

Purgatory Puzzles: Moral Perfection and the *Parousia*

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Abstract: My argument proceeds in two stages. In §I, I sum up the intuitions of a popular argument for “satisfaction accounts” of Purgatory that I label, TAP. I then offer an argument, taken from a few standard orthodox Christian beliefs and (at least) one axiom of Christian theology, to show that TAP is unsound. In the same section, I entertain some plausible responses to my argument that are *prima facie* consistent with these beliefs and axiom. I find these responses wanting. In §II, I offer a sorites puzzle and a problem of evil against TAP, given the orthodox Christian understanding of Christ’s *parousia*, showing that TAP and the intuitions driving it are faulty. To attempt something of a corrective, I end by offering a modest theological suggestion for thinking through “the logic of total transformation.”

Introduction

The last thirty years, and, in particular, the last decade, have seen a swell in articulations and defenses of the doctrine of Purgatory that are purportedly consistent with Protestant theology. These have taken shape in various papers and monographs, most notably, Jerry Walls’s (2012) and (2015).¹ Walls’s (et. al.) work toward providing an acceptable model of Purgatory for Protestant theology finds motivation from reflecting on the moral perfection of Heaven, where ‘Heaven’ might be understood as, “the dwelling place of God – a place where nothing unholy abides...[where created human persons enjoy] eternal union and fellowship with the triune God” (Barnard 2007, 312).² Says Walls: “Faced with what seems to be this

¹ Other papers include: (Brown 1985); (Barnard 2007); (Vander Laan 2007); (Judisch 2009); (Green 2015).

² My insert. Oddly, Barnard cites Revelation 21:3-4 for this definition. Of course, this chapter in the Bible has nothing to do with Heaven, per se; after all, according to the verses just preceding these, the first heaven and first earth have passed away. So, this text has everything to do with the *New Creation*, the New Jerusalem descending *from* the new Heaven *to* the new earth. Then, so says the revelator, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” In other words, God’s dwelling place with man is the New Jerusalem, *not* “in Heaven.” I’ll say more about this unhelpful conflation of “Heaven” and “the New Heaven and New Earth” (i.e., New Creation) at the end of §II.

obvious empirical reality [that everyone dies short of perfection], the question remains about the fate of such persons” (2012, 6).³ There’s a question here because, given the moral perfection of Heaven, it seems that humans who die in a morally imperfect condition must be changed into morally perfect humans in order to enter Heaven. The question, then, is this: how does this change happen?

Purgatory defenders suggest that this change happens, over time, in Purgatory, a temporally intermediate state between one’s death and one’s entrance into Heaven. The claim is that one’s instantaneously being made morally perfect does not happen upon death or otherwise; indeed, recent Purgatory defenders think, it *could not* happen. To demonstrate this, David Brown (1985, 447) offers a “temporal argument” for Purgatory, a modified version of which I present here. Call it: Temporal Argument for Purgatory (TAP):

1. A human being at death is clearly morally imperfect.
2. But essential to the definition of Heaven is that human beings are in a state of complete moral perfection.
3. So, for a human being at death to enter Heaven, she must transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect.
4. Therefore, either there is an abrupt transition between the two conditions or an intermediate state exists to effect a gradual transition.
5. But it’s not possible to affect such an abrupt transition in essentially temporal beings.
6. Therefore, an intermediate state of Purgatory must exist, if Heaven exists.⁴

³ My insert.

⁴ Suppose, for TAP, that (6)’s ‘Purgatory’ is shorthand for: “an intermediate state that gradually transitions a dead person from morally imperfect to morally perfect.” I borrow the phrasing of most of these premises from Brown’s original. I take it that this is what he means by the term (as do others). Here is Brown’s version verbatim:

1. A human being at death is clearly morally imperfect.
2. But essential to the definition of Heaven is that human beings are in a state of complete moral perfection.
3. Therefore, either there is an abrupt transition between the two conditions or an intermediate state exists to effect a gradual transition.
4. But there is no way of rendering such an abrupt transition in essentially temporal beings conceivable.
5. Therefore, an intermediate state of Purgatory must exist, if Heaven exists. (Brown 1985, 447)

I need to make two quick notes as to why I’ve not used Brown’s original iteration. First, argument is more clearly an argument about what’s possible, not what’s conceivable. So, I’ve rendered TAP in terms of possibility (*pace* Brown’s (4)). Second, I’ve modified Brown’s argument because I think his move from (1) and (2) to (3) is a *non sequitur*. There is a suppressed premise, I think; hence, the (3) I’ve put into TAP. What follows from Brown’s (1) and (2)—if one takes it that the argument is trying to show how one gets to “Heaven”—in his original formulation just is (3) in TAP. *Only* then can Brown’s (3) and TAP’s (4) be inferred. For Brown’s (3) invites this question: “An abrupt transition between which two conditions or an intermediate state exists to effect what gradual transition for what purpose?” Brown’s (3) is just entirely unclear because it doesn’t, so far as I can tell, fall out of (1) and (2). But (3) in TAP does. (Brown’s (3) doesn’t even deploy the term ‘Heaven’ to help make inferential connections.) An anonymous referee disagrees that there’s a non sequitur in the original

Now, this argument, and its underlying intuitions, are taken to be consistent with what's come to be called "sanctification models" of Purgatory; these are conceptions of Purgatory that don't include any retributive notions of punishment.⁵ According to sanctification models of Purgatory, a person in Purgatory is, over a temporally extended period of time, being sanctified, *purged* of her sins, and made holy and ready for life in Heaven. This is, thinks Walls (et. al.), *prima facie* consistent with Protestant theology, generally and Protestant soteriology, specifically.⁶

For argument, let's grant premises (1) – (4). Even still, I think that TAP is unsound. I submit, with Brown, that (5) "...contains the key to the entire argument" (1985, 447).⁷ Accordingly, I will argue that it's false and, thus, that TAP is unsound. Now, in defense of (5), Walls, for example, agrees with Brown that a morally imperfect human's abrupt transition into the sort of state of glory required for life in "Heaven" invites problems for personal identity (i.e., that a human couldn't survive such an abrupt transition) (Walls 2012, 114 – 119; Brown 1985, 451). Justin Barnard (2007) agrees, too.⁸ Indeed, this intuition is one of the fundamental motivations for (5). Walls, Barnard, and Neil Judisch add to the identity problem a problem of evil: if God can instantaneously transform the morally peccable to the morally impeccable, why doesn't he do this *now* (Walls 2012, 121 – 122; Judisch 2009, 171; Barnard 2007, 318 – 319, 325)?⁹ In an attempt to answer these concerns and show that TAP is unsound, I will run an argument against temporally extended models of Purgatory, given orthodox Christian theology's understanding of Christ's return, the *parousia*. Along the way, we'll see that the problem of evil associated with an "abrupt transition" is no more than a species of the following problem (if it is one): why doesn't Christ *return now*?

but does agree that my framing of the argument makes Brown's clearer. Others have agreed with me that Brown's original is a non sequitur. (Jordan Wessling, Ryan Mullins, and Roger Turner are three such who, upon reading earlier versions of this paper, agreed that Brown's argument, as stated, is a *non sequitur*.)

