

Christian Materialism in a Scientific Age

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Most Christians are dualists. They believe, in Dean Zimmerman’s words, “the doctrine that each human person is an immaterial substance, a soul—or at least, that each of us has a soul as part of us.”¹ Materialism, as I’ll use the word, is denial of dualism so characterized. Many Christians who have argued against Christian materialism have construed Christian materialism quite narrowly—for example, as the view that “no separation of person from bodily organism is possible.”² These Christian dualists do not distinguish between two distinct theses:

(A) I cannot exist without my organic body.³

and

(B) I cannot exist without some body that supports certain mental functions.

I’ll call materialism that entails (A) ‘Type-I materialism’, and materialism that entails only (b) ‘Type-II materialism’. Traditional Christian Materialists—Peter van Inwagen (1995), Kevin Corcoran (2001), Trenton Merricks (Merricks 2007)—are all Type-I materialists.⁴ Dualists typically argue against Type-I materialism without considering Type-II materialism.⁵ Although all materialists—both Type-I and Type-II—deny that we have immaterial souls, and that we cannot exist unembodied, only Type-II materialists

¹ Zimmerman (2002, p. 315).

² Cooper (1988, p. 22).

³ My use of modal terms like ‘can’ and ‘could’ indicate what Plantinga calls “broadly metaphysical possibility”. (Plantinga 2006, 4)

⁴ Van Inwagen (1995), Corcoran (2001), Merricks (2007).

⁵ E.g., see Plantinga (2006).

hold that human persons can exist without having the particular bodies that they in fact have.

I shall outline a Type-II materialist view, which I call ‘Constitutionalism’⁶ and enumerate ways that Type-II materialism differs from Type-I materialism. Then, I’ll respond to some Christian dualists who have argued that materialism cannot accommodate important Christian doctrines—bodily resurrection, the Incarnation, and the existence of an “intermediate state.” Finally, I shall respond to the charge that Constitutionalism is incoherent.

Constitutionalism

Christian materialists are not materialists tout court. They believe in a nonphysical God, who created the universe ex nihilo. Suppose that God created a material world in this sense: every concrete object that exists in the created world and every property that is exemplified in the created world either existed (or was exemplified) at the Creation (or Big Bang), or is constituted (at every time that it exists or is exemplified) by properties and objects that existed or were exemplified at the Creation (or Big Bang). Between the Creation and now, the universe has evolved. Galaxies, solar systems, and species have come into being; new properties have come to be exemplified. With the evolution of intentional entities, cultural evolution became an agent of change along with natural selection. Artifacts and artworks came into existence.

The myriad entities and properties that we enjoy are all constituted, ultimately by

⁶ Although Corcoran (2001), like me, holds that persons are constituted by bodies without being identical to the bodies that constitute them, he is a Type-I materialist who believes that we cannot exist without the bodies that we in fact have. I use the term ‘Constitutionalism’ for my view.

aggregates of physical particles. (Hence, “materialism” is an appropriate label for entities and properties in the natural world.) Constitution, unlike identity, is a contingent and time-bound relation of unity between items of two different primary kinds. Everything is of some primary kind essentially. A thing x’s primary kind is the answer to the question, “What, most fundamentally, is x?” Human persons are constituted by human organisms (at least during part of their existence). A person has a first-person perspective essentially; a human organism has integrated organs essentially. Things of different primary kinds have different persistence conditions. A person has first-personal persistence conditions; an organism has third-personal persistence conditions. During the period of “cognitive inflation,”⁷ human organisms developed language and, I speculate, robust first-person perspectives. That was the ontological turning point at which human organisms came to constitute a new kind of entity, *person*.⁸ The emergence of human persons is as significant as the creation story of Adam and Eve suggests: It is the emergence of beings with first-personal persistence conditions.

Human organism and *person* are both primary kinds. A thing’s primary-kind property confers on its (nonderivative)⁹ bearer causal powers that its constituter would not have if it hadn’t constituted anything. If x constitutes y at t, then y is on a higher ontological level than x,¹⁰ y has different persistence conditions from x, and y has causal powers that x would not have if x hadn’t constituted anything. When a primary-kind

⁷ Mithen (2004), Baker (2009).

⁸ One of the ways that my view is nonstandard is that I do not think that basic (ineliminable,irreducible) properties and entities are timeless.

