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## **Idealist Solutions to the Beatific Vision with Resurrection: Solving Cortez's Extraneous Problem of the Body During the Beatific Vision**

Idealističko rješenje za visio beatifica s uskrsnućem:  
Rješenje Cortezova problema stranoga tijela tijekom  
*visio beatifica*

**Summary:** Marc Cortez recently raised the extraneous body problem to a more traditional view of the beatific vision in personal eschatology. We argue that the criticism is overstated, and that there are two variants of one solution to the problem that supply an explanation that either undermines the extraneous problem of the body or deflates its weight as a significant concern. We disagree with Cortez's assessment that Aquinas and Edwards are on equal footing in terms of this problem, and we supply solutions consistent with both; however, if we are right, then Edwards's view, utilizing his unique idealism, may supply a superior explanation of how the body finds a place in the beatific vision. By drawing from a Christological development of the body, the charge is deflated, and, even better, using Edwards's idealism we can show how the body remains intrinsic to the beatific vision.

**Keywords:** Beatific vision; Marc Cortez; Idealism; body; resurrection; Divine communication; Thomas Aquinas; Jonathan Edwards.

**Sažetak:** Marc Cortez suprotstavio je nedavno problem stranoga tijela tradicionalnijem shvaćanju *visio beatifica* u osobnoj eshatologiji. Smatramo da je taj kritičizam pretjeran te da postoje dvije varijacije jednoga rješenja koje nudi objašnjenje koje slabi problem stranoga tijela ili umanjuje njegovu težinu kao važnoga problema. Ne slažemo se s Cortezovom tvrdnjom da Toma Akvinski i Edwards imaju jednako mišljenje o tom problemu te nudimo rješenja koja su konzistentna s obama mišljenjima. Ako smo u pravu, tada Edwardsovo mišljenje, koristeći se njegovim jedinstvenim idealizmom, može ponuditi bolje objašnjenje toga kako tijelo pronalazi svoje

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mjesto u *visio beatifica*. Oslanjajući se na kristološki razvoj shvaćanja tijela, prigovor je umanjen i, štoviše, koristeći se Edwardsovim idealizmom, možemo pokazati kako tijelo ostaje intrinzično u *visio beatifica*.

**Ključne riječi:** *visio beatifica*; Marc Cortez; idealizam; tijelo; uskrsnuće; božanska komunikacija; Toma Akvinski; Jonathan Edwards.

Marc Cortez has argued that Jonathan Edwards's communicative idealist ontology provides us with a powerful picture of God's creational and redemptive economy of embodied or physical reality (Cortez, »Edwards's Communicative Ontology« 139–51). Presumably, this would apply to other metaphysically idealist accounts that grant some role to the physical as the medium by which God unveils his nature to created minds. This paper advances two idealist accounts and shows briefly how these account for the significance and centrality of embodiment in the beatific vision (see Kirk; Lossky; Boersma, *Seeing God*; Farris and Brandt, »Baptist and Reformed Theologies of Vision and Deification«; Parkison). Yet, there is an additional problem according to Cortez, namely, that of the possibility of immediate knowledge of God during the disembodied interim state, thus rendering resurrected embodiment extraneous and static (i.e., unmoving, unchanging, or lacking a dynamic interaction). This paper therefore concludes by gesturing towards an answer by rebutting Cortez's extraneous charge.

Cortez is ultimately convinced that the traditional account—to which Edwards is committed—renders embodiment extrinsic to human personhood and to human purpose (see also Farris and Brandt, »Ensouling the Beatific Vision« 78). Cortez offers a solution he finds satisfying, namely, rejecting that physical resurrection is intrinsic to human persons and offering a multi-faceted account of human purpose. But is there a way to explain a singular intrinsic account of the bodily resurrection as non-extraneous to human purpose? We think there is, but it requires two conditions. First, it requires that we understand human purpose as the beatific vision produced by Christ's resurrection of which our bodies are a token. Second, this requires that we deny the substantial nature of the body and revise it as either communicative events or intellectual ideas of participation. By doing so, we avoid the charge that our resurrected bodies are extraneous because Christ's resurrection body becomes our body(s).

