

## HOW IMMATERIALISM CAN SAVE YOUR SOUL

It was common in the early modern era to tie one's philosophical reflections to the service of God and religion. Yet when it comes to Berkeley's metaphysical system, he not only believes that his speculations are consonant with the doctrines of Christianity, he also thinks that he has diagnosed a central cause of ungodliness and atheism. Immaterialism is not only compatible with Christianity, but he alleges that it is in part the *remedy* for atheism. Here I allege that Berkeley has a positive case for believing both that materialism (by which I mean the belief in the existence of material substance and *not* simply material monism, thus mind-body dualists are materialists in this sense) is more likely to lead people to atheism and that immaterialism is a better fit with Christian doctrine. I am not arguing for the truth of Christianity or any kind of theism; instead I am only arguing in this paper that Berkeley has a plausible set of reasons for *linking* elements of materialism to atheism and hence for promoting his ontology on religious grounds. Adherence to a form of materialism is more likely to lead to the sorts of situations that incline the unwary to skeptical doubts and irreligious positions. That said, I should note that my efforts here are a part of a larger project, where I contend that *if* one wants to be a theist, then there is a reasonable case to be made that one ought to be an immaterialist.<sup>1</sup>

1. See Marc Hight, "Berkeley and Bodily Resurrection," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 45 (3), July 2007: 443-458 and Marc Hight and Joshua Bohannon, "The Son More Visible: Immaterialism and Incarnation," forthcoming in *Modern Theology*. Note, however, that I am *not* defending the reverse claim that being an immaterialist actually *inclines* one toward theism, only the weaker claim that Berkeley holds immaterialism to be a better fit with Christian dogma.

### *Immaterialism and Religion: Natural and Revealed*

Berkeley believes that the application of reason reveals that immaterialism is consonant with the dictates of natural religion. He frequently talks about how he can better establish the existence of God, the natural immortality of the soul, and other similar claims.<sup>1</sup> His intention to defend natural religion is most clear in the introduction to the *Three Dialogues*.

"As it was my intention [in the *Principles*] to convince *skeptics* and *infidels* by reason, so it has been my endeavor strictly to observe the most rigid laws of reasoning. And, to an impartial reader, I hope, it will be manifest, that the sublime notion of God, and the comfortable expectation of immortality, do naturally arise from a close and methodical application of thought: whatever may be the result of that loose, rambling way, not altogether improperly termed *free-thinking*, by certain libertines in thought, who can no more endure the restraints of *logic*, than those of *religion*, or *government*."<sup>2</sup>

That Berkeley thinks the entire value of his project hinges on whether his philosophical system promotes the consideration of God and defeats the challenges of atheistic skeptics has been well noted before. What has not been sufficiently emphasized, however, is exactly *why* Berkeley believes that positing the existence of matter is so pernicious. Furthermore, few have taken Berkeley's claim that immaterialism *promotes* the cause of Christianity seriously.<sup>3</sup> Imma-

1. In fact, he seems to believe at times that establishing these claims is the *primary* accomplishment of his work. See, for example, his 6 September 1710 letter to Percival, where in complaining about the reception of the *Principles* he writes, "If, therefore, it shall at any time lie in your way to discourse with your friends on the subject of my book, I entreat you not to take notice to them I deny the being of matter in it, but only that it is a treatise of the 'Principles of Human Knowledge' designed to promote true knowledge and religion, particularly in opposition to those philosophers who vent dangerous notions with regard to the existence of God and the natural immortality of the soul, both which I have endeavoured to demonstrate in a way not hitherto made use of." Benjamin Rand, *The Correspondence of George Berkeley and Sir John Percival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 82.

2. 3D, Introduction. All Berkeley citations from *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, 9 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1948-1957). The following abbreviations will be used for convenience: 3D: *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, ALC: *Alciphron: or the Minute Philosopher*, PC: *Philosophical Commentaries* (the notebooks), PHK: *Principles of Human Knowledge*, S: *Siris: A Chain of Philosophical Reflexions and Inquiries*. Other texts of Berkeley, not abbreviated, are also from this source. Section numbers will be used for the *Principles*, *Philosophical Commentaries*, and *Siris*; all others will be page numbers from the appropriate volume in the *Works*.

