The claim has often been made over the centuries that the presence of the spirit of God, seen especially in saintly people, is an anticipation of immortality. My purpose in this paper is to see why this claim is made and to lay bare the structure of the argument which underlies it. Although there has been a renewed interest in the question of immortality, both among philosophers and theologians in recent years, this particular aspect of it has been neglected.

The claim being discussed is not, as we shall see, restricted to Christianity; and even within the Christian religion it is expressed in many different ways. John Wesley, for instance, says in his sermon On the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit...is some portion of, as well as preparation for, a life in God, which we are to enjoy hereafter. The gift of the Holy Spirit looks full to the resurrection; for then is the life of God completed in us.¹

Similarly, Karl Barth alludes to the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians V, and says that the limited perfection achieved in this life is the pledge and first fruits of that perfection for which we are destined and which will be manifested when Jesus Christ comes: ‘The power of the life to come is the power of his life in this world’ (Church Dogmatics IV. iv. pp. 39–40). Both he and Wesley point to the link between the presence of the Holy Spirit and sanctification; and this connection is not surprisingly stressed by many Roman Catholic and Orthodox writers, who see the saints (by which is not necessarily meant those who are officially recognized, e.g. through canonization; there are always the ‘hidden saints’) as forerunners of God’s kingdom. Thus, Karl Rahner maintains that the Church ‘must always have her saints’, for she ‘is meant to be and to appear as the community of eschatological salvation and of victorious grace’.² Similarly, Vladimir Lossky discusses St Maximus’ contention that although the Holy Spirit is present in all Christians, and indeed in all men, he is particularly present in the wisdom and understanding of the saints, and goes on to say,

The Church...is the sphere within which union with God takes place in this present life, the union which will be consummated in the age to come, after the resurrection of the dead.¹

All these writers exemplify what has come to be known as ‘inaugurated’ or ‘partially realized’ eschatology (to adapt C. H. Dodd’s phrase). There are many passages in Scripture which can be used to support their statements. St Paul often links the Holy Spirit with the Christian’s hope (e.g. in Rom. 15: 13, Gal. 5:5). But, more specifically, he speaks of those who sow to the Spirit reaping eternal life from it (Gal. 6: 8), of sanctification having eternal life as its end (Rom. 6: 22 f.), and he says

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you. (Rom. 8: 11)²

He uses the metaphors of ‘first fruits’ and ‘earnest’³: the Spirit is the first fruits of our adoption as sons and of the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8: 23), an earnest of our heavenly dwelling and of the swallowing up of what is mortal by life (II Cor. 5: 5; cf. 1: 22); and the seal of the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance (Eph. 1: 13 f.; cf. 4: 30). Similarly, the Epistle to the Hebrews uses the metaphor of a ‘foretaste’, speaking of those who ‘have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come...’ (6: 4 f.). The Fourth Gospel often speaks of eternal life as being a present possession (e.g. in 3: 36), but on three occasions such passages are immediately followed by references to our being raised at the last day (5: 24—9, 6: 40, 54), perhaps suggesting that one is an anticipation of the other.

A variation on this theme is the claim that it is the Holy Spirit who will raise men from the dead. In Judaism the outpouring of God’s spirit is associated with the final days. The Rabbinic teaching on Exodus 35: 31 (where Bezalel is described as being filled with the spirit of God and endowed with skill, perception and knowledge) says ‘In this world, My spirit hath given you wisdom, but in the time to come it will give you new life’, citing Ezekiel 37: 14 ‘And I will put My spirit in you, and ye shall live.’⁴ Christian writers are usually unwilling to say simpliciter that the Holy Spirit will raise us, presumably because this view would go against the claim that the Father

