

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS: MYTH OR HISTORICAL REALITY?

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The Significance of Christ's Resurrection

The reality of the resurrection of Jesus is the touchstone of Christianity. An internationally recognized scholar has stated incisively that the resurrection of Jesus is "absolutely decisive for any Christian proclamation and for the Christian faith itself."¹ Another world-class theologian has summarized it in a single sentence, "Christianity stands or falls with the reality of the rising of Jesus from the dead by God."² Any informed reader of the NT will agree with these two summary assessments regarding the significance of the resurrection of Jesus for Christian faith. However, it may come as a surprise, even a shock, to find that neither of these world-class theologians accepts Jesus' bodily resurrection! Later in this essay we will discuss in some detail why these and other liberal theologians reject a bodily resurrection of the Lord.

Foundation for Faith and Preaching. The apostle Paul states unambiguously and with unabashed directness, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain" (1 Cor 15:14, NASB). The term "vain" is not familiar to many modern readers. The NKJV, therefore, reads, "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty." The REB (Revised English Bible) puts it in more colloquial language, "And if Christ was not raised, then our gospel is null and void, and so too is your faith." The NIV uses the term "useless" as a substitute for the term "vain."

Why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ of such decisive significance? Without the resurrection of Jesus our preaching, our

gospel, and our faith is "vain," is "empty," "useless," or "null and void." This key sentence in the apostle Paul's resurrection chapter (1 Cor 15) reaffirms the centrality of the resurrection of Jesus for Christian faith and proclamation. Genuine Christian faith and preaching has no foundation, no focus, no assurance, no guarantee, and no certainty without the factuality of the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Foundation of the Believer's Salvation. Romans 10:9 affirms, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (NASB). The confession of the lordship of Jesus and the belief in the heart (mind) that the Father raised Him from the dead go hand in hand. Thus, Jesus' lordship and His resurrection from the dead are two essentials foundational to the believer's salvation. Christian faith without the resurrection reality can, therefore, be neither genuinely Christian nor will it be saving faith.

Foundation of Christianity's Uniqueness. The uniqueness of Christianity over against all other world religions is manifested in the resurrection of Jesus, aside from other miraculous events. One prominent evangelical author writes, "The incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the events which distinguish Christianity from Mohammedanism and Judaism,"³ and, we may add, from any other world religion.

Another widely read contemporary evangelical theologian sums up major connections and guarantees provided in Jesus' resurrection in the following quotation:

Christianity is like no other faith on earth, . . . Whether you compare Christianity with Judaism or Islam, its hostile half-brothers, or with Hinduism and its atheistic child Buddhism, or with Taoism or state Shintoism or any type of polytheism, or with any other religion that humanity has developed, the basic contrast is invariably the same. . . for they all ring changes on the theme of self-salvation. When Christians are asked to make good their claim that [Christianity is different] . . . , they point to Jesus' Resurrection. The Easter [that is, resurrection] event . . . demonstrated Jesus' deity; validated his teaching; attested the completion of his work of atonement for sin; confirms his present cosmic dominion and his coming reappearance as Judge; . . . and guarantees each believer's own reembodiment by Resurrection in the world to come.⁴

Christianity without the resurrection of Jesus is unthinkable. However, a major debate has waged for decades in the liberal tradition of modern theology about the reality and meaning of the resurrection of Jesus.⁵ In the last few years the debate about the bodily resurrection of Jesus has entered the evangelical world as is indicated by a recent volume, *The Battle for the Resurrection* (1989), written by Norman L. Geisler.⁶

Reality of the Resurrection Questioned. The literature on the subject of the resurrection of Jesus is vast. The computerized list of the *ATLA Religion Index* provides more than 660 entries.⁷ More than fifty major books have been published in the last four to five decades.⁸ This vast amount of material, with its array of divergent opinions, reveals that the subject remains a current concern.

The passion and intensity with which the resurrection of Jesus is debated is revealed in several titles. Eduard Schweizer, professor at the University of Zurich, entitles his essay, "Resurrection - Fact or Fiction?"⁹ Another scholar uses the title, "How Historical is the Resurrection?"¹⁰ indicating that the historicity, facticity and actual event-happening of the resurrection is a major issue. One essay has the heading, "The Resurrection of Christ: Myth or History?"¹¹ These titles briefly indicate that the resurrection of Jesus has become a major problem in modernity with its secular, rationalistic mindset.

A key issue in the ongoing debate is whether Jesus actually rose in bodily form, in a truly physical manner. Did Jesus really come out of the tomb with a resurrection body? Was there an empty tomb to begin with? What about the claim that Jesus was raised only in the minds of the disciples? That is, was His resurrection a psychological resurrection of some sort based on hallucinations or other visionary experiences?

Was the resurrection an event in the faith of the disciples but not an event in actual history? Was it a faith resurrection which "took place" in the belief system or the kerygma (preaching) of the immediate followers of Jesus? Was it an experience in the mind and thinking of those who claimed to have seen Him? Is the "seeing" with the intellectual eye of the mental processes of the brain but not with the physical eye that perceives a material reality? These

questions, aside from others, indicate the direction in which the discussion at large is developing today.

Informed Christians cannot avoid becoming knowledgeable on major views in existence today regarding the resurrection of Jesus. They may insist that their denominational statements of faith are sufficiently precise on this matter so as to avoid confusion or to give in to accommodations of liberal, non-biblical views on this matter.¹²

Resurrection Reality Clashes with Modernistic World Views. Major thinkers in Christianity at large no longer accept the resurrection of Jesus as having happened in the way the NT describes it. These persons engage in massive reinterpretations of NT data in order to bring it into harmony with certain presupposed modernistic "scientific" world views.

The axiom of such a world view in liberal theology is summed up by the liberal theologian Jürgen Moltmann: "Faith does not depend on the Bible's world view but rather liberates reason to its own reasonableness. That includes the application of the historical[*-critical*] sciences to the Bible and to church dogma."¹³ In this precisely worded claim an authoritative, modernistic, "scientific" world view superimposes itself on Christian faith and the Bible. Accordingly, the Bible must be reinterpreted to fit into this presupposed "scientific" world view. Unfortunately, exegesis (that is, a reading out of the text) becomes in this approach eisegesis (that is, a reading into the text) of something which the biblical text does not hold on its own terms.

Resurrection Reality Bound up with the Reality of the Second Coming. The Advent movement with its universal mission of proclaiming the "eternal gospel" (Rev 14:6-12) has as its focus a real and near return of Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven. This end time message, of course, does not fit into the modernistic "scientific" world view either. But it is based on the Bible's own divinely revealed world view.

The Three Angels' Message would be shaken to its very foundations, if the modernistic "scientific" world view were superimposed on Scripture. It would have to be reinterpreted in a massive way, and in its very essence, if a physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus has never taken place. How could Jesus Christ return in

reality and in fact on the clouds of heaven as a real Being and take His own home, if He has not been raised bodily from the dead?

In the face of these challenges to the essence of biblical faith, it is a mandate to return to Holy Scripture. Its words on this vital subject must have renewed impact on what believers will accept as their faith today, in the time of the end. Their faith must be a genuine biblical faith, a faith based on Scripture and grounded firmly in the Word of God.

In this essay we will first survey several modern views on the resurrection of Jesus. Following the survey, we will investigate the major NT records which shape and affirm the Christian faith in the resurrection of Jesus. In conclusion we will highlight briefly the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ for the church and the believer.

Major Modern Views

Twentieth century scholars—for reasons based in essence on a non-negotiable, modernistic "scientific" world view—have taken contradictory positions on the facticity and historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. It is important to provide a sampling of representative views without being exhaustive. Our discussion will include: (1) Undergirding assumptions based on conceptions of reality and world views; (2) Presuppositions which are part of the historical method employed; (3) Subtlety of argumentation and language used in new proposals; (4) Changes implied for the Christian faith; and (5) The acculturation of the gospel message to various modern forms of thinking.

"Swoon Theory": Jesus Taken from the Cross Alive. The volume by the British scholar J. Duncan M. Derrett,¹⁴ *The Anastasis. The Resurrection of Jesus as an Historical Event*,¹⁵ published in 1982, gives renewed support to the old hypothesis that Jesus did not really die on the cross but merely "swooned." Jesus was, according to the "swoon theory," overcome by physical exhaustion and fainted on the cross, giving the appearance of being dead. He was mistakenly taken down as dead, but in the coolness of the tomb He revived and lived another forty days before He expired.