⁵ Conceptions including retributive notions of punishment are "satisfaction models." I take it that TAP could be made consistent with these models. It seems to me one could render TAP consistent with a satisfaction model (retributive punishment) if one conceives of post-mortem retribution as analogous to the way the U.S. penal system works, say. One gets sentenced to 5 years in prison for some crime and is said to "do time" to "pay one's debt to society." In this way, a sinner in Purgatory with unatoned for sins might have to "do time" to pay one's debt to God. But, given Protestant atonement models, satisfaction models of Purgatory are likely out of bounds. I agree, so I'll not say more about them. I will leave aside whether or not sanctification and satisfaction models are appreciably different. For arguments why they're not, see (Judisch 2009, 167 – 185). For arguments why they are, see (Walls 2012, 59 – 91).

⁶ Note that, in my view, Walls is surely correct to suggest: "...some version of purgatory is a theological necessity for any adequate Christian scheme of thought. For ultimate salvation requires that one be fully purged of all sin, and justification and regeneration, the initial components of salvation do fully accomplish this" (2012, 37). The key distinction here is that defenders of Purgatory (as a proper noun) require a temporally extended (i.e., non-immediate) period of purgation. See the rest of the paper.

⁷ Of course, in Brown's initial version, the premise is numbered (4).

⁸ See also (Judisch 2009, 170).

⁹ In Barnard's terminology, this is an immediate transformation of *the Lapsable* into *the Sanctified*.

My argument proceeds in two stages. In §I, I sum up the intuitions of TAP and offer an argument, taken from a few standard orthodox Christian beliefs and (at least) one axiom of Christian theology, to so show that TAP is unsound. In the same section, I entertain some plausible responses to my argument that are *prima facie* consistent with these beliefs and axiom. I find these responses wanting. In §II, I argue that, given the orthodox Christian understanding of Christ's *parousia*, that TAP and the intuitions driving it are faulty. To attempt something of a corrective, I end by offering some modest theological suggestions for thinking through "the logic of total transformation."¹⁰

1. Abrupt Purgation

Let me explain a bit further why Walls (et. al.) thinks TAP is sound. I'll stick with explaining the intuitions driving TAP's (5) because I take it my very brief outline (above) of the purported problem of evil motivating (5) is sufficiently clear.

Now, it's important to notice that (5) is explicit about the "essentially temporal" nature of human beings precisely because Purgatory defenders (of the above sort) have the following intuition: there are *some* qualitative changes that, should they happen too quickly, destroy a substance rather than change it. Here's a rough example. Suppose, for illustration, that ancient Greek ships are substances. And suppose we have before us Theseus's ship. Suppose further—again, for illustration—that Theseus's ship can undergo qualitative change and yet persist through time (i.e., that it's not the case that numerically different ships keep popping in and out of existence). So, Theseus's ship can change some of its constituent planks from time to time and still remain the numerically same ship. I'm going to suppose that the "folk" wouldn't give this supposition any further thought; they'd just assume that Theseus's ship could undergo repairs and changes of various sorts and remain the same ship. But, so I think the Purgatory defenders might argue, an occurrence to which the "folk" *would* give further thought is one in which at some time, T_1 , Theseus's ship is made entirely of a set of parts, S , and then, at the very next instant, is made entirely of some further set of parts, S^* . To the "folk," so it might be claimed, this sort of occurrence would appear as though Theseus's ship had vanished from the harbor and some new ship had taken its place. In other words: the change is too quick to retain the identity of Theseus's ship. This is plausibly what the "folk" might say (even if not said in this way).

Recent Purgatory defenders reason in a similar way with respect to the moral perfection of human persons. Adam Green, for example, suggests that one can think of a character in a movie. Call this character: Bob. Suppose Bob has all kinds of moral impairments: he's cowardly; he's prideful; he's arrogant and so on. Now suppose that Bob goes off screen and comes back onscreen shortly thereafter with all of his moral impairments removed. With Green, let's call this version of Bob, Bob*. Bob* isn't cowardly, prideful, arrogant, and the like. Are viewers of the movie to understand that

¹⁰ This phrase is taken from the subtitle of (Walls 2012).

Bob and Bob* are numerically identical? Says Green: “One might well think that something has happened to Bob off-screen and that he has been replaced by an imposter. One might entertain the hypothesis that mind control is involved or perhaps just bad screenwriting. In contrast, if Bob gradually morphed into Bob* over the course of the movie, then one would probably accept that Bob and Bob* are the same person” (Green 2015, 154 – 155). Walls, in a similar way, suggests that readers of Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* would be “bewildered” if Scrooge instantaneously changed from hateful and miserly to friendly and generous (Walls 2015, 135). Says Walls, “The reason the story appeals to us is that it makes not only dramatic but psychological and moral sense of how the most despised man in town ‘became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew’” (2015, 135 – 136). And the implied reason for this is that these sorts of changes to one’s moral character require *temporally gradual change*. Here’s Walls again:

...the essential role of time in character formation as a component of personal identity is an intuition shared by a number of philosophers and theologians...To know who you are, you must gain orientation in moral space in such a way that you know what is good and bad, what is important to you, what is trivial, and so on. The process of gaining this orientation is like a journey...Likewise, to have a sense that one’s character is genuine, one will have to know how he “got there.” As beings whose characters are growing and becoming, we can no more arrive at our destination in an instant than a person can walk out of the drugstore in Montreal and turn the corner to arrive at the real Taj Mahal. (2012, 116)

For one who doesn’t hold this intuition, the arguments for Purgatory that are driven by it will be unconvincing. Even still, in an effort not simply to counter assert my own intuitions, I’ll offer an argument to show why TAP is unsound.

To begin to do this, look again at TAP. Now, let’s call its morally imperfect, essentially temporal, beings: “morally imperfect humans” (MIHs). If so, here’s a counter argument against TAP. Call it: Abrupt Purgation:

2. Essential to the definition of Heaven is that human beings are in a state of complete moral perfection. (From TAP)
7. Christ’s *parousia* (return) marks the consummation of New Creation, a cosmos for which its inhabitants must be fit for Heaven.¹¹

¹¹ There’s a host of scholarship on offer to demonstrate that at *Christ’s* resurrection the New Creation was *inaugurated* (i.e., *began*), but its consummation comes at Christ’s *parousia*. See (Walls 2015, 32); (Middleton 2014, 26 – 27, 71); (Bauckham 2007, 307); (Kelsey 2009, 546); (Wright 2008, 207ff.) An anonymous reviewer wonders whether (7) is consistent with some persons being damned. I say “yes.” However, I’m not always clear on what to make of Hell or a place for the damned, though I think there is one. Even still, I do *not* understand Hell to be a part of New Creation. I follow Middleton and Beale in thinking that New Creation just is the fulfillment of the Holy of Holies, a place in which there’s nothing unclean or damned. This, though, takes me *well* outside of my aims for this paper. For some biblical theological treatments of this issue see, for example, (Middleton 2014, 170 – 171) and

8. So, those human beings who inhabit the New Creation must be completely morally perfect (2, 7).
9. Christ's *parousia* (return) is at some fixed time in the future.¹² (Axiom of orthodox Christian theology)
10. So, at some fixed time in the future, those human beings who inhabit the New Creation must be completely morally perfect. (8, 9)
11. During the second before Christ returns, there will be MIHs living on earth that, upon Christ's *parousia*, instantaneously inhabit the New Creation. (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:51 – 52.)¹³
12. So, the MIHs living on earth during the second before Christ returns instantaneously will be made completely morally perfect at the time of Christ's *parousia*. (From 11, 12; also 1 Cor. 15:51 – 52.)
13. If an event *E* will happen, it's possible that it will happen.
14. Therefore, it's possible that MIHs instantaneously will be made completely morally perfect. (From 12, 13).

