

Coming Back to Life in and through Death: Early Christian Creativity in Paul, Ignatius, and Valentinus

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Abstract:

This paper examines notions of coming back to life *in/through* death in the writings of Paul and two of his second century interpreters: Ignatius of Antioch and Valentinus. I demonstrate that, in the Pauline tradition, there are many ways of mapping notions of death and life to the human body. My departure point is 2 Corinthians 3–4, where notions of *life in death* and *life through death* are configured in relation to recurrent spatial metaphors of verticality, proximity, and containment. With these spatial mappings in view, I turn next to Ignatius of Antioch and Valentinus, demonstrating that the conceptual tension Paul proposes in 2 Corinthians tends to be parsed out and prioritised differently among his early readers. Ignatius and Valentinus utilise the same spatial categories as Paul, though they do so with different emphases: Ignatius stresses all the same somatic spaces, though he does so with a different connective logic; Valentinus, on the other hand, tends to prioritise notions of proximity and containment over those of verticality. In the end, though Paul is quite forthcoming regarding the body and its place in his resurrection ideals, his early readers build on and modify this somatic element. Paul's thinking about resurrection is marbled by interpretive creativity that attempts to negotiate both the apostle's own writings and the lines between death and life for those who follow in his footsteps.

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Coming Back to Life in and through Death: Early Christian Creativity in Paul, Ignatius, and Valentinus¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

Few figures in the early Christian movement were so variously understood and vigorously interpreted as the apostle Paul. Prominent within the spectrum of early Pauline interpretation are issues of resurrection and the nature of risen bodies. In this paper I explore trajectories of Pauline Christianity that emerge in the first two centuries of the Common Era. I am specifically interested in how Christ-devotees of this period understand themselves to be embodying death and coming back to life. I will demonstrate that, in the Pauline tradition, there are many ways of mapping notions of death and life to the human body; that, though Paul is quite forthcoming regarding the body and its place in his resurrection ideals, among his early readers we find a vast array of interpretive options and opinions. This is evident already in the earliest post-Pauline voices. For example, both the Epistle to the Colossians and the text we know as Ephesians build upon Pauline ideas of dying with Christ, while casting notions of resurrection within an explicitly realised framework (see [Col 2:11–15](#); [3:1–17](#); [Eph 2:1–10](#)). These texts are usually located within a trajectory of thought that is traced

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back to Paul,² and indeed related themes are pregnant in Paul's writings (comp. [Rom 6:1-14](#)).³ But with equal weight, one cannot miss the apostle's very clear expectation of resurrection as a future event (e.g., [1 Cor 15](#); [2 Cor 5:1-5](#); [1 Thess 4:13-18](#)), and this is brought forward into the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians and subtly in the much later Pastorals (cf. [2 Tim 2:18](#)). The memory of Paul's thinking about resurrection, it seems, is marbled by interpretive creativity; creativity that attempts to negotiate both the apostle's own writings and the lines between death and life for those who follow in his footsteps.

One of the main axes on which early Christian creativity turns is that of temporality—*when has/will resurrection happen/ed*—and indeed, this is where much modern discussion has taken place.⁴ But Paul and his early interpreters should not be so quickly put into a simple already/not-yet binary. Even a cursory reading of the sources quickly demonstrates that Paul utilises cosmological and somatic categories as much as he does temporal categories (see Tappenden 2016). In this paper I explore some of the conceptual mechanisms at work in early Pauline interpretive creativity as they relate to issues of death, life, and resurrection. My analysis will be anchored in the conceptual intertextures of 2 Cor 3-4, and the ensuing discussion will explore how two second-century readers of Paul—Ignatius of Antioch and Valentinus—make use of the conceptual structures identified therein. I make no explicit claim to textual dependence, as if to say that Ignatius and Valentinus knew 2 Cor 3-4, or that they (un)consciously sought to read/interpret this specific Pauline passage. My interest is less in the exegetical use of Paul (e.g., citations or echoes) but rather in the extent to which Pauline modes of thought impress themselves upon these later writers, shaping

² See, for example, Wedderburn 1987 or Käsemann 1969.

³ For more, see my previous work on the subject (Tappenden 2016).

⁴ See Lehtipuu (2015, 159-201) for a recent and thorough engagement of the issues surrounding resurrection and temporality in early Christian literature.

their mindsets and dictating their practices.⁵ That is to say, I am interested in patterns of thought that are shared by Paul and those who self-consciously imitate/idealise him.

II. PAUL

Though it is generally recognised that Paul's resurrection ideals are bodily ideals, ancient and modern readers alike usually take up this dictum into debates about the precise nature of resurrected bodies. Surprisingly, much less emphasis is given to how Paul uses language of death and coming-back-to-life to frame human experience here-and-now. Such a usage can be demonstrated in [2 Cor 4](#), the passage with which this study begins.

In its present form, 2 Corinthians is a composite text consisting of various fragments that stem from a series of correspondences in the middle of the first century CE (cf. Mitchell 2005). For various reasons, distrust has festered between the Corinthians and Paul, and the former have been impressed by a certain group of Judean Christ-devotees who speak of ascent to heaven and other ecstatic experiences as the true signs of an apostle. Faced with the prospect of losing this *ekklēsia* to these so-called “super-apostles” ([2 Cor 11:5](#)), Paul offers in our fragment (preserved in 2 Cor 2:14–6:13 and 7:2–4) a reasoned and cordial, though also acute, intervention. The key passage is 2 Cor 3:12–4:18, where the apostle draws on the same kinds of traditions as his “super-apostle” counterparts, but does so in ways that creatively reconfigure those traditions.⁶

Before turning to the passage in detail, it will be helpful first to say a brief word regarding the kinds of themes I am looking for, and

⁵ Scholars generally agree that Ignatius did not know 2 Corinthians (Foster 2005; Holmes 2007, 174–75; cf. Koester 2000, 2:284). For Valentinus, there is some thematic overlap between [Frag. 6 \(= G\)](#) and [2 Cor 3:2–18](#), specifically with respect to the humanity-as-writing metaphor (cf. Perrin 2011, 129). Beyond this, however, our knowledge of Valentinus is so scant that we cannot make a secure judgment concerning his knowledge of 2 Corinthians.

⁶ This examination of 2 Cor 3–4 draws on my previous work. For a full discussion, see Tappenden 2016, 190–207.

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the theoretical framework in which those themes are identified. In recent decades, cognitive linguists have made important contributions to our understanding of the relationship between language, thought, and practice.⁷ For these theorists, *concepts* are understood to be *embodied*, and metaphor is understood as a ubiquitous aspect of human cognition. So, for example, basic spatial concepts such as UP–DOWN, NEAR–FAR, and IN–OUT are understood to emerge organically from the kinds of bodies we have functioning in the kinds of environments in which we live. We learn these concepts because we have bodies that exist within a world where things can be above or below us, near or far from us, or where we can move into and out of things. Mark Johnson's (1987, 21) description of the CONTAINER schema is an excellent example of what is meant by the embodied foundations of concepts:

Our encounter with containment and boundedness is one of the most pervasive features of our bodily experience. . . . From the beginning, we experience constant physical containment in our surroundings (those things that envelope us). We move in and out of rooms, clothes, vehicles, and numerous kinds of bounded spaces. We manipulate objects, placing them in containers (cups, boxes, cans, bags, etc.). In each of these cases there are repeatable spatial and temporal organisations. In other words, there are typical schemata for physical containment.