Derrett argues that the Greek terms *anastasis/anasthenai*, "resurrection/raised," mean the "revival of a person" but do not

refer to the resurrection of a dead person. In order to avoid the counter argument based on the term *egerthenai*, "to rise up, to be raised,"¹⁶ he argues that this term expresses a manipulative action of the disciples to raise Jesus up from his fainted condition, but does not reflect the fact of a physical resurrection.

Hugh J. Schonfield also defends in his book, *The Passover Plot*,¹⁷ the "swoon theory." Jesus plotted with Joseph of Arimathea to arrange for his death and the "resurrection." When Jesus cried out "I thirst," it was a signal for a servant of Joseph of Arimathea to administer to Him a powerful drug on a sponge, which caused a death-like state; but Jesus was not dead. He was laid in a tomb where He came to himself. Thus, Jesus plotted His "resurrection" by being revived in the tomb from the drug and rejoined His disciples subsequently.

It can hardly be expected that Schonfield would find many followers with this "highly imaginative piece of fiction which runs entirely contrary to the witness of the gospels,"¹⁸ not to speak of the witness of the apostle Paul.

Derrett and Schonfield, each in their own way, revive the old "swoon theory" propounded extensively by rationalists on the Continent.¹⁹ In 1828 the German rationalist H. E. G. Paulus²⁰ claimed that Jesus was taken down from the cross in an apparently dead state, but still alive, living for another forty days before He died. Jesus was revived by the coolness in the tomb and the aromatic spices and could leave the tomb because the earthquake had moved the rolling stone.²¹

The Greek terms²² employed in the NT to describe the resurrection cannot be bent in meaning so as to give credence to the "swoon theory." The Greek terms for "resurrection" means just that and do not mean the revivication, resuscitation, "revival of a person," or the like.

The "swoon theory" is old, as we have seen, but it still commands some following today. Although no longer widely supported in the second half of the twentieth century, it is still alive.

"Myth" Theory: Resurrection by Proclamation. Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), "one of the twentieth century's most influential theologians,"²³ who has dominated NT scholarship in much of this century, and who is known for his demythologization

program²⁴ has been a strong opponent to the factual, historical and bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Bultmann recognizes that "the resurrection of Jesus is often used in the New Testament as a miraculous proof."²⁵ Does this mean that the miraculous resurrection is a proof for Bultmann? No, it does not. Bultmann's modernistic "scientific" world view includes the presupposition of a "closed continuum" of natural causes and effects in history. It is a given that the "cause-effect" continuum on which modern historiography is based cannot be broken by a miracle.²⁶ Bultmann's acceptance of this presupposition makes it impossible for him (and all other modern scholars who think likewise) to accept a physical resurrection of Jesus, despite his recognition that this is what the NT claims on its own terms.

Bultmann concedes regarding Acts 17:31, which states that God "having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (NASB), that "here [in Acts 17:31] we are actually told that God substantiated the claims of Christ by raising him from the dead."²⁷ Can Bultmann accept this divine substantiation, or "proof," as valid and authoritative for believers in the twentieth century? Bultmann answers in the negative.

In fact, he chides the apostle Paul for calling on eye-witnesses as evidence for the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 15). Bultmann terms this eye-witness proof a "fatal argument"²⁸ on the part of the apostle. It is "fatal" in Bultmann's view because faith (as defined by him) is an existential decision which cannot have any support in historical fact. Bultmann's existentialist interpretation of faith is the issue here, not what the NT claims.

The apostle Paul shows it to be otherwise. He calls on eye-witnesses to show that the resurrection of Jesus was an event in time and place, quite different from faith in Jesus as Bultmann understands it. For Paul, and the early church from whom his information derives (1 Cor 15:3-8), the resurrection faith is based on Jesus' actual resurrection which a long series of eye-witnesses have attested. Most are still alive and could be questioned regarding this reality.

At the end of Bultmann's argument—and after he has spoken of "the legend of the empty tomb"—he concludes, "An historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceiv-

able!"²⁹ It is inconceivable on the part of Bultmann because he follows the presupposition of modern historiography. Accordingly, what happens in history is determined by an alleged "closed continuum" of causes and effects on the horizontal plane. Such a presupposition does not allow for God to intervene and to shape the historical process itself.

Many other modern scholars have joined Bultmann in the claim: "The resurrection itself is not an event of past history."³⁰ They have done so despite the fact that the NT presents Jesus' resurrection as an event of past history.

As just noted, Bultmann is not convinced by the 500 eye-witnesses to which Paul appeals. He speaks of "the impossibility of establishing the objective historicity of the resurrection no matter how many witnesses are cited, . . ."³¹ For Bultmann the resurrection can never be historically verified or established through "objective historicity." "Objective historicity" is a concern of the historical-critical method to which he subscribes, a method which does not allow a divine cause to function in history.

In this sense Bultmann maintains an essential opposition between history as he defines it and historical reality as the NT defines it. He asserts, contrary to the NT, that "the real difficulty is that the resurrection is itself an article of faith, . . ."³² It is an article of faith only for the existentialist interpretation to which Bultmann subscribes.

Since the "resurrection is an article of faith" for Bultmann, can there be any historical reality in support of such an "article of faith"? Bultmann is consistent in his claim: Jesus' "resurrection is not an event of past history. All that the historical criticism [i.e. historical-critical method] can establish is the fact that the first disciples came to believe in the resurrection."³³

It is undeniable historically (as the NT gives witness to it) that the disciples believed in the resurrection of Jesus. But since Bultmann holds that Jesus' "resurrection is not an event of past history," what is the nature of the resurrection of Jesus for Bultmann? Bultmann's incisive answer is: "Jesus has risen in the kerygma."³⁴ In addition, ". . . Jesus Christ is present in the kerygma."³⁵ These statements mean that Jesus Christ is raised at the moment when the message of Jesus is preached and is present in

the preaching itself. Therefore, the reality of the resurrection is not based in a historical event; it is not an event of verifiable history. Of course, since it happens in the kerygma (proclamation), it is not a bodily resurrection. The bodily resurrection of Jesus in the NT becomes, in Bultmann's reinterpretation, a kerygmatic resurrection which takes place in the preaching of the church.

It is, therefore, no surprise that Bultmann speaks of "the legend of the empty tomb,"³⁶ and of "all the Easter legends, whatever elements of historical fact they may contain."³⁷ Whatever "elements of historical fact" that may be at the core of these so-called legends,³⁸ will never grant an iota of credibility to the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

For Bultmann there can be no factual, historical, physical resurrection of Jesus because of his definition of history and what the historical-critical method can deliver. A physical resurrection is ruled out *a priori* on methodological grounds. In a debate with the Continental existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers, Bultmann wrote that like him he was convinced "that a corpse cannot become alive again and climb out of the grave."³⁹

Since the NT witness is so overwhelming regarding Jesus' physical resurrection as a historical reality, Bultmann asserts that we have to engage in a reinterpretation of the NT, a demythologization, to demonstrate that Jesus "has risen in the kerygma."⁴⁰

Bultmann's claim of the resurrection of Jesus "in the kerygma" feeds into and is in harmony with his existentialist interpretation of the gospel. Jesus is not only raised in the kerygma, the apostolic proclamation of the past, but the "Christ of the kerygma"⁴¹ "authoritatively addresses the hearer—every hearer"⁴² in the church's present proclamation. Jesus is still being raised as the "Christ of the kerygma" in the preaching of today.

By now there is ample evidence from Bultmann's pen that Jesus' "resurrection in the kerygma" is not identical with a physical resurrection as an historical event of the past. Thus, Bultmann can maintain his view that the resurrection of Jesus as "an event of past history" is "inconceivable," while at the same time he can speak of the resurrection of Jesus in another sense, meaning something radically different.

We will linger just a little longer with Bultmann, because he

has defined the issue so decisively and linked it so explicitly to the dominant historical-critical method which modernistic scholarship employs as the standard method of research.