(Here I must offer a small note: I wish to remain non-committal on whether time is continuous [the view that suggests that no two temporal moments are immediately adjacent because time is infinitely divisible] or discrete [the view that says two temporal moments can be immediately adjacent because time is finitely divisible]. To do this and keep my argument as clear and as amenable to both views as I can, I use "seconds" as a standardized unit of time measurement that's easily understandable on both views. You'll see this in premises (11) and (12) for example. I assume herein that all of my readers have no problem counting time by seconds. So, when I say things like "an event *E* precedes an event *E** by one second" or that "Jones died one second before Christ returned" I will assume that everyone reading this paper understands these kind of statements in a very obvious way.)¹⁴

Now then, if (14) is true, then (5) is false. One can see, then, that TAP and Abrupt Purgation clash when considered in light of the consummation of New

(Beale 2004, 23 – 24); In any case, nothing in this argument hinges on whether or not one wants to read (7) in a soteriologically particularist or universalist way.

¹² I'm aware that many in the Christian tradition take it that Christ's *parousia* ushers in an "eternal" or "atemporal" kingdom (though, I don't myself think the two terms are synonymous). But, of course, it's likewise the case that nearly all in the Christian tradition affirm that there is a "day and hour" when Christ returns; for Jesus's ignorance of *when* this day and hour is (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32) is normally marched out as an archetypal example of the human Jesus's finite knowledge. I take it, then, that it's plausible that Jesus's return is at a time (whether discrete or continuous), even if what follows after is "atemporal" (however it is that an "atemporal" state's being "after" anything is supposed to make sense).

¹³ The most up-to-date biblical scholarship reads this passage in this way. See, for example, (Wright 2003, 356 – 361); (Middleton 2014, 203); (Holleman 1996, 72 – 74, 96 – 97, 168); (Thiselton 2012, 112 – 115). We can add to this passage 1 Thessalonians 4:12-14: "...the Thessalonian Christians were anxious that those who died before Christ's return would miss out on any final triumphant event. Paul replies that they should not grieve, for 'God will bring with him those who have died in Jesus' (1 Thess. 4:12-14), and the living and dead will share equally in the glorious events of the *Parousia* and resurrection" (Thiselton 2012, 98.)

¹⁴ Notice that seconds can be infinitely divisible, if time is continuous. Also, seconds can be finitely divisible, if time is discrete (maybe a second is many millions of "chronons.") cf. (Dainton 2010, 295).

Creation. And, in particular, the necessity of a temporally extended Purgatory clashes with the consummation of New Creation when its consummation is understood in a way that includes the dictates of (9).

At least, there's a clash between a necessarily temporally extended Purgatory and (9), if it's the case that (11) is true. Suppose, though, that a Christian philosopher or theologian looking to rebut Abrupt Purgation argues that (11) is false. She argues, instead, that the following is true:

~11. During the second before Christ returns, there will not be any MIHs living on earth that, upon Christ's *parousia*, instantaneously inhabit the New Creation.

Note that (~11), like (11) and (12), deploys the term MIH. Because of this, and to get clear on why the Purgatory defender might think (~11) is true, we may need to parse out further what kinds of morally culpable, morally failing, essentially temporal beings there are. Consider the following by supposing that "MIH" is a genus under which there are two species:

Morally Debased Humans (MDHs): Any being, *B*, that is morally culpable, can and does morally fail, is essentially temporal, *and whose abrupt transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect is sufficient to stop B's persistence.*

Morally Near Perfect Humans (MNPBs): Any being, *B*, that is morally culpable, can and does morally fail, is essentially temporal, *and whose abrupt transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect isn't sufficient to stop B's persistence.*

With these in hand, our Purgatory defender might think that there are at least four possible reasons for thinking (~11) is true:

- (a) The second before Christ returns bookends a long period of time in which all human life has ceased.
- (b) During the second before Christ returns, though there will not be any MDHs or MNPBs living on earth, there will be morally perfect, essentially temporal, beings living on earth that, upon Christ's *parousia*, instantaneously will inhabit the New Creation. (Call these: "morally perfect humans" (MPHs).)
- (c) During the second before Christ's return, though there will not be any MDHs living on earth, there will be MPHs and MNPBs living on earth that, upon Christ's *parousia*, instantaneously will inhabit the New Creation.
- (d) All MDHs living on earth during the second before Christ returns will not inhabit the New Creation.¹⁵

¹⁵ (d) might well be a description of "the damned" for one arguing for (~11). Now, someone might complain that there's a fifth way: all MDHs living on earth who haven't died before Christ returns will not, upon Christ's *parousia*, *instantaneously* inhabit the New Creation. This seems to me a position consistent with what Walls might say. He makes reference to 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." Walls suggests that the reading of this passage is open to debate; that it leaves open the idea that those MDHs around when Christ returns wouldn't

Now, suppose our Protestant Christian philosopher thinks (~11) is true for reason (a). Given the way modern physics often speaks about the future heat death of the universe, it's plausible, even likely, that there will be no non-supernatural life *at all* during the second before Christ returns, *if* his return is millions of years in the future.¹⁶ But (11) claims, in its defense, 1 Cor. 15:51-52. This is a passage that contemporary exegetes take to indicate that St. Paul assumed that there would, in fact, be *humans* alive during the second before Christ's return.¹⁷ In fact, it's plausible that Paul thought that *he* and some of those reading his letters would be alive during the second before Christ's return.

Here our philosopher needs to make a decision. For, if it's the case that Paul thinks some humans will be alive during the second before Christ's return (and possibly he among them), then thinking of (~11) in an (a) way entails that Paul is wrong. Our philosopher needs to decide whether Paul is wrong or she is.

Fortunately for our philosopher, there are ways to think that Paul is wrong and still hold a high view of scripture (i.e., that it carries divine authority; that it's the final court of arbitration for matters of faith and practice, etc.), a thing that, generally speaking, Protestants are wont to do.¹⁸ One way to do this is by pointing to the obvious fact that Paul *is* wrong, if it's the case that he thought that he (or anyone in his immediate audience) would be alive during the second before Christ's return. Paul and his contemporaries are long dead; Christ hasn't yet returned. So, Paul is wrong; but, generally speaking, theologians don't understand Paul's being wrong in *this* sort of way as counting against the divine authority of scripture. So, if he's wrong about his being alive during the second before Christ's return, and there's no problem with *that*, then perhaps there's no problem with his being wrong about there being *any* humans alive during the second before Christ's return.

immediately enter New Creation at the *parousia*; they'd enter New Creation at some later time, after a time in Purgatory. See (Walls 2015, 115). Perhaps the reading of 1 John 3:2 is open to debate. But there are other passages, plausibly *much* more clear, with which Walls doesn't interact (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:51–55), that don't allow this reading. More to the point, I'm working with the assumption that orthodox Christian theology denies that people will be resurrecting well after Christ's return and at various times after the consummation of the New Creation. If the Purgatory defender wants to deny this view, then she'll need to provide some theological (and biblical, for the Protestant) warrant for doing so. Usually, it's understood that the return of Christ coincides with the defeat of death, hence the resurrection. Cf. (Fergusson 1997, 231); (Bauckham 2007, 318); (Middleton 2014, 212); (Cooper 2000, 154); (Holleman 1996, 62 – 63). I'll say more about this when I review (d).