⁷ See especially Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987; and Fauconnier and Turner 2002. The intellectual roots of these theorists' works are somewhat opaque. To my knowledge a full intellectual history of the cognitive linguistic project has not been written, though some have offered cursory reflections (cf. Wolf 1994, 38–41). Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 97–98) briefly trace their project back to the work of phenomenologists such as John Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, though their discussion at this point is quite general and does not offer a detailed or thorough engagement. One of the richer assessments, even if it is not focused on cognitive linguistics specifically, is the work of Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991, 15–33), which engages both Western and Eastern philosophical and scientific traditions.

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Such “repeatable spatial and temporal organisations” can also be identified for notions of verticality and proximity (cf. Johnson 1987, xiv and 14–21). Another way of putting all this is to say that we understand concepts such as VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT because we first experience these concepts with our bodies. And, as a correlate, this embodied grounding renders such concepts both intuitive and readily perceptible. Cognition and performance, then, are interrelated inasmuch as the substance of thought is found in everyday happenings and practices.

When considering Paul’s address to the Corinthians, it is precisely these kinds of basic concepts—VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT—that are of interest in this study. How do these concepts relate to one another? How are they creatively blended, and are there recurrent patterns of blending? How are these concepts employed in the process of Paul’s and his interpreters’ construction of meaning? In answering questions such as these, the insights drawn from cognitive linguistics carry implications that are far-reaching, for conceptual and theological abstractions are always configured and understood metaphorically in relation to the concrete. And indeed, this is what we see Paul doing, even if his descriptions are at times convoluted.

The primary passage in 2 Corinthians that will command our attention is [4:7–18](#). In the broader epistolary context—throughout the address of 2:14–6:13—Paul employs a series of container metaphors that continually contrast and complement that which is IN to that which is OUT. At the fragment’s outset ([2:14–15](#)), Paul’s address is geared toward public (= outward) displays of credentials, and at its conclusion, Paul invites his readers into one another’s hearts (= inward) with the hope that such inward conjoining will produce external boasting ([6:11–13](#); [7:2–4](#)). In [3:2–3](#), Paul characterises the Corinthians as letters written on the human *καρδία*, and this somatically inward letter stands in contrast to the (external) documents of papyrus that others might demand. The theme carries on into ch. 5 (esp. [vv. 11–17](#)), where Paul hopes that the Corinthians will boast about their knowledge of Paul that exists in their

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“conscience” (συνείδησις), not like the super-apostles who “boast in appearances [πρόσωπον] but not in the heart [καρδία]” (5:12). This somatic mapping finds clearest articulation, however, in 3:12–4:6, where Paul contrasts Moses, the one who ascended to the presence of God, with those who are in Christ, who similarly ascend to the presence of God, though are privy to see the face of God’s Great Glory, Jesus (4:6). While the ascent of the former was mountainous, the ascent of the latter is somatic; the one who sees the face of Christ does so not at a mountainous/heavenly pinnacle but rather in their own body’s interior—indeed, in their “heart” (καρδία, 3:15–16). For Paul, ascent to heaven is simultaneously a movement into the body.⁸ In all of this, Paul blends notions of VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT together to create conceptual correlations between that which is UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT.

It comes as little surprise, then, that our passage opens in 4:7 with the metaphor of a clay jar. Here, the human body is characterised not only for its container-like quality, but also for the frailty and temporariness of its earthly state. I cite the passage here at length:

But we have this treasure in clay jars. . . . We are being afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying the death of Jesus in the body, so that the life of Jesus might also be revealed in our bodies [πάντοτε τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν φανερωθῇ]. For we who are living are always being delivered over into death for Jesus’s sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh [ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φανερωθῇ ἐν τῇ θνητῇ σαρκὶ ἡμῶν]. So death is at work in us [ἐν ἡμῖν], but life in you [ἐν ὑμῖν]. . . .

Therefore, we are not discouraged, because even though our outer person [ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος] is being destroyed, our inner person [ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν] is being renewed day by day. For our slight momentary affliction is bringing about for us an

⁸ It should be noted that this correlation finds resonance in Judean literature from the same period and just after (cf. Morray-Jones 2006).

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eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, [because] we are looking not at what can be seen but [at] what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. ([2 Cor 4:7-18](#))

Paul maps notions of life and death to the spatial coordinates of the body, specifically the somatic interior and exterior. There are two key points I want to make regarding the passage. First is the recognition that Paul draws these connections not in ways that advocate strong binaries between opposites, but rather in ways that are premised on the interrelation of opposites. That which is IN *affects* that which is OUT; that which is UP *affects* that which is DOWN, and so on. There is a dynamic of mutual affectivity at work in Paul's understanding of the body here, such that distinct parts are seen to stand in both coherence and tension with each other. For this reason, Paul's use of the body thematic is developed not so much in the specific definitions that he gives to body parts and terminology, but more in the relationships that exist between spatial coordinates. How does that which is ABOVE the body relate to that which is BELOW, that which is FAR from the body relate to that which is NEAR, and crucially, that which is OUTSIDE of the body relate to that which is INSIDE? In 2 Corinthians (and throughout the undisputed letters; see Tappenden 2016), these somatic coordinates exist symbiotically, which is to say that they are premised on interrelated connectivity and mutual dependence.

This mutual dependence between somatic spaces is explicit in [4:7-18](#). The *death* of the exterior produces *life* on the interior, which in turn produces *life* on the exterior. Death *now* effects a coming-back-to-life *now* and a coming-back-to-life *then*. Crucially, the temporal referent is both present and future; thus Paul speaks of "always being delivered over into death for Jesus's sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh" ([v. 11](#), the present dimension), and he contrasts outer and inner persons (the $\epsilon\acute{\xi}\omega$ and $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\sigma\omega$ $\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$) with a teleological eye toward the invisible and the eternal ([vv. 16-18](#), the future dimension). While the goal of coming back to life is certainly anchored in the future, in the present there is

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a revivification process that is worked out on the spatial coordinates of the human body.

The second point, which builds on the first, is that Paul's logic of somatic interrelation and mutual dependence has specific communal import.⁹ The sufferings and hardships that Paul and his apostolic counterparts endure are done not in isolation but rather on behalf of the Corinthians. No doubt this plays into the apostle's polemic with the so-called super-apostles. The logic is as follows: what happens to individuals (in this case, Paul and his companions) affects the community (the Corinthians). So Paul, "death is at work in us [ἐν ἡμῖν], but life in you [ἐν ὑμῖν]" ([4:12](#); see also [v. 15](#)). In this way, Paul's suffering/dying produces life for the Corinthians.

Paul's resurrection ideals, then, are both individually and socially embodied. They are coordinated to the spatial parameters of the human body and are played out in the relationship between those somatic spaces. By employing the human body in this way, Paul is able to interchange creatively notions of VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT. This is seen in [vv. 16–18](#), where the temporal present and future (i.e., NEAR and FAR) are brought into coordination with the somatic interior and exterior (i.e., IN and OUT). The text reads as follows:

⁹ This communal import is already seen in [3:12–18](#), where Paul develops this dynamic of mutual-affectivity with respect to communities and their idealised figures. There is a movement in these verses from somatic exterior to interior and back again. It begins in [3:13–15](#), where the veiling of Moses's face (OUT) in turn effects a veil on the hearts (IN) of those who read Moses, and continues in [3:16–18](#) where those who ascend to Christ have the interior veil (IN) removed such that their exterior face (OUT) is similarly unveiled. This latter movement from interior to exterior is less explicit in the text but is conveyed perhaps in the mirror metaphor of [3:18](#); it is a determinative limitation of the human body that one is unable to see one's own face without an external reflective aid, and a mirror enables such sight. For Paul, the mirror metaphor is a way of characterising the unveiled, already radiant inner heart looking out at the external, earthly face in anticipation of future pneumatic glory. For more, see Tappenden 2016, 193–99.