² Assuming, with Chrysostom and Augustine, that Paul is referring here to the final resurrection, and not to the continual operations of the Spirit in us here and now. See C. E. B. Cranfield, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, 1 (Edinburgh, 1975), 391.
³ I prefer this old fashioned term to modern translation like ‘pledge’ or ‘guarantee’, since it is closer to the meaning of the original Greek word, arrabōn. The phrases ‘first instalment’ or ‘down payment’ are also closer in meaning (though some people may dislike their connotations of buying washing-machines, etc.).
raises the dead (John 5: 21). But St Paul, in Rom. 8: 11 (already quoted), speaks of God giving life through his Spirit. Hence many Christian writers, both early and late, assign a central role to the Holy Spirit in our resurrection. St Basil, for instance, says that the Spirit causes both our renewal in this life and our resurrection from the dead (On the Holy Spirit, §49); and another early Christian writer, Niceta of Remesiana, quotes I Cor. 15: 36 in his Explanation of the Creed and then argues:

I take it that He who raises to life the grain of wheat for the sake of man will be able to raise to life the man himself who has been sown in the earth. He both can and wills to do this. What the rains do for the seed, the dew of the Spirit does for the body that is to be raised to life.¹

Barth gives the Holy Spirit a central role both in the raising of Jesus and in our resurrection: he says that an important characteristic of the New Testament view of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was that, as a free work demonstrating and revealing the grace of the Father, it took place by the Holy Spirit;² and that the power of the Holy Spirit will awaken us to eternal life (C.D. IV. iv. p. 100).

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT

The claim at stake, then, is that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which according to Gal. 5: 22 f. brings joy and peace as well as a moral transformation, is not only a preparation for the future life but an anticipation of it here and now. But what grounds are there for thinking that this is so? What is the reason for thinking that the present indwelling of the Spirit is indeed a prelude to something greater?

One possible answer to my questions is that the claim being discussed is not based on arguments but on experience. In ordinary life there are experiences, e.g. of great joy or peace, when people become oblivious to the passage of time. Josiah Royce argued that the experience of listening to music, in which we are aware not only of the chord being played at a particular moment but of the whole sequence of the piece, can serve as an analogy of God’s simultaneous awareness of all time.³ Similarly it might be maintained that in religious experience, particularly mysticism, people feel that they are ‘transcending’ time and that they have a foretaste of the Beatific Vision.

I think that there is something of importance in this answer, but that it cannot be the whole story. Louis Dupré is probably right when he says that ‘the belief in life after death appears to have grown out of actual experiences

¹ Trans. G. G. Walsh, in Fathers of the Church, vn (New York, 1949), 52. Other examples I have found are: Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. V. vii. 1 f., xiii. 4; Epideixis 42; Theodore of Mopsuestia, On Baptism, in Woodbrooke Studies, vi, ed. A. Mingana (Cambridge, 1933), 54, 56, 75.
² C.D. IV. i. p. 308. I am not sure that all the New Testament passages which he quotes bear the sense he wishes to give them, e.g. Rom. 1: 4, I Tim. 3: 16 and I Pet. 3: 18.
³ The Conception of Immortality (Boston and New York, 1900), pp. 84 ff.
far more than out of reasoning processes' (he instances experiences of transcendence).¹

But there is a difference between a belief 'growing out of' some experiences and its being grounded on them. People do indeed have 'timeless' experiences. But what if death is after all the end, and such experiences then cease? We need some reason for supposing that they will indeed continue after death. I have already noted that although the Fourth Gospel speaks of eternal life as a present possession, it also indicates that those who possess it will be raised at the last day.

A further point which requires to be made is that Wesley and others are not merely appealing to an experience, for they do not regard the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as such. There may be an experience of this indwelling, but it is not itself just an experience, any more than putting in a light-bulb is just an experience, although there is an experience of putting in a light-bulb. The essential thing about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is that it is regarded as the source of new life and of moral transformation, of which the fruits should be visible to others.

So we are still left with the task of providing an argument to show that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, seen particularly in the saints, is a first instalment of the future life? But what kind of argument could this be? It does not seem to be the case that statements about the occurrence of saintliness entail ones about immortality, so a deductive connection is lacking. Nor have we found out by observation that some saints survive death, so that we can mount an inductive argument. So what alternative is there?