A few years ago Bultmann gave an interview to a major German news magazine, *Der Spiegel*,⁴³ which reported on a rally of 22,000 German believers in the Westphalia Hall in Dortmund, Germany, on March 6, 1966. These confessing Christians of Germany gathered under the banner, "The Lord is risen—the Lord is risen, indeed." In response to this rally Bultmann reaffirmed in his interview that the NT "reports of a bodily resurrection of Jesus are legends, . . ." ⁴⁴ He also maintained "that Jesus is risen in the same manner as Goethe [considered the most famous of German poets], if one views the person and work as a phenomenon of cultural history. For the person and works of great men remain effective in cultural history, and that goes for Jesus too."⁴⁵

In this sense the resurrection of Jesus is not an hallucination on the part of the disciples, a view which Bultmann does not support. Rather, it is "a phenomenon of cultural history," an event in the memory of human beings as they are told about Jesus, Goethe, Stalin, or any other major historical figure. The resurrection of Jesus is but an event in memory not in history.

Bultmann, as noted before, refuses to understand the resurrection of Jesus to be a matter of historical research. He holds firmly to the "principle of analogy" as espoused by the historical-critical method.⁴⁶ This principle holds that there is "a fundamental homogeneity of all historical events" (E. Troeltsch), that is, the past is known only by means of the experience of the present. The present is the only key to provide knowledge about the past.

Thus, for Bultmann there can be no physical resurrection of Jesus in the past, because physical resurrections are not part of the human experience at present. Since the dead do not come forth from their graves today, there could not have been a resurrection of Jesus from the dead in the past. This view is grounded in and based on the so-called "principle of analogy" of modern historical criticism.

In short, Bultmann's denial of a physical resurrection of Jesus is grounded in his modern "scientific" world view. The latter contains: (1) The presupposition of a "closed continuum" of natural causes and effects which are said to determine the flow of history,

and (2) The principle of analogy which understands the past on the basis of phenomena happening in the present. Since no dead come out of their graves today, Jesus could not have come out of His grave in the past. These methodological constraints provide the basis for the denial of the physical resurrection of Jesus.

Reactions to Bultmann have been voluminous.⁴⁷ Bultmann separated faith from history. Past reality based on happening and contemporary faith are dichotomous.⁴⁸ Contemporary faith is based on the contemporary world view, so Bultmann claims, and this world view does not allow anyone to be raised from the dead. Can we follow such a modern dichotomous separation of the past and the present, of faith and history? Do we want to engage in a reductionism of the biblical message, a shortening of the biblical truth? Are we willing to concede that faith is a concoction of the mind without any basis in historical reality? If we were to concede this, then faith would be based on a myth as Bultmann holds.

The world view of the believer must be holistic and comprehensive. It needs the divine revelation of Scripture. It cannot disallow or deny singularities, that is, one-time and unique events of history, simply because they do not seem to be repetitive and known in today's experience. If the resurrection is but a reality of proclamation (kerygma) and thus a reality created in the minds of the listeners, then the resurrection is but a mental reality no different from any other such mental act.

The NT, however, speaks of another type of reality which involve eye-witnesses and not simply mind-witnesses as is the case in Bultmann. Over against Bultmann we have to maintain the unity of truth and historical reality. This means that the truth is based on a reality of events which happened in time and space, a reality in history which was factual and genuine.⁴⁹

It has been said, "Faith did not create the appearances; the appearances created faith."⁵⁰ We need to add that the kerygma did not create Jesus' appearances nor his resurrection; the kerygma, the preaching, proclaimed what had happened in the physical resurrection and in real history. The resurrection of Jesus precedes the proclamation (kerygma) about it.

"Non-Factual Vision" Theories. The views of several modern theologians and exegetes who have in common the general

idea that the resurrection of Jesus is the result of non-factual visions or hallucinations fit under this heading. The term hallucination is less often used in recent literature because of certain criticisms leveled against it earlier. Therefore, the language of "non-factual vision" is preferred today.

1. *B. H. Streeter*. The Oxford NT scholar B. H. Streeter is known most widely for the formulation of the so-called "four-source theory" of the Synoptic Gospels.⁵¹ Streeter held at the beginning of this century that the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus Christ were a "sign" which satisfied the apostles, but can "be not a convincing sign to us."⁵²

In Streeter's view the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection were "[visions] directly caused by the Lord Himself veritably alive and in communion with them [the disciples]."⁵³ With this interpretation the miraculous nature of the bodily resurrection is avoided, making it but a visionary experience, indeed, a "sign."⁵⁴ The historicity of the resurrection as a factual event in history is circumvented in this interpretation as well.

2. *Günther Bornkamm*. Günther Bornkamm, a student of Bultmann who belongs to the so-called post-Bultmannians, agrees with Bultmann that the resurrection of Jesus is "removed from historical scholarship. History cannot ascertain and establish conclusively the facts about them [Jesus' resurrection from the dead, his life and his eternal reign] as it can with other events of the past."⁵⁵

Bornkamm also speaks of the "Easter stories" as "legend"⁵⁶ and containing "legendary additions."⁵⁷ He does not accept a bodily resurrection of Jesus, nor does he know what really happened on resurrection Sunday. Bornkamm holds that "we have to understand the Easter stories too as evidence of the faith, and not as records and chronicles, and that it is the *message* of Easter we must seek in the *Easter stories*."⁵⁸ He maintains that the "appearances of the risen Christ and the word of his witnesses have in the first place given rise to this faith."⁵⁹

In Bornkamm's view the appearances of the risen Christ are not historically verifiable events. While he refrains from designating the appearances of Jesus as outright hallucinations, they are

on the level of non-factual visions in the minds of those who proclaimed Jesus to have been raised from the dead.

3. *Willi Marxsen*. Willi Marxsen, who was Bultmann's successor on the professorial chair at Marburg University and also a so-called post-Bultmannian, remains highly skeptical about the NT resurrection reports.⁶⁰ He asserts that no one who belonged to the early Church ever claimed to have seen or experienced "Jesus' resurrection as an event, a fact, a happening."⁶¹

He holds that since our time and place is different from that of the NT, we are as little able to appeal to the NT texts as we are able to appeal to Genesis 1-2 when we wish to know what really happened. Natural science has to inform us on these matters.⁶² Marxsen reveals in these ideas a methodological presupposition which is grounded in a modern "scientific" world view. The latter is the norm for understanding the past. The scientific history created by historical criticism, that is, the historical-critical method, to which he subscribes and the presuppositions which determine its understanding of history rule out a physical resurrection of Jesus.

Marxsen himself raises the question whether the idea of a vision of Jesus is "indeed the whole truth of what really happened?"⁶³ For Marxsen the resurrection of Jesus is the result of "an outcome of reflection."⁶⁴ The question relates to the cause of the "reflection"? Is it a fact in time and space, because history speaks about time and space? Is it the result of a "vision," an event in the mind of people and not in time and space? Marxsen provides the answer to this crucial issue. He says, "The formulae [of the resurrection] show that both the setting up of the community as well as the reasons given for functioning within it were traced back to a vision of Jesus after the crucifixion. Now this means that what supplies the real basis of the community and the function within it is *the fact*, not of the resurrection itself, but of Jesus' *appearances*; this fact alone is brought into prominence."⁶⁵ The "fact" are the "appearances" which are the "vision of Jesus after the crucifixion."

For the purpose of our discussion it will suffice to note that Marxsen shares with other historical-critical theologians the view that the resurrection of Jesus is not based on historical fact, but on

"a vision of Jesus after the crucifixion," a "vision" of appearances in the minds of the disciples.⁶⁶

In short, Jesus was raised in the minds of the disciples, in their subjective "vision." Subsequently they reflected about it and thus produced what the NT contains regarding the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection was not a physical reality which was experienced by Jesus who had actually died on the cross. In harmony with Bultmann, Marxsen says that the phrase "'Jesus is risen' simply means: today the crucified Jesus is calling us to believe."⁶⁷ The phrase is but a metaphor for believing in Jesus.

The German Lutheran scholar Ulrich Wilckens, himself a scholar of the liberal tradition, noted that neither Marxsen's nor Bultmann's views on the resurrection can pretend to represent biblical Christianity.⁶⁸ This assessment is correct, because their reductionistic interpretation omits key elements in the NT. They represent what the best of historical-critical scholarship can provide.

