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THE W. C. TAYLOR LETTERS  
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# HEAVEN OUR HOME

CHRISTIANITY TODAY in the favorite journal of preachers in this land, says the "Opinion Research Corporation". It is only a year and a half old. It has 7 editors, 50 "contributing editors" and 70 correspondents in cities all over this country and countries all over this world. Of those "contributing editors" one is Billy Graham, and several others are from our Southern Baptist Seminaries and Universities. It has many wholesome articles. But I was rather amazed that an article should come out in the issue of May 12 which dehearted the New Testament doctrine of heaven. My papers accumulated for two months while I was away in North Carolina. On return I wrote the editors the following letter.

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The Editors:

The article of Dr. Johannes G. Vos seems to me to deheart our hope beyond the grave. Fifty years ago, when I was a young preacher, I used to read articles about the **intermediate place**, as well as state. One who described it in terms of a Greek underworld of shades openly called it **limbo**, the Roman Catholic term for babies who pass eternity there, deprived of "the ineffable vision", for the lack of a spoonful of baptismal water on their heads before death. Dr. Vos has advanced to an intermediate state without an intermediate place, which renders man in that state "deficient and abnormal". How, then, could he possibly be called "perfect", "just men made perfect"? Is anything "perfect" that is "deficient and abnormal"?

Man in heaven, as pure, though finite, spirit, is no more deficient and abnormal than God the Father is deficient and abnormal. He has been eternally pure Spirit. We are made in his image. Clearly that image is not the body for He never had a body. Therefore our perfection in his image must be in the spirit, and is no more "deficient and abnormal" that is our Creator and Father in a like, though infinite, state of pure spirit, bodiless.

Dr. Vos seems to think of babies in heaven as static. Horrible thought. Why should anyone entertain it? I have a better hope. When you come to think of it, the vast majority of heaven's inhabitants were babies, when they entered there or at least when they left this world. Only recently has medical discovery prolonged the life of most babies. They used to die young, mostly. Countless billions of babies died in infancy and went to heaven. They are the majority of its human inhabitants. Baptists believe that "all dying infants are saved: all living infants are lost and remain so as they come to years of accountability and make their own decisions", as that great preacher, J. H. Anderson, of Tennessee, used to say.

Even with the dim life of Old Testament revelation, David had full assurance about his and Bathsheba's baby: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return unto me," II Sam. 12:23. Have you seen babies that did not grow? Is anything more pitiful than that? And can we imagine heaven's major population in that static, speechless, stupid state?

If dying babies are saved, they are saved by the propitiation Christ made for our sins, "and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world", I John 2:2. Babies are born sinners, conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity, says the Psalmist, children of wrath by nature, says Paul. They have no personal responsibility, so the race propitiation saves them, apart from any personal responsibility, for they have none. They come into heaven cleansed by the blood of Christ. The Greek does not say, in Heb. 12:23, "the spirits of just MEN made perfect". There is no MEN in the Greek. The inhabitants of heaven are described two ways. 1. They are "first-born", a heavenly "assembly and church of firstborn, enrolled in heaven", in the book of life. That includes women and youths and babies, not just men. 2. All alike are made perfect, on entering that life. And that could not possibly leave a helpless baby in the almost total imperfection of babyhood. Perfection is completion, not just a negative absence of moral faults. Every baby in heaven is complete, a full rounded mind, in a spirit that lacks no understanding, mental capacity and social fellowship.

Once in this city, while on furlough, I visited my old chum of Seminary days, Dr. John Inzer, in a hotel. It chanced that Dr. Finley F. Gibson visited him at the same hour. He told this experience. He had preached here on heaven and had assured mothers present that babies dying in infancy were in heaven, where they attained their normal growth and expansion of personality, as God willed. A lady came after the ser-



mon and said, almost weeping: "Oh! Dr. Gibson. You've spoiled my heaven. I had hoped there to clasp my dead baby in my arms again and rock him to sleep again as I used to love to do." Dr. Inzer said: "Yes, and after about three hours of that, she'd be asking the Lord Jesus to send some angel to take over."

All that heavenly assembly are "first-born". The first born son in Israel got a double portion of the inheritance. All are first-born, over there. And certainly the shade-like existence of wraiths is no double-portion inheritance. It is not a half heritage of personality and glory.