Our goal is not to signal disagreement about all that Cortez advances, but to offer some modest pushback that weakens Cortez's claims and, finally, to offer a fifth option. This paper advances its thesis in five parts: it (I) begins by providing a rationale for the paper's present dialectic on the disembodied beatific vision, then (II) by introducing Jonathan Edwards as a way to frame the context of Cortez's concerns, next (III) by describing and answering Cortez's three concerns, (IV) afterwards moving to consider the various options to address his concerns, and finally (V) it offers a fifth option, a Physical Intermediate State, which rebuts Cortez's concerns and

offers a solution to seeing the vision of God as our primary telos while also showing that the body is not extraneous to it.

## I. The Rationale for the Present Dialectic on Disembodied Beatific Vision

The question of the soul's relationship to the body and its ultimate destiny in the beatific vision has occupied Christian theological discourse for centuries, spanning traditions and continents (see Kirk; Lossky; Boersma, *Seeing God*; Farris and Brandt, »Baptist and Reformed Theologies of Vision and Deification«; Parkison). While much of the present discussion unfolds in an American theological context, the issues at stake are of profound relevance to European scholars, as well as to both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions. The conversation surrounding these themes is long-standing, particularly within the scholastic tradition of Thomas Aquinas and the subsequent development of Reformed theology. This paper engages this dialogue by bringing two key figures—Jonathan Edwards and Marc Cortez—into conversation, demonstrating both the continuity and divergence within the broader theological tradition.

To clarify the framework of our inquiry, this study begins by outlining the central thesis and research questions. Specifically, it considers how the beatific vision is experienced in the intermediate state and the role of the body in this eschatological fulfillment. Traditionally, Thomas Aquinas held that the soul, immediately upon death, attains the vision of God, yet he also maintains that the body is essential to complete human flourishing (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Suppl. IIIae. 93, a. 1-3; Farris and Brandt, »Ensouling the Beatific Vision« 69-70). This creates a tension between the disembodied experience of the vision in the intermediate state and the fully embodied experience in the resurrection. The Reformed tradition, while adopting and adapting elements of Thomas's thought, has also wrestled with this issue, leading to a variety of positions that attempt to account for the continuity of personal identity, the necessity of embodiment, and the final telos of human existence (Farris and Brandt, »Ensouling the Beatific Vision« 70-82; Farris and Brandt, »Baptist and Reformed Theologies of Vision and Deification« vol. 1 and 2).

Robert Llizo's analysis in his article, »The Vision of God: St. Thomas Aquinas on the Beatific Vision and Resurrected Bodies,« provides a helpful point of departure for considering these issues. Llizo elucidates Aquinas's synthesis of Aristotelian anthropology and Christian eschatology, highlighting the paradox of an intellectual vision of God that occurs in a disembodied state yet anticipates the perfection of resurrected embodiment (Llizo, »The Vision of God« 19-26). While Hans Boersma has suggested that Thomas's eschatology leaves the body extraneous to the union of the intellect within the beatific vision (Boersma, »The 'Grand Medium'« 187-212), Llizo believes that Thomas »does make the body at least a very important participant in the soul's vision of the essence of God,« namely as the soul allows »its physical eyes

and senses to see and apprehend the glory of God and its manifestations in the new heavens and the new earth« (Llizo, »The Vision of God« 25), here citing and borrowing from Cortez (Cortez, »The Body and the Beatific Vision«). This tension—between the vision’s disembodied state and perfected resurrected embodiment state—underlies much of the contemporary debate and serves as an essential backdrop for evaluating the claims of Marc Cortez and Jonathan Edwards, to which we now turn.

Jonathan Edwards offers a compelling framework for considering the relationship between the soul, body, and beatific vision, particularly in his emphasis on the affective and volitional aspects of human participation in God. By engaging Edwards first, this paper establishes a theological and philosophical context that directly intersects with Cortez’s concerns. Cortez, in his work, raises three key objections regarding the role of the body in the intermediate state and its relation to the beatific vision. While his arguments advance an important discussion, they also warrant further scrutiny. This paper does not seek to reject Cortez’s position outright but rather to offer measured critique that exposes its potential weaknesses, particularly in relation to historical theological resources that may offer alternative solutions.

In response to Cortez’s concerns, this study will explore several possible resolutions before advancing a fifth option: the notion of a Physical Intermediate State. This proposal challenges the assumption that the beatific vision can only be properly experienced in a disembodied state or in the eschatological resurrection. Instead, it suggests that some form of bodily existence persists in the intermediate state, preserving the integrity of the human person while affirming that the vision of God remains the ultimate telos for the human being. This model not only engages the strengths of Edwards’s theological anthropology but also provides a constructive alternative to Cortez’s conclusions, demonstrating that embodiment is not extraneous but rather intrinsic to the beatific vision itself.