4. *Jürgen Moltmann.* In 1964 the University of Tübingen systematic theologian Jürgen Moltmann wrote an epochal book, *Theology of Hope*.⁶⁹ His programmatic volume was translated into many languages, because it was taken as a milestone in the eschatological orientation of modern theology of the liberal tradition.⁷⁰ It became influential in the development of what has become known as liberation theology in its various forms.

Moltmann's tome, *Theology of Hope*, is seen "as much a book about the resurrection of Jesus as it is a book about eschatology, since for Moltmann, the resurrection is only properly understood in eschatological perspective, . . ."⁷¹ We quoted in our introduction above his famous sentence, "Christianity stands or falls with the rising of Jesus from the dead by God."⁷² What does Moltmann mean when he speaks about the resurrection of Jesus?

It is a fact of Moltmann's thinking that there was no factual or physical resurrection of Jesus.⁷³ He writes, "The resurrection of Jesus from the dead by God does not speak the 'language of facts,' but only the language of faith and hope, that is, the 'language of promise'."⁷⁴ Although Moltmann is in conversation with and opposition to the so-called "present" eschatology of Bultmann, in the

matter of Jesus' resurrection he follows Bultmann's "existential interpretation."⁷⁵

Moltmann remains also indebted to the traditional principle of analogy of the so-called "scientific" historical-critical method. Since the resurrection of Jesus is without analogy in present human experience, it cannot be perceived to be a historical event of the past and cannot be historically verified by the "language of facts," argues Moltmann.

In Moltmann's view the resurrection is an "eschatological event" of the future. It is a "promise." "*Resurrectio* is no restoration," says Moltmann, "but rather a *promissio*. It has no *anamnesis*, but rather anticipation."⁷⁶

Moltmann is a thorough-going historical skeptic. He insists that not even the NT narratives of the resurrection of Jesus know what happened. He maintains, "What 'resurrection of the dead' really is, and what 'actually happened' in the raising of Jesus, is thus a thing which not even the New Testament Easter [resurrection] narratives profess to know."⁷⁷

What does the phrase "risen from the dead," which is repeated so often in the NT, actually mean for Moltmann? He provides an elaborate and complex answer: "The actual process of the raising of Jesus is covered by a term for which there is no basis in experience hitherto and elsewhere. That is to say, it is described as something for which there are no analogies in the history we know, but only apocalyptic promises and hopes that where death is concerned God will give proof of his divinity in the last [that is, the future]."⁷⁸ This explanation calls again upon the principle of analogy which is foundational for secular "scientific" historiography in the liberal tradition of scholarship.

He also notes that the term "resurrection" has no equivalent in present experience. This means that there are no physical resurrections as part of the human experience of the present. The implication with the principle of analogy is that since we do not experience physical resurrections in the present it did not happen in the past.

Finally, he reinterprets the resurrection event of the past, which the NT explicitly affirms to be physical in nature, as but a divine promise of the future. We must ask, How can an alleged

promise for the future have any meaning, if there is no factual and real substance to it in the reality of the past? The real future resurrection has meaning only if there was a real resurrection in the historical past. Without such an historical event in the past, the promise of it for the future is empty. It is pie in the sky. What did the disciples experience in the appearances of the resurrected Jesus? Moltmann elaborates that "... the eye-witnesses perceived the earthly, crucified Jesus of the past in the glory of God's coming and drew conclusions from that in their experience of call and mission."⁷⁹ This "perception" explanation is most curious.

Moltmann holds that what the disciples "perceived" in the appearances of Jesus was actually "the glory of God's coming," that is, His future coming. Thus, the perception was a visionary "sight and a foretaste in the countenance of the crucified Christ of the God who was to come, a matter of being seized by the coming change in the world through God's glory."⁸⁰ The "sight" of the appearances of Jesus was but that, namely, some sort of a mental vision. The resurrection appearances have thus been interpreted by Moltmann as mental faith visions of a "pre-reflective anticipation"⁸¹ of God's future in the Christ event.

It is fully evident by now that Moltmann does not support a historical, physical resurrection of Jesus in the sense of a past factual event in space and time.⁸² For him the resurrection of Jesus was not "a real event in space and time"⁸³ in the sense that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead. It consisted of events in the minds, the "sight," of the disciples who experienced a mental "foretaste" of what is to come from God in the future. "Hence," as far as Moltmann is concerned, "in the strictest terms Jesus cannot ever be said to have been resurrected," concludes R. E. Otto correctly.⁸⁴

Does this mean for Moltmann that there can be no real second coming of Jesus since the resurrection was but a "sight" experience in the minds of the disciples? What the disciples experienced in their "sight" regarding the appearances is but a foretaste of what the believers are to experience in their "sight" as the Second Coming. The denial of a physical resurrection is by Moltmann inseparably linked to a denial of a physical return of Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven.

"Objective Vision" Theory: Historical Resurrection

Without Bodily Resurrection. The world renowned neo-Kantian systematic theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg of the University of Munich has become famous for defending the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event.⁸⁵ This defense has caused much excitement because it is believed that historical-critical scholarship can now affirm the historical happening of the resurrection of Jesus.

Pannenberg claims that "there are good and even superior reasons for claiming that the Resurrection of Jesus was a historical event, and consequently the risen Lord himself is a living reality."⁸⁶ To a mainline Bible-believing Christian this is a most astonishing statement from a liberal theologian.

Does Pannenberg mean that Jesus Christ was bodily raised from the dead, and that He is now a genuine living Being in the heavenly world? It seems as if this is what Pannenberg argues for in the languages which he uses. But Pannenberg must be listened to with care for what he claims and for what he does not claim.

What does Pannenberg mean when he speaks of the "historical event" of the resurrection of Jesus? And what does he mean when he says that the risen Lord Jesus is a "living reality"? Bultmann could also speak of Jesus as a "reality" in Jesus' post-resurrection state. But for Bultmann it was a "reality" caused by the kerygma, the preaching in the past and in the present, and not by a physical resurrection.

A "historical event" occurs in time and space, argues Pannenberg. That is to say, a "historical event" happens with reference to a "specific" time and a "specific" place on earth. The death of Jesus took place on the cross, and it happened at a specific time which can be dated in history and at a specific place which can be geographically located. Thus, the death of Jesus is an event in time and place. In this sense the time-place nature of the event of the resurrection, Pannenberg says, leads to the claim "that an event [which] happened at a particular time and place implies logically a claim to historicity."⁸⁷ Thus, Pannenberg can speak of the "historicity of Jesus' Resurrection."⁸⁸ By this he means that Jesus was "raised" at a particular time and a particular place.

But when Pannenberg speaks of the "historicity of Jesus' Resurrection," does this resurrection at a particular time and space mean that He was physically raised from the dead in a bodily

resurrection? This question touches the very core of the issue on the nature of the resurrection of Jesus in Pannenberg and modern neo-liberal theology.

Pannenberg bases his conclusions on the appearances of the raised Jesus and argues on that basis as follows: "If Jesus (after he was dead) now lives, then he was—before he was seen for the first time as the living One—either resuscitated or, conversely (when the manner of the contemporary life excludes resuscitation and his death was undoubtedly certain), he has been transformed to another 'life'."⁸⁹

First, it needs to be noted that Pannenberg avoids speaking affirmatively of the physical resurrection in this pivotal statement, or elsewhere in his writings. Instead, he speaks elusively of Jesus being "transformed to another 'life'." He actually puts the term "life" in quotation marks so as to indicate that this other "life" is of a different order and nature than the life Jesus experienced before his death.

Second, Pannenberg allows for the theory of resuscitation, although he does not commit himself to it. Pannenberg prefers to speak of Jesus as "transformed to another 'life'." "Because the life of the resurrected Lord involves the reality of the new creation, the resurrected Lord is in fact not perceptible as an object among others in this world; therefore, he could only be experienced and designated by an extraordinary mode of experience, the vision, and only in metaphorical language."⁹⁰ In this pivotal statement Pannenberg speaks of Jesus, after his resurrection, as not being "perceptible as an object." An object can be touched and is material. But for Pannenberg, Jesus is not raised as an "object" in this sense. Therefore, Jesus can only be "experienced and designated by an extraordinary mode of experience," namely "the vision."