3. One notable exception is James Spiegel, "The Theological Orthodoxy of Berkeley's Immaterialism," *Faith and Philosophy*, 13 (April 1996): 216-235. There are plenty of discussions of how theism influences Berkeley's philosophy

terialism, he tells us, not only better reveals the truths of natural religion but also more accurately guides theists to the one true religion of Christianity. There is a sense in which Berkeley seems to believe that immaterialism may well save your soul.

Berkeley is not quite as obvious and heavy-handed in his discussions of the Christian value of immaterialism as he is with respect to some other issues, but that seems to be principally because he had reserved much of that discussion for his ill-fated second part of the *Principles*.

“Having done with the objections [...] we proceed in the next place to take a view of our tenets in their consequences. Some of these appear at first sight, as that several difficult and obscure questions, on which abundance of speculation hath been thrown away, are entirely banished from philosophy. Whether corporeal substance can think? Whether matter be infinitely divisible? And how it operates on spirit? These and the like inquiries have given infinite amusement to philosophers in all ages. But depending on the existence of *matter*, they have no longer any place on our principles. Many other advantages there are, as well with regard to *religion* as the *sciences*, which it is easy for anyone to deduce from what hath been premised. But this will appear more plainly in the sequel.”<sup>1</sup>

Here and elsewhere Berkeley claims to have a ready set of arguments that will show—in the sequel, the second part of the *Principles* that never appeared—that (Christian) theism is *best* supported by immaterialism. In addition to claiming that his metaphysical system provides benefits to religion, Berkeley also holds that its rival materialism has serious disadvantages as well.

“Were it necessary to add any farther proof against the existence of matter, after what has been said, I could instance several of those errors and difficulties (not to mention impieties) which have sprung from that tenet. It has occasioned numberless controversies and disputes in philosophy, and not a few of far greater moment in religion. But I shall not enter into the detail of them in this place, as well because I think, arguments *a posteriori* are unnecessary for confirming what has been, if I mistake not, sufficiently demonstrated *a priori*, as because I shall hereafter find occasion to say somewhat of them.”<sup>2</sup>

in various ways, but less attention has been given to the influence of his philosophy on his theological claims. See also Genevieve Brykman, “Is Immaterialism a Roundabout Way to Faith?” unpublished. There is, of course, a large literature concerning such topics as Berkeley’s arguments for the existence of God, but few of them actually engage the question of whether immaterialism is an effective support for theism.

1. PHK 85, original emphases.

2. PHK 21. Note the reference Berkeley makes at the end of the paragraph to another “occasion” where he intends to speak of these errors. That is most likely a reference to Part II of the *Principles*, as he nowhere else discusses those issues at length or depth in Part I.

What are these alleged pernicious consequences that stem from materialism? How can immaterialism positively advance the cause of Christian theism in particular? Berkeley must have in mind something more than merely arguing that immaterialism is a true description of the world while materialism (including substance dualisms with a material component) is a false one. After all, he claims that positing the existence of matter leads to *impieties*. Provided that one antecedently accepts the existence of God, there is in fact reason to believe that good Christians *ought* to be immaterialists.

When Berkeley defends the plausibility of Christianity, he does so both in terms of natural and revealed religion. Natural religion concerns truths that can be discovered and proven by reason. It is no surprise therefore that Berkeley holds that Christian immaterialism can best demonstrate the claims of natural religion. Thus Crito (speaking for Berkeley) says in the *Alciphron*, “How can you pretend to be in the interest of natural religion, and yet be professed enemies of the Christian, the only established religion which includes whatever is excellent in the natural, and which the only means of making those precepts, duties, and notions, so called, become revered throughout the world?”<sup>1</sup> A part of what makes immaterialist Christianity powerful, thinks Berkeley, is that it accommodates the natural as well as the spiritual world.

Revealed religion concerns truths made visible to finite minds in Scripture that are not demonstrable by reason – the so-called Christian mysteries such as the Incarnation, the nature and fact of the holy trinity, grace, the resurrection of the dead, and so on. Although these doctrines are not *known* except by revelation, they nonetheless can allegedly be understood and made *plausible*. That is, it can be shown that they are not contrary to reason. Exactly what it means to not be “contrary to reason” might be open to some dispute, but fortunately Berkeley is reasonably clear on the point. When he writes of the Christian mysteries being not contrary to reason, he means that they entail no (explicit) contradictions.