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Therefore, we are not discouraged, because even though our outer person [ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἀνθρώπος] is being destroyed, our inner person [ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν] is being renewed day by day. For our slight momentary affliction is bringing about for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, [because] we are looking not at what can be seen but [at] what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. ([2 Cor 4:7-18](#))

Where is this *unseen renewed-life* to be found? I suggest it is both interior and upward. Where is the temporal referent in this text? I suggest that it is both now and then. That is to say, that which is “unseen” is itself embodied; it is both the transformed somatic interior that looks upon the face of God ([4:7](#)), and it is also the future risen body that will one day be transformed into a heavenly form. Hence where Paul’s address moves next, as he goes on immediately in [5:1-10](#) to discuss the heavenly body ([vv. 1-5](#)) and then to speak of the interplay between earthly and heavenly somatic states ([vv. 6-10](#)). In all these ways, we find in [2 Cor 4:7-18](#) a vision of the apostle and his communities *coming back to life* as he/they *simultaneously die*.

It would seem, then, that for Paul death and life, mortality and immortality, present and future mutually interlace each other within the apostolic body and its relation to the Corinthian community. In Paul we find a dynamic of mutual affectivity that is elaborated somatically in relation to concepts of VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT. By blending spatial concepts such as UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT, Paul is able to conceptualise the process of coming back to life in various ways. He can at once express both life *in* death (movement from OUT to IN) and life *through* death (movement from DOWN/FAR to UP/NEAR). The two notions are isomorphic. In fact, the blending of these spatial orientations creates a kind of interpretive richness in Paul’s writings. The conceptual complexity of UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT betrays a robustness in Paul’s thought that should not be easily parsed out or separated. Accordingly, here, as elsewhere in the undisputed letters,

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we encounter the Pauline conviction that bodies matter; in this instance, it is with respect to the permeability of life and death, and the insistence that both individuals and communities encounter death (DOWN/FAR/OUT) and life (UP/NEAR/IN) in their somatic selves and their communal identities. In [2 Cor 4:7–18](#), bodies serve not only to connect Christ-devotees to one another, but they also function as the primary carriers and spaces in which death and coming back to life are realised.

III. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

We have seen that correlated blends of UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT constitute a rich conceptual web within Paul's address to the Corinthians. How might these conceptual configurations be received and used by those who self-consciously follow in Paul's footsteps? In this section and the next I explore the surviving writings of two early and roughly contemporaneous readers of Paul's letters: Ignatius of Antioch and Valentinus. There is nothing about these two figures that naturally links them, other than the fact that they both admire and seek to emulate Paul, and further that they, like Paul, hold convictions about notions of coming back to life that permeate their thinking and practices. Of particular interest are the ways that Ignatius and Valentinus configure notions of death and coming back to life via concepts of VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT. In the analysis that follows I explore the extent to which shared patterns of description can be found between the writings of these two figures, and further how those patterns compare with Paul's blending of the same concepts.

We know of Ignatius principally from the seven letters that bear his name.¹⁰ In this series of epistles, which were penned presumably in the early to mid-second century,¹¹ the self-identified bishop of Antioch is currently in transit under imperial escort to Rome where

¹⁰ With the majority of modern scholars, I take as genuine the sevenfold Ignatian corpus (see Foster 2005, 2007; Holmes 2007).

¹¹ Cf. Holmes 2007, 167. On the date of Ignatius, see Foster 2005; Holmes 2007.

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he expects he will die. In many ways, the bishop's journey from Syria to Italy is more spectacle than history (cf. Schoedel 1985, 11–12). Exactly what has precipitated Ignatius's journey is not known; what is clear is that the prospect of death stands squarely before him. It is perhaps because of this strong realisation that Ignatius turns unequivocally to the heroes of his faith—especially Paul. His writings are replete with reflections on impending death and are self-stylised in a way that imitates the Pauline epistles.¹²

However else we read Ignatius's letters, we must see them within the context of one who believes that his expectations of coming back to life are about to be tested.¹³ On more than one occasion he insists that he is “not yet perfected in Jesus Christ” and that he is “only beginning to be a disciple” ([Eph. 3.1](#); see also [Eph. 1.2](#); [Pol. 7.1](#)); similarly, it is only when death and suffering are complete that Ignatius will “rise up free in [Christ]” ([Rom. 4.3](#)).¹⁴ The relation of life to death advocated here takes a more linear focus: life follows death rather than emanating within it,¹⁵ and resurrection remains

¹² See, in part, Reis (2005), but also Smith (2011) and Pervo (2010). Like Paul, Ignatius travels from east to west, writing letters, encouraging and warning various *ekklēsiai*, and ultimately welcoming suffering (and death) as the medium/means of true life in Christ. On this point, Pervo (2010, 138) notes: “he was following the path of the great apostle. Ignatius knew, identified with, and imitated Paul as an itinerant, a writer of letters, and a leader who suffered for his faith.”

¹³ Paul Foster (2007, 102) rightly notes that the “prospect of death in Rome shaped Ignatius's thinking and the rhetoric he employed throughout all seven [of his] epistles.”

¹⁴ Translations of Ignatius are either my own or, when indicated, from Holmes 2007 (at times with slight alteration); the embedded hyperlinks connect to the older Loeb edition (Lake 1912–1913).

¹⁵ For example, death is the necessary passageway through which one “attain[s] God” (θεοῦ τευξόμεθα, *Magn.* 1.3 [[≈ 1.2](#) in Lake 1912–1913]; see also [Rom. 1.2](#); [4.2](#); [5.3](#)). This is expressly clear in the *Epistle to the Magnesians*, where the bishop insists that Christ's life is “in us” (ἐν ἡμῖν) only if we “freely choose to die into his sufferings” (ἐὰν . . . ἀθαιρέτως ἔχωμεν τὸ ἀποθανεῖν εἰς τὸ αὐτοῦ πάθος, [5.2](#)). The statement is made in the context of employing a two-ways theology so as to insist, “all things have an end, and two things together

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squarely in the future (for example, [Trall. Salutation](#); [9.2](#); [Pol. 2.3](#)).¹⁶ In the *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, for example, God is described as the believer's "reward," and the Smyrnaeans are to "endure all things" so as to "attain him" ([9.2](#)).¹⁷ Earlier in that same letter ([Smyrn. 4.2–5.3](#)), in a passage presumably formulated with docetic ideologies in mind, Ignatius makes an experiential appeal:

For if these things were done by our Lord in appearance only, then I am in chains in appearance only. Why, moreover, have I surrendered myself to death, to fire, to sword, to beasts? But in any case, "near the sword" [ἐγγὺς μαχαίρας] means "near to God" [ἐγγὺς θεοῦ]; "in the middle of the beasts" [μεταξὺ θηρίων] means "in the middle of God" [μεταξὺ θεοῦ]. Only let it be in the name of Jesus Christ, so that I may suffer together with him [συμπαθεῖν αὐτῷ]! I endure everything because he himself, who is the perfect human being, empowers me. ([Smyrn. 4.2](#); trans. Holmes 2007, slightly adapted)

The spatial metaphors are worth noting in detail. Ignatius blends both "suffering" and "God" into a single location; being *with* or *in* death means being *with* or *in* God. Outi Lehtipuu (2015, 167 and 170) notes the ambiguity that surrounds *resurrection* in Ignatius's letters, particularly highlighting this blurring of suffering/death with expectations of coming-back-to-life. For Lehtipuu, this ambiguity reflects broader trends within martyrological literature whereby "the suffering and death of the martyr is his or her resurrection. . . . resurrection [is] a direct ascent to heaven" (p. 170). In a way, then, Ignatius does integrate life *into* death, and for this reason it is not surprising that he too, like Paul, speaks of "suffer[ing] together with

lie before [us], death and life" ([Magn. 5.1](#)). Here, the way of life is marked not so much by wisdom or righteousness, but rather by martyrdom.