⁹ For extensive discussion of the derivative/nonderivative distinction, see Baker (2007a). I am a person nonderivatively; the body that constitutes me now is a person derivatively during the time that it constitutes me.

¹⁰ The idea of a higher ontological level is explained in Baker (Baker 2007a).

property—G, say—comes to be exemplified, a new concrete object, y that has G essentially, comes into existence. So, since *human organism* and *person* are primary kinds, when a human organism develops to the point of having a rudimentary first-person perspective,¹¹ a new entity—a person—comes into existence. The person is constituted by the human organism.

Typically, in learning a natural language, the person develops a *robust* first-person perspective that allows for an inner life. A robust first-person perspective is a conceptual ability to think of oneself as oneself, in the first person, without a name, description or other third-person referring device. (I signal thoughts that manifest a robust first-person perspective by use of ‘I*’, as in “I wish that I* were a movie star.”) In short, human persons have first-person perspectives (rudimentary or robust) essentially. Human organisms that do not develop even rudimentary first-person perspectives do not constitute persons. Higher nonhuman animals have only rudimentary first-person perspectives, and those only contingently. What distinguishes persons from nonhuman higher animals is not only that we have (rudimentary) first-person perspectives essentially, but also that we typically develop *robust* first-person perspectives. It is important to note that first-person perspectives are not concrete entities; they are properties. My first-person perspective is a different exemplification of the same property that is your first-person perspective.

According to Constitutionalism, a human person is constituted by some body or

¹¹ Anything that has consciousness, intentionality, and the ability to imitate has a rudimentary first-person perspective. Organisms have rudimentary first-person perspectives. When a late-term human fetus develops a rudimentary first-person perspective (and thus has it contingently), it comes to constitute a person who has a rudimentary first-person perspective essentially. See Baker (2007a).

other at each moment of its existence. The body furnishes the mechanisms that support a first-person perspective. It is an empirical fact that organs in a human body can be modified (and made to function properly) by artificial parts—cochlear implants, mind-brain interfaces, artificial hearts and other organs (soon an artificial eye), prosthetic limbs, neural implants and on and on. Even now, paralyzed people who have mind-brain interfaces are not simply constituted by a human organism, but by a human organism *and* a nonorganic prosthetic device. At some point, there could be enough nonorganic devices that support your mental and behavioral functioning that we should say that your body is no longer organic. In that case, you would not have the same body that you were born with.¹²

Constitutionalism is materialist in that it holds that we cannot exist unembodied, but it is new (or perhaps I should say ‘nonstandard’) in a number of ways:

(1) Unlike Type-I materialism, Type-II materialism (such as Constitutionalism) is not committed to there being, for every concrete material object *x*, one or more aggregates of physical particles with which *x* is identical. There are primary-kind properties (e.g., being a driver’s license), and hence classes of material objects, whose conditions for identity and persistence are intentional and relational.¹³ My driver’s license is a particular material object that is not identical to the piece of laminated plastic that constitutes it (it could have been constituted by paper or something else); it is a driver’s license in virtue of state authorization of a person to drive a car. State

¹² For details, see Baker (2009).

¹³ I call such objects and properties ‘intention-dependent’ or ‘ID’. A goodly proportion of the objects we interact with are ID objects. All artifacts and artworks are ID objects. (Baker 2007a, 11-13)

authorization—and not what it is made of or how it is constructed—is what makes it the kind of object that it fundamentally is.¹⁴ It is a concrete material object (it could be lost or stolen) that is not identical to any physical particles.

I suspect that the reason that materialists are so committed to Type-I materialism which identifies material objects with physical particles is that they tend to see the material world through the lens of theories of mereology—theories of “the” part/whole relation. I think that a mereological approach to the material world is deeply wrongheaded.¹⁵ Instead, appeal to primary kinds—some of which are relational (genes) and/or intentional (wristwatches)—leads to a fuller picture of the reality that we interact with. It recognizes ontological novelty and the growing heterogeneity of reality. With its emphasis on the ontological importance of relational and intentional properties (we are material creatures who add to basic reality by our inventions), Constitutionalism is a different, if nonstandard, sort of materialism.¹⁶

¹⁴ Van Inwagen “cannot bring [himself] to take seriously the idea that constitution is real.” He thinks that becoming a driver’s license is like becoming a husband: “*entirely* a matter of a pre-existent thing’s acquiring a new legal status.” (Van Inwagen 2006) This analogy, I think, misfires. The piece of laminated plastic that constitutes my driver’s license is no pre-existing object that acquires a new legal status. It was manufactured in order to constitute a driver’s license. The piece of laminated plastic would not have been manufactured were it not for driver’s licenses and all the economic and social practices that surround driving. By contrast, my husband would have existed even if there were no practices surrounding marriage.