## **II. Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to his Idealism and Vision of God**

A broader introduction to Jonathan Edwards and his view of the beatific vision is necessary to provide some further context to Cortez’s concerns. Edwards has been touted as the most important and influential of philosophers and theologians created in America. He was a pastor in New England who exhibited a great deal of intellectual energy to the development of a philosophical theology of Divine communicative idealism that impacts every aspect of his monumental corpus of works. One could make the case that he was also the most influential pastor-theologian of the time, having created a whole theological culture known as New England theology that reflects the strands of an optimistic natural theology, creational theology, and moral government theory of the universe that, at once, is influenced in great measure by the Cambridge Platonists and the wider Reformed tradition within Christianity.

The key central philosophical underpinnings to his theological project are found in his unique brand of idealism. Edwards reflects a striking similarity to the thought of Bishop George Berkeley in his affirmation that all knowledge is a product of sense-perception, commonly codified in what is known as phenomenal idealism. What is known are the perceptible qualities of which the mind is primarily the substance (albeit a created substance) that knows ideas as sense-perceptible notions. Both Berkeley and Edwards are committed to a form of empiricism as well as idealism wherein what is known is the sense-perceptible that are themselves a set of ideas coordinated and communicated by one singular mind. In other words, what exists are ideas and the minds that perceive them. There is, then, a question about what we are to make of the created minds—are they ideas, substances, or both? This question need not distract us here, but both Berkeley and Edwards seemed to affirm the reality of minds as substances in some sense (even if in an attenuated sense). As a result, if they are minds then there exists not just one mind (i.e., the Divine mind) as we find in Spinoza's substance, of which there exists only one singular substance that is truly independent, but a plurality of substances. Yet, it is the Divine mind that provides the coordination, unity, and phenomenal coherence to created minds as they experience the world of physical sensations, so there is not a problem of multiple minds that construct multiple realities—as found on some alternative versions of idealism. Following in one important sense the empiricist epistemology of John Locke, Edwards seems to have affirmed the idea that notions are created realities that we participate in, and while the body is non-substantial, it is a reality that created minds participate. And, these notions are experiential or phenomenal novelties that God communicates to created minds. In other words, the body is a glorious communication of Divine action to created minds and an important medium by which those minds interact with the Divine mind in creation and redemption. This final idea becomes important to the philosophical theology of Edwards for making sense of the body as 'intrinsic' to the final purpose of humanity in redemption (Farris, »Edwardsean Idealism, Imago Dei, and Contemporary Theology« 83-107).

Edwards's broader view of the beatific vision is founded upon God as Trinity. God is, according to Edwards, »happy from the days of eternity in himself, in the beholding of his own infinite beauty« (Edwards, »Nothing upon Earth can Represent the Glories of Heaven« 153; cf. Edwards, »Charity and Its Fruits« 373). In other words, the three persons of the Trinity gaze upon one another in perfect harmony and blessedness; specifically, the Father's gazing upon the Son spirates the perfect happiness of the Spirit (Strobel 27, 118). The vision is primarily, as it were, God's gazing upon himself. It is at this point that Edwards connects the beatific vision to saints in Christ. As saints are raised in the Son by the power of the Spirit, they are enabled to experience that vision as well, so that those in Christ are brought up to experience that very kind of vision in God. Humans even »apprehend« the nature of God by being in Christ wherein Christ is »instamped« upon us (Edwards, *Sermons* 889-90). Therefore, in line with traditional Christian theology from the likes of Thomas

Aquinas, he believed that the vision of God is the end of humanity as they are happy and beatified.