¹⁶ For a discussion on this, see (Wilkinson 2010).

¹⁷ Though 'person' is often used synonymously with 'human person', I wish to be more careful. Hence, I specify that Paul assumes that *humans* will be alive at the temporal moment prior Christ's return. For, as most Christians will likely agree, there are other kinds of persons: divine persons, angelic persons, etc. In other words, not all persons are human persons. And, I take it there aren't any bare persons (i.e., persons that aren't particular *kinds* of persons). For some arguments in the literature to this effect, see (Turner 2014, 313 – 316). For another relevant use of this 1 Cor. 15 passage, cf. (Mugg and Turner 2017). Also, I understand that the word "second" is anachronistically applied to Paul. I'm using it to keep my language consistent in the paper.

¹⁸ This rough "definition" of a "high view of scripture" is all that I mean by the term, however vague it might be.

Thinking of (~11) in an (a) way, then, appears tenable. But, we must take care to notice to which position this commits the Protestant defender of a temporally extended Purgatory. That's this: whatever human efforts have been advanced for the cause of Christ and the beginning of his New Creation will have been long destroyed with no fingerprint left on the cosmos. The heat death of the universe is a result in which no trace of our existence will be found. Now, that might square with some strands of Christian theology. Perhaps Brown, Judisch, and Barnard think this way. But, Purgatory's most prominent Protestant defender, Jerry Walls, at least in his most recent works, appears to hold an "inaugurated eschatology" view:

Christ's resurrection is the beginning of the new creation. But there is unfinished business. The full impact of Easter is yet to be seen and felt. When our bodies are raised and heaven comes to a renewed earth, God will have finished the work he began when he raised Jesus from the dead. When heaven comes to earth, when the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray—"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"—is fully answered, then the work of Easter will be done. (Walls 2015, 32)

"Inaugurated eschatology" is a view in which Christ's resurrection is understood as the beginning of New Creation. According to this view, (living) humans associated with Christ are then working to build *for* the New Creation (even if they cannot *build* the New Creation) (Wright 2008, 207 – 232; Middleton 2014, 146 – 147, 220 – 221). It's clear from this quote, and his work generally, that this is the view that Walls holds. This is a view on which Walls and I agree. But, taken together, (a) and "inaugurated eschatology" don't seem to fit well. So, I don't think that Walls will hold (a). Perhaps other Protestant defenders of Purgatory don't hold the "inaugurated eschatology" view. If not, then they might coherently believe (a).¹⁹

Suppose, then, that our Protestant defender of a necessarily temporally extended Purgatory thinks of (~11) in a (b) way. If so, those morally culpable, essentially temporal, beings living during the second before Christ's return won't need any abrupt moral change at the *parousia*.²⁰ After all, they're morally perfect humans. At first glance, it's consistent with (b) that our Purgatory defender can still insist that humans who die in a morally imperfect state require a temporally extended stay in Purgatory.

Again, though, we must note to what sort of position this commits our Purgatory defender. For, if it's the case that the only humans living during the seconds before Christ's return are MPHs, then it follows that the human species will have made *significant* moral strides. I'm skeptical that there are, aside from Jesus, *any* living

¹⁹ Of course, there might be other *theological* problems associated with it. Here's one possible problem: the *imago Dei*—the stewards of creation—will have been wiped from the cosmos, a striking turn of events given God's promise not to do such a thing in Genesis 8:21-22 and 9:8-17.

²⁰ I say "moral change" here because I take it that one can't glorify one's body on one's own; so there'll still be an abrupt bodily change. This is an act of God, and it's one necessary for living in the New Creation. This is just a standard understanding of the doctrine of the bodily resurrection.

morally perfect human beings.²¹ And, I dare say, there won't be any any time soon. But, suppose one comes from a Protestant tradition that endorses a kind of "Christian perfectionism." Such a one might think that there are a few morally perfect people who exist now.²² But (b) requires that *every* human that's on earth the second before Christ returns is morally perfect. So, one believing (b) is committed to a serious moral optimism.²³ The degree to which our defender wants to be a moral optimist of this sort, is the degree to which she can believe (~11) in a (b) way. Moreover, she'll need to be committed to the view that Jesus *will not* return until the only humans on earth are MPHs. If that's right, then it's going to be a long time before Christ's second coming. This is another *prima facie* theological problem: traditionally, Christ's *parousia* is understood to be an event that *could* occur at any time. (cf. Matthew 24:42-44, 25:13; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:40; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 5:2; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20). But that's not correct if (b) is the reason (~11) is true.

In Abrupt Purgation, I offer 1 Cor. 15:51-52 as a reason to think that (11) is true. Justifying (~11) via (b), on the other hand, suggests either that Paul thinks he and his Corinthian friends are MPHs or else that he's just wrong about the sorts of persons who can rightfully hope to immediately inhabit the New Creation when Christ returns. On my view, Paul is clear that he's not morally perfect. He's equally clear that the Corinthians likewise are not. I say much more about this just below in my evaluation of (d).

None of these arguments against (b) are knockdowns, of course. But they provide reasons to think that the Purgatory defender has work to do if she's going to argue for (~11) via (b).

Taking a (c) view of (~11) produces similar results to (b); after all, it includes in it the idea that there are MPHs living the second before Christ returns. So, humanity will have to take *significant* moral strides if living humans are either MPHs or MNPHs the second before Christ's return. If so, the attendant moral optimism will be required of the Purgatory defender who takes (~11) in a (c) way. *Mutatis mutandis* for the additional theological worry *vis-à-vis* a guaranteed delayed *parousia*.

Further to these issues, (c) suffers from the problem of evil that Walls and others raise. If a being, B, is near perfect and can persist through an abrupt change from near perfect to perfect, why doesn't God change her *now*? Given that Walls and company think that abrupt transition views are susceptible to this charge, we can assume that they won't accept (c).

How about (d)? Now (d) is consistent with (b) and (c). So, whatever its strengths are, at least some of them are consistent with the strengths of (b) and (c). (d), though, says something rather stark: all MDHs living on earth during the second before Christ returns will not inhabit the New Creation. Why is (d) consistent with (~11)? To see why, recall that (d) defines (assuming, for argument, that there's a

²¹ Some of this isn't straightforward. It invites such questions as "where is the embodied Jesus *now*?"; "Is the disembodied Heaven a part of the cosmos?"; "Are disembodied human beings alive or dead?"

²² Thanks to Jordan Wessling and Oliver Crisp for highlighting this point.

²³ I take it that this view is consistent with what's often called "post-millennialism," a view sometimes affirmed in Presbyterian communities (perhaps others).

problem for personal identity with an abrupt transition from morally debased to morally perfect) an MDH as any being, B, that is morally culpable, can and does morally fail, is essentially temporal, and whose abrupt transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect is sufficient to stop B's persistence. Now, Christ's *parousia* is the time of the consummation of New Creation, the time when everything is put right. Importantly, the *parousia* is also the time of the eschatological bodily resurrection: the *final* resurrection, the defeat of death (cf. Fergusson 1997, 231; Bauckham 2007, 318; Middleton 2014, 212). The result, then, is that the MDHs that are alive during the second prior to Christ's return will not live in the New Creation; they've run out of seconds to become MPHs.