¹⁵ In Baker (2008) and Baker (2010), I have argued for this claim.

¹⁶ Not only do I deny that there are immaterial entities (like souls) in the natural world; I also deny that properties divide into two kinds—mental and physical. Some philosophers (Dean Zimmerman 2004, 324) still consider me a dualist. I think that the charge of dualism stems from commitment (which, of course, I do not share) to counting by identity to the exclusion of counting by identity-or-constitution, as explained in (Baker 2007a, 169-172). There I showed in detail how x and y could be the same F without being identical. (E.g., my current body and I could be the same person now, yet not be identical.)

(2) Constitutionalism does not take there to be a sharp line between mental and physical phenomena and hence is not “property-dualism.” ‘Mind’ does not refer to an entity, but to a congeries of abilities of thinking, deciding, remembering, reasoning, evaluating, repenting and so forth—abilities that we group together as mental.

(3) Constitutionalism sees dignity and integrity in the world that we interact with—the world depicted in the Bible—without any skeptical theses that, say, the Dead Sea Scrolls are just *entia successiva* or assemblies of physical particles. Moreover, Constitutionalism does not take the first-person perspective to be in any way illusory. Suppose that neuroscientists never find a single neural location where first-person experiences (simultaneously remembering to take my keys and hearing the birdsong) are correlated with neural events localized in different parts of the brain. Some Christians may take this to be evidence of the existence of an immaterial soul, but Constitutionalism shows a way to avoid such a conclusion: the experience of simultaneously remembering to take my keys and hearing the birdsong is constituted by variously located events in the brain (and perhaps elsewhere).¹⁷ A manifestation of a first-person perspective—an essential property of persons—may be constituted by an aggregate of spatially disparate events.¹⁸ Constitutionalism gets beyond the “soul-or-illusion” dichotomy that afflicts so much analytic philosophy. Rather, persons exist (and are as real as electrons) and that their first-person perspectives are not illusory.

(4) Constitutionalism takes science seriously. Although Christians never suppose

¹⁷ See Baker (2009).

¹⁸ For details, see (Baker 2009a). For a definition of ‘property-constitution’, see (Baker 2007a, 113-114); for a sufficient condition for ‘higher-level property’, see (Baker 2007a, 236).

science to have the last word on reality, many present-day Christians want to be in tune as much as possible with the scientific worldview. The success of the sciences is indisputable: the effects of science and technology permeate our lives. We can see how a first-person perspective can gradually develop through the species until it reaches the point where it can grow into a robust first-person perspective that allows us to think: me and me again.¹⁹ But it is difficult to see how an immaterial soul could evolve through the species. It seems to me much tidier to suppose that the natural world created by God is wholly material, and the divine world is wholly immaterial, than to suppose that the created world is partly material and partly immaterial. (Our robust first-person perspectives, even with a provenance in natural selection, could be what some theologians call the *imago dei*.)

In short, Constitutionalism takes us human persons to be fully in the natural world (we evolved by natural selection along with the nonhuman species); yet it shows how we are nevertheless ontologically unique (we developed the ability to think: me and me again, and thus to take responsibility for what we do). Constitutionalism endorses materialism about the created world, but Type-II materialism that does not entail “I cannot exist without my organic body.”

Constitutionalism and Christian Doctrine

¹⁹ Sorabji (2006)

Some Christians believe that Christian materialism is unable to accommodate Christian doctrines like the Resurrection of the Body or Incarnation²⁰ (Taliaferro and Goetz 2008) or an “intermediate state”.²¹ Consider these in turn.