Could Jesus be seen by anyone after his resurrection? Was "the vision" a normal vision in the sense of a sight or seeing open to any human being? The resurrection appearances, in Pannenberg's view, were not events "visible to everyone." He states, "With regard to the character and mode of the Easter appearances, the first thing to be considered is that it may have involved an extraordinary vision, not even an event that was visible to everyone."⁹¹

How can this be the case, if there were hundreds of people who

saw Jesus after his resurrection? Pannenberg does not accept the reports of Jesus' resurrection at face value. The gospel reports regarding the appearances of Jesus "have such a strong legendary character that one can scarcely find a historical kernel of their own in them."⁹²

What kind of body did Paul see and was in contact with on the road to Damascus? Pannenberg answers, "Paul must have seen a spiritual body, a *soma pneumatikon*, on the road to Damascus, not a person with an earthly body."⁹³ The resurrection body of Jesus is not a physical body, an "earthly body," but a "spiritual body."

The "spiritual body" is so radically different from the previous body that "the transformation of the perishable into the spiritual body will be so radical that nothing will remain unchanged. There is no substantial or structural continuity from the old to the new existence."⁹⁴ Thus, both in substance and structure the "spiritual body" is without continuity with the old body. The "spiritual body" is not a structural body.

What kind of continuity will exist between the non-material, non-substantial and non-structural body of the resurrected Jesus and his previous body? Pannenberg is as elusive here as we will find him anywhere in the exposition of his views. He asserts, "Something different will be produced in its place, but there is a historical continuity in the sense of a continuous transition in the consummation of the transformation itself."⁹⁵ Evidently, the only continuity between the pre-resurrection body of Jesus and the post-resurrection body of Jesus is an "historical continuity . . . of a continuous transition," but not bodily continuity, even if the material nature of the body is different.

Pannenberg does not accept the NT record that Jesus predicted his own resurrection.⁹⁶ He is also uneasy about everything the NT says concerning the empty tomb. While he does not wish to follow those who have an "excessive skepticism" of the empty tomb tradition,⁹⁷ he does not accept the accounts himself in the completeness with which they are presented in the gospels. Pannenberg notes that he only accepts the empty tomb tradition "as historical in its core."⁹⁸

The historical "core" of the empty tomb tradition is restricted to the idea that Jesus was raised from the dead to "another 'life'."

But what is this "life" to which He was raised? He states, "That the Easter appearances were, as experiences, events in space and time need not include that the appearing *Reality*—presupposing it was not a question of mere hallucination—on its side was in space and in time. Hence, the resurrection of Jesus as an event [itself] is fixable temporally and spatially—but the continuous sequential relationship in which events are usually arranged, temporally as well as spatially, at this point [in the appearances] evades our view. Plainly said: The wider course of the event, insofar as it concerns Jesus himself, remains unknown."⁹⁹ Thus, Pannenberg says "the appearing *Reality*" was not one in "space and time." Thus, Jesus who died was transformed to "another life."¹⁰⁰ That other "life" is a life with an immaterial, "spiritual body," without substance and corporeality.

Pannenberg develops this further. He does "not consider the Gospels in every respect as historically reliable sources, . . ." ¹⁰¹ He believes that "apologetic pressure" led to the development of "legendary elements in those [gospel] narratives, especially in their final form, representing comparative late stages of their tradition."¹⁰²

Pannenberg takes as his starting-point the report of Acts 9:3ff., 22:6ff., and 26:12ff., with the light and voice coming to Paul from heaven as the clue to the "life" of the resurrected Jesus.¹⁰³ From there he goes to 1 Corinthians 15:42ff. where Paul speaks of the "spiritual body" of the new life of the Resurrection in contrast with the present condition of bodily existence."¹⁰⁴ The "spiritual body" is for Pannenberg a "spiritual life" which "means a form of life that is no longer separated from the divine origin of life and hence is immortal, as Paul says (1 Cor 15:42, 52sqq.)."¹⁰⁵

It must not escape our attention that Pannenberg's view of the resurrection of Jesus is depicted by him as a "metaphor." "To speak of the resurrection of the dead is not comparable to speaking about any random circumstance that can be identified empirically. Here we are dealing with a metaphor."¹⁰⁶ Pannenberg does not wish to remove any "historical event" aspect from the resurrection of Jesus when he speaks of resurrection in terms of "metaphor."¹⁰⁷

In the end, therefore, Pannenberg "spiritualizes" away the bodily resurrection of Jesus. For him, the experience of Paul was a

purely visionary phenomenon.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the appearances of Jesus were of the same nature.

At this point it is important to note that the NT never refers to the resurrection appearances of Jesus in terms of a "vision."¹⁰⁹ Paul says of his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, "He appeared [Greek *ophthe*] to me also" (1 Cor 15:8, NASB). Paul equates his Damascus road encounter with Christ in terms of an "appearance" in the same way in which Christ "appeared" (Greek *ophthe*) to the disciples and brethren earlier (vss. 5, 6, 7). This usage is in harmony with the Greek terminology used in Acts 26:19 for the "heavenly vision [*ouranios optasia*],"¹¹⁰ more precisely translated as "heavenly appearance,"¹¹¹ which includes "the appearance [of Christ] outside Damascus"¹¹² referred to in Acts 9:1-9 and subsequent revelations of Jesus.¹¹³

William L. Craig, one of the foremost contemporary scholars on the resurrection of Jesus who has earned a doctorate under Pannenberg, has reacted to Pannenberg for confusing the issue of the "spiritual body/life" of Jesus. Craig points out that the reports in Acts regarding the appearance of Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:5-6; 22:8, 10; 26:15-19) cannot be interpreted to be merely extrasensory, visionary manifestations.¹¹⁴

It seems inappropriate to start with Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, since the appearances of Jesus to his disciples precede Paul's own experience in time.

In addition, it is not sound to equate the "resurrection life" of Jesus with the "spiritual body" of 1 Corinthians 15 as is done by Pannenberg. The language in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians reveals that ". . . the 'spiritual body' is in its nature the same body, the body of flesh, but determined by the Spirit as is the body of Jesus Christ."¹¹⁵ The contrast is not between the natural and non-natural body, that is, a material and an immaterial body, but between the natural and the supernatural body.¹¹⁶ In both cases there is a bodily reality.

The contrast is also not between bodily existence in this life and spiritual existence in the life after the resurrection. The contrast in 1 Corinthians 15:42-49 is between an "earthly body" which is characterized by corruption (vs. 42) and weakness (vs. 43), that is, the "earthly body" as the "natural body" of fallen humanity, and

a "spiritual body," being still a body and not immaterial and non-corporeal in nature. The latter is called "spiritual" because it manifests fully the Spirit which is from heaven and not the corruption and weakness of sin typical of what is on earth.¹¹⁷ The "continuity between the earthly body and the heavenly body rests on a miracle."¹¹⁸ The resurrected One exists in the resurrection body *and* with immortal life which exists in God alone and comes from Him.

On a theoretical level Pannenberg qualifies the historical-critical method in one aspect, that is, the principle of analogy which holds that dead persons do not leave their grave.¹¹⁹ Pannenberg allows for singularities on a theoretical level. However, in his application of the historical-critical method, he still holds to the principle of analogy. He recognizes the limitation of the method but is not able to accept its implications.

Thus, the full testimony of the NT, especially that of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, is still rejected. The mandates of historical reasoning based on the historical-critical method's principles of analogy, correlation and criticism, cause an essential part of the NT to be dismissed as legendary. And this, despite the fact that Pannenberg uses elusive and reinterpreted expressions as "historical event" and "historical fact" when he speaks of the resurrection of Jesus.

The assessment of Daniel P. Fuller that "Pannenberg has solved the problem of how we can know the resurrection of Jesus Christ by historical reasoning—and still remain historians"¹²⁰ cannot be accepted in this unqualified way. If Pannenberg were able to penetrate to the truth of the resurrection by means of the historical-critical method, then his approach would involve "an elitist 'priesthood of historians' which can provide decisions concerning the truth of the Christian faith"¹²¹ based on the complicated and elitist methods used by so-called "scientific" historians. Such elitism of historical authority¹²² would mean that the trained historian would become a new pope, telling the believer what is truth. However, biblical truth transcends such a method from "below," since biblical faith is based on more than that.