¹⁶ Eschatology is generally muted in the Ignatian letters. For example, there is no discussion of a future judgment/setting right (Schoedel 1985, 18 and 20–21; see also Koester 2000, 2:286).

¹⁷ The notion of "attaining God" is frequent across the Ignatian letters (occurring some 19 times) and is always expressed as a future possibility (as noted in Schoedel 1985, 28–29).

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[Christ]” (συμπαθεῖν αὐτῷ, [4.2](#)).¹⁸ But for Ignatius, the experience of suffering/death is of a different kind than it was for Paul. Death and life are certainly intertwined, though the bishop’s expectation is absolute in nature (i.e., an encounter with God in *conclusive* suffering and death) while the apostle’s is more dynamic (i.e., an encounter with God in the midst of *ongoing* suffering and death). For Ignatius, life is not so much being realised in the present as it is beckoning from the grave.¹⁹ This betrays a life *through* death rather than a life *in* death pattern.

Much like Paul in 2 Corinthians, Ignatius too develops the theme of individual-affecting-community, though for him the direction of impact is reversed. Central here are metaphors of VERTICALITY, which are developed with respect to the hierarchy of ecclesial offices and the rhetoric of concord. Thus, for Ignatius, “ecclesial harmony manifests, imitates, and arises from divine concord” (Maier 2005, 314; cf. [Eph. 3–6](#); [Magn. 2–3, 6–7, 12–14](#); [Trall. 2–3](#)).²⁰ In such a formulation there is a blending of VERTICALITY and CONTAINMENT; because earthly concord (DOWN) imitates divine concord (UP), social boundaries of unity (IN/OUT) are understood as manifestations of celestial order. Accordingly, UP and IN are blended, though Ignatius elaborates these spatial categories not with a view toward coming back to life (as Paul does), but rather with an eye toward establishing communal unity to bolster his bid for life *through* death.²¹ That is to

¹⁸ See also [Magn. 5.3](#), where Jesus’s passion is understood as believers’ resurrection.

¹⁹ Ignatius’s strong sense of *telos* is evident in the fact that when he talks about death he also talks about resurrection (e.g., [Phil. 9.2](#)), which indicates the sense of progression he presumes: one leads to the other.

²⁰ While Ignatius at times draws comparisons with divine and apostolic figures (e.g., [Trall. 3.1](#)), emphasis is consistently placed upon obedience to the bishop; so Foster (2007, 94), “the relationship of believers to the bishop reflects the union between the Church and Jesus, and that of Jesus to the Father ([Eph. 5.1](#)).”

²¹ Hence Ignatius’s plea to the Romans: “Pray for me, that I may reach the goal. I write to you not according to human perspective [*κατὰ σάρκα*] but in

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say, Ignatius deploys his stress on communal oneness in a way that reverses Paul's logic of one-affecting-all. It is not that Ignatius's sufferings benefit those who read him, but rather that the oneness and concord of his addresses enables his own *achievement of God*. Accordingly, when writing to the Romans, Ignatius insists that their inactivity and their silence plays an active role in enabling his martyrdom ([Rom. 7.1](#)). Whereas martyrdom is reserved only for certain figures, concord and ecclesial oneness are the proper activities to which all Christ-devotees should ascribe (Maier 2005). To eschew such concord and oneness is to engage in a "schismatic" ($\sigma\chi\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$), and those who do so "will not inherit the kingdom of God" ($\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \omicron\upsilon\ \kappa\lambda\eta\rho\omicron\nu\omicron\mu\epsilon\acute{\iota}$, [Phil. 3.3](#)). The *telos* of "attaining God"—of gaining life *through* death—is achieved not only through martyrdom (as for select individuals) but also through proper concord, harmony, and oneness (for communities).

This is not to say that notions of death's permeability are only teleological in Ignatius's writings. In his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, the bishop notes that believers have already been "rekindled" (or "inflamed with new life" [$\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\zeta\omega\pi\upsilon\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$], [1.1](#)),²² and he describes the eucharistic bread as "the medicine of immortality, the antidote which [we take] not to die but to live in Jesus Christ through all [things]" ([20.2](#)). For Ignatius, there is a sense in which the lines between death and life are eroded in ritual performance; as also in Luke, the meal functions as an encounter with both Christ's crucified and risen bodies ([Smyrn. 6.2](#); comp. [Luke 22](#) and [24](#); on Luke, see Tappenden 2012).²³ Both sides of the Christ narrative are maintained, and

accordance with the mind of God [$\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \gamma\nu\acute{\omega}\mu\eta\nu\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$]" ([Rom. 8.3](#); trans. Holmes 2007).

²² Similarly, Ignatius is quite happy to envision the Ephesians as engaged in celestial worship, "hoisted up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross" ([Eph. 9.1](#)). This brings the eschatological into the present.

²³ Though note, Ignatius refers not to the "body and blood" of Christ in the Eucharist but rather to the "flesh and blood" of Christ (cf. [Phil. 4.1](#); [Smyrn. 6.2](#); see also [Smyrn. 3.2](#)). The Gospel of Luke contains its own variety here, speaking both of the "body . . . [and] new covenant in my blood" ([22:19–20](#)) while also describing the risen Christ "being made known in the breaking

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Ignatius's own conviction regarding his impending suffering and coming back to life is likened to the post-apparition experiences of the apostles:

For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection; and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: "Take hold of me; handle me and see that I am not a disembodied demon." And immediately they touched him and believed, being closely united with his flesh and blood [*κραθέντες τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ αἵματι*]. For this reason they too despised death; indeed, they proved to be greater than death. And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them like one who is composed of flesh, although spiritually he was united with the Father. (*Smyrn. 3.1–3*; trans. Holmes 2007)

The language here is not only that of PROXIMITY but also of CONTAINMENT—the verb *κραθέντες* (aorist passive participle from *κεράννυμι*) draws from a culinary frame so as to indicate the “mixing” of separate substances (e.g., water and wine) into a single product. One thing is put *into* another, an image of blending that is complemented by (presumed) eucharistic echoes whereby bread and drink are similarly consumed *into* those who partake.²⁴ For Ignatius, those who take hold of the Lord's flesh/blood in a meal context take on life within themselves.²⁵

of the bread” ([24:28–43](#)). In this latter instance, the risen body of Christ is identified not so much for what it is but for what it is not; namely, it is not a “spirit” (*πνεῦμα*). For a recent treatment of the development of and discourse that surrounds intra-Christian disputes about resurrection of the flesh, see Lehtipuu 2015.

²⁴ The echoes are particularly strong when [Luke 24](#) is seen as one of the possible intertexts. In the Gospel, it is the *risen* Christ, who already had suffered, that is recognised when bread is broken ([Luke 24:30–31](#)).