Resurrection of the Body. Since I have discussed this at length elsewhere, I’ll be brief here.²² “Presumably,” say Taliaferro and Goetz, “the Christian materialist thinks that [resurrection of the body] must require numerical sameness of body because it is numerically the same person who exists in the resurrection life as existed in this earthly life.”²³ However, this takes Taliaferro and Goetz’s target to be Type-I materialism. On Constitutionalism (Type-II materialism), sameness of person does not require sameness of body. Indeed, the doctrine of resurrection cannot require identity (“numerical sameness”) of the earthly body. A resurrection body is a “spiritual” body. Whatever a spiritual body is, it is incorruptible. All earthly bodies are corruptible. Anything corruptible is essentially corruptible, and anything that is incorruptible is essentially incorruptible.²⁴ Hence, no single body can be corruptible (at one time) and incorruptible (at another time or in eternity). So, no corruptible body is identical to any incorruptible body. Resurrection, then, requires the possibility of preservation of the person without preservation of the body. Resurrection is a miracle. We have no idea how God accomplishes it, but its metaphysical possibility is built into Constitutionalism. Hence, Constitutionalism comports well with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

²⁰ Taliaferro and Goetz (2008).

²¹ Cooper (1989).

²² Baker (2007b), Baker (2005), Baker (2007c)

²³ Taliaferro and Goetz use ‘numerical sameness’ the way that I use ‘identity’. I define a relation that I call ‘numerical sameness’ in terms of identity or constitution. Constitution is another kind of Aristotle’s ‘numerical sameness’. See (Baker 2007a, 169-172)

²⁴ Baker (2007b).

The Incarnation. Taliaferro and Goetz think that the doctrine of the Incarnation poses an insurmountable problem for Christian materialism. The problem is to understand the way in which the divine Second Person of the Trinity (the Logos, the Son of God) is related to Jesus of Nazareth, in his humanity. After centuries of battles, the Western doctrine of the Incarnation was finally codified by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. In the words of the definition of Chalcedon, Jesus Christ is recognized

in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ.²⁵

Taliaferro and Goetz say, “It is unclear how materialism could allow that the Son of God can become incorporated into or become identical to a *human animal*.” They imply that the materialist makes “the unintelligible claim that God, an incorporeal being, becomes identical with a *corporeal body*.”²⁶ But their charge holds water only against a Type-I materialist, not a Type-II materialist who denies the identity of a person (human or divine) with a human animal or a corporeal body. The constitutionalist remains untouched by this criticism of Type-I materialism.

I confess that I find the Chalcedonian “two natures/one Person” Christology fundamentally mysterious; but as far as I can understand the Incarnation, I think that Constitutionalism, with an amendment, is congenial to the Chalcedonian “two-natures”

²⁵ Bettenson (1963, p. 73).

²⁶ Taliaferro and Goetz (2008, p. 320).

doctrine. So, rather than saying that all human persons are essentially embodied, I should say that all beings that *began existence* as human persons (i.e., were constituted by human bodies at the beginning of their existence) are essentially embodied.

With this amendment, Constitutionalism seems to be congenial to the Chalcedonian doctrine of the Incarnation. Constitutionalism can hold that Christ's human nature is wholly material and his divine nature is wholly immaterial. By contrast to Constitutionalism, soul-body dualism that holds that human persons have immaterial minds, and since Christ is fully human and fully divine unmixed, soul-body dualism would seem to imply that Christ two *immaterial* minds—one human and one divine. It is surely more straightforward and elegant to treat the “two-natures” doctrine as Constitutionalism does.

Taliaferro and Goetz say, “If one understands the incarnation in dualist terms, one can affirm that God the Son acts as the embodied subject (it is the son of God who acts as Jesus Christ) and endures embodiment as an object (when Jesus Christ suffers the passion it is the Son of God who is suffering).”²⁷ It seems to me that the dualist is the one in trouble here (at least with respect to Chalcedon). It looks as if either the humanity of Jesus Christ is underemphasized (in which case, dualism courts Apollinarianism) or Jesus Christ has two immaterial minds, one human and the other divine (in which case, dualism courts Nestorianism). So, still supposing that the Incarnation is a mystery, Constitutionalism seems more congenial to the orthodox Chalcedonian position than is dualism.

²⁷ Taliaferro and Goetz (2008, p. 320).

The “intermediate state”. Some—but not all—Christians believe that there is a kind of existence after death and before resurrection. For example, the Roman Catholic Church holds that after death, those who will have eternal salvation undergo a final purification, “so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.”²⁸ The dead in purgatory suffer temporal punishment for their sins before attaining the beatific vision of God. The Roman Church offers prayers and Eucharistic sacrifice for those in purgatory and also “commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead.”²⁹ However, Protestants from Martin Luther on, rejected the notion of purgatory, and its surrounding lore (e.g., praying for and offering sacrifices for the dead). They took Purgatory to be unscriptural, and a denial of the completeness of forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ’s saving work.