There are many other views which could be mentioned.¹²³ However, the hypotheses referred to above provide a cross-section

of the liberal and neo-liberal views held by major figures today. We will turn now to the NT evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

NT Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection

The NT references to the resurrection of Jesus deserve a full and complete presentation. Unfortunately, it cannot be provided within the constraints of an article. Suffice it to say, the resurrection of Jesus is acknowledged in almost every book of the NT (except 2 Thess, Titus, Phile, 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude and James).¹²⁴

It has been noted that the early Christian message "stands or falls with the resurrection, since exaltation forms the foundation of the confession that Jesus is Lord."¹²⁵ Indeed, biblical faith stands or falls with the resurrection of Jesus, since the risen and exalted Christ completes his post-resurrection and pre-advent ministry in the heavenly sanctuary before He returns in glory in His Second Coming.

In short, if there is no true resurrection, there can be no ongoing, intercessory ministry on the part of Christ, and there can be no investigative judgment ministry in the time of the end. Consequently, there can be no victorious return of Christ to take home the true believers of all ages: the righteous dead who will be raised at the first resurrection and the faithful living ones. Without Jesus' resurrection there is no new life, no heaven to go to, and no newly created earth to be possessed by God's children.

Surveying the NT. For the sake of brevity we will enumerate only the longer passages in the NT on the resurrection:

1. Major Resurrection Records in the Gospels¹²⁶

- a. Matthew 28:1-10
- b. Matthew 28:16-20
- c. Mark 16:1-8
- d. Luke 24:1-12
- e. Luke 24:13-35
- f. Luke 24:36-39
- g. Luke 24:50-53
- i. John 20:1-18
- j. John 20:19-29
- k. John 21:1-14
- l. John 21:15-24

2. *Major Resurrection Records in the Book of Acts*

a. Acts 2:24-36

b. Acts 1:3

c. Acts 17:31

3. *Major Resurrection Records in the NT Letters*¹²⁷

a. 1 Corinthians 15:3-34

b. 1 Corinthians 15:35-57

c. Romans 1:3-4

d. Ephesians 1:19-21

The listings of these major NT records dealing with the resurrection of Jesus should not be understood to mean that these are more important than the shorter references or casual references to Jesus' resurrection. This is by no means the case. It is simply an attempt to indicate that there are major discussions in various NT writings which treat the resurrection of Jesus extensively within the various contexts of the respective NT documents.

Evidence in the Gospels. All four gospels along with the report of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 agree to a consistent pattern of four sequential events connected with the resurrection of Jesus, namely, that He (1) died, (2) was buried, (3) was raised, and (4) appeared to various human beings. Taking this sequential picture of events as our starting-point, we will briefly discuss the burial reports in the NT. We assume that we do not need to discuss Jesus' death on the cross. It is for the purpose of this essay taken for granted.

1. *Burial Reports.* The time of the burial is indicated in Mark 15:42, "And when evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is the day before the Sabbath" (NASB). Jesus was buried (a) in the evening of the (b) preparation day (c) before the Sabbath began. This time notice reveals that Jesus rested in the tomb on the Sabbath.

Jesus was buried on Friday,¹²⁸ the day of preparation for the seventh-day Sabbath and in this instance for the ritual Passover Sabbath, thus constituting a "high day" (John 19:31). Because of the lateness of the hour in view of the approaching Sabbath, Jesus was laid in "the tomb [which] was nearby" (John 19:42).

Joseph of Arimathea, the owner of the tomb (Matt 27:57-60), requested of Pilate the corpse of Jesus, and Pilate gave orders for

him to receive the body of Jesus. Joseph placed the body of Jesus in the tomb. Various other persons were also involved in the burial process.¹²⁹

The body of Jesus was wrapped (Mk 15:46; Matt 27:59; Lk 23:53) in a shroud, respectively "linen cloths" (John 19:40, and a "face cloth" was used as well (John 20:7). It is "evident that the Synoptics see no contradiction between speaking of the *sinclon* [shroud] and a plurality of *othonia* [linen cloths]"¹³⁰ when it comes to the material used in the burial of Jesus. Jesus was buried in a previously unused rolling-stone tomb in a garden.¹³¹

Among the women present when Jesus was buried were Mary Magdalene (Mk 15:47; Matt 27:56, 61; cf. John 20:1), Mary the mother of Joses (Mk 15:47), and the "other Mary" (Matt 27:61), and other women both named and unnamed (Lk 23:55; 24:1, 10).

On resurrection Sunday women again play a significant role. Some of the same women who participated or witnessed the burial became witnesses of the empty tomb.¹³²

2. *Empty Tomb Reports.* A casual reading of the gospel reports of the women's discovery of the empty tomb and the events surrounding it reveals that not all gospels report every detail or every aspect relating to the empty tomb. Thus, the impression can be gained by the less careful reader that there may be discrepancies in the stories.¹³³

a. **Theories about the empty tomb.** A number of theories have been developed by those who wish to do away with the empty tomb narratives. Among the more prominent ones are the following: (1) Joseph of Arimathea stole the body of Jesus,¹³⁴ or (2) reburied it after the body had been first buried somewhere else.¹³⁵ (3) The disciples stole the body of Jesus.¹³⁶ (4) The women went on Sunday morning to the wrong tomb.¹³⁷ (5) The gardener removed the body of Jesus from the tomb so that his lettuce would be protected from the arriving spectators.¹³⁸ (6) The body of Jesus "evanesced" or decomposed between the time of his death on Friday and Sunday morning.¹³⁹ (7) Jesus "swooned" and did not really die on the cross.¹⁴⁰

The matter of the empty tomb has given rise to the hypothesis in liberal and neo-liberal scholarship that the reports of the empty

tomb are an "apologetic legend"¹⁴¹ and, therefore, cannot be used for demonstrating the historicity of the resurrection.¹⁴²

The legend notion is a modern historical-critical construct designed to minimize the gospel reports. However, the NT reports about the empty tomb do not function as an apology in the gospel record and are, therefore, no "apologetic legend."¹⁴³ Furthermore, the gospel reports appear to fill each other out, supplementing and complementing each other without contradiction. One can perceive that there is a harmonious mosaic made up from the various parts.¹⁴⁴

b. Women at the empty tomb. Let us first consider the women going to the tomb. The women arrived at the rolling-stone tomb "very early on the first day of the week," (Mk 16:2) or to be precise, "when the sun had risen" (Mk 16:2), "at early dawn" (Lk 24:1) which means "after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn" (Matt 28:1).¹⁴⁵ John adds that Mary Magdalene "came early . . . while it was still dark" (20:1).

The fact that there were a number of women going to the tomb that very morning, early on the first day of the week, is indicated by John who mentions only Mary Magdalene, but notes in her announcement to the disciples "We do not know where they have laid him" (vs. 2, NASB). Mary was obviously not alone at the tomb for she includes others in the word "we." There must have been the two Marys and Salome mentioned in the Gospel of Mark, Joanna and other women mentioned in Matthew and Luke.

c. The guard at the tomb. Only the Gospel of Matthew reports that a guard had been placed at the tomb (27:62-66; 28:4, 11-15). The reason for the guard was to prevent Jesus' disciples from removing His body, enabling them to claim His resurrection (27:64).

Subsequently, the guard reported to Jewish authorities, upon the fact that the tomb was empty, "all that had happened" (Matt 28:11). The guard were bribed to say, "His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep" (vs. 13).

Evidently the guard had nothing to lose by cooperating with the Jewish leaders in giving a false report.¹⁴⁶ The historicity of the guard report is very well presented by several authors.¹⁴⁷

d. The sealed stone rolled away by the angel. No one had

seen Jesus rise from the dead. The stone that sealed the tomb was designated as a "large stone" (Matt 27:60) or "extremely large" in size (Mk 16:4). The women were not likely to roll away such a huge stone by themselves. Actually they wondered themselves who would perform this task for them (Mark 16:3). Large stones of rolling stone tombs are estimated to have a weight of one and one-half to two tons.¹⁴⁸

When the women arrive at the tomb early on the first day, they find the stone already rolled away (Matt 28:2; Mk 16:4; Lk 24:2). It is reported that an "angel" moved the stone and then sat upon it (Matt 28:2). The guards, upon seeing the angel who rolled away the stone and recognizing that the sealed tomb had been opened by him (Matt 27:66), "shook for fear of him, and became like dead men" (Matt 28:4, NASB).