²⁵ Indeed, for Ignatius the Lord's day is that “on which our life arose through him and his death,” and it is this conviction that serves as the grounds in which Ignatius's present suffering is rooted and which provides life in which all Christians can live ([Magn. 9.1](#)).

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Taking the above together, there is a tendency within the epistles of Ignatius to individualise the process of suffering, death, and coming back to life. Though he does, like Paul, set bodily experience within the framework of communal oneness and unity, Ignatius nevertheless relegates the dynamic interplay of life and death to the suffering, individual body of the martyr. Ignatius does hold to a notion of present interior life (as does Paul), but this life is not enacted through an ongoing process of *death-affecting-life*. Instead, the attainment of life remains a future hope; one comes back to life *through* death.²⁶ For Ignatius, conceptual categories of UP/DOWN,²⁷ NEAR/FAR,²⁸ and IN/OUT²⁹ coalesce, though the centre of gravity has shifted. Paul touts suffering as the mechanism of ongoing life in Christ, while Ignatius objectifies suffering as the final passageway to life in Christ. Accordingly, there is a tendency in Ignatius to emphasise life *through* death rather than life *in* death.³⁰

IV. VALENTINUS

Valentinus was a second-century philosophical teacher who was born in the Egyptian delta.³¹ The surviving fragments of his works are few, but their use of rhetoric, philosophy, and scriptural exegesis

²⁶ Indeed, the eucharistic meal seems more oriented toward life than death—the Lord’s Supper is “the medicine of immortality” (*Eph. 20.2*), and consciously abstaining from the meal causes one to “perish” (*Smyrn. 7.1*). When compared with Paul, there is an incongruence here inasmuch as death does not lead to life but is rather the consequence of abstaining.

²⁷ For Paul, ascent to heaven; for Ignatius, proper hierarchical order in the *ekklēsia*.

²⁸ For Paul, ascent to the Great Glory (i.e., Christ); for Ignatius, proximity to Christ’s risen flesh in the eucharistic bread.

²⁹ For Paul, oneness with the Lord, the spirit; for Ignatius, sharing the mind of God/Christ.

³⁰ This point must be held tentatively, for the circumstances that surround Ignatius’s letters necessitate that we not push the conclusion too far. Indeed, Ignatius’s strong teleology may well be reflective of his imminent suffering.

³¹ Layton (1987, 217) locates Valentinus’s birth in Phrebonis, though it is not clear from what source Layton draws this information.

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nevertheless betray a learned author.³² While it is possible that Valentinus began and ended his career in Alexandria,³³ by the early mid-second century CE (ca. 130) he relocated to Rome and became active among the Christ-devotee communities there. The few indications we have suggest that Valentinus was not marginalised at Rome but rather experienced some degree of (at least initial) acceptance in establishing his own school of Christian thought.³⁴ As for Valentinus's relationship to Paul, the surviving fragments indicate the former knew at least Paul's Epistle to the Romans³⁵ and perhaps even [2 Cor 3:2–18](#).³⁶ Given his placement in the early to mid second century, we are justified in presuming his awareness of other Pauline letters, perhaps as part of a collection.³⁷ We are on firmer

³² For example, they betray Valentinus's breadth of literary abilities (sermons, letters/treatises, poems) and conceptual and ecclesial impact (e.g., he is Christocentric, he was influenced by Greek philosophy [both Platonic and Stoic thought] and likely some form of Sethianism).

³³ It is noteworthy that virtually all of the surviving fragments of his writings come from Alexandrian sources.

³⁴ Ismo Dunderberg (2005, 72) rightly notes that, "unlike Marcion, [Valentinus] was never expelled from the Roman Christian community," and Tertullian relates that Valentinus even ran for bishop of Rome but lost to another who had confessed his faith in the midst of persecution (Tertullian, *Val.* 4.1–2 [[≈ ch. 4 in ANF](#)]).

³⁵ See esp. [Frag. 5 \(= D\)](#) and [6 \(= G\)](#), of which Layton (1987) notes connections with Romans. Clement of Alexandria ([Strom. 7.17](#)) notes that some later Valentinians from Alexandria insisted that Valentinus himself claimed to have been taught by a certain Theudas, who in turn had been taught by Paul. The reliability of this tradition is unknown but doubtful. That said, however, it is impossible to offer any kind of global or systematic assessment of Valentinus's ideas and teachings—so Einar Thomassen (2006, 430), the fragments "do not allow the reconstruction of a coherent body of teachings in the sense of the preserved Valentinian systems . . . [and it remains] doubtful whether Valentinus ever put such a system into writing."

³⁶ As noted above (n. 5), Perrin (2011, 129) draws attention to the humanity-as-writing metaphor in both texts.

³⁷ Pervo (2010, 23–62) argues that the first collection of Pauline letters was compiled in Ephesus, ca. 100 CE. On the canonisation of Paul, specifically the

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ground, however, in the writings of later Valentinians, which clearly betray knowledge and approval of the apostle's writings.³⁸

Only a handful of fragments from the writings of Valentinus survive, and those that do are not without problems;³⁹ they are embedded in contexts of intra-Christian conflict and refutation. Accordingly, caution and nuance are required. For the purposes of this study I want to focus specifically on [Frag. 4 \(= F\)](#),⁴⁰ which reads as follows:

From the beginning you [plur.] have been immortal, and you are children of eternal life. And you wanted death to be allocated into yourselves [εἰς ἑαυτοὺς] so that you might spend it and use it up, and that death might die in you and through you [ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι' ὑμῶν]. For when you nullify the world and are not yourselves annihilated, you are lord over creation and all corruption. (trans. Layton 1987, slightly adapted)

The fragment is known to us from Clement's *Stromata* (4.89.1–5 [[≈ 4.13 in ANF](#)]), where it is identified as originating from one of Valentinus's homilies (4.89.1). Beyond this we know very little of its origin,⁴¹ and its precise focus/intent is debated. For Clement this

shape and interpretive import of specific Pauline collections, see Scherbenske 2013.

³⁸ See especially Pagels 1992. According to Pervo (2010, 210–11), Valentinian texts betray knowledge of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and Hebrews.

³⁹ For a succinct overview of the fragments and their authenticity, see Dunderberg 2005, 73 (n. 38). Though Layton (1987, 251) also attributes to Valentinus the so-called Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi Codex I, this is by no means certain nor generally accepted (cf. Thomassen 2006, 146–47).

⁴⁰ Fragment numbers correspond to Völker 1932; letters to Layton 1987. The Greek text of [Frag. 4 \[= F\]](#) is from Camelot 1951–; both the English translation and embedded hyperlinks are from Layton 1987.