“The being of a God is capable of clear proof, and a proper object of human reason: whereas the mysteries of His nature, and indeed whatever there is of mystery in religion, to endeavour to explain and prove by reason is a vain attempt. *It is sufficient if we can shew there is nothing absurd or repugnant in our belief of those points*, and, instead of framing hypotheses to explain them, we use our reason only for answering the objections brought against them.”<sup>2</sup>

1. *ALC* 27.
2. *ALC* 327, emphasis added.

At a minimum, outright contradictions are both absurd and repugnant to rational thinkers, so I shall assume from this point that Berkeley's project is to preserve the mystery of the revealed truths of Christian dogma (to inspire faith) while showing that belief in such mysteries does not lead to endorsing contradictions.<sup>1</sup>

Berkeley holds that his system more ably demonstrates that Christianity is the best means of propagating natural religion and that the Christian mysteries are made most plausible in an immaterialist framework. Berkeley thus also has a positive component to his immaterialist Christianity. Why one might believe that immaterialism is a better support for the tenets of Christianity will occupy us subsequently. First, however, I want to examine the negative aspect of his project: his claim that materialism inclines the unwary to atheism.

### *Materialism and Atheism*

The most obvious threat from positing matter is that it might free humans and the natural world from the concurrence of God. If matter exists as a substance independent of the perception of minds, then why not suppose that matter exists as a substance independent of *all* minds, including the mind of God? Berkeley's initial strategy on this point is to note that if you want to use the concept of matter to represent what we otherwise typically call *things* independent of our volitions, then in fact we do not require a mind-independent substance to play such a role. At the end of the *Three Dialogues* Philonous makes the point clearly.

"One would think therefore, so long as the names of all particular things, with the terms, *sensible, substance, body, stuff* and the like, are retained, the word *matter* should never be missed in common talk. And in philosophical discourses it seems the best way to leave it quite out; since there is not perhaps any one thing that hath more favoured and strengthened the depraved bent of the mind toward *atheism*, than the use of that general confused term."<sup>2</sup>

I suggest that Berkeley is so keen to emphasize the idleness of material substance in part because he wants to remove any reason

1. See also Berkeley's 27 December 1709 letter to Percival, where he notes in passing that reason must be applied to revelation or "all use of reason in points of the Christian religion must be quite laid aside." Rand, *The Correspondence of George Berkeley and Sir John Percival*, 70.

2. 3D, 261.

for thinking that the world could exist separate from God. "It is a very extraordinary instance of the force of prejudice, and much to be lamented, that the mind of man retains so great a fondness against all the evidence of reason, for a stupid thoughtless *somewhat*, by the interposition whereof it would, as it were, screen itself from the providence of God, and remove him farther off from the affairs of the world."<sup>1</sup> The ploy is thus to secure the *role* of matter as a substratum inside a theistic framework without the odious substance itself. Berkeley continues:

"Whether therefore there are such ideas in the mind of God, and whether they may be called by the name *matter*, I shall not dispute. But if you stick to the notion of an unthinking substance, or support of extension, motion, and other sensible qualities, then to me it is most evidently impossible there should be any such thing. Since it is a plain repugnancy, that those qualities should exist in or be supported by an unperceiving substance."<sup>2</sup>

Whatever else he may be doing, there is the strong suggestion that Berkeley is trying to retain, or better yet, *demonstrate*, the necessary role of God in the world.

Once one allows the existence of material substance, the *need* for an omnipresent mind starts to fade and Berkeley is keenly aware of the danger.

"[S]o likewise upon the same foundation [materialism] have been raised all the impious schemes of *atheism* and irreligion. Nay so great a difficulty hath it been thought, to conceive matter produced out of nothing, that the most celebrated among the ancient philosophers, even of these who maintained the being of a God, have thought matter to be uncreated and coeternal with him. How great a friend material substance hath been to *atheists* in all ages, were needless to relate. All their monstrous systems have so visible and necessary a dependence on it, that when this cornerstone is once removed, the whole fabric cannot choose but fall to the ground [...]."<sup>3</sup>

Berkeley is right that the issue is foundational to one's world-view. If the concept of a mind-independent substance is coherent, then there will always be the danger of rival naturalistic explanations for everything in the world. If there arise increasingly plausible natural explanations for *everything* in the world, then a principal motivation for theism drops away. Berkeley smartly recognizes the threat and seeks to remove it at its root. If he can show that the very concept of a mind-independent substance is absurd, then he

1. PHK 75.
2. PHK 76.
3. PHK 92.

will have destroyed the foundation for secular free-thinking. He trumpets his insight in the next section of the *Principles*.