Edwards also modified certain aspects of Aquinas's view of the vision. His modifications are numerous, but relevant for our purposes include three interconnected ideas: (1) Edwards denies the common High Medieval notion that the beatific vision includes the sight of God's essence, (2) he affirms that the vision of God always has some theophanic mediation (whether in creation or more ultimately the Son), and (3) he affirms that the sight of God is never-ending and progressive, including sights of creational beauty on this side of heaven (for more, see Boersma, *Seeing God* 354-384). Hans Boersma summarizes Edwards: »The mediated vision character of all vision of God allows Edwards to posit a never-ending progression in the vision of God to ever-greater intimacy« (Boersma, *Seeing God* 376). Indeed, according to Edwards, the ever-growing vision can be seen both in redemptive history and an individual saint's own life. In the former, there is an increasing vision of God from Mount Sinai to the tabernacle and onto the new covenantal gaze upon the person of Christ. The Bible, indeed, can be read as an ever-growing increase of the vision of God. In the latter, a saint's sight of God grows from infancy to adulthood and ends with a »face to face« gaze upon God in the afterlife (see Edwards, *Pure in Heart Blessed* 75-76; Edwards, *Happiness is Progressive* 431-32). The vision of God, in other words, is progressive: it is not simply relegated to the very end of life, but rather the vision happens progressively in this life as a sign of what's to come (Edwards, *Sermons* 889-90; Edwards, *The Works of President Edwards* 266-68; Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* 720). While there are smaller visions of God here and now, the final beatific vision in the new heavens and earth is ultimately »perfect« and »truly happyfying« wherein the soul finds its »highest perfection and excellency« (Edwards, *Pure in Heart Blessed* 17:61, 68). He states this here and elsewhere without affirming that the beatific vision includes the sight of God's essence—as other theological giants like Thomas Aquinas articulated (see Boersma, *Seeing God* 376-83).

While this article is focused on Edwards in order to show an Edwardsian solution to the problem that body is extraneous (which Cortez articulates), Aquinas is an important interlocutor as commonly described as the representative traditional view on beatific vision and personal eschatology. For on Aquinas's view, representative once again of much of the theological development in Roman Catholicism and aspects of Reformed Christianity, the beatific vision occurs during the intermediate state of disembodied existence, which is the final end or purpose of humanity (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Suppl. IIIae. 93, a. 1-3; Farris and Brandt, »Ensouling the Beatific Vision« 69-70). Therefore, as previously noted, Robert Llizo helpfully highlights the fact that there are many resources in Aquinas that bring out the importance of the functional integration of the body and the soul and how the beatific vision impacts the final resurrected state (Llizo, »The Vision of God«). However, according to Cortez, the view helpfully articulated by Llizo remains problematic even though there is much to say about the body in humanity's final end. Namely,



what it does not say definitively is why the resurrected body is vital, intrinsic, necessary or essential to humanity's final purpose. This is where Cortez's critique of both Aquinas and Edwards overlaps, since they both fail to give central concern to the resurrection body in humanity's eschatological purpose and the summing up of redemption.

Precisely how the physical body participates in, and is strictly necessary for, the beatific vision is more disputed and is the subject of this current paper. Therefore, the paper now considers Cortez's threefold problem; moreover, in order to show that the body is not extraneous to the vision, we shall later show how Edwards provides solutions to Cortez's dilemmas.

### III. The Desiderata: Articulating the Concerns

Cortez begins articulating his concerns by comparing Jonathan Edwards's and Thomas Aquinas's views of the beatific vision. He articulates three concerns in total, the first of which will receive the most attention in this paper:

1. The Extraneous Worry
2. The Christological Worry
3. The Static Worry

Taking first the extraneous charge, Cortez argues that both Edwards and Aquinas are on equal footing, even though Aquinas's view of the resurrected body is superior to that of Edwards—despite the charge of some to the opposite effect (see Farris and Brandt, »Ensouling the Beatific Vision« 67–84; Boersma, *Seeing God* 376–83). Cortez is convinced that Aquinas has a robust role for the body in the flourishing of human existence. Humans need their bodies to function properly and to actualize all of their potentialities. However, like Edwards, Aquinas makes the body extraneous to the final purpose, i.e., the beatific vision of humanity. Cortez argues that the body is non-essential for both Edwards and Aquinas because the disembodied soul (during the intermediate state) can be performed without the body (E.g., McDonald 141–58; Strobel; Boersma, »The 'Grand Medium'« 187–212; Farris and Brandt, »Ensouling Beatific Vision« 67–84). For Aquinas, human's highest purpose is actualized without a body, hence it is extraneous.

The same critique is true for Edwards too, says Cortez. However, the situation is a bit different on Edwards's account. For Edwards, there is at least one body that is necessary: Christ's body is necessary for our experience of the *visio Dei* (i.e., the vision of God). Christ's body in some way mediates the intellectual vision of God to redeemed human beings. Cortez summarizes the problem: »However, this suggests that only *Christ's* resurrected body is essential to beatific vision, raising the question of whether our own resurrected bodies are extraneous in much the same way as in Thomas' account« (Cortez, »Body and the Beatific Vision« 333).