⁴¹ Layton (1987, 240) suggests the language of composition was probably Greek and the provenance likely Alexandria (since the fragment comes to us from Clement). Further, it is worth noting that in the lines following this fragment (4.89.6–90.1 [[≈ 4.13 in ANF](#)]) Clement cites another statement of

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citation betrays two supposed aspects of Valentinus's thought: (a) the assertion of a special/unique "race" or "class saved by nature" who are to abolish death, and (b) the assertion that death originated in the creator god (= the god of the Hebrew scriptures). Modern scholarship has questioned the extent to which Valentinus held these beliefs. For some, Valentinus is speaking critically of other Christian understandings of either the Eucharist or of martyrdom.⁴² Others, however, suggest Valentinus is speaking not to opposing interlocutors but rather to his students; that is to say, "Valentinus [does] not condemn the attempts of his addressees to 'use up' death . . . [but rather insists that such] attempts lead to a *positive* outcome: [namely, the demise of death]" (Dunderberg 2008, 37; emphasis original). For Ismo Dunderberg (2008, 39–42), the fragment speaks toward both practical and ethical ends: Valentinus seeks to instil in his pupils a strong sense of immortality that affects self-mastery here-and-now (hence what it means to "nullify the world"). In many ways this is not unlike Paul's logic in [Rom 6:1–14](#), where believers are to take on Christ's death so as to live in self-mastery (cf. Tappenden 2016, 135–63), or even 2 Cor 3–4, where Paul and his apostolic counterparts embody suffering/death so as to impart life to the Corinthian *ekklesia*. Following Dunderberg, I want to press this line of interpretation, first relating [Frag. 4 \(= F\)](#) to 2 Cor 3–4, after which I will turn briefly to the Treatise on the Resurrection, a later text that likely emerges from the Valentinian school and which similarly conveys ideas of coming back to life in/through death.

The intertextual contours of [Frag. 4 \(= F\)](#) are immediately worth highlighting. Dunderberg (2008, 37–39) rightly notes that certain interpretations of Gen 2–3 find resonance with this fragment. What makes Valentinus's interpretation of Genesis "exceptional," Dunderberg suggests, is the positive view that is given to death's

Valentinus ([Frag. 5 \[= D\]](#)); it is possible the two come from the same homily (Layton 1987, 236).

⁴² So argued by Paul Schüngel (1996) and Jens Holzhausen (2005), conveniently summarised in Dunderberg (2008, 36–37).

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bestowal; the fall “leads not to [humanity’s] destruction, but to the destruction of death” (p. 38). Building upon this, I see no reason not to suggest that 2 Cor 3–4 also may have served as a source for Valentinus’s positive assessment of death. Both texts place death and life in a temporal perspective that centres on the present; both describe a dynamic overcoming of death by life through the actions of subjects; and both map this revitalisation process spatially to human subjects—“in you and through you” (ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι’ ὑμῶν).⁴³ There is a paradoxical logic at work here. The fragment betrays the “idea of consuming by assuming” so that the *taking on* of death becomes the means by which death is *exhausted* (cf. Thomassen 2006, 460–65; citation from p. 460). When one endures death, death itself dies, and so the addressees engage in the soteriological drama. Crucial to all this is the spatial dimension; death is “allocated/divided *into yourselves*” (μερίσασθαι εἰς ἑαυτούς) such that it is destroyed “in *you* and through *you*” (ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι’ ὑμῶν). Here the paucity of evidence leaves us wanting. The spatial orientation of the addressees as those *into* whom and *in* whom and *through* whom things happen suggests a somatic affair.⁴⁴ If Paul (esp. 2 Cor 3–4) is lurking somewhere in the background of Valentinus’s homily, the body becomes the primary location on which death and life are played out. Those hearing the address are compelled to embody death while simultaneously embodying life.

Like the other texts we have been looking at, this tiny fragment presumes a certain dynamic of how individuals and communities mutually affect one another. Einar Thomassen (2006, 460–65) notes

⁴³ Beyond 2 Corinthians, this text also echoes ideas from the Pauline tradition whereby death and suffering are objectified in ways that have instrumental ends. In [Phil 1:18b–26](#), where Paul rhetorically flirts with suicide, death is objectified as an inconsequential passageway that will ultimately lead to a better situation. In a different way, [Col 1:24](#) commemorates an image of Paul whereby the apostle’s own sufferings and death are part of the soteriological drama, thus quantifying death as something that must indeed be “used up” (in the language of Valentinus) so as to fully enact life.

⁴⁴ Drawing on comparative examples (esp. Philo), Dunderberg (2008, 39–42) asserts that the body and its moral praxis (or lifestyle) is in view here.

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the peculiarity of the fragment: it is not the Saviour who overcomes death but rather the addressees themselves. For Thomassen, this reflects something similar to later Valentinian ideas whereby Saviour and saved mutually participate with one another in the soteriological equation. Though we must be cautious not to retroject uncritically later Valentinian ideals, it is worth noting that conjoinment with the divine is a theme found elsewhere in the surviving fragments ([1 \[= C\]](#); [2 \[= H\]](#); and [5 \[= D\]](#)). This has important points of comparison with the other texts we have examined. Whereas 2 Corinthians envisions a process in which the apostle's sufferings bring life to Christ-devotees, Valentinus appears to insist that the elect together suffer and take on death. That is to say, while Paul retains a strong sense of mimetic (and hierarchical) authority over his communities (e.g., [1 Cor 4:6](#); [11:1](#); [Phil 3:17](#); [1 Thess 1:6](#); cf. Castelli 1991), Valentinus appears to insist that the elect together—rather than the singular apostle—suffer and take on death (as evinced by the repeated plural pronouns).⁴⁵ Here the role of the individual is diminished; Valentinus and Ignatius are distinguished from each other, the former stressing the present sufferings of the community and the latter the future sufferings of the individual, while 2 Corinthians maintains a balance between part and whole.

⁴⁵ “*You* have been immortal [*ἀθάνατοί ἐστε*] . . . *you* wanted [*ἠθέλετε*] death to be allocated [*in*]to *yourselves* [*εἰς ἑαυτούς*] so that *you* might spend it and use it up [*ἵνα δαπανήσητε αὐτὸν καὶ ἀναλώσητε*], and that death might die in *you* and through *you* [*ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι’ ὑμῶν*]” (trans. Layton 1987). Within the Pauline tradition, especially the earliest expressions of Pauline pseudepigrapha, it is perhaps not surprising that the apostle’s strong mimetic assertions of apostle-affecting-life-for-*ekklēsiai* result in the figure of Paul himself taking on a soteriological function. [Colossians 1:24](#) is the prime example, where Paul himself has some amount of death allocated to him to “fill-up” what is lacking of Christ’s own sufferings (cf. Koester 2000, 2:270, who draws on Standhartinger 1999). While such a development in many ways flows naturally from the logic of texts like 2 Cor 3–4, Valentinus does not share this same individuated soteriology, but rather lumps the saved together and conflates them with the Saviour into a single referent.

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In this fragment, then, there is a kind of participatory dimension that finds resonance with certain themes in Paul's writings. Though this participatory aspect is only implicit with respect to individual/communal dynamics, it is certainly explicit with respect to death/life dynamics. Whereas 2 Cor 3–5 presents a dialectical movement between death and the *pneumatic* Christ's risen life (comp. also [Phil 3:10–11](#) and [1 Cor 15](#)), for Valentinus the endurance of death is in the service of realising the ever-constant immortal or spiritual seed (comp. [Frag. 1 \[=C\]](#)). In addition to Dunderberg's aforementioned ethical dimension, this seems to be what Valentinus means by "nullify[ing] the world [but not being] annihilated" ([Frag. 4 \[= F\]](#)). Though our knowledge of this fragment's context is admittedly lacking, in this tiny excerpt we find Valentinus stressing spatial concepts of PROXIMITY (divine/human propinquity) and CONTAINMENT (somatic allocation) more than concepts of VERTICALITY. In doing so he appears to favour a more collective process than the mimetic hierarchy presumed by Paul. There are of course important differences between Paul and Valentinus,⁴⁶ and our knowledge of the latter is so sparse that it is difficult to assess with any confidence the degree of similarity and difference between the two. It is unclear, for instance, to what extent Valentinus understands this embodiment of death to include also a future, risen embodiment (as advocated by Paul).⁴⁷ Accordingly, we cannot tell exactly how Valentinus configures bodily experience in the present. Certainly the human body has a role to play in the process toward salvation, and this may even be intimately tied to

⁴⁶ For example, while both Valentinus and Paul assert the immortality of humanity, Valentinus presumes this immortality remains unbroken among the elect while Paul insists on the universality of mortality and the acquisition of immortality through *πνεῦμα* (cf. [Rom 5:12](#); [6:23](#); [8:1–30](#); [1 Cor 15:35–50](#)).