The answer, of course, is that there are more complex forms of argument. My contention will be that by adding further premises we can construct an argument maintaining that the occurrence of saintliness is evidence for immortality. These further premises are of a theological nature, so the argument is a theological rather than a philosophical one. Nevertheless, it is an argument with a clear logical structure and one which is, I believe, valid.

A clue to the nature of this argument is provided by C. H. Dodd, in his discussion of the concept of 'eternal life' in the Fourth Gospel. Referring to Jesus' linking of statements about the present possession of eternal life with those about the final resurrection, Dodd says 'It is because the word of Christ has this power here and now that we can believe that it will have the same power hereafter.'² A similar argument is put forward by St Irenaeus, when, after quoting St Paul's remarks in II Cor. 3: 3 about the Spirit writing on the tablets of the human heart, he says 'If, therefore, in the present time, fleshly hearts are made partakers of the Spirit, what is astonishing if, in the resurrection, they receive that life which is granted by the Spirit?'³

It is, however, insufficient to appeal to the power of Christ or the Holy Spirit, since we need to know not only that they can grant immortality but that they will do so. Clearly the Christian will appeal here not only to God's power, but to his promises and his fidelity. And such an appeal is made by Irenaeus, though in a different context, in an earlier passage where he mentions the translation of Elijah and the preservation of Jonah and the men cast into the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar, and sees those as demonstrating God's power, promise and fidelity, and therefore as confuting those who cannot believe that God can and will raise up their bodies to eternal life (Adv. Haer. V. v. 2). Similarly, Barth points to the notion of promise that is implicit in St Paul's use of the terms 'first fruits', 'earnest' and 'seal' of the Spirit (C.D. IV. ii. p. 322).

What, then, is the logical structure of this argument? It can be put in the form of a *modus ponens* argument: If God can and will give the Holy Spirit (or eternal life) now, then he can and will raise men from the dead; but God has given, and continues to give the Holy Spirit (or eternal life) now; therefore he can and will raise men from the dead. This formulation, however, does not advance matters very far, since the truth of the claim 'If God can and will give the Holy Spirit (or eternal life) now, he can and will raise men from the dead' is precisely what is at stake. What reason is there to think that dead men will be raised, and furthermore that they will be raised to the kind of fullness of life promised by Christianity (as compared, say, with the shadowy life endured by Achilles in Hades, as depicted in Homer's *Odyssey*)? The answer, I take it, is provided by the considerations raised in my last paragraph. God has promised both the gift of the Holy Spirit and immortality, and he has given and continues to give the former as an earnest. The giving of this earnest shows both God's power and his fidelity.

The argument which I have just adumbrated falls, I believe, into the hypothetico-deductive form of argument which is familiar in the sciences, though it is not exclusive to them. In this pattern of argument a hypothesis, suggested by certain evidence, is formulated and conclusions are deduced from it. In the case of the sciences these conclusions are then tested by further observation and experiment, and this fact differentiates the scientific and the religious cases; but the logical form of the argument is the same. An example of such an argument in science is this:

**Evidence.** 100 parts (by volume) of oxygen combine with 200 parts of hydrogen to form water; 100 parts of muriatic gas combine with 100 parts of ammonia gas to form ammonia chloride...

**Hypothesis.** Gases combine in simple ratios by volume [Gay-Lussac's law].

**Deduction.** The combination of gases F and G will be in simple ratios by

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1 Though it has been argued that some religious statements can be verified in this life or the next: see J. Hick, 'Theology and Verification', in B. Mitchell (ed.) *The Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford, 1971) and H. H. Price, *Belief*, (London, 1969) pt. ii, lecture 10.
volume.¹ (If they do so combine, then we have further evidence for the hypothesis). Now the religious argument in question may be set out in a similar form:

Evidence. God has given the Holy Spirit and continues to give it as he promised.

Hypothesis. God is always faithful and effective.

Conclusion. God will also give immortality, as he has promised.