According to Cortez, what is needed is an account of *embodied* vision as superior to disembodied vision (Cortez, »Body and the Beatific Vision« 334). While some like Hans Boersma focus on reasons the resurrected body is good to human life in general and Christ's bodily resurrection is the culmination of the redeemed order, it does nothing to show that the vision is intrinsic to the body. Therefore, what is needed is to show what makes human bodies intrinsic and necessary to the vision, rather than extrinsic (Cortez, »Body and the Beatific Vision« 334). Cortez is convinced that Edwards does not offer an account that makes the individual resurrection of humans necessary to the beatific vision. In other words, there may be reasons for the necessity of embodiment, but there is not an explanation that accounts for the vision.

There are three possible explanations given by Cortez for the importance of the resurrected body to the vision, and all of these options are appropriately drawn from the wider corpus of Edwards's theology as viable routes. First, the defender of Edwards could say that the resurrection is important for progressive revelation that occurs as our souls expand in their vision of God's glory in eternity. Second, the defender of Edwards could say that the resurrected state grants a superior vision of God, but he likely has in mind Christ's body as the 'means' of the vision (as seen in Boersma, *Seeing God* 354-384; Farris and Brandt, »Ensouling the Beatific Vision« 68-83). Finally, the defender of Edwards can argue that the unmediated vision of God would collapse the Creator-creature distinction, but this would merely limit our interests in Christ's resurrected body leaving individually resurrected bodies as accidental to the beatific vision once again.

Three general comments are in order before moving on to the more substantive contribution in the paper. First, it seems that for these three reasons listed above Edwards's theology of the vision is, in fact, superior to Aquinas' view. The three possible explanations provided are all drawn from Edwards, not Aquinas. Second, it is difficult to ascertain on any account what it is that the material body could offer as a contribution to a vision of God. This remains undeveloped in Cortez's article; his focus, rather, is to point out that, on the condition that the beatific vision (i.e., as the final end of human purpose) occurs during the intermediate state of disembodied existence, there is no way to include the resurrected body as necessary and essential to it (unless we affirm a multi-purpose view, which is not the traditional view, according to Cortez). Third, and finally, it appears that not only has Cortez left out one option that might account for the necessity of the resurrected body, but that Edwards's ontology of idealism—*via* Divine communication of ideas to creaturely minds—supplies us with a superior route to think about the vision in the intermediate state as a bodily reality.

Let us first summarize the additional concerns Cortez raises. On the Christological worry, Cortez argues that Christ's resurrection is not only the potential means for obtaining the vision, but it is necessary through union to the ongoing vision of God. Accordingly, Cortez seems to think that this is an advantage over Edwards's



account insofar as Christ experiences a different vision as an infinite Divine being than we do in our finite creaturely states. This point deserves further exploration in Edwards' theology. But it is a point that we are not sure is reflective of Edwards's theology of the incarnation as a unique human encounter with God.

Cortez's final concern, the static worry, is that Aquinas' account entails a »static view of the eschaton« rather than, in Edwards' account, a progressive state of growth where the soul's vision of God is expanded in eternity (Cortez, »Body and the Beatific Vision« 337). The point being emphasized by Cortez is that the body remains extraneous on both accounts and that the resurrected body is not intrinsic to the beatific vision, which he deems out of sync with the biblical portrayal of human purpose as physical resurrection. While this is an interesting concern, we do not wish to concern ourselves directly with it, for much of it depends already on the extraneous worry. So, with that, let us turn to consider the extraneous worry in more detail by considering the options on the table for discussion. This will occupy the remainder of the article.

#### IV. The Options: Addressing the Concerns

In what follows, the paper briefly lays out the four options as they are developed in Cortez's article and adds a fifth option, which we contend is the best option:

- (1) Eliminate the Intermediate State
- (2) There is no Beatific Vision during the Intermediate State
- (3) The Beatific Vision is not received through bodily sight in which case the Resurrection has no role to play in the final end of humanity.
- (4) Multifaceted view of human purpose as both beatific vision and bodily resurrection so that they are both necessary to fulfill humanity's highest end.
- (5) Christ's resurrection body is our resurrected body:
  - a. Substance-dualist option
  - b. Idealist-monist option

The first option according to Cortez is to eliminate the intermediate state of disembodied existence. This is certainly a commonly accepted option amongst Christian materialists today who have no room for an immaterial substance. By eliminating the intermediate state, Cortez reasons that it necessarily situates the beatific vision in the physical resurrection. Notwithstanding the potentially insurmountable challenges when accounting for personal survival on Christian materialism, this option suffers from departing from biblical teaching on an eschatological state distinct from the physical resurrection and departing from the dogmatic tradition of catholic Christianity (Brandt and Farris, »A Theology of Seeing, Experiencing, and Vision« 3–18). For these reasons, we will not consider this option further.