Is *this* conclusion compatible with a high view of scripture? Recall that I said that there are some ways to consider Paul's thinking on our subject matter as incorrect in such a way that does not undermine the divine authority of scripture. But viewing (~11) in a (d) way might run afoul of the sorts of exceptions I give. To see why, consider again 1 Cor. 15:51-52:

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Reading this passage through the lens of (d) suggests either of two things: (i) Paul and those of his audience included in the 'we' pronoun were either morally perfect or morally near perfect and so not MDHs or else, (ii) if Christ had returned the day after this passage was written, Paul and those included in the 'we' pronoun wouldn't have been included in the New Creation. For the Protestant, I think there are some compelling reasons to think that (i) and (ii) are false. With respect to (i)'s being false, there's good reason to believe that Paul thinks that he's nowhere near morally perfect (cf. Rom. 7:15-25). With respect to (ii)'s being false, there's good reason to believe that Paul is *teaching* that, if Christ returns shortly after he writes this letter (1 Corinthians), he *will* be included in the New Creation (for that's why he's risking his life as an evangelist).²⁴ If so, I submit that (d) is false. At least, I don't think defending (~11) by way of (d) is a tenable route for the Protestant (given the denial of what's *prima facie* a teaching of the Apostle Paul).

Objector 1: While it's the case that Paul acknowledges he's not morally perfect, you've already given reason to think that there are at least two species of which one could be morally imperfect: MDH and MNPH. Why not think that Paul means that he's an MIH of the MNPH sort? After all, this too looks consistent with orthodox Christian belief.

Replies: First, if Paul and those included in the 'we' pronoun are MNPHs, then we're left with the problem of evil that (c) implies (if abrupt transitions invite a problem of evil as the Purgatory defenders I have in mind seem to think). Namely,

²⁴ The whole point of the latter half of the 1 Corinthians 15 pericope is to demonstrate the certainty of the coming New Creation through resurrection power *and* the inclusion of Paul and his audience at New Creation's consummation (because they're already part of its inauguration!).

why isn't Paul (et. al.) changed *right then*? Why allow Paul and his cohorts to continue to commit *any* evil if they could be changed instantaneously from morally near perfect to morally perfect without ceasing to persist?

Second, if Paul and those with him are MNPHs, then so are all followers of Christ. I take it that one of the points of the 1 Cor. 15: 51-52 and Romans 7 passages just is for Paul to link his fate at Christ's return and his own struggle with sin to the fate and struggle of his Christian brothers and sisters. One doesn't have to read too far in the Corinthian correspondence to see that the Corinthian church wasn't full of moral exemplars (or anything close). Yet, Paul includes them in the 'we' pronoun. From this, I take it that whatever moral status Paul thinks is required to be immediately changed at Christ's *parousia* is the moral status had by his Corinthian contemporaries. And if this means they were MNPH, then this is good *prima facie* reason to think that most or all Christians are too. And, if that's the case, then most or all Christians won't go through a temporally extended Purgatory; they can be changed instantaneously from morally near perfect to morally perfect.

Objector 2: I'm not as persuaded as you seem to be that Paul thinks he and his Corinthian contemporaries are of a similar moral status. But, suppose he does and they are. (~11) via (d) understands the 'MIH' deployed in (~11) as MDH. The same is true, then, of the 'MIH' in Abrupt Purgation's (11). It too is MDH. And what you've said about Paul and other Christians being MNPHs doesn't say anything about a temporally extended Purgatory for MDHs.

Reply: That's true. But it's possible that TAP doesn't either. Recall TAP:

1. A human being at death is clearly morally imperfect.
2. But essential to the definition of Heaven is that human beings are in a state of complete moral perfection.
3. So, for a human being at death to enter Heaven, she must transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect.
4. Therefore, either there is an abrupt transition between the two conditions or an intermediate state exists to effect a gradual transition.
5. But it's not possible to affect such an abrupt transition in essentially temporal beings.
6. Therefore, an intermediate state of Purgatory must exist, if Heaven exists.

This, remember, is a slight modification of David Brown's original argument for a temporally extended Purgatory (Brown 1985, 447).²⁵ It's the sort of notion of Purgatory and the sort of argument for it with which I'm concerned in this paper. Note that the use of 'morally imperfect' is borrowed verbatim from the language of Brown's original argument (e.g., (1) is verbatim).

I've already suggested that "morally imperfect" might be better thought as a genus under which there are two species: MDH and MNPH. For if it's not, we're left with thinking that 'morally imperfect' just means 'not morally perfect'. But then a human's changing from being not morally perfect to being morally perfect only *could*

²⁵ See note 4.

be instantaneous.²⁶ There's no middle ground between these two properties; they're contradictory. No matter how far one's character advances, one is either morally perfect or one isn't. And, if so, TAP's (5) is trivially false.

Neither can we understand TAP's 'morally imperfect' to mean MNPH. For, if we did, then (5) is again trivially false. It's part of the definition of an MNPH that such an abrupt transition is possible. The upshot of this is that TAP's 'morally imperfect' should be taken to mean MDH. But if it does, it's not clear that TAP's (1) is true. St. Paul and his Corinthian contemporaries, for example, aren't MDH. Because, if they are, they won't be changed instantaneously into inhabitants of the New Creation when Christ returns, the very thing Paul says *will* happen. What human beings then *are* MDH? Identifying which humans fit this bill is not as straightforward as TAP's (1) seems to suggest.

In my reply to Objector 1, I say we have good *prima facie* reason to think that the following is true: if Paul's Corinthian contemporaries are MNPHs, then so are all Christians. One reason for thinking this is that Paul, assuming that Christ would return at any moment, seems fully to believe that his Corinthian contemporaries would instantaneously be changed into beings fit for New Creation, the "heavenly" state. They'd be made morally perfect. But, given the content of the Corinthian correspondence, it's not too daring to propose that this community was *far* from morally exemplary. That is, it's not far-fetched to think that these people fell well short of whatever criteria a Purgatory defender might think is necessary for a human to be allowed entrance into the heavenly state. And, yet, Paul has no problem asserting that the Corinthian Christians would be there instantaneously upon Christ's return. And, there's no mention of their moral progress being the condition on account of which they'd be ready to "put on immortality" at Christ's *parousia*. *Ceteris paribus*, the same seems equally to apply to Christians at any stage of moral progress.

Prima facie, Christians can persist through an abrupt change from their current moral state to the eschatological "heavenly" moral state. This marks Christians out as MNPH according to the above MIH distinctions. So, they're not subject to a temporally extended Purgatory. And so, if the term 'morally imperfect' in TAP means "morally debased," then TAP doesn't tell us anything about Christians; for, if the above gloss on the Corinthian correspondence is correct, Christians are MNPHs. Moreover, if one understands Christians as MNPHs to be such that they can persist through an abrupt change from morally imperfect to morally perfect, then this just is a standard Protestant account of "purgation," though not normally called by this name (and not the proper noun "Purgatory").²⁷ In other words, on standard Protestant "abrupt transition" views, the redeemed are *purged* of their sin instantaneously at Christ's return (Walls 2012, 37). The upshot of all this is that MDHs are, if anyone, (some) non-Christians. Even still, I don't think there are any MDHs, even though I think there are MIHs. I'll say more about why in §II. This will help resolve any problems the term 'MDH' might throw into Abrupt Purgation were we to plug the term into the syllogism.

²⁶ Thanks to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

²⁷ See note 6.