Now I hope to grow, on and on, in heaven. Who would be static? I quit growing in my body a long time ago, but I have done a lot of growing since then in mind and spirit. Why should it stop all at once? I don't believe people are equal in heaven. There will be five-talented men who become ten-talented. Talents are responsibilities. One thing about heaven Dr. Vos seems to have overlooked is our activity there: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." And the Lamb is their Pastor, as he is their *naos* (Holy of Holies) and he makes Psalm 23 come true and they dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

All are there who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and that includes babies. There have been countless baby martyrs, dashed to pieces before their mothers' eyes. There they are, mothers and babies, equally perfect. They see Jesus and are like him for they see him as he is. And it is not just the martyrs who live in glorious activity in heaven. Of all it is said: "AND HIS SERVANTS SHALL SERVE HIM". That is heaven—work! Who wants to sit around and twang a harp forevermore? I want to work, and I shall. With billions of people in that life, it has to have organization, mission, stewardship, obedience, cooperation, fellowship and all the mutual reactions of real life. I am inclined to think it is now, in this era, that the twelve apostles fulfill the Savior's promise and sit on twelve thrones, and rule over the twelve tribes of Israel, as represented there.

You say: "Well, then, the resurrection has nothing to add." But it does. Then come new heavens and a new earth. And on these orbs there may be new tasks for newly peopled globes. We know not what bliss awaits us there. Our new bodies may give new realms of action. But that is no reason for giving up our present blessed hope of our dear dead who are glorified.

How would Dr. Vos, on his theory, account for the Transfiguration? Is it a myth? Did the apostles really see the great visitors to Jesus? Were they conscious of time factors when they came to cheer Jesus and hearten him to go on to his own great redemptive EXODUS?

In Brazil we have typhoid fever and paratyphoid. I fear the Dr. got off into a new fad parapsychology that is worse than the countless passing fads of the psychology of the hour.

How wonderfully Jesus used Scripture. He said that when God called himself the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob it meant the patriarchs were alive with him. "All live unto him". "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Abraham is not dead, not half-dead. He lives. Life is real. You would not say: "I am the owner of my great-great-grandmother's old cow." That cow is no more. You aren't the owner of something that no longer exists. But Abraham exists. He isn't a shade. He holds court in heaven. Jesus said that a beggar died, named Lazarus. The angels carried him straight to Abraham's bosom. Now that does not mean that Abraham had a vast XXXXXXXXXXXX bosom, wide as hades, and, in fact, another name for hades. No, never. When Jesus was host at the Last Supper, John lay with his head on Christ's bosom. So the instant Lazarus left this life, he was escorted to a welcoming banquet. He was to lie like John, special intimate of the host of the hour, for Abraham seemed to be doing the honors while Jesus was away in the Incarnation. Ah! Jesus painted no underworld of Pluto. When he himself died, there went with him that very afternoon to Paradise a converted and crucified thief, that Paradise where is the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits and yielded her fruit every month and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. It must be a great life there.

Once I faced a grave operation, where life hung in the balance. The night before, I sat on the side of my bed and there seemed to pass before my thought a dialogue between myself and my soul. And I said: "Soul of mine, suppose that tomorrow at this hour this body you love is cold in death. Where, then, will you be? Soul of mine, can you see without eyes? Can you hear without ears? Can you feel without hands and nerves? Can you think without a brain?" And my soul seemed to answer me: "Never doubt. You have your Savior's word. Less than twenty-four hours before HE died, he said that all was well. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Going from here, you are at once in the Father's house. What better do you want? Lie down and go to sleep. You will need your strength for the operation in the morning." And I lay back and was asleep in an instant and they had to wake me to get ready for the operation next day.

I still find those thoughts a considerable comfort.

I was a student briefly under Geerhardus Vos, the most suggestive teacher I ever sat under. It is a good name, but it led off into gloom in this article in "Christianity Today", a "Today" that has a glorious tomorrow.

Sincerely yours,  
W. C. TAYLOR



From one of the editors I received a courteous letter from which I take the liberty to quote. "Thank you so much for taking the time to write such a splendid letter in response to Johannes G. Vos's article in our May 12th issue. You certainly write well, and I could wish that you had written sooner that we might have included at least an excerpt from your letter along with other responses we printed on this article. It seems to me that much of your difference with Dr. Vos is due to your taking his article to speak of heaven, whereas he was speaking of the intermediate state of the soul before it becomes rejoined with the body in the resurrection."