The size of the stone indicates that the women could not move it by themselves. With the guard placed before it and the Roman seal attached, it was not possible for grave robbers to move the stone and remain undetected.

e. The report to Peter and its result. Mary reports to Simon Peter that the tomb is open and "they have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him" (John 20:2, NASB). John reports that both Peter and "the other disciple" rush to the tomb and find it empty with the linen grave clothes rolled up (vss. 5-8). John, "the other disciple," comes to believe then and there that Jesus is raised from the dead (vs. 8).

f. The grave clothes. The mention of grave clothes in the Gospel of John is hardly accidental. He even records that the face-cloth was "in a place by itself" (John 20:7, NASB). The emphasis on the face-cloth and the linen wrappings being still in the tomb indicates that the body of Jesus could not have been stolen.

Robbers stealing a body would not have unwrapped the corpse and placed the linen neatly wrapped in two different places in the tomb. They would have taken the body quickly, just as it was, including its face-cloth and linen wrappings.¹⁴⁹

g. The angelic announcement. The angel's statements that "He is not here" (Matt 28:6, KJV), that "He has been raised from the dead" (Matt 28:6, NRSV), and that the women are to report to the disciples, "He has been raised from the dead" (vs. 7, NRSV)

provides additional evidence for the reality and facticity that the tomb was empty.

The fact that Paul has the fourfold sequence of "died—was buried—rose again—was seen" (1 Cor 15:3-5) "clearly implies that the tomb was empty"¹⁵⁰ on account of the second and third members of this sequence. Although Paul does not mention explicitly the empty tomb, it is surely implied in the sequence of this early report which came to Paul and which he related to the Corinthians in this letter.¹⁵¹ Oscar Cullmann has noted incisively that Paul, in his report of what he "received," provides "the proof that, long before the composition of the Gospels, the certainty of the resurrection was grounded not only on the appearances, but equally on the 'empty tomb'."¹⁵²

The gospel records regarding the empty tomb may be summarized as follows: The last event in the final period of Jesus Christ's ministry on earth is not the cross—as important and central a role as it plays in Christian faith. The cross is followed by the burial of Jesus, and this in turn is followed by His resurrection and subsequent ascension. The cross without these subsequent events is like a mountain chain without its peaks.

The concluding sections of each of the four gospels contain reports which deal with the empty tomb and the events that surround it. Each of the four gospels report that women, followers of Jesus, found the tomb open and empty aside from the grave clothes. The women were the first who were told and recognized that Jesus had risen. Women were to make this fact known to the disciples.

There are two reports about appearances of the Risen One in the gospels. Matthew 28:9-10 reports that "Jesus met them [women] and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him" (NASB). In John 20:1-2, 11-18 Mary Magdalene is especially singled out as the earliest to report to Simon Peter that the tomb is empty (vss. 1-2). She later (as well as the other women, Matt 28:9-10) saw Jesus who conversed with her, at first unrecognized and then recognized (John 20:11-18).

This cumulative evidence shows that the women witnessed something true and factual taking place following the resurrection. They see the reality of the empty tomb and are confused, stating "We do not know where they have laid him" (John 20:2, NASB).

But being informed by the word of the angel, "He is not here, for He is risen, just as He said" (Matt 28:6, NASB) they realize that Jesus had indeed risen. Mary Magdalene later that morning personally spoke to Jesus (John 20:11-18). Thus, human recognition of the empty tomb and of Jesus in the garden, supported by the testimony of the angelic word, point to the factual, historical event of the resurrection of Jesus.

3. *Appearances and the Nature of the Resurrection Body.* Among the exciting facets of the resurrection of Jesus is the aspect of His appearances and His resurrection body. Did Jesus appear in "visions"? Was He seen with the mind's eye or with the physical eyes? Was Jesus raised bodily or spiritually? Did he have a non-material reality or a physical reality when He rose from the dead? In other words, What was the nature of Jesus' resurrection appearances and His resurrection body? These questions call for an answer from the testimony of Scripture as preserved by the Evangelists.

a. **The debate and its presuppositions.** At this point we briefly recall our previous discussion on the resurrection of Jesus in current thought. Modern progressives of the liberal tradition deny a bodily resurrection of Jesus.¹⁵³ It is typical for these scholars to play off what they consider the "massive realism"¹⁵⁴ of the four gospels with what they depict as the purely "spiritual body" mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.¹⁵⁵ The "spiritual body" is interpreted to be non-physical, immaterial and intangible.

In discounting the nature of the gospel records, it is stated, "Above all, [the gospel records] have throughout a strong legendary character. For a Jesus who, after his resurrection, interacts in this way with his disciples is a figure of legend, of a legend of which it must be asked whether it does justice to the mystery of what Jesus' resurrection means."¹⁵⁶ Once more a major book by a well-known NT scholar resorts to declaring the gospel accounts "legend" and/or "legendary"¹⁵⁷ simply because the reports do not fit into modern, philosophically conditioned understandings of what can or cannot happen or what can or cannot be perceived.¹⁵⁸ The modern "scientific" world view interferes again with the Scriptural record.

Paul's reference to the "spiritual body" is interpreted in purely immaterial and noncorporeal terms so as to make it fit modern

conceptions. Once this interpretation is made it is pitched against the gospel records. The latter are accordingly reinterpreted to be legendary in nature by modern interpreters. The problem is not what the gospel records actually report or what Paul actually meant, but what the interpreter with his/her "scientific" historical method, (grounded in modernistic presuppositions) is willing to accept. Here is another telling example of the modern mind-set, a mind-set based on a naturalistic world view, is the determinant of what the Bible means or is meant to say.

b. **Risen physically.** With these preliminary considerations in mind, we turn directly to the gospel records for their testimony. A "close reading"¹⁵⁹ of what is recorded in every gospel about the appearances of Jesus shows that what is reported is consistently physical appearances.¹⁶⁰

The angel's words are recorded in Mark 16:6, "He has risen; He is not here; here is the place where they laid him" (NASB). The Greek verb rendered "he has risen," is *égèrthe*.¹⁶¹ Its usage communicates "the event as just having happened."¹⁶²

This same Greek word is also used when Jesus makes His earlier predictions of his own resurrection (Matt 16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19; Mk 14:28; Lk 9:22), and it is used in all four gospels with regard to his resurrection (Matt 28:7; Mk 16:6; Lk 24:34; Jn 21:14).

In Matthew 28:7 the angel commands the women to announce to Jesus' disciples that "He has risen from the dead." The expression "from the dead" reveals that it is a genuine resurrection and not a resuscitation from an unconscious state or an apparent death. Jesus was truly dead, and now He is truly alive again: "He has risen."

c. **Grasping Jesus' feet.** The Gospel of Matthew reports an incident that demonstrates clearly that Jesus' resurrection was physical in nature and neither immaterial, visionary, or an hallucination. After the Risen Lord had greeted the women, "they came up and took hold of his feet" (Matt 28:9, NASB). The appearance of Jesus is so "real"¹⁶³ and genuine that the women who are at the tomb are able to hold him by his feet. To hold a person by the feet indicates that the feet are real in a physical sense even as the person himself must be real in that same sense. Their taking hold of the

feet of Jesus reveals that His was a physical appearance and that His body was a physical body.¹⁶⁴

d. **"Do not cling to Me."** The Gospel of John reports that Mary Magdalene held on to Jesus after she recognized Him. Jesus says to her, "Do not cling to Me" (Jn 20:17, NKJV). The NASB tries to capture the intention of the Greek expression in its rendering, "Stop clinging to me." The NIV renders the phrase, "Do not hold on to me."

Jesus' imperative to Mary Magdalene shows that it was within her power to maintain her hold on Him, that is, to continue to cling to Jesus. It was possible for Mary Magdalene to grasp Jesus in a physical way and to keep holding on to Him, preventing Him from moving away. Once more the gospel account reveals that the resurrected body of Jesus was a real, physical body and that His appearance was a physical one.

e. **Eating Food.** The appearance of Jesus to His disciples on the evening of the day He arose (Lk 4:36-49) also communicates the same message of a bodily resurrection and physical appearance. It is highlighted by the fact of their surprise. "Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself" (vs. 39, NRSV), says Jesus. He continues, "Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (vs. 39b, NRSV).