Objector 3: I don't think that many (if any) Christians this side of the eschaton would consider themselves "morally near perfect" in the sense that they're nearly morally fit for "Heaven." Something has gone wrong with the way you've categorized the different kinds of morally imperfect humans.

Reply: I agree that many Christians would deny that they are morally near perfect. But I submit that having to so designate the kind of humans that are morally culpable, can and do morally fail, are essentially temporal, and can persist through an abrupt change from morally imperfect to morally perfect requires some name that designates how this is possible. After all, the Purgatory defender sets up his original argument by saying that humans are "clearly morally imperfect" (TAP's (1)) and not fit for "Heaven". But, "Heaven" requires moral perfection; and according to TAP, this is a moral state into which humans cannot be instantaneously transformed.

The intuitions running TAP revolve around character transformation, transformation that occurs over time such that, eventually, one is ready to enter the heavenly state. An MNPH would be one way of thinking of a person who was "almost ready" in such a way that her being instantaneously changed from "almost ready" to "ready" wouldn't stop her diachronic persistence. Now, if the Purgatory defender just thinks that this kind of person is an impossibility, then what we're left with are MDHs. And, thus, all humans (this side of the eschaton) are MDHs. To this, I simply point back to the Corinthian correspondence (or, if you like, the Thessalonian correspondence in 1 Thess. 4 (cf. (Thiselton 2012, 98.)) as apostolically given counter examples (see my reply to Objectors 1 and 2).

Objector 4: You've missed the point of the argument. What's really in mind in TAP is a gradual change from one's present state to a perfect state, not a gradual change from one's exemplifying the property "being not morally perfect" to exemplifying its contradictory "being morally perfect."²⁸ Here's an analogy: a marathon. Of course, it's the case that one has either finished the marathon or one hasn't; but it's not the case that finishing a marathon involves moving immediately from its starting line to its finish line.

Reply: I think *this* homes in on a central intuition driving temporal arguments for Purgatory. But there's a worry here, a significant one that I take up in the next section. I'll leave my reply to it until then.

I offered four ways for thinking that (~11) is true. I don't find any of these satisfactory. Contrarily, I think that (11) is eminently compelling and that the Abrupt Purgation argument is compelling, too. But, for those not yet convinced, I offer that there's a further lurking problem associated with temporal arguments for Purgatory. I said I'd address it in §II. It's time to make good on that promissory note.

2. The Final Countdown

The force of TAP lies in the intuition that one's moral character must gradually—over time—be changed from morally imperfect to morally perfect. Better: using the distinctions in MIHs I give above, one's moral character must gradually—over time—

²⁸ This objection echo the worries of an anonymous referee.

be changed from morally debased to morally perfect. The idea, then, is that a necessary condition for a person to leave Purgatory and enter “Heaven” is a stay in Purgatory of sufficient temporal length such that one changes from morally debased to morally perfect and that this stay is sufficiently gradual not to cause problems for a person’s persistence. Recall the following from TAP:

3. So, for a human being at death to enter Heaven, she must transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect.
4. Therefore, either there is an abrupt transition between the two conditions or an intermediate state exists to effect a gradual transition.
5. But it’s not possible to affect such an abrupt transition in essentially temporal beings.

With these in mind, I begin to make good on my promissory note regarding a lurking problem in accounts of temporally extended Purgatory.

Consider again the two kinds of MIHs:

Morally Debased Humans (MDHs): Any being, B, that is morally culpable, can and does morally fail, is essentially temporal, and whose abrupt transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect is sufficient to stop B’s persistence.

Morally Near Perfect Humans (MNPBs): Any being, B, that is morally culpable, can and does morally fail, is essentially temporal, and whose abrupt transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect isn’t sufficient to stop B’s persistence.

With these in mind, we will see that a problem infects these *and* the underlying intuitions of accounts of temporally extended Purgatory.

To begin to see how, recall (9):

9. Christ’s *parousia* is at some fixed time in the future. (Axiom of orthodox Christian theology)

Call the second of the *parousia*: T_{Ω} . This is also the time of the eschatological resurrection of all the dead and the consummation of New Creation. For argument, let’s just suppose that the resurrection takes one second. I don’t think this is a stretch. Paul’s language in 1 Cor. 15:51-52, for example, could easily be taken to mean that it takes far less than a second. He says: “in a moment [Greek: *en atomō*; (my translation: in the shortest possible amount of time)], in the twinkling of an eye [Greek: *en rhipē ophthalmou*; (my translation: in the blink of an eye)]...the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” Paul’s use of ‘*en atomō*’ and ‘*en rhipē ophthalmou*’ suggest *very* rapid change.²⁹ In any case, let’s suppose it lasts a second. Further, we’ve already stated by way of definition that the only humans that need a temporally extended Purgatory, if any do, are MDHs. So, if the purgatorial state is

²⁹ Anthony Thiselton translates ‘*en atomō*’ morally literally as “an uncut[able] unit.” He translates ‘*en rhipē ophthalmou*’ in the same way I do. (Thiselton 2015, 363 – 364)

temporally intermediate between an MDH's death and, at least, her entrance into the morally perfect New Creation, then let's say that $T_{\Omega-1}$ (the second prior to T_{Ω}) marks the last possible second of Jones's purgatorial period. Suppose Jones is our dead MDH. She may well have left Purgatory many years prior to $T_{\Omega-1}$, but the idea is that $T_{\Omega-1}$ is the last *possible* second Jones could be in Purgatory. This means, of course, that she'll have been rendered morally perfect (in line with what our Purgatory defenders mean by this) by no later than $T_{\Omega-1}$. Let's call the final seconds of Purgatory (i.e., the final seconds leading up to the *parousia*) The Final Countdown.

The Final Countdown generates two problems, the first of which is less severe. It's a sorites type puzzle. To see this, suppose Jones dies at $T_{\Omega-2}$, two seconds prior to the eschaton and one second prior to Purgatory's final second ($T_{\Omega-1}$). On the Walls (et. al.) account of Purgatory, a necessary condition for Jones's persistence into the morally perfect "Heaven" is that Jones goes through a sufficiently temporally gradual moral change. This invites a question: is one second sufficiently temporally gradual to change Jones from an MDH to an MPH without sacrificing her personal identity? I take it that the intuitions pumping TAP will pump against one second's being sufficiently long. I think the same applies for two seconds, and three seconds, and so on. If so, it looks as if no clear account can be given for a sufficiently gradual period of time necessary to change Jones.

The sorites move here aims to stop TAP's main intuition pump: that humans can't survive radical and abrupt changes to their character. It does this by showing, as above, that it's not clear that an account can be given of a certain amount of time that's necessary for an MDH to persist into being an MPH. Rather, any amount of time picked out by the Purgatory defender comes across as arbitrarily chosen.³⁰ (Compare: sorites puzzles aim to stop the intuition pump that suggests that there are heaps of things (e.g., sand); it does this by showing, among other things, that there's no clear way to distinguish between that which is a heap (e.g., of sand) and that which isn't.) Whether one agrees that TAP's main intuition pump has been stopped by this sorites move will depend on whether one finds sorites puzzles compelling.