⁴⁷ If [Frag. 3 \(= E\)](#) refers to the risen Christ (rather than the pre-crucifixion Christ), then we can certainly insist that resurrected bodies were important to Valentinus. But whether the process of resurrection takes the same emphasis for him as for Paul is unknown.

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Christ, but for Valentinus such somatic importance may be more terrestrial than celestial.

Scholars have often noted connections between Valentinus's fragments and a number of later Valentinian texts, and the themes examined above are no exception.⁴⁸ Space does not permit a full assessment of these later writings, though I will briefly draw attention to the late second-century Treatise on the Resurrection, which develops many of these same ideas and spatial relations.⁴⁹ In this text too, as with 2 Cor 3–4 and [Frag. 4 \(= F\)](#), there is an interplay of PROXIMITY and CONTAINMENT concepts that is explored as a way of articulating the already/not-yet nature of resurrection. Priority is given to referents that are both IN and NEAR. The Treatise, for example, states that “the thought . . . [and] mind of those who have known him shall not perish” ([Treat. Res.](#) 46.22–24).⁵⁰ Note the key somatic coordinates: “thought . . . [and] mind” (both IN) are oriented specifically toward “know[ing] him” (that is, being NEAR). It is here, in this emphasis on the somatic interior, that we find the locus of salvation ([Treat. Res.](#) 47.1–3). When one ceases to “think in part” but rather recognises the “all which we are” ([Treat. Res.](#) 49.10 and 47.26–29, respectively), then one will realise that “already you have the resurrection” ([Treat. Res.](#) 49.15). By stressing the NEAR/IN

⁴⁸ For example, Thomassen (2006, 460–65) reads [Frag. 4 \(= F\)](#) in relation to the [Excerpta ex Theodoto 21–22, 35–36](#) and the Tripartite Tractate, while Layton (1987, 240–41) draws connections with the Gospel of Truth and Treatise on the Resurrection.

⁴⁹ Though surviving only in Coptic, the Treatise is usually dated to the late second century, thus locating it within the context of broader intra-Christian debates concerning the nature of the resurrection. Indeed, the text itself is written with the express purpose of indicating that “it [i.e., resurrection] is necessary” ([Treat. Res.](#) 44.6b–7; cf. 47.1–3), and further with the goal of describing and giving definition to resurrection.

⁵⁰ Unless stated otherwise, English translations of the Treatise on the Resurrection are from Peel 1985a; the same translation also appears in Peel 1990, the text of which is hyperlinked throughout this essay. Unfortunately, however, the online text of Peel 1990 does not include a numbering system.

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nature of the elect's risenness, the author of the Treatise configures resurrection as possessing a decidedly present component.

This present, internal dimension is developed elsewhere in the Treatise, specifically in relation to the author's teleological vision of future resurrection. A key text is found in [Treat. Res.](#) 45.14–46.2:

The Savior swallowed death. You must not be ignorant: for he put aside the world which is perishing. He transformed into an imperishable age, he raised himself up, having swallowed the visible by means of the invisible, and he gave us the way to immortality. Then indeed, as the Apostle [Paul] said, “We have suffered with him, and we arose with him, and we went to heaven with him.” Now, if we are visible in this world wearing him, we are that one's beams, and we are embraced by him until our setting, that is to say, our death in this life. We are drawn to heaven by him, like beams by the sun, not restrained by anything. This is the spiritual resurrection which swallows the psychic [resurrection] just as fleshly [resurrection]. (trans. Petrey 2016, 43–44)⁵¹

This passage simultaneously looks back to Jesus's resurrection while also affirming the future resurrection, when those who believe will be “drawn to heaven by him.” The language is thoroughly Pauline, as is seen in the constellation of resurrection echoes and descriptions: “swallowing” (cf. [1 Cor 15:50](#), [53–54](#); [2 Cor 5:4](#)), “perishable/imperishable” (cf. [1 Cor 15:50–54](#)), “visible/invisible” (cf. [2 Cor 4:8–11](#), [16–18](#)), the language of “wearing” him (cf. [1 Cor 15:49](#); [2 Cor 5:1–5](#); [Gal 3:27](#)), and the trio of fleshly, *psychic*, and spiritual (cf. [1 Cor 2:14–3:3](#); [15:45–50](#)), not to mention also the amalgamated Pauline citation (cf. [Rom 8:17](#); [Eph 2:5–6](#)). More pressing is the curious description in [Treat. Res.](#) 45.39–46.2 of three different kinds of resurrections: “the spiritual resurrection which swallows the psychic [resurrection] just as fleshly [resurrection].”⁵²

⁵¹ The translation is reproduced exactly *as is*, and thus all parenthetical content is original to Petrey 2016.

⁵² Petrey (2016, 44) notes that the parallel adjectives “spiritual,” “psychic,” and “fleshly” all agree in gender and thus stand in apposition to one another,

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Taylor Petrey (2016) suggests, I think rightly, that these three resurrections refer to stages within the soteriological progression, thus linking them to the garment metaphor of the same passage—“we are visible in this world wearing him . . . [until] our death in this life.” That is to say, already while in the flesh, some kind of resurrection is granted to the Christ-devotee, which is only partially experienced in the present. This more immediate resurrection is further elaborated later in the Treatise, in 48.34–49.8, which reads as follows:

[Resurrection] is the revelation of what is, and the transformation of things, and a transition into newness. For imperishability [descends] upon the perishable; the light flows down upon the darkness, swallowing it up; and the Pleroma fills up the deficiency. These are the symbols and the images of the resurrection. (trans. Peel 1985a)

The attitude toward the earthly body is particularly noteworthy here. As noted by Petrey (2016, 45): “the language is not at all about leaving behind or escaping from the flesh, but rather about fulfilment and (again) enveloping. Transformation and manifestation in this life thus include a period of ‘resurrection’ while in the mortal flesh.” Viewed within the conceptual categories of this study, resurrection is mapped to the somatic interior of the human body, finding expression primarily through the categories of somatic CONTAINMENT (though it is worth noting that the image of “sun beams,” which both radiate from and are drawn to heaven, draws also on notions of cosmological VERTICALITY and divine–human PROXIMITY [[Treat. Res.](#) 45.31–38]). In terms of temporal mapping, then, the Treatise balances immediacy and teleology; thus Lehtipuu (2015, 190): “the treatise combines a past, present, and future aspect of resurrection, embracing both the not yet and the already” (see also Lundhaug 2009, 204; Petrey 2016, 44–45).

hence the reference to three different resurrections: “This is the spiritual resurrection which swallows the psychic [resurrection] just as fleshly [resurrection].”