Even without purgatory, some Protestants hold that there is an “intermediate state” between death and a general Resurrection at the end of time, and at least one Protestant theologian—John W. Cooper—has argued that an intermediate state entails mind-body (or soul-body) dualism.³⁰ The soul is taken immediately to Christ, and later when all the saved are resurrected, it will be reunited with “its” body.

Throughout his book, Cooper seems to move between construal of ‘mind-body dualism’ as (1) affirming that a person can exist apart from an earthly organism and (2) affirming that a person can exist apart from any body, biological or not. That is, he moves between denying Type-I materialism and denying Type-II materialism. As I have emphasized, Constitutionalism affirms (with Cooper) that a person can exist apart from

²⁸ Vatican (1994, p. 1030).

²⁹ Vatican (1994, p. 1032).

³⁰ Cooper (1989).

an earthly organism. What Constitutionalism (Type-II materialism) denies is that a person can exist apart from *any* body, a view affirmed by Cooper and other traditional soul-body dualists.

Cooper's main argument for soul-body dualism relies on the doctrine of an intermediate state between death and a general resurrection, which occurs at the end of time. Cooper offers a Biblical argument for soul-body dualism.

Premise 1: The Bible (in the New Testament) entails that there is an intermediate state between death and a general resurrection. (II Corinthians 5:1-10; Philippians 1: 21-23)

Premise 2: If there is an intermediate state, then soul-body dualism is true. (An intermediate state presupposes soul-body dualism.)

Conclusion: Soul-body dualism is true.

The argument is obviously valid, but are the premises true? Premise 1 is a matter of interpretation. The subtlety and delicacy of Biblical interpretation are well-known, and Premise 1 is controversial. But I will let that pass and focus on Premise 2.

Cooper says: "The main pillar on which our case for dualism rests is the claim that New Testament eschatology teaches a sequence of an intermediate state and resurrection."³¹ He interprets the intermediate state to be "an interval, a period of time between death and resurrection, during which persons exist without bodies."³² However, I know of no reason—Biblical or philosophical—to suppose that the intermediate state must be a *disembodied* state. For all we know, persons in the intermediate state

³¹ Cooper (1989, p. 210).

³² Cooper (1989, p. 210).

(assuming that there is one) are constituted by intermediate-state bodies. As we saw, when one is resurrected, one has a ‘spiritual’, or ‘glorified’, or ‘imperishable’ body. If God can so transform or replace our bodies once, he can do it twice. So, the arguments about the intermediate state provide no reason to prefer soul-body dualism to Constitutionalism.

Constitutionalism seems to accommodate these three Christian doctrines, but some have charged Constitutionalism with being unilluminating, or worse. Are they right?

What Should We Expect from Constitutionalism?

Elsewhere, I have tried to answer many of the criticisms of my notion of constitution.³³ Here I shall focus on one criticism of my view of personal identity over time and its suitability for reconciling materialism with the doctrine of resurrection.

According to my version of Constitutionalism, human persons are part of the fundamental reality of the (created) universe. Since the universe itself and its inhabitants evolve, human persons come into being at some time.³⁴ But that only means that they are emergent, that they are not reducible to subpersonal or nonpersonal items. Thus, it is no criticism of Constitutionalism that there is no informative criterion of personal identity over time.³⁵

³³ Baker (2007a).

³⁴ But like everything else in the created world that we know of, they come into existence gradually and thus have vague temporal boundaries. See (Baker 2007a, Ch. 6)

³⁵ See (Merricks 1998). For a good discussion of the superiority of physicalism over dualism in the context of the Incarnation, see (Merricks 2007). Although most of Merricks’ argument uses Type-I materialism, at the end of his article, he extends his definition of ‘physicalism’ to include Type-II materialism. (Merricks 2007, 298)

In an online paper, “I look for the Resurrection of the Dead and the Life of the World to Come,” Peter van Inwagen has taken issue with my view.³⁶ As I understand him, van Inwagen has a complex objection: First, I have given no noncircular informative definition of the words ‘x and y have the same first-person perspective’; and, second, he says that such a definition is needed in order to show how there can be 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.” In greater detail:

Van Inwagen asks (with exasperation) what the words ‘x and y have the same first-person perspective’ *mean*. He then produces a definition that he finds wanting:

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.