I think this line of reasoning provides a defeater for TAP. For TAP insists that instantaneous change from morally imperfect to morally perfect is *impossible* for humans as essentially temporal beings. And that's a strong claim. Moreover, it's a claim that's not been shown to be true. In fact, no clear account for a necessary amount of time has been given. And since no clear account of this has been given, it's

³⁰ Barnard (2007, 324) runs this sort of argument against those who think that *death* marks the final moment of sanctification. For, he says, we often think of "lives cut short" and the like. Supposedly these point to intuitions that suggest that there's no good reason to think that moments of death have a significant role to play in the process of sanctification, a process he takes to have its own "internal momentum." By my lights, Barnard's arbitrariness objection against "provisionism" (the label he gives the view that one's being made morally perfect is an instantaneous act of God) misses the mark. For, death is a catastrophic event in the life of a human being; so much so, that it results in the death of a human being. In the normal progression of a human's existence, what's more significant than this? Furthermore, given Christian theology, there's good reason to think that putting to death our mortal bodies kills "the old man/nature," that thing against which the Christian struggles (a fount of sin and moral imperfection, one thinks). If there's post-mortem life, the mortal body's being dead seems a good reason to think that it's no longer able to keep the new creature from doing good.

not clear why one should think that instantaneous change is impossible. If such a change *is* possible, then there are no MDHs, even though there are MIHs.

The sorites problem is the less severe problem generated by The Final Countdown. But there is another problem, a problem of evil. To see this, suppose there *is* a certain amount of time to change Jones (our MDH) to an MPH such that Jones could persist into the morally perfect heavenly state. And, with the Purgatory defender, suppose that this amount of time is a necessary condition for Jones's persistence into the New Creation. Now, as above, suppose Jones dies at $T_{\Omega-2}$, two seconds before the *parousia*. Again, given the intuitions pumping TAP, it looks as if Jones hasn't enough time to become fit for the New Creation. Even God cannot save Jones. God cannot unilaterally zap her into an MPH status because, *ex hypothesi*, this would kill Jones. If that's right, then God cannot save the (possibly) many MDHs who die during The Final Countdown. How far out from the eschaton does The Final Countdown go (temporally speaking)? Does it begin three second prior to the eschaton? Four seconds prior? Five seconds prior? I'm not sure where/when to draw the line (see above). But, I am sure that if there is a certain amount of time to change an MDH to an MPH such that one could persist to the New Creation, then there's a certain amount of time early enough before the *parousia* that an MDH could die, go to Purgatory, and be made morally perfect in time to get to the New Creation. But presumably this amount of time isn't a matter of ten seconds, ten minutes, or ten hours. If it is this brief an amount of time, I'm going to lose my grip on the intuitive force behind TAP-like arguments. Ten seconds is seemingly abrupt for the kind of character transformation Walls (et. al.) write about; so is ten minutes; so is ten hours. But the further out we posit the time an MDH needs to die before the *parousia*, the more lives will be lost (whether to Hell or otherwise).

I think this is a significant problem of evil for the Walls sorts of accounts of Purgatory. These accounts, after all, trade on intuitions about the importance of a person's freely responding (in a libertarian way) to God's offer of salvation; intuitions about God's wanting to save as many people as he possibly can, even possibly allowing for post-mortem conversion; and that a person's being damned is her own fault, solely the consequence of her own free actions. But, if Jones (for example) dies as an MDH too chronologically close to the eschaton, Purgatory is of no help to her. Her fate is sealed because time has run out. And the same is true for possibly very many others. Conversely, one positive aspect of views that deny that there's a temporally extended Purgatory is that they don't think that abrupt transitions from morally imperfect to morally perfect terminate a person's persistence. On such a view, if Jones dies and there's no requirement for a temporally extended Purgatory, then it's possible that she be totally transformed in an instant.

Fortunately for Jones, our morally imperfect human, if Christian eschatology is true, we have good theological reasons for thinking that there's no necessary condition of a temporally gradual moral change for her entrance into the New Creation. In fact, we might say that Christian theology has a built-in time for when God will affect Jones's instantaneous change from morally imperfect to morally perfect: the *parousia* of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the putting on of immortality and incorruptibility. It's not *death* that makes a person morally perfect, which is the event toward which Purgatory defenders point as the purgatorial instant

for “abrupt transition” views. Rather, it’s a dead person’s bodily *resurrection*, an act accomplished by God at the *parousia*, that affects this change. For those living when Christ returns, it’s their *transformation* “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52), an act accomplished by God, that affects this change.

In the language of St. Paul, the *parousia* is the moment when a (redeemed) dead human resurrects as a *sōma pneumatikon* and a living human changes from a *sōma psychikon* to a *sōma pneumatikon* (1 Cor. 15:44; Middleton 2014, 203; Thiselton 2012, 112; Wright 2003, 347 – 356).³¹ The *sōma psychikon* is the sort of bodily being powered by one’s own soul/mind/self and the *sōma pneumatikon* is the sort of bodily being powered by the Holy Spirit.³² This insight is key because it overcomes Walls’s objection that it isn’t sufficient to retort: “we can take a shortcut to sanctification by getting a new body” (Walls 2015, 137). Now, in his rebuttal to retorts of this sort, Walls is quite correct to insist that the morally perfect need also a new *will*. In light of this, it’s important to note that 1 Cor. 15:44 isn’t a treatment of the mind/body problem; Paul’s not working on a philosophy of mind. Rather, the text suggests something else: Paul understands the resurrected and transformed human to be completely obedient to God (i.e., in the language of our Purgatory discussion, “morally perfect”) rather than being his own master (i.e., “morally imperfect”). The *sōma pneumatikon* has a new will. Changing into a *sōma pneumatikon* immediately affects to whom the human bodily being is perfectly a servant, viz., the Spirit. If this is correct, then Christians have a good reason to think that Christ’s *parousia* and the bodily resurrection are the jointly necessary and sufficient conditions for transforming a morally imperfect human into a morally perfect one.³³ The upshot of all this is that the Abrupt Purgation argument appears sound.

What about the problem of evil that Walls (et. al.) thinks plagues such an abrupt transition view? Conveniently, the *parousia*’s being the morally perfecting moment circumvents this problem. After all, the *parousia* occurs at T_{Ω} , not before. Why does God wait until T_{Ω} to bring about New Creation and the resurrection of the dead? This, I’m sure, is well beyond my ken. But here’s a guess: perhaps God wishes to add to the number of people headed for New Creation, and many of these people are not yet actual.

Objection 1: This section begins with the suggestion that the resurrection takes one second. But one second is a temporally extended duration. It’s not instantaneous. The argument in TAP is that an *instantaneous* change from morally imperfect to morally perfect in essentially temporal beings is impossible.

Reply: If, on the TAP account, one second is sufficiently gradual to change the morally imperfect to the morally perfect, then I agree with the Purgatory defender. But, this isn’t really Purgatory. Purgatory, I should have thought, is supposed to be a

³¹ The transliterated Geek words *sōma pneumatikon* and *sōma psychikon* are translated often as “spiritual body” and “natural body” respectively.

³² See, for example, (Thiselton 2012, 112); (Wright 2003, 347 – 356).

³³ It is also the moment when Christ transforms an imperfect cosmos into a perfect one! Humans, indeed, can be understood as microcosms. Middleton likewise makes this point (2014, 204). Note, also, that *my* understanding of a morally imperfect human *does not* include (d)’s definition of an MIH, viz., “...and whose abrupt transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect is sufficient to change *B*’s personal identity.”

state temporally intermediate between one's death and one's bodily resurrection. The one-second moment this objection describes, however, just is the act of resurrection. And, in any case, I think conceding that one second is sufficiently gradual just takes the force out of TAP and the various literature concerning Protestant accounts of a temporally extended Purgatory. (See, for example, the analogy given above *vis-à-vis* Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*.)