The second option is similar in that it rejects that the beatific vision happens in the intermediate state. But in this option, while the intermediate state is real, it does

not consist of having the beatific vision. This option is perhaps a better possibility than option 1, since it could develop how the body is intrinsic to the vision (since it is not had without it), but the option on its own does not address the precise manner in which the body is necessary. Cortez notes the same. Therefore, neither options 1 nor 2 tell us why the body is essential to the vision of God. Simply because the vision occurs during the physical resurrection of individual humans does not entail that it provides us with an explanation of the beatific vision.

The third option is the traditional option, claims Cortez. According to option 3, the physical resurrection has no role to play in the beatific vision. Experiencing a vision of God is an intellectual vision of the soul. So, while the body might have some role to play in the culmination of Christ's resurrection and the completion of redemption, it does not follow that the body has a function in the vision itself. The glorified body might enhance the subjective powers of the soul, but the highest human purpose, i.e., beatific vision, is intellectual and it occurs in the disembodied state and following, leaving the resurrected body non-essential to it.

Traditionalists might respond in a couple of ways. They might hunker down by arguing that this is in fact the reality that the beatific vision is an intellectual vision of which the body is non-essential. The tension seems to be present in the fact that Scripture and tradition has the beatific vision occur during the disembodied state (Parkison 22-137; Brandt and Farris, »A Theology of Seeing, Experiencing, and Vision« 3-18), and yet they also affirm a later physical resurrection wherein the vision presumably continues to occur. However, this might not be enough for the traditionalist. Instead, they might appropriate Edwards's strategy in saying that Christ's resurrected body supplies us with a coherent reading of the biblical material. There is a final option advanced by Cortez.

The final option, number four, which Cortez believes is the best candidate, suggests that while the body is not intrinsically necessary to the vision, it is necessary to other final purposes that humanity has, such as living an embodied existence as God's image bearers in the new creation. Thus, Cortez claims, in this view humanity must have a multi-faceted purpose, one in which the vision is not the highest purpose of the human person.

Nevertheless, there may be a fifth option that Cortez misses. This option takes it that humans are essentially immaterial and that the vision is primarily an intellectual vision of God, but that the intermediate state remains physical. There are two options that are rooted in an appropriate ontology of the human. Each option has its own advantage, but they each provide an explanatory account as to why it is that the physical body is essential to the beatific vision.

## V. A Physical Intermediate State? Two Possibilities

On this fifth option, there are two possibilities. The first possibility is the Substance Dualist one. It takes it that humans are soul-body compounds, hence substance dualism. While humans are essentially immaterial substances, the physical body of Christ is essential to the beatific vision (see Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology* 131-51). During the intermediate state, it would not be accurate to say that the resurrection of individual humans does not supply an explanation for the beatific vision, but it is also the case that the final resurrection is distinct from the intermediate state of bodily existence. For on this account, it is the body of Christ that becomes the body by which the souls of saints function and operate during the intermediate state. In other words, the body of Christ supplies the teleo-functional properties to human souls. Christ's body impresses a new structure on the souls of the saints in such a way that they might instantiate the vision of God. The only difference in the assumption of individually resurrected bodies is in supplying additional powers of touch and autonomous physical actions that are not supplied to individual souls during which they are united to Christ's body in the intermediate state. Granted, Cortez might still object that the individual resurrected bodies are non-essential to the beatific vision, even if Christ's body is essential. What it does is supply a rationale for a bodily intermediate state. Further, it might also be argued that the beatific vision is expanded in terms of the capacities (e.g., of grasping with the hands, autonomous physical action, and control over the body) granted to the soul. If that is unsatisfying to Cortez, then there is one other alternative, which we believe is stronger.

The second alternative is the Idealist-Monist option. Christian monism continues to be the subject of ongoing reflection in contemporary theology. Monism is often associated with materialism or physicalism. It also often denies an intermediate state of existence for the human. However, there is an alternative monism that does not deny the intermediate state between the present somatic reality and somatic resurrection.

