-existent object will be a driver's license only derivatively: it will be a driver's license in virtue of constituting something that is non-derivatively a driver's license. The new object, moreover, will be essentially a driver's license, and the pre-existent object, the piece of colored plastic, will be a driver's license only accidentally (for the first few minutes of its existence, it wasn't one, and it might never have become one). Moreover, the non-derivative driver's license, the new object, is a piece of plastic—but derivatively, only in virtue of being constituted by something that is non-derivatively a piece of plastic.

It is important to realize that, for Baker, being derivatively F is a species of being F. It's not that, after the "real" driver's license has come into existence, we apply the term 'driver's license' to the pre-existent piece of plastic "vicariously" or "only in the loose and popular sense," as a shorthand way of saying that something intimately related to the initial piece of plastic is a driver's license. No, the pre-existent piece of plastic now really is a driver's license, and the new thing that is essentially a driver's license really is a piece of plastic. The two objects are pieces/licenses for different reasons, but they are both literally and strictly pieces and licenses. A similar point applies to me and my body: I am a person non-derivatively and it derivatively, but it really is a person—and I really am a body, although I'm not the body we call "my body," for this phrase denotes the thing that is non-derivatively a body. (Are there then two co-located persons? Well, there are two numerically distinct and co-located objects each of which is a person, but the two are not, Baker says, separate persons—or, indeed, separate objects. I doubt whether any sense can be made of this, but I will not press the point.)

Baker devotes the body of her book to explaining constitution (there is an elaborate Chisholm-style definition) and to meeting objections to "the constitution view" (both as a general metaphysic of the material world and in its particular application to the person-body problem). I have only one major objection to "constitution theory": I can't bring myself to take seriously the idea that constitution is real. It seems to me as obvious as anything can be that if a piece of plastic becomes a driver's license, that's like a man's becoming a husband: entirely a matter of a pre-existent thing's acquiring a new legal status. It seems equally obvious to me that there is nothing numerically distinct from me is spatially coextensive with me. And Baker's strenuous, extended, and very intelligent efforts to convince her readers that there are good reasons to believe these things move me not at all; I retain a complacent, unworried conviction that these things that seem obvious to me deserve to seem obvious to anyone who considers them. Well, that's philosophy. Let us, however, set aside any worries we may have about the constitution theory, and examine Baker's application of it to the problems with which the doctrine of the resurrection presents the materialist.

How does the "constitutionalist" view identity across time for human persons? First, a material thing is a human person if (i) it is a mereological sum of fundamental

particles that have a member of the species Homo sapiens as one of their mereological sums, and (ii) it has (non-derivatively) a "first-person perspective." Now consider me and my body. We are both human persons, but I am a human person non-derivatively, and it is a human person only derivatively; I have a first-person perspective non-derivatively and it has a first-person perspective only derivatively. I will describe this state of affairs by saying that I am a non-derivative human person--and the only non-derivative human person that currently shares my proper parts. In the sequel, I will use 'person' to mean 'non-derivative person' and 'body' to mean 'non-derivative body'. Suppose I die and am dissolved into my elements. What can God do to bring it about that some person, some person he brings into existence in the future, is I? (Baker agrees with me that if an organism, I mean a thing that is non-derivatively an organism, is totally destroyed, even God can't bring it back into existence. That is why she thinks that constitution theory, according to which a human person is not, non-derivatively, an organism, enjoys a decisive advantage in the project of providing a materialist account of the metaphysics of resurrection over those materialist theories according to which a human person is, simply and without qualification, an organism.) Baker's answer to the question 'What can God do to bring it about that some person, some person he brings into existence in the future, is I?' is this: He must bring it about that this future person and I have the same first-person perspective. And this, Baker thinks, is something God can do without fooling about with corpses and simulacra, for he can cause the future person and me to have the same first-person perspective without there being any physical continuity between us. Identity of organisms, non-derivative organisms, would require physical continuity; identity of derivative organisms need not require physical continuity, and identity of those special derivative organisms that are human persons does not require physical continuity.

But what is it for x and y to have the same first-person perspective? Baker insists that no criterion of sameness of first-person perspective is possible, and that it would be a mistake to demand one. Perhaps that is so, but I am not asking for a criterion—whatever that means—, but for a definition. I am asking what the words 'x and y have the same first-person perspective' mean. Baker makes it plain that, in her view, the familiar distinction between descriptive and numerical identity applies to first-person perspectives. My Doppelgänger on Twin Earth and I have minds with identical content at each moment and can therefore be said to have descriptively identical first-person perspectives. But we have numerically distinct first-person perspectives because, if for no other reason, our first-person perspectives are "directed at" different human bodies. In this language, the language of numerical identity, what God must do to make a post-resurrection person me is to provide him with a first-person perspective numerically identical with mine. (Merely descriptively identical first-person perspectives wouldn't do, for two or even a hundred post-resurrection persons could have descriptively identical first-person perspectives.) But what is the numerical identity of first-person perspectives? "Well, you understand what it is for x and y to have first-person perspectives, and you understand numerical identity, so you must understand the sentence 'the first-person perspective of x is identical with the first-person perspective of y'." To paraphrase Wittgenstein, you understand 'it's five o'clock' and you understand the adverbial phrase 'on the sun', so you must understand 'It's five o'clock on the sun'. No, my antecedent understanding of 'first-person perspective' and 'is identical with' are

not sufficient for my understanding ‘the first-person perspective of x is identical with the first-person perspective of y’. I need some sort of definition, some explicit statement of meaning. And, unfortunately, the only definition I can think of (Baker gives none, and would probably not agree with me that one was needed) is this:

> The first-person perspective of x is identical with the first-person perspective of y =df
>
> x has a first-person perspective and y has a first-person perspective and x is identical with y.

But if this what identity of first-person perspectives means, then it’s hard to see how being told that God can make a post-resurrection person me by giving that person a first-person perspective numerically identical with mine explains anything—for an essential part of giving a person a first-person perspective identical with mine is to make that person identical with me. And how God might do that is just what identity of first-person perspectives was supposed to help us to understand. I conclude that even if I know that I am a thing that has, non-derivatively, a first-person perspective and is only derivatively a living organism, and is spatially coincident with a non-derivative living organism that has a first-person perspective only derivatively, this rather astounding and certainly very important piece of metaphysical information will be of no help whatever to me if I want to reconcile a materialist theory of the human person with the Christian doctrine of the general resurrection. It seems to me that the materialist who believes in the general resurrection is, so to speak, stuck with saying that there must somehow be some sort of physical continuity between the person who dies in the present age of the world and the person who is raised on the day of resurrection. If human persons are physical substances, nothing but physical continuity can ground the identity of human persons across time. The problem for the “Christian materialist,” therefore, is to try to present a plausible theory according to which such physical continuity exists.