“That impious and profane persons should readily fall in with those systems which favour their inclinations, by deriding immaterial substance, and supposing the soul to be divisible and subject to corruption as the body; which exclude all freedom, intelligence, and design from the formation of things, and instead thereof make a self-existent, stupid, unthinking substance the root and origin of all beings. That they should hearken to those who deny a providence, or inspection of a superior mind over the affairs of the world, attributing the whole series of events either to blind chance or fatal necessity, arising from the impulse of one body on another. All this is very natural. And on the other hand, when men of better principles observe the enemies of religion lay so great a stress on unthinking matter, and all of them use so much industry and artifice to reduce every thing to it; methinks they should rejoice to see them deprived of their grand support, and driven from that only fortress, without which your Epicureans, Hobbists, and the like, have not even the shadow of a pretence, but become the most cheap and easy triumph in the world.”<sup>1</sup>

I am not here interested in whether Berkeley has *proven* that the concept of material substance is contradictory. We have uncovered, however, a powerful reason that explains why Berkeley would be so interested in rejecting matter, assuming that his theism is antecedent to his philosophical reflections in this regard. In short, Berkeley takes materialism to be a *necessary* component for atheism (but not, of course, a sufficient one).<sup>2</sup>

A second problem with matter (as an unthinking substance) is that such a concept creates a divide between the world and our knowledge of it. As a result, skepticism arises. Berkeley thinks that skepticism is independently undesirable, but it is worth noting that skepticism also has an irreligious component. If one can be skeptical about the external world, then that sets the stage for doubt about religion as well. This concern, however, is general and relatively unfocused. Berkeley frequently marries the concepts of atheism and skepticism, but he does not provide a detailed argument about how external world skepticism leads to irreligion. I will accordingly pass over this issue here.

### *Immaterialism and Christian Dogma*

If one believes in the existence of mind-independent material substance(s), then there are a number of Christian doctrines that

1. PHK 93.

2. My thanks to Ben Hill for this more pellucid formulation of my thesis.

appear relatively intractable, or least considerably more difficult to understand. Perhaps the most prominent is the doctrine of bodily resurrection. If our bodies consist of mind-independent substance subject to the regularities of the natural world, then when I die there is a strong possibility that one or more other individuals will have bodies containing portions of the material substance that once constituted my body. This becomes a problem initially because the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection promises that the faithful will be resurrected with their own specific matter. If several persons share the same matter, then one might reasonably ask: who gets the matter on that day when the faithful are restored to their own bodies? Do the elect only share their matter with the damned, so the conflict is removed? Even there, on some readings of Christian theology the damned also require their bodies in order to suffer for their unrepented sins. To complicate the issue further, we need to worry about the state of the body when resurrected. Will the handicapped and deformed attain salvation only to be limited by their original defective material forms? Such an outcome does not speak well for the goodness of God.<sup>1</sup>

Berkeley diagnoses all of these concerns as stemming from the supposition that our bodies are independent material substances. With respect to bodily resurrection Berkeley notes, "Take away this *material substance*, about the identity whereof all the dispute is, and mean by *body* what every plain ordinary person means by that word, to wit, that which is immediately seen and felt, which is only a combination of sensible qualities or ideas: and then their most unanswerable objections come to nothing."<sup>2</sup> I have argued elsewhere that Berkeley's immaterialist interpretation of the doctrine of bodily resurrection has some merit,<sup>3</sup> but what deserves attention here is only the point that endorsing the existence of matter is the root cause of doubting this central Christian tenet. Remove material substance and the alleged difficulties and contradictions are similarly removed, even if it is still a Christian mystery. Thus one reason the doubtful might be led away from Christianity—the alleged incoherence of the promise of bodily resurrection—is removed inside Berkeley's immaterialism.