I agree that this definition explains nothing; it is noninformative. Indeed (as I have argued), I do not believe that there is *any* noncircular informative definition of ‘x’s first-person perspective’s being identical to y’s first-person perspective.’ (Nor for that matter is there any noncircular informative definition of ‘person x considered at t is identical to person y considered at t’.)³⁷ All that follows from the lack of such definition is that persons cannot be understood in wholly nonpersonal terms. (And any

³⁶ Van Inwagen (2006) sets out my view in terms that I explicitly reject (he acknowledges using language very different from my own, but says that “[his] representation of [my] answer to the person-body question is accurate (as far as it goes: much is left out.”(Van Inwagen 2006) Let me reiterate that I reject a mereological approach to the material world and to human persons. Moreover, if ‘a member of the species *Homo sapiens*’ refers to a (nonderivative) human organism, it is not accurate to say that I say that I think that a member of the species *Homo sapiens* “has *non-derivatively* a ‘first-person perspective’”. (Van Inwagen 2006)

³⁷ Baker (forthcoming).

nonreductionist about persons should agree.) Van Inwagen asks for *a definition*, because he wonders how God “can cause the future person and me to have the same first-person perspective without there being any physical continuity between us.”³⁸ But I do not expect any mere definition to carry the weight of showing how God can do this.

It is the Argument from Providence that shows how “the future person and me...have the same first-person perspective without there being any physical continuity between us.” In virtue of what is Smith the person with resurrection-body 1 or the person with resurrection-body 2 in the resurrection? The answer is God’s free decree. On the traditional doctrine of God’s knowledge, every contingent state of affairs depends on God’s freely decreeing it.³⁹ And which body constitutes Smith is contingent.⁴⁰ So all that is needed is God’s free decree that Smith be constituted by resurrection-body 1. Of course, God could replace Smith’s earthly body piecemeal at the speed of light, but He need not. Given God’s free decree, no physical continuity is needed between Smith’s earthly body and his resurrection-body.

In virtue of what is *Smith’s* first-person perspective exemplified in the resurrection? Again, the answer is God’s free decree. What God knows by his natural knowledge is that a particular exemplification of a first-person perspective would be Smith’s (this is a necessary truth); what is a matter of God’s free decree is whether or not

³⁸ Van Inwagen (2006).

³⁹ I am putting aside the possibility of middle knowledge, which is not part of the traditional view.

⁴⁰ Moreover, on the traditional doctrine, God’s “natural knowledge” is of every metaphysical necessity or impossibility; hence, God knows that it is metaphysically impossible for Smith to be identical to both the person with resurrection body 1 and the person with resurrection body 2. So, it is not within God’s power to make Smith identical with both and there is no threat of the “duplication problem”.

that particular exemplification occurs. According to this Christian version of Constitutionalism, it is within God's power to bring about Smith's existence in the resurrection without any physical continuity between between Smith-constituted-by-his-earthly-body and Smith-constituted-by-resurrection-body-1. (The supposition to the contrary—that physical continuity is required—is a remnant of Type-I materialism.) Smith exists in the resurrection in virtue of God's free decree that brings about both the exemplification of the first-person perspective that is Smith's and the state of affairs that the person (Smith) whose first-person perspective is exemplified is constituted by a certain resurrection body.⁴¹

I think that I can clarify my view a bit by looking at van Inwagen's next two sentences, following the uninformative definition:

But if this is what identity of first-person perspectives *means*, then it's hard to see how being told that God can make a post-resurrection *me* by giving that person a first-person perspective numerically identical with mine explains anything—for it is 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.⁴²

Some close readings:

(1) “[I]t'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

⁴¹ We may either posit a temporal gap in a single exemplification of a first-person perspective between earthly death and re-constitution in the resurrection, or posit an intermediate-state body. Baker (2007b).

⁴² Van Inwagen (2006, p. 16).

mine explains anything.”⁴³ Of course, it explains nothing; on my view, the sentence doesn’t even make sense. I think that it is metaphysically impossible to start with “a post-resurrection person” (a generic person?) and then make it me or some other particular person.

(2) “[A]n essential part of giving a person a first-person perspective identical with mine is making that person identical with me.”⁴⁴ I think that that sentence is, to say the least, misleading. No one—not even God—can make something identical with itself (nor, of course, can God make something identical with something else).