There are, of course, many human analogies for such an argument, and St Paul’s use of the term arrabōn (earnest) suggests the situation of a man fulfilling part of a contract as evidence of his trustworthiness. I think it is important for the theological argument that there continue to be saints manifesting the fruits of the Holy Spirit, for then evidence of God’s power and fidelity is always visible. Lack of such evidence tends to falsify the hypothesis, for if God’s promises have not been fulfilled, this is evidence against his power or his fidelity.

Clearly, this argument, which I have maintained is a theological argument, depends on certain assumptions. It presupposes that the transformation seen particularly in the saints is an unexpected occurrence which is not to be explained simply in terms of natural causes, and that it is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. It assumes that God has promised to bestow his spirit, and that he has kept his promise by bestowing it in the way described. Lastly, and most crucially, it assumes that we have a promise of immortality, and that one and the same being, God, has given this promise and the promise to send his spirit.

Clearly, too the Christian religion defends these assumptions by appealing to the teaching of Jesus Christ: it was he, speaking on behalf of the Father, who promised both the Holy Spirit and immortality. Moreover, the Father confirmed his authority by raising him from the dead. These basic claims could be followed up by further appeals to God’s fidelity and power, e.g. miracles. But it is important to see that the argument can be restated in ways other than those put forward by orthodox Christians. Someone might accept Jesus’ authority, without believing him to be God. Or people may accept some other authority, e.g. a prophet, but put forward a similar argument: I take it that Judaism does this, since it appeals to prophets like Ezekiel, Joel and Daniel for its belief in immortality and the outpouring of the Spirit of God (rather than the ‘Holy Spirit’ – though this term is used on occasion in the Old Testament; cf. Ps. 51: 11; Is. 63: 10 f.). Moreover, the argument may be boosted by other more general considerations, e.g. by appeal to God’s justice.

The sequence of the discussion so far can be summarized as follows:

(1) x is an earnest of y.

Claims of this form raise two questions:

(2) What reason is there to think that \( x \) will continue at all?

(3) What reason is there to think that \( x \) will continue as \( y \)?

A possible answer is:

(4) \( A \) has promised \( x \) and \( y \), and has given and continues to give \( x \) as an earnest.

(5) Thus we can construct a hypothetico-deductive argument, using ‘\( A \) is always faithful and effective’ as a hypothesis.

Further questions then arise:

(6) How do we know that one and the same being has promised both \( x \) and \( y \), and that this being is \( A \)?

(7) How do we know it is \( A \) that has given \( x \)?

A Christian would continue thus:

(8) \( B \) promised both \( x \) and \( y \), on the authority of \( A \).

(9) \( A \) raised \( B \) from the dead, and so confirmed his authority; moreover, \( A \) showed thereby that he has the specific power to raise men from the dead.

(10) Other arguments for the fidelity, power, and justice of \( A \).

The argument which I have outlined is only one among a number of possible grounds for belief in immortality. Some people may think it sufficient to believe in promises like ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live’ (John 11:25). But the argument, if valid, provides further grounds; and it explains the connection between holiness and immortality. It has certain similarities with other arguments for immortality. It is like Kant’s argument in the *Critique of Practical Reason* in appealing to the notion of men’s holiness: but it starts from holiness already (to some degree) achieved, rather than a demand of the practical reason which can only be fulfilled in an endless progress in an infinitely enduring existence (bk. ii, ch. ii, §4). It is like some of the arguments used by the early Fathers in appealing to God’s power and fidelity, such as Irenaeus’ argument about certain Old Testament figures which I have already mentioned, or his later argument that the raising of Lazarus and others by Christ shows that his words concerning our future resurrection may also be believed (Adv. Haer. V. xiii. 1). It is to be noted, too, that St Paul uses the same term ‘first fruits’ both of the Spirit which guarantees our redemption and of Christ’s resurrection which anticipates that of others (Rom. 8:23; I Cor. 15:20, 23).