1. I recognize, of course, that there are *many* attempted answers to all of these problems. My point is only to show that Berkeley was aware of these concerns and had a specific diagnosis.

2. *PHK* 95.

3. Marc Hight, "Berkeley and Bodily Resurrection," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 45 (3), July 2007: 443-458.



Not one to rest on a few small victories, Berkeley employs similar moves to strengthen the plausibility of other Christian mysteries while impugning material substance. Again, the goal is not merely to show that Christianity is generally reasonable, but to show that the supposition of materialism in particular is pernicious with respect to religion. Consider the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ. As an individual, Christ is supposedly both fully human and fully divine. The problem for materialists is that such a description is difficult to understand given that the *divine* nature of Christ the Son must be immaterial yet the *human* nature of the Son is clearly *bodily*. Since materialists interpret “body” as material while denying that the divinity of God is material, we have the difficult outcome that Christ is composed of distinct, even incommensurable substances. Worse yet, having a material body was occasionally viewed as a corruption of sorts, or at least a limitation.<sup>1</sup> Thus a perfect being cannot have a material component while remaining divine. We have a mystery indeed. Recall Berkeley’s position with respect to religion: although the tenets of revealed religion cannot be fully understood by mere mortals, they can be shown to be not contrary to reason (i.e. produce contradictions). As a result, if Berkeley can reasonably show that on his immaterialist principles the Christian mysteries are not obviously contradictory or logically incoherent, then he in fact has good grounds for his claims that immaterialism is the better support for the Christian faith.

With respect to the nature of Christ, immaterialism offers a solution to the objection that Christ cannot be both fully human and divine, both material and immaterial. Bodies in Berkeley’s system are collections of sensory ideas. Thus he needs only to account for why and how Christ *qua* divine can perceive passive sensory ideas associated with bodies like those finite human beings typically possess. Berkeley explicitly notes that ideas are neither modes nor proper parts of minds. Thus ideas are in some sense distinct from (but not ontologically independent of) the substance of the mind that perceives them.<sup>2</sup> There is no special difficulty in concei-

1. A treatment of Gnostic and docetist views lies outside the scope of this work. See Hight and Bohannon, “The Son More Visible: Immaterialism and the Incarnation,” *Modern Theology* (forthcoming) for a more complete treatment of the theological subtleties.

2. See PHK, 49. For a more detailed defense of this claim, see Marc Hight, *Idea and Ontology* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008), chap. 7.

ving of an immaterial mind (even a divine one) perceiving a train of sensory ideas in such a way as to have those ideas associated with what we standardly call a body. Such a body is technically distinct from the substance of Christ and the possibility of removing an obvious contradiction presents itself.<sup>1</sup>

What is exciting about immaterialism for Berkeley is that when it comes to most of the Christian mysteries, the deep problems are theological and not logical or metaphysical, just as they ought to be for members of the faith. The supposition that Christ the Son is an omnipotent mind that happens to perceive a train of ideas is perfectly reasonable as a matter of metaphysics, i.e. as a matter of logic and human reason. The mystery in the Incarnation –and the portion that generates faith– comes from other sources. What would tempt an infinite mind to associate with only a finite series of ideas? How can the Son be fully human and yet be one substance with the Word that upholds all created things? Why would an omnipotent being choose to subject itself to such experiences for our sake? Such worries are decidedly theological, which bodes well for the fit between immaterialism and Christianity. The mysteries are, as it were, located in the right places. The concern is less logical and more about general credibility given our experiences in the world.

The Holy Trinity is a related Christian mystery Berkeley believes is better supported by immaterialism. The basic mystery concerns how three things that are distinct can be at the same time one entity. The first of the Articles of Religion from the Book of Common Prayer is entitled *Of Faith in the Holy Trinity* and reads, “There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”<sup>2</sup> The problem, however, might best be divided into two components. The first is the obvious issue skeptics typically raise: how can three

1. For a sustained defense of this immaterialism solution, see Hight and Bohannon, “The Son More Visible: Immaterialism and the Incarnation,” forthcoming in *Modern Theology*.