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This already/not-yet dimension of the Treatise is not unlike Paul, who similarly maintains the immediacy and inwardness of resurrection (thus, *life in death*) with an eye toward somatic transformation in the future (thus, *life through death*). There are, however, important differences between not only the apostle and the author of Treatise, but also with the fragments of Valentinus. While it is true that the Treatise places a high value on the risen body/flesh (OUT),⁵³ the full import of this idea runs a different course. Both Paul and the Treatise draw strong caricatures between earthly and risen states, even opposing the two definitely, but for Paul the space between these states is much more interactive and interlaced such that subjects are in the process of coming back to life as they are dying. As we saw above, Paul works this out on the apostolic body quite concretely with respect to suffering (2 Cor 3–4) and the eventual “clothing over” (ἐπενδύομαι) of one body onto the other ([2 Cor 5:1–5](#)). In the Treatise, by contrast, there is much less interaction and mutual affectivity between these somatic states. On the one hand, some positive function is given to the earthly body in [Treat. Res. 47.17–24](#), which reads:

The afterbirth of the body is old age, and you exist in corruption. You have absence as a gain. For you will not give up what is better if you depart. That which is worse has diminution, but there is grace for it. (trans. Peel 1985a)

⁵³ See recently Lehtipuu 2015, 191–92 and Petrey 2016, 35–51. The key text in this debate is [Treat. Res. 47.2–16](#), which has been notoriously debated (see Peel 1985b, 178–80; Lehtipuu 2015, 191–92). While some maintain that only the mind will be raised, most scholars recognise that Valentinians generally held to a resurrection of a transformed flesh that was properly suited for the heavenly realm (on this point, see Lundhaug 2009, 190–91). Petrey (2016, 41) has compellingly argued for a “correspondence between the mortal and resurrected selves . . . [such that] the resurrected subject appears as a human body, with recognizable parts.” In principle, then, there is no strong difference between Paul and our author: the apostle looks ahead to an ethereal, pneumatic body ([1 Cor 15:42–44](#)), while the Treatise toward a kind of ethereal, pneumatic flesh ([Treat. Res. 47.2–24](#)).

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As Lundhaug (2009) has shown, the Treatise uses gestational metaphors to convey the idea of the risen interior as *birthed out of* the corruptible body. That is to say, the earthly body functions as the vehicle through which resurrection is achieved and, as Lundhaug (2009, 195–96) rightly notes, what is in view is the full maturation and ageing process of the human subject (note the reference to “old age”).⁵⁴ Yet, on the other hand, the positive functioning of the earthly body does not seem to be the ongoing interlacing of somatic death and coming-back-to-life that Paul (and perhaps also Valentinus?) advocate(s). The earthly body has a role to play in the cosmological and soteriological process, but this role appears more incubative than generative; more custodial than formative. Hence, in [Treat. Res. 47.17–24](#), somatic alteration of the earthly body can only be diminutive; it is part of corruption and mortality, it marks frail flesh in all its earthiness vis-à-vis the stability of the spiritual. Like Paul in [1 Cor 15](#) there is a strong emphasis placed on transformation as a future and definitive break,⁵⁵ but unlike Paul there is no process of embodying positive somatic transformation here and now.

In the Treatise, then, it is not so much that one comes back to life in the midst of earthly embodiment, but rather that one bears the inner resurrection within the midst of the earthly embodiment (cf. [Treat. Res. 45.28–35](#)). Accordingly, in the Treatise, resurrection is the “disclosure of those who have risen” ([Treat. Res. 48.3–6](#)); it is

⁵⁴ On this point, the author of the Treatise appears to value the whole course of earthly life, even though the earthly body itself is disparaged. Lundhaug (2009, 196–97) is worth citing in full: “the decay of the material body is thus presented in a positive light, and death is conceptualized as birth . . . [I]t is the material body that serves the metaphorical function of the womb in the metaphorical conceptualization of life as a pregnancy, and this conceptual blend highlights the importance of the material body and life in this world as the time and place of the development and maturation needed to effectuate the birth of what we may regard as the resurrection-body . . . [In this text, there is] a pronounced emphasis on the relatively higher value of the inner body *in relation to* the outer” (emphasis original).

⁵⁵ It is worth noting that [Treat. Res. 48.31–38](#) relies quite strongly on [1 Cor 15](#), precisely where Paul’s language is most categorical.

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the act or process of making known that which already is,⁵⁶ namely the deposit of immortality *within* oneself ([Treat. Res.](#) 47.4–6, 24–31).

The extent to which the Treatise reflects Valentinus’s own ideas is difficult to determine. There is perhaps a connection between Valentinus’s [Frag. 4 \(= F\)](#) and [Treat. Res.](#) 47.4–6, 24–31, both of which intimate notions of possessing *immortality from the beginning* (to use the language of the former). Similarly, both [Frag. 4 \(= F\)](#) and the Treatise place priority on spatial conceptions of PROXIMITY and CONTAINMENT. That being said, there is a greater emphasis in [Frag. 4 \(= F\)](#) on notions of “spend[ing] . . . and use[ing-up death] . . . in you and through you [ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι’ ὑμῶν].” This suggests that Valentinus might have held a more dynamic understanding of life and death as somatically interlacing each other *within* the subject here-and-now rather than at some future *telos*. If this is true, then Valentinus is closer to Paul than is the Treatise. Regardless of our judgment on that matter, from the little bits that we have, there certainly is a tendency in Valentinus/Treatise to emphasise notions of life *in* death rather than life *through* death.

V. CONCLUSION

As noted at the outset of this paper, Paul’s resurrection ideals proved difficult to pin down in the post-Pauline period. Paul certainly advocates the permeability of death and life; death is not the end but rather a necessary path or process through which all must move. But how Paul made sense of this permeability was both complex and nuanced. He advocated an intricate balance between spatial concepts, correlating UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT in such a way as to envision death and life as mutually affecting one other in the present while placing the human body within a transformative *telos* toward future risen life. What Paul holds in tension, his later interpreters tend to parse out and prioritise. Both Ignatius and

⁵⁶ In many ways this extends Paul’s address in 2 Cor 3–4 (and even [Phil 3](#)) and shares many similarities also with [Col 3:3](#) (“your life is hidden with Christ in God”).

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Valentinus utilise the same conceptual categories, though they do so with emphases placed on differing aspects. Ignatius stresses all three (PROXIMITY, CONTAINMENT, and VERTICALITY) though does not share Paul's logic of in-out affectivity; Valentinus stresses PROXIMITY and CONTAINMENT over VERTICALITY. In one way, we might see Ignatius and Valentinus/Treatise as occupying different ends of the same conceptual pole; the former maintains a strong sense of teleology and sequence (namely, *life through death*), while the latter emphasises containment and somatic replacement (namely, *life in death*).

Importantly, however, both are “Pauline” in the sense that they find impetus and rooting in Paul's writings; but they are “Pauline” in very different ways. Interpretive creativity marbles the reception of Paul's writings. While the germ of coming back to life persists across these textual expressions, differing voices—each echoing Paul's ideals—negotiate the apostle's thought in various ways. The image of Paul in 2 Corinthians as one *coming back to life in and through death* does not seem to have been easily emulated. Certainly the general textures and mechanics of this image impressed themselves upon individuals like Ignatius and Valentinus, though the creativity of these later readers is both liberated and constrained by what they inherit from the apostle. There are at least two fronts to this creative impulse. On the one hand, there can be little doubt that later interpreters prune and shape the apostle's resurrection ideals in ways that serve their vision of the porosity between life and death. But, on the other hand, the germ of this interpretive creativity—that is, the centrality of *coming back to life in/through death*—already is sown by Paul himself. To this end, the apostle's writings do much to spark the imagination of those who read him as a book (cf. Pervo 2010, 23–61) and who advocate “Pauline” ideas of the porous boundaries between life and death. To this end, Paul is as much implicated in this creative process as are his interpreters.

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