You see, the editor goes further than Dr. Vos and supposes that the intermediate state is also in some intermediate place, WHICH IS NOT HEAVEN. His letter is worse, in that respect, than the original article by Dr. Vos.

Later on, CHRISTIANITY TODAY publishes a direct, open attack on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, in an article that spreads out in two issues, by Cullmann, of the University of Basel and the Sorbonne in Paris. It curtly dismisses the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, as merely Greek thought, and goes into a prolonged study of the dubious faith of Socrates in a possible immortality, as if that were our theory or the source of our Lord's testimony to the truth of immortality. Of course, any Christian believes that the source of all Christ's witness was God the Father. All peoples that have arrived at a level of serious thought at all have believed in immortality. One of my students in Brazil who went out to evangelize a tribe of pagan Indians hunted for two things in their crude thought—the soul and immortality. Finally he heard an old patriarch of the tribe one day use a word and quickly asked: "What did you say? What is that?" He had found a word that corresponds to the word **soul**. Later on, he learned that when it thunders, the tribal traditions supposed that the dead chiefs are running on the floor of the upper world, hunting deer. Now you had just as well attribute primitive man's groping after immortality to be the fountain of our Lord's ample revelation of his assurance of universal immortality as to suppose that he was a mere disciple of Socrates, or that we are, in giving faith to his certainty of universal immortality. Not only Greece, but Babylon and Egypt, had their notions of immortality.

Cullmann's article is on "Immortality or Resurrection?" They are not alternatives at all. I shall reserve for another "Letter" the infidelity of Cullmann and similar foreign infidels. Here I have space only to add a few further considerations on heaven as a place now, at present inhabited by the saints on high.

Paul's language in II Cor. V, is so clear that it cannot be beclouded by any infidelity. Let me use "tent" instead of tabernacle, for tabernacle, for us, may be a great building. It is today the name of many vast church houses. Paul used the common word TENT. "FOR WE KNOW that if this earthly house of our tent be destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Note the present tenses. It does not say that WE SHALL HAVE, thousands or millions of years hence, in the resurrection, a house made ready then for our risen bodies and their incarnate spirits. This heavenly house exists right now and we have it, as a certainty, passing from the earthly tent to the heavenly home.

It is assumed by those who hold that immortality and the resurrection are alternatives that being unclothed is to be bodiless, and Paul did not desire heaven, but the resurrection, then 2,000 years later and, even now, still future. BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT PAUL SAID. He wanted to pass at once from his earthly tent to this house not made with hands, eternal, and in heaven. He saw no intermediate nakedness. He stepped from the door of one house to the other, became clothed with the heavenly house at once on leaving the present tent of his groans. To be in the body is to be physically absent from Jesus. To be absent from the body is to be fully present with Jesus, v. 8. There is no intermediate delay. Such a state would be that of being unclothed and Paul desired no such nakedness. Nor did it come upon him. And he is not now naked in some intermediate dressing room, waiting to put on his clothes, yonder in the future.

Now there are two possible interpretations of II Cor. V. One is that the house not made with hands is heaven itself, and the redeemed spirits are at home there, as bodiless as the angels, and just as happy, free and active. That is perhaps the more natural interpretation. The other is that God prepares for the spirit that enters heaven such a heavenly nature as would be adequate to its expression, to which the resurrection would add later the risen body, in the final state of human life.

My friend, what is your idea of a spirit? Is it just so much NOTHING, with a line drawn around it? Spirit is the same substance God is eternally made of. Our Confessions of Faith affirm that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of the same substance, equally. Spirit is **something**. I once tried to think spirit, but I did it negatively. I began to subtract the bodily senses and powers. I wound up having an absence of seeing (eyes), hearing (ears), feeling (nerves), thinking (brain) and so on. My "spirit" then was just a batch of nothing with a string around it in the human form. But **the string** and **the form** went with the rest of the imagination and I wound up with the equation, "Spirit equals nothing." But that is stupid. God is pure spirit. The angels are spirits. God sees. God hears prayer, but not with ears. God knows, but not by human sense organs.