The disciples, having been shown Jesus' hands and feet, were in their joy still "disbelieving and wondering," so that He asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence" vss. 41-43, NRSV).

The fact that the resurrected Jesus could eat in a normal manner like any other human being proved to His disciples that He had indeed risen and stood a real person before them. He was not a ghost, an apparition, a hallucination, or the like, but a person with a genuinely raised body; a person as real as any person that can eat food.

The fact that the risen Jesus ate in the presence of His disciples is proof of the reality of the bodily resurrection and the reality of a physical, bodily appearance. "The bodily resurrection is so real that the risen One is able to eat with his own."¹⁶⁵

f. **Seeing and touching.** Thomas was skeptical of the reports

from his fellow disciples about the resurrection of Jesus. He was absent when Jesus appeared to the other disciples at an earlier time. Thomas did not wish to be deceived by an hallucination, by a trick of his senses.¹⁶⁶ He did not wish to believe that Jesus only appeared in a "vision" or to the "sight" of the inner eye of the mind.

It is important to note that this incident in which Thomas meets the resurrected Jesus is found only in the Gospel of John (20:19-29). The timing of this event carries its own significance. It takes place on the eighth day after the resurrection of Jesus (vs. 24, 26). By that time Christ had ascended to His Father and had returned again to earth (see John 20:17). Consequently, this Thomas-James narrative is a *post-ascension* appearance of Jesus. In other words, this narrative gives evidence about the nature of Jesus' resurrection body *after* His return from heaven.

Thomas had insisted, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (Jn 20:25, NKJV). Thomas insisted on two sensory experiences. He wants to "see" with his own eyes, and he wants to "touch" with his own hands. He is not satisfied with seeing alone, because he knows that sight or seeing may be deceptive. He may experience an apparition; he may have a vision; he may be engaged in an hallucination.

Thomas wants the second proof, that of touch. C. K. Barrett notes that Thomas "would be satisfied neither with a substituted body which was not the body of the Lord who died on the cross, nor with a spiritual body or an apparition."¹⁶⁷

Thomas, according to the record, is immediately addressed by Jesus who appeared suddenly in the midst of the disciples. Jesus commands Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing" (vs. 27, NKJV). Thomas does not follow through. He is so overwhelmed by the fact that Jesus knew his thoughts and words that "he had no desire for further proof."¹⁶⁸

Thomas asked for a sensory "proof" so as to accept Jesus' resurrection as real. Thomas saw him; Jesus spoke to him. He spoke such words which only an all-knowing Jesus Christ could reveal. And thus, Thomas received a proof of Jesus' resurrection as a reality which went beyond the physical touch and sight.

Jesus offered Thomas what he desired, but the seeing and the speaking of Jesus, all of which communicated that Jesus' resurrection body was real, convinced Thomas of the physical reality of His resurrection. Thomas was given more than what he asked. He asked to handle the resurrection body. He surely could have done so, but it was no longer needed, since the doubting disciple received more than what he requested.

Thomas is overcome and exclaims, "My Lord and my God!" (vs. 28). This confession provides the apex of the reports of the risen Lord.¹⁶⁹ Jesus, risen from the dead, is both Lord and God.

g. "Flesh and bones." There is also an aspect to Jesus' resurrection that reveals that His "resurrection is not simply the resuscitation of a corpse."¹⁷⁰

When Lazarus came forth from his grave, it was a resuscitation of a corpse. Lazarus lived again, but he also died again. The body of Lazarus was mortal. Jesus, on the other hand, rose in a new body to "enter into His glory" (Lk 24:26) and to "ascend to My Father" (Jn 20:17). This shows that Jesus, after His resurrection, did not simply continue His earthly life with a body that had all the limitations of His former earthly body.¹⁷¹

The fact that Jesus is able to disappear ("he vanished from their sight," Lk 24:31, NASB) at the moment the disciples on the road to Emmaus "recognized Him" indicates that the resurrection body is not limited in the same manner as the present mortal body is. As suddenly as Jesus can disappear He can reappear. When the two disciples tell the others what had happened to them on the road to Emmaus, Jesus "Himself stood in their midst" (vs. 37).

The group of Jesus' followers were so startled and frightened by this sudden appearance of Jesus in their midst, they thought "they were seeing a spirit" (Lk 24:37, NASB). In order to avoid any kind of misunderstanding, Jesus said, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (vs. 39, NASB).

There is a vital distinction between the "flesh and bones" as Jesus designates His resurrection body and what Paul describes as "flesh and blood" which "cannot inherit the kingdom" (1 Cor 15:50, NKJV). What does Paul mean by the expression "flesh and blood"

which he parallels with the phrase: "neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (KJV).

Paul's phrase "flesh and blood," in harmony with Semitic idiom, is a designation for "man's external life and [refers] also to his existence as a living creature, which is guaranteed by blood as the sap of life. From the very outset, then, the idea of mortality and creatureliness seems especially bound up with the phrase."¹⁷² "Flesh and blood," thus, refers to man in his "mortality and creatureliness."

Paul says that in man's mortality, in his "flesh and blood," there is a "qualitative difference from God."¹⁷³ Accordingly, "flesh and blood" is a "Semitic expression for mortal human nature and has nothing to do, strictly speaking, with anatomy."¹⁷⁴ Therefore, it is wrong to understand Paul's phrase "flesh and blood" to mean the same thing as Jesus' phrase "flesh and bones" when the latter depicts His resurrection body. There is no opposition, if rightly understood, between what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:50 and what Luke writes when he quotes Jesus' expression "flesh and bones."

What does Jesus mean when He speaks of His resurrection body as "flesh and bones" and not identifiable with a "spirit" or a "ghost"? The expression "flesh and bones," as Jesus uses it, refers to His corporeal, bodily existence. A spirit or ghost has no corporeal or bodily existence. The risen Jesus, however, has that kind of existence.¹⁷⁵ The risen Jesus has "flesh and bones." He can be touched, He can eat, He can walk and talk, and so on. He has corporeality,¹⁷⁶ a physical body, but one which is not subject to mortality as is the body of "flesh and blood" of which Paul speaks.

The gospel records are unanimous and in agreement with each other, if rightly understood. Jesus was raised bodily. His resurrection was not immaterial and visionary. It was not hallucinatory and in the mind of the disciples. He came forth from the tomb with a genuine physical body. He could be touched, held, seen, talked with and talk, be eaten with and eat, and so on.

There can be no question about the reality of Jesus' physical resurrection and His bodily existence according to the witness of the gospels. Their evidence overwhelmingly supports a genuine bodily resurrection of Jesus and physical appearances.

There is, however, an aspect of Jesus' resurrection body that allows Him to appear and disappear at will. His resurrection body has qualities which are no longer bound to space and time in the same way His natural or mortal, pre-resurrection human body was bound to the space/time continuum. Jesus can appear and disappear, shall we say, materialize and dematerialize, in a way not possible with the pre-resurrection body. Furthermore, Jesus' resurrection body is also immortal, whereas the pre-resurrection body was mortal.

Resurrection Evidence in 1 Corinthians 15. The pivotal chapter on the resurrection in the NT outside the gospels is universally recognized to be 1 Corinthians 15. The problems and false teachings that floated around in the church at Corinth also included disbelief in the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the faithful. Some in Corinth argued, "There is no resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor 15:12).

A complete study of the resurrection theme in this important chapter would fill a full-sized book. It will, therefore, be necessary to limit ourselves to some essential points.

1. *Passing on What Paul Received.* It is exciting to recognize that Paul begins his argument about the resurrection of Christ with the words, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received" (1 Cor 15:3, NASB). Many scholars have come to recognize that Paul passes on a report, or, as some would say, a "tradition" (1 Cor 15:3, REB). It is widely assumed today that 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 contains information which is of pre-Pauline origin.¹⁷⁷

The information Paul supplies can be presented in the following schematic way:

- a. "Christ died for our sins according to Scripture."
- b. "He was buried."
- c. "He was raised on the third day according to Scripture."
- d. "He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."
- e. "He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep."
- f. "He appeared to