2. *Book of Common Prayer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, standard edition [1662], 1968), 611-612. It is worth remarking that the Trinity is explicitly reaffirmed in the second and fifth articles of faith (*Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man and Of the Holy Ghost*). Both reaffirm the numerical sameness of substance.

things be numerically identical to one? The second, however, is a more specific application of this concern to an entity that is *one substance*. The doctrine of the Incarnation reveals that the Son is essentially at least partly a bodily being. For a materialist or a standard substance dualist, that entails that the Son is at least partly *material*. God, however, is consistently depicted as an *immaterial* being. The mystery is thus deepened by the apparent claim that the Holy Trinity involves the numerical unity of beings that are composed of distinct, incommensurable substances. *That* claim appears to be simply incoherent.

Unsurprisingly Berkeley has nothing to offer the skeptical inquirer concerning the fundamental mystery. How three things can be numerically one is genuinely an article of faith that only divine revelation can make intelligible. He can, however, mitigate the effects of the potential contradiction by addressing the second component. For materialists there is no escaping the worry that believers are forced to accept the unity of incommensurable substances when everywhere else they are told to keep them separate. Spinoza, of course, has a possible solution in his adoption of property dualism, but such a move ultimately denies the personal nature of God, a price Berkeley (and most Christians) would be unwilling to pay. Berkeley cannot remove the larger problem of the seeming contradiction of three putatively distinct things being numerically one, but he can at least remove the added worry of trying to unify two distinct substances. Instead of resorting to property dualism, Berkeley simply denies mind-body dualism. God is an eternal, omnipresent mind. The Son is as well, but one who also has a special relationship with certain finite sensory ideas, giving him a finite body. The Holy Ghost, of course, is an immaterial entity, of which we do not actually know much. In any event, the immaterialist believer at least avoids the uncomfortable position of having to assert that God is a partless composed of two distinct and incommensurable substances. Berkeley can thus argue, at a minimum, that immaterialism is more conducive to the plausibility of Christianity than materialism.

One might wonder why the problem is not best avoided another way. If Berkeley's motivation concerns religion, then advocating material monism might well be a superior option. What would push Berkeley to reject the existence of matter? There are several reasons why such a solution fails. First, Berkeley believes he has independent reasons for objecting to the existence of matter. Those arguments are, of course, subject to critical evaluation, and I have

no desire to rest my case on their merits. More importantly, material monism is not an option because Christian dogma clearly describes God the Father as a wholly immaterial being. Berkeley is also quite clear about the point.

“What I here make public has, after a long and scrupulous inquiry, seem’d to me evidently true, and not unuseful to be known, particularly to those who are tainted with skepticism, or want a demonstration of the existence and immateriality of God, or the natural immortality of the soul.”<sup>1</sup>

The immateriality of God is a basic article of faith. In the Anglican Church, article I of the 39 Articles states that “there is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions” —a view consonant with Biblical testimony.<sup>2</sup> For materialists (and standard dualists) bodies are composed of matter. Thus even were God not immaterial, God is certainly not material, and so the problems remain.

Other Christian doctrines await analysis, including original sin, free will, predestination, creation, and the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for salvation. There are too many doctrines and views to engage in this relatively short article. I shall conclude this endeavor, therefore, with a discussion of one final important doctrine that relates to both natural and revealed religion, one that has caused considerable trouble for materialist theists. Christians hold that souls are naturally immortal and that there is a future state for all souls. For some that means heaven, for others, hell. The third article of religion from the Book of Common Prayer explicitly defends belief in the existence of hell. Interestingly, heaven is only mentioned in connection with the resurrection of Christ, the articles of faith only indicating that the predestined elect will attain “everlasting felicity.”<sup>3</sup> The Bible, however, is replete with references to heaven and the promise that at least some human persons will arrive there.

Perhaps the most obvious problem raised by those tempted by doubt concerns the *location* of heaven and hell. Recall that we are to be resurrected and judged *in our bodies*. Thus heaven and hell by extension must have a physical location (which is not necessarily to say a material location!). Early accounts placed heaven and hell in

1. PHK (Preface), *Works*, 23.

2. See John 4:24, Deuteronomy 4:15, Luke 24:39, John 1:18, John 5:37, Acts 17:29, Romans 1:20-21, 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:17, and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:16.