Then I began to think of **spirit** positively. Spirits (God, angels, the bodiless redeemed) see, hear, feel, know, work, experience emotions, love, fellowship and power. It is just as natural for the bodiless redeemed



to have all those powers as for God to have them, for they are made in his image, and that image was never bodily, for he never had a body. So I came POSITIVELY to the full New Testament view of the full heavenly life in that blessed company of God, the angels and the redeemed. John in his REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST saw the church life of his times, as golden candlesticks, in God's ideal for them, yet very imperfect in fact. And from Patmos itself he saw "a door opened in heaven" and he went right up. And what did he find there? One of our race, our Brother Man, on the throne of this universe. And with him in that heaven, in all its glory were cherubic beings beyond our ken and with them joined every creature present in their song: "Worthy is the Lamb." We know that Lamb. He wears the human scars of Calvary. And the scene is of constant repetition of worship of that Lamb, who holds firmly the reins of all history and all destiny in his hands. And presently I see there that a "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands". Now you can't put white robes on nothing-with-a-string-around-it. And such a wraith cannot hold a palm in its hands. It has no hands. God revealed truth to John in his own language.

Then I read that John asked: "What (No. He said WHO, in the Greek. They aren't just things up there. ) are these which (who) are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" And the answer was: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and SERVE HIM DAY AND NIGHT IN HIS TEMPLE". Already had appeared a group of which John said: "I saw under the altar the souls (Well, then. You can see a soul, in heaven.) of them that were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held. (They believed something and stood up for it, even if it cost them their lives. They got white robes, too, had some kind of a frame you could dress up in heavenly garb. It is not the resurrection time yet, for a lot of fellow-martyrs were yet to be killed (Revelation 6:11) but these are safe, redeemed, and in glory. "Under the altar" is no purgatory. The Lamb offered as the Sacrifice, Sin-Bearer, Substitute and Saviour is right there on heaven's throne. Under the altar means they are under the covering blood, with the rest of the blood-washed. Now among these billions, that even angels have no arithmetic that can number, are some from every land, tongue, tribe and kindred. But a lot of these tribes on earth have never yet heard the gospel. Missions yet have a long way to go. Some of those billions from earth are babies from lands never yet evangelized who died in infancy and join in the praise of their Savior. Babies are among "the just made complete" and they join that cherubic praise of the Lamb. Like ourselves, they owe everything to that Lamb. And their life there is far more real even than our own life here on earth, at home in the body (some of us are too much at home in it) but absent from the Lord. There it is reversed: absent from the body, present before the throne and him who is enthroned, "whom not having seen we love".

Billy Graham's great word is: "The Bible says:" Why, then, does his CHRISTIANITY TODAY give space to infidelity, to deny what the Bible says so often? Men who deny immortality have no Bible and they have no song book. Our poets have sung of a contemporary heaven. They even intensify the urge to the new birth with that thought.

"A dear one in heaven thy heart longs to see,  
At the beautiful gate may be watching for thee.  
Then list to the words of this solemn refrain:  
Ye must be born again."

Heaven is our home. Let no infidel deny it.

The truth of the business is, these men who do not believe in the immortality of the soul—I do not refer to Dr. Vos—do not believe in any real resurrection. It is the continuing life of the immortal soul which constitutes the unity of the life that began here incarnate, passes as an immortal soul to the great beyond, and will be raised in a body fitted for its final destiny. Without the intervening immortal soul there is no sort of connection between the life we now live and the resurrection life. Abraham lived something less than four thousand years ago. If he is not Abraham still, in heaven, then not only has our Lord no veracity, but when God produces a new body and calls it Abraham, he, too, lacks veracity, for, under this hypothesis, it will be somebody else. Abraham's body is scattered in atoms of dust long ago. Has he been non-existent all these millenniums, in unconsciousness? A resurrection that starts off with a wholly new being, called Abraham, is no resurrection. It is a -surrection, a new creation, a wholly unconnected start of a new existence. The truth is not either/or. It is both, for when infidelity loses the immortality of the soul, it loses the RE-surrection of the body, too. The resurrection body is not identity with the old body that died. "God giveth it a body", is the story of the continuing life in the seed, the sprouting and the standing corn. And God will give immortal souls the body which continues their life in its third and final phase. If you don't believe in the immortality of the soul, you don't believe in any resurrection, for there is no one to rise again. The continuing immortal soul is the link between.

*It sounded strange at the Convention, in Houston, to hear you mention retiring. I had not thought of that impending loss.*  
W. C. TAYLOR  
W.C.T.