Idealist monism is the view that humans are one kind of substance. In this case, what we have in mind is the view that (1) humans are mentalist, immaterial substances and (2) properties are ideas dependent on minds or a mind. By immaterial, we have in mind the view that it is the kind of substance that is characterized, not by spatial extension, but by rational adequacy, intension, and other non-extensional objects. What further describes the immaterial subject is that it is a mind—either in the Berkeleyan or Edwardsian sense (i.e., a phenomenal subject), described earlier, or in the Augustinian sense (i.e., what characterizes the subject are rational ideas). On both accounts, it is God that communicates ideas to creaturely minds.

What is important about idealist monism is not whether one holds to a subjective idealism (with Berkeley or Edwards) or a rational idealism (with Augustine), but rather that the ontology of physical objects is metaphysically explained by minds. In

other words, there exists an ontological structure that undergirds and precedes physical objects. Physical objects do not exist on their own. Moreover, humans are substances that are physical in the sense that they always have phenomenal experiences (with Berkeley or Edwards) or rational ideas (with Augustine). Being physical, in other words, is understood in terms of the structural capacities and powers of humans rather than being independent substances of spatial extension.

On this form of monism, one can invert the eschatological state not by eliminating the intermediate state between this physical life and the physical resurrection, but rather by collapsing—as it were—the physical resurrection into the intermediate state. Indeed, this would not only be consistent with the Edwardsian metaphysics described above, but it would flow from it. In fact, the important point about the nature of physicality as sense or phenomenal-experience would still retain a place as the structural apparatus of the soul during the intermediate state—thereby a natural fit with the metaphysical portrait Edwards offers. Further, the view is consistent with the theological rationale that the beatific vision is a degreed reality of participation that is an ongoing process in the afterlife whereby the reality of Divine perfection is never exhausted. This means that the body, as a set of structural properties, are present during the intermediate state between the present somatic reality and somatic resurrection. Hence, there is a denial of the *disembodied* intermediate state, and an affirmation of a *bodily* intermediate state, however phenomenally and subjectively diminished (but not objectively diminished). On a subjective idealism, for example, we would take it that the body is present because the mental subject retains phenomenal experiences—experiences of God in the beatific vision. One might be inclined to think of the physical in one of two ways: hard physicality versus soft physicality. On the latter, humans during the intermediate state would have soft physicality. What this means is that they still have phenomenal experiences (i.e., physical properties of the soul), but they do not have all the properties and powers characteristic of hard physicality in bodies of this life or in the final state of physical resurrection. Bodies—once again as structural capacities and powers of the mind—are similar to what some ancients like Aristotle called subtle matter, which is consistent with apparition-type experiences of ghosts. As is common to ghosts, they would fail to have other properties of physical experiences like grasping objects with hands, touching bodies, and feeling with the various parts of one's body.

The Physical Intermediate State view, suggested above as a modest pushback to Cortez's options, can incorporate the benefits of the substance-dualist option above where Christ's body becomes our body for a temporary state of existence, but it may have other advantages. It defeats the charge of individual bodies being extraneous because in some real sense it is conceivable that mental substances do, in fact, have bodies during the intermediate state. Cortez might respond that all of this is true, yet still on our account only the soul is intrinsically necessary, which is precisely the problem Cortez articulates. He might therefore say that we have not yet shown that

the body is intrinsically necessary, but only that it is present there for the vision. However, we think that if the vision occurs during the intermediate state, and the intermediate state includes bodily (albeit soft) existence, the vision thereby retains the necessity of the body and physical life to the soul. In other words, the body is not extraneous to the vision of God. And, this is consistent with Edwards's metaphysics of the physical as articulated above.

## Conclusion

If we are right, then we have at least one additional option that was unaccounted for by Cortez in his engaging article. And it is an option that coherently fits with and flows from what we find in Edwards. Even though Edwards might speak with the vulgar as if the intermediate state is a disembodied state, his ontology of idealism coherently accounts for the fact that the intermediate state, while different from the earthly somatic state, remains an embodied state. Apart from the more general claim and charge that idealism denigrates embodiment, which has not been motivated by Cortez, then it seems the present option could circumvent the charge of making the resurrected body extraneous to human purpose for it appears that our resurrection begins with Christ's resurrection in the intermediate state of bodily existence.

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