3. *Book of Common Prayer*, Article XVII, 618.

the sky (beyond the fixed stars) and below the earth respectively, but as we explored and learned more about our environs such views became increasingly implausible. Even in Berkeley's day much was known about the solar system and its mechanical operation, making the supposition that heaven was simply "in the heavens" increasingly less palatable. Dedicated materialists are thus more susceptible to irreligious doubt on account of the puzzles generated by their ontological commitments (which is not to say that immaterialism does not generate puzzles of its own, but presumably those puzzles are importantly not ones that incline the unwary towards atheism). Immaterialists, however, have no such difficulty. Having a body only implies that one's mind is associated with a particular train of sensory ideas. No spatial location in a mind-independent space is required. In fact, Berkeley's system does not have space *per se*, but only a relational theory of place. Thus there is no "space" where heaven and hell are located.<sup>1</sup> Instead, those terms are shorthand locutions for special *kinds* of ordered experiences one might expect to have under certain circumstances. Thus Berkeley's views are confirmed by the Scriptures when they mention the felicitous *experiences* promised after salvation.

I think Berkeley is probably right in asserting that the plausibility of a future state is easier to grasp within an immaterialist metaphysic. In fact, it probably makes the entire doctrine of a future state considerably more plausible. In his response to a concern raised by Samuel Johnson on the possibility of a future state in his immaterialist system Berkeley writes the following.

"I see no difficulty in conceiving a change of state, such as is vulgarly called death, as well without as with material substance. It is sufficient for that purpose that we allow sensible bodies, i.e., such as are immediately perceived by sight and touch; the existence of which I am so far from questioning (as philosophers are used to do) that I establish it, I think, upon evident principles. Now, it seems very easy to conceive the soul to exist in a separate state (i.e. divested from those limits and laws of motion and perception with which she is embarrassed here), and to exercise herself on new ideas, without the intervention of these tangible things we call bodies."<sup>2</sup>

The possibility of a future state for a materialist seems to entail one of two startling possibilities. If one is a material monist, then survi-

1. For an excellent overview of some of the early modern debates about the nature and location of heaven and hell, see Philip Almond, *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), esp. 42, 46, and 123-130.

2. *Works*, II, 282. Letter to Johnson II.

ving bodily death seems unlikely in any manner that is reasonably consistent with the Scriptures, although some have tried to salvage such accounts or embrace heretical forms of Christian mortalism.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, if one is a substance dualist, then either one believes that the individual is a composite of mind and body, or else is only the mind. In the former case we encounter problems with what the person is when separated from its body and of course with reuniting the soul with its promised matter. In the latter case one wonders why we need the body in the first place. Yet Berkeley's immaterialism provides a neat explanation as to why we must have the experience of bodies (or a correlate) even in the afterlife. The mind of necessity thinks, and in thinking it must have an object. Thus, the mind must perceive ideas. For Berkeley, our mortal lives involve perceiving sensory ideas. In the afterlife, we perceive different sorts of ideas, new ones, and all the promises of the Scripture with respect to our resurrection and future state may be reasonably accommodated, even if the nature of those experiences remain a mystery to be revealed.

Although this discussion has at best only touched on some of the major arguments and engaged but a few of the most important tenets of (Anglican) Christian doctrine, there is enough evidence I believe to plausibly conclude that Berkeley had reasonable religious grounds for vigorously pursuing his system and opposing materialism. Assuming that one is antecedently a Christian theist, he has the resources to make a powerful argument in the aggregate for the claim that as a Christian, one ought to be an immaterialist. In that sense, Berkeley is offering arguments from the standpoint of one who may well be engaged in an enterprise that can save your soul from the pernicious effects of heresy and materialism.

Marc A. HIGHT,  
*Hampden-Sydney College,*  
VA 23943 (USA).

1. Peter Van Inwagen and Lynne Rudder Baker are two prominent defenders of some forms of Christian materialism. See Van Inwagen, *The Possibility of Resurrection and Other Essays in Christian Apologetic* (Westview Press, 1998), esp. chap. 4 and Lynne Rudder Baker, "Need a Christian be a Mind/Body Dualist?" *Faith and Philosophy* (October 1995), 489-504. For a nice overview of the history of Christian mortalism, see Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).