Objection: If the *parousia*/resurrection is what changes the morally imperfect into the morally perfect, then it follows that no humans who died in a morally imperfect state are now in Heaven. But there are people who died in a morally imperfect state that are now in Heaven. So, the *parousia*/resurrection is not what changes the morally imperfect into the morally perfect.

Reply: This argument misses the mark if its aim is to rebut Abrupt Purgation. Abrupt Purgation doesn't say much of anything about there now being morally perfect humans in Heaven. Moreover, this objection doesn't rebut the charge that it's not clear that there is a necessary condition for a sufficient amount of time to change the morally imperfect to the morally perfect. Instead, the argument takes issue with what I've said about one of the functions of Christ's return. To this, there are at least two possible replies. The first is that if one is uncomfortable with putting so much emphasis on the *parousia*/resurrection and one doesn't want to say that death is what provides the transition from morally imperfect to morally perfect, then perhaps one can look again to the language of scripture and say that what provides the transition is "glorification." My objector can simply hold that disembodied souls are "glorified" before they enter "Heaven." Of course, they might need to offer an account of what "glorification" is and how it's accomplished if it's not accomplished through *parousia*/resurrection (the above objection denies this), temporally extended purgatorial sanctification (Abrupt Purgation and The Final Countdown issues deny this), or death (Walls, et. al. deny this).

My second reply is this: we need to get clear on what the objector means by 'Heaven'. Now, earlier in this paper, I used a gloss on a generally understood notion of "Heaven": "the dwelling place of God – a place where nothing unholy abides...[where created human persons enjoy] eternal union and fellowship with the triune God" (Barnard 2007, 312). This, though, is too vague. For consider two non-identical ways in which one could conceive of this notion:

Heaven *A*: the disembodied heavenly state

or

Heaven Ω : the eschatological resurrection state: the New Creation.

I take it that the above objector means 'Heaven' in a Heaven *A* way. Why do I take it that she means 'Heaven' in this way? Because she cannot, unless she's affirming immediate resurrection, be using the term 'Heaven' to denote the eschatological

resurrection state. And, I'm unaware of any Purgatory defenders that affirm immediate resurrection.³⁴

Drawing out this distinction is important for many reasons. One of which is that, in biblically sensitive scholarly discussions of afterlife (at least among Protestants), 'Heaven'/Heaven A is *not* identical with the New Creation (and here I return to a note I made early on).³⁵ Rather, New Creation is the joining together of Heaven and Earth; indeed, the eschatological state is a New Heaven and New Earth (Middleton 2014, 171 – 175).³⁶ And, if there is this sort of distinction to be made between Heaven A and Heaven Ω , then perhaps it's not obvious that Heaven A must be morally perfect in the sense that the Purgatory defender (and the above objector) assumes "Heaven" must be, while it's certainly true that the New Creation (Heaven Ω) must be morally perfect in the fullest sense (e.g., Rev. 21).

To bring out that Heaven A might be non-morally perfect, here's a possible example: we have, in scripture, the Satan making an appearance in Heaven (Job 1:6-12).³⁷ There is much more that could be said about this, but it would take us too far afield and it's outside my purview. I mention it to suggest that it's possible, maybe even likely, that, if there's human existence in the disembodied Heaven A, their total transformation to moral perfection doesn't occur until—and because of—the bodily resurrection at Christ's *parousia*.³⁸

There are further upshots to making this distinction: if the 'Heaven' in TAP's (2) is Heaven A, and there's moral imperfection in this Heaven A, then TAP is unsound because (2) is false. Of course, it's also the case that, if this is the way that 'Heaven' is understood in Abrupt Purgation's (2), then Abrupt Purgation is unsound (because (2) is false). For my purposes, this development isn't troublesome. This is for two reasons. The first reason is that, if TAP is unsound, I haven't an argument to which I need to respond. The second reason is that Abrupt Purgation's (2) is easily amendable to make the argument work:

(2)* Essential to the definition of Heaven Ω is that human beings are in a state of complete moral perfection.

And this amendment just highlights the fact that, if the 'Heaven' in TAP's (2) is Heaven Ω , then Abrupt Purgation goes through (recall that it borrows (2) from TAP).³⁹

³⁴ Walls certainly does not. See (Walls 2012, 99 – 102).

³⁵ See note 2.

³⁶ Walls, too, makes this observation in (2015, 30 – 32). Yet he continues to confuse Heaven and New Creation (at least, he rarely clarifies which Heaven he means when he uses the term 'Heaven').

³⁷ Barnard actually picks up on this possibility, too. He suggests that the New Heaven (what I'm calling Heaven Ω) is perfect, and needed to be made *new* and distinguished from the "first heaven" (what I'm calling Heaven A) that "passed away" (Rev. 21:1), precisely because, according to some Christian stories, Satan's rebellion against God began in Heaven (perhaps Heaven A) (2007, 313, 329 note 11).

³⁸ There is a third reply. It could be that the objector is wrong: there are no humans in Heaven A. Maybe there's no heavenly intermediate state and humans must resurrect into the New Creation as morally perfect beings or else not have post-mortem fellowship with God at all. For an argument to this effect, see (Turner 2015a) and (Turner 2015b).

³⁹ The same arguments could be made *mutatis mutandis* about Abrupt Purgation's (8).

It seems to me that by so confusing these two notions of “Heaven,” the Purgatory defender that argues via TAP appears never to consider that there’s a fixed temporal terminus to Heaven *A* (regardless whether or not it’s morally perfect): the consummation of Heaven Ω . In fact, in the literature, it’s not at all clear that there’s a recognition that these distinctions *should* be made. The consequence of making these needed distinctions, though, is that sorites and The Final Countdown problem(s) I’ve highlighted in this section and the logic of Abrupt Purgation go through.

Now a modest proposal: Can I suggest that those thinkers who are aware of the differences between Heaven *A* and Heaven Ω ,⁴⁰ as I’ve described them, be more clear about how they deploy the term ‘Heaven’? By my lights, it’s better to refrain altogether from referring to the eschatological state as “Heaven.”⁴¹ Instead, perhaps one should use the terminology of biblical theology and call the eschatological state: “New Creation.” Doing so, I think, will help clear up further lines of inquiry in Christian philosophy/theology *vis-à-vis* life after death, not least in discussions centered on Purgatory.

3. Conclusion

Given the fixed future temporal point of the consummation of the New Creation, what I’ve called T_Ω , we have no clear reason to think that a sufficiently long enough period of time gradually to change a human from morally imperfect to morally perfect is a necessary condition for a human’s entering “Heaven” (really: New Creation). Further, given Abrupt Purgation, Protestant Christians have good reason to think that a human’s abrupt change from morally imperfect to morally perfect is possible. If so, TAP is unsound and the intuitions driving the argument are faulty. Protestants, then, still have good reason to believe that there’s no such thing as Purgatory (in the temporally extended sense).⁴²

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⁴⁰ Walls seems to me such a one. See (Walls 2015, 29 – 33).

⁴¹ To this end, see Middleton’s clarion call in (2014, 237).

⁴² Thanks to Oliver Crisp, Jordan Wessling, James Arcadi, Chris Woznicki, Jesse Gentile, Ryan Mullins, Roger Turner, and an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

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