I have maintained that although the argument has a logical structure, it is a theological one which depends on certain assumptions. How, then, will it appear to those outside of the Judaeo-Christian tradition? The position with regard to a religious sceptic is fairly straightforward: clearly the argument will not convince him as an argument, since the assumptions involved in it are unlikely to be acceptable. But this does not mean that it is totally alien to him: after all, the example of people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dag Hammarskjöld, Maximilian Kolbe and Mother Teresa of Calcutta in our
own time may have a much greater influence in leading an unbeliever to give attention to the claims of religion than any theological argument. An unbeliever may greatly admire the characteristics which the believer calls the fruit of the spirit, recognize that they are ‘supernatural’ in the weak sense of being unexpected and such as cannot be easily brought about simply by natural means, and so wonder how they are produced. He may even feel that saintly people are ‘empowered’ by something more than themselves, and wonder what this power is and what are its characteristics. Clearly, however, these considerations stop a long way short of assent to any argument for immortality, though they perhaps indicate the beginnings of a road one might travel.

The position of other religions is more complicated. An easy way out is to say, again, that the argument is only applicable within Christianity, because it depends on certain assumptions (especially Christ’s promises), and so it does not imply anything one way or the other about a future life for non-Christians. There are, however, one or two other considerations worth mentioning. I have indicated that an argument parallel in many respects to the Christian one is found in Judaism, so it would seem that in principle the argument could be extended to any theistic religion. Then, again, saintly people exhibiting characteristics similar to those called the fruit of the Spirit are found in other religions, even non-theistic ones (not to mention saintly unbelievers), and often they are regarded as having an eschatological significance, though the after life of which they are the ‘first fruits’ may be different from that envisaged by Judaism and Christianity. The Buddhist arhat, for example, is believed to have obtained release from the wheel of reincarnation and to be ready for nirvāṇa. The existence of such people is not a difficulty in itself, unless one assumes that only Christians may receive the Holy Spirit, and thereby gain salvation and immortality. There are a number of possibilities that can be suggested. Perhaps people achieving saintliness in other religions may share the same fate as Christians; or perhaps they may come to the kind of future life that their own religions speak of – for why should not different forms of immortality or ‘release’ co-exist with each other? Or perhaps different eschatological teachings may be reconciled with each other: Geoffrey Parrinder has instanced the way in which belief in nirvāṇa, first taught by Jains and Buddhists, apparently came into Hinduism through the Bhagavad Gītā, where it is seen as communion with God; the ‘blowing out’ indicated by the term is of desires and karma, not extinction of soul.1 John Hick has attempted a reconciliation of all the eschatological and pareschatological teachings of different major religions in his Death and Eternal Life.

It is not part of my argument to speculate about the nature of the future life. Nevertheless, there is one particular aspect of this question which needs to be pursued here, namely the likeness that is claimed between the life of a saintly person now and the life of the resurrection, since this seems to indicate something about the nature of the latter. The argument we are considering is not simply claiming that God has shown himself faithful and effective in granting one thing he has promised, so he can be relied upon to bestow something further, for this would be to ignore the link between the two things promised. There is supposed to be an intrinsic connection between the two, in that one is not merely a preparation for the other, but also an anticipation of it. The healing and purification which is seen in the saints is regarded as part of a continuum. This continuity is suggested by some of the metaphors which St Paul uses, especially ‘first fruits’ and ‘earnest’. The latter is something more than a ‘pledge’ or ‘guarantee’, for the Greek term used, *arrabon*, differs from the term *enechuron* (pledge) in that it denotes what is actually a small part of the whole that is promised, for instance, a portion of the purchase money given to ratify a contract. Of course, one must be careful about inferring too much from the use of metaphors; and in the present context we do not want to suggest that the future life will be merely ‘more of the same’. In any case, the other analogies used, e.g. the seed in I Cor. 15: 36 ff. and the tent and house in II Cor. 5: 1, suggest that there will be a great change within the continuity. A seed or a tent are not quite a ‘first instalment’ of a plant or a building.