(3) Next sentence: “And how God might do *that* is just what identity of first-person perspectives was supposed to help us to understand.”⁴⁵ Well, no. Appeal to first-person perspectives was supposed to help us to understand what persons are. No one—not immaterialists or materialists or Thomists—can explain how God can bring about resurrected people.

All that any metaphysics can do is to be consistent with God’s miraculously bringing about resurrection. A metaphysics of resurrection cannot explain how God makes resurrection happen; it can only leave room for a miracle—a miracle, by being a miracle, is not explainable. We no more know how God’s free decrees are effected than we know how God created the universe *ex nihilo*. However resurrection occurs, it remains a mystery. (Think of the Gospel accounts of Jesus’s resurrection.) But it is no more a mystery for Constitutionalism than for any other view.⁴⁶

⁴³ Van Inwagen (2006, p. 13).

⁴⁴ Van Inwagen (2006, p. 13).

⁴⁵ Van Inwagen (2006, p. 13).

⁴⁶ Van Inwagen thinks that materialists have a special problem about resurrection.

Let me conclude with a comment on van Inwagen's analogy that aims to show the emptiness of my expression "the first-person perspective of x is identical with the first-person perspective of y". Van Inwagen compares my expression to Wittgenstein's meaningless "it's 5 o'clock on the sun". The analogy seems to miss its target. A better analogy for my expression would be a first-person version of a Rip-van-Winkle story: I go to sleep for 40 years. There is a dawning awareness of a thought of wondering whether I* am still alive. An awareness has a subject, and the subject in this case is me. Only I can be aware of wondering whether I* am still alive. Therefore, I still exist and my first-person perspective is still exemplified. Therefore, the first-person perspective of the person wondering whether she* is still alive is identical to the first-person perspective of the person who went to sleep 40 years earlier. Since first-person perspectives are properties, not concrete entities, 'numerical identity' applied to first-person perspectives means 'same exemplification.' The same story can be told about someone who died, instead of going to sleep. Unlike the "5-o'clock on the sun" case, there should be no difficulty in understanding what it means to say "The first-person perspective of x is identical with the first-person perspective of y".

In any case, believers in bodily resurrection are better off as Type-II

He thinks that "if human persons are physical substances, nothing but physical continuity can ground the identity of human persons across time." Since I don't know what van Inwagen packs into the notion of a physical substance, maybe I don't think that human persons are physical substances in his sense. In any case, I see no reason that the identity of human persons should (or can) be grounded in anything. I call myself a materialist (about the natural world), because I believe that every object and property exemplified in the natural world is either recognized by theories of physics or is ultimately constituted by objects or properties recognized by theories of physics. Primary-kind properties (like being a person) are emergent; they are constituted in the sense I discussed in (Baker 2007a, 234-239), but not grounded (whatever one means by 'grounded'). They are already on the ground floor.

Constitutionalists than as Type-I materialists, according to whom “a human person is, simply and without qualification, an organism.” (Van Inwagen 2006, 15) In contrast to such materialists (popularly called ‘Animalists’), Constitutionalists do not take being a person to be just a contingent and temporary property of beings that are fundamentally nonpersonal (organisms). Indeed, on the Animalist view, our having first-person perspectives (or any mental states at all) is irrelevant to the kind of being that we fundamentally are.

Conclusion

Unlike Type-I Christian materialism, Type-II Christian materialism can withstand the criticisms of dualists. Of the various alternatives—Type-I Christian materialism, Type-II Christian materialism, immaterialism, and dualism—Type-II Christian materialism is most in tune with a scientific worldview. Technology has developed to the point where we can radically change our organic bodies into organic-inorganic hybrids, or perhaps into wholly inorganic bodies—all the while remaining human persons with our first-person perspectives. Constitutionalism, or some other Type-II materialism, is well suited for this reality.

Moreover, Constitutionalism is at home in both theistic and nontheistic contexts. Although Constitutionalism itself does not require any reference to God, here I have considered Constitutionalism in a theistic, specifically Christian, context. I hope to have shown that it reveals a new way to approach core Christian doctrines, as well as the natural world. Overall, Constitutionalism is an invitation (which can be refused) to acknowledge that reality includes the world as actually encountered in all its

heterogeneity and to investigate this shared world metaphysically.⁴⁷

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