Both common sense and philosophical considerations about the nature of identity suggest that there must be some likeness between the person on earth and the resurrected person, if they are indeed to be reckoned the same. But the specific question which we are considering is: why are the saints more like men of the age to come than ordinary people? There are a number of considerations to be taken into account here. The saints are believed to be already leading the best kind of life, being purified of sin and manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, in view of this they are growing in the likeness of God. Now since in the age to come those who have purified themselves will be like God (I John 3: 2 f.), it follows that there is also a likeness between them and the saints in this world (this assumes, of course, that the two sets of people are like God in the same respects). Thus Irenaeus says

But we do now receive a certain portion of his Spirit, tending towards perfection, and preparing us for incorruption... if the earnest, gathering man into itself, does

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1 Something of this idea survives in Kant’s view of immortality as endless progress towards the complete accord of the will with the moral law (loc. cit.)

even now cause him to cry, 'Abba, Father', what shall the complete grace of the Spirit effect, which shall be given to men by God? It will render us like unto him, and accomplish the will of the Father; for it shall make man after the image and likeness of God (Adv. Haer. V. viii. 1, trans. Roberts & Rambaut).

Another way of expressing the likeness, more common among Eastern Orthodox writers but deriving from the remark in II Pet. i. 4 about becoming ‘partakers of the divine nature’, is that the saints are becoming divinized.

If, then, there is a likeness between the saints now and the men of the age to come, it seems to follow that by looking at them we can know something about the future life. But there are a number of considerations which should warn us against trying to be too explicit about this. There is the risk of banality, which many putative descriptions of the after-life reveal.1 Alternatively, imagination runs riot. Then there is a shift of context when the language of trust and hope (or of warning) is replaced by that of prediction. The prudent man, therefore, may well feel inclined to abandon any attempt to depict the state of the Blessed (or the damned), and instead content himself with indicating a few truth-conditions, largely negative (e.g. that consciousness does not cease forever at death). But even a minimal statement about what one’s belief entails and excludes may raise several philosophical questions: for instance, the belief in the resurrection of the body raises questions about spatiality and location which have not received sufficient discussion.2

The argument about the connection between sanctity and immortality which I have discussed suggests, if it is valid, certain features of the future life: that it will have some continuity with our present life, that in it we shall be closer to God than we are on this earth, and that we shall be healed and made perfect. Will this life be a bodily life? The argument, I think, strongly suggests that it will be so, because the concept of saintliness seems to involve the concepts of activity and community, and they in turn suggest embodiment. Let us look at the list of the fruit of the Spirit given by St Paul in Gal. v. 22 f. Some of them could be possessed by a disembodied person: we can at least imagine what it would be like to be what Paul Helm calls a ‘minimal person’ who merely remembers, thinks, reasons and has dream-like perceptions,3 and who in this state feels joy, peace and benevolence towards other beings. But how would such a ‘minimal person’ be able to act? Unless we can ascribe action and communication with others to such a being, then we cannot see what it would mean to describe it as gentle, patient and self-controlled, and as exercising love and kindness towards others. The same

1 I agree with Cullmann that art is the most suggestive medium here. See his remarks at the end of his ‘Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead’, in K. Stendahl (ed.) Immortality and Resurrection (New York, 1965), p. 53.
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considerations apply, though to a less extent, to the dream-like existence envisaged by H. H. Price, in which people do have ‘visual’ images of their own bodies and interact with each other telepathically, but lack sense-perception and the power of action through their limbs.1 Hence it is difficult to see how there could be a Communion of Saints, who manifest the fruit of the Spirit, without a bodily resurrection.2

If the life to come will be an embodied existence involving activity and community, this also suggests some considerations about another disputed question, whether this life will be in time, in the sense that change will continue. Some writers, e.g. Unamuno, have said that it must be, for man’s highest aspirations are dynamic rather than static, and an eternity which was an eternal timeless present would allow no scope for creation or progression.3 Others have envisaged a ‘timeless’ existence, of which philosophical contemplation or mystical experience give us some anticipation. But, again, if the fruits of the Spirit will continue to be manifested in the age to come, this requires a dimension of time. Moreover, Kant’s view of the acquisition of holiness as an endless progress likewise entails this. Hence his follower, Hermann Cohen, describes man’s holiness as an ‘infinite task’, which ‘consists in self-sanctification, which, however, can have no termination, therefore cannot be a permanent rest, but only infinite striving and becoming’.4

These considerations, especially those concerning bodily existence, are not, I think decisive, since two considerations might be mentioned on the other side: the fruit of the Spirit listed by St Paul might be manifested only in this life,5 and the saints in Heaven enjoy some other form of communion; and, more seriously, since God (and possibly angels) can act and manifest goodness without possessing a body, then so can disembodied persons, even if we cannot now envisage how.6 But, as it happens, both Judaism and Christianity do believe in a bodily resurrection, though on grounds other than that of the particular argument being discussed (e.g. Christianity appeals to the bodily resurrection of Christ).

3 See his The Tragic Sense of Life, especially ch. x.
5 St Paul envisages that gifts like prophecy and speaking in tongues will pass away, for they belong to an imperfect state (1 Cor. 13: 8). Aquinas holds that the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in Isaiah xi. 2 will remain in Heaven in their essence, though with a different operation (S. T. 1 a, 2ae. lxvii. 6). Thus, for instance, fortitude will remain as confidence, rather than courage in the face of adversity; and counsel will still be needed to make the mind full of reason, though not to prevent impetuosity (ibid., ad 2).
6 A further consideration is introduced by John Morreall, who argues that belief in the resurrection of the body is superfluous if one believes in the Beatific Vision, for such a resurrection could add nothing to the perfect happiness to be enjoyed in the latter (‘Perfect Happiness and the Resurrection of the Body’, Religious Studies xvi (1980), 29–35). But even if this is true, it fails to give any account of what is in question here, of how the Communion of Saints could be realized without a bodily resurrection.
The Christian tradition, following St Paul, describes the bodies of those who have risen from the dead as ‘spiritual’ bodies. But this term is not, I think, to be taken as a description of the composition of those bodies, as Origen supposed when he suggested that a spiritual body is one that is pure, refined and glorious, and therefore better suited to the purer ethereal regions of heaven.¹ The term ‘spiritual’ (pneumatikos), is simply the adjective derived from pneuma, and St Paul uses it to denote a quality of relationship, not of substance.² The ‘spiritual man’ described in I. Cor. 2: 15 is no less corporeal than his ‘unspiritual’ confrère described in the previous verse, who is so because he does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God and lacks spiritual discernment. Hence St Paul’s contrast between a physical and a spiritual body in I Cor. 15. 44 is not a statement about the substances of these bodies, but is to be explicated in terms of his contrast in the following five verses between the first Adam, the man of dust, and the last Adam, the man from heaven who became a life-giving Spirit.³ That this is the meaning of the term was realized by Irenaeus when, showing more discernment than Origen, he said that by ‘spiritual’ St Paul means partaking of the Spirit rather than lacking flesh; a being whose flesh was stripped away would be the spirit of a man (or of God), and not a spiritual man – who is a man possessing the earnest of the Holy Spirit and subject to the Spirit (Adv. Haer. V. vi. 1, viii. 2).⁴ This is not to deny that there may well be striking differences between earthly bodies and resurrected bodies (St Paul says, for instance, that the latter are imperishable, in I Cor. 15: 42), but the term ‘spiritual’ is not meant to describe what those differences will be. So, again, there seem to be good reasons for refraining from trying to be too explicit about the nature of the life to come. But the argument we have been considering does commit us to saying that a saint is more like the men of the age to come than is an homme moyen sensuel.

¹ de Principiis III. vi. 4; contra Celsum vii. 32. See also de Principiis II. xi. 6 for his suggestion that the saints who die will remain in a place on this earth called Paradise for further instruction after which they will ascend to a place in the air and reach the kingdom of heaven, passing through the spheres and globes (which Scripture calls heavens). Such passages show that science-fiction-like descriptions of the future life are not a modern invention!
⁴ See also St Augustine, The City of God xiii. 20 for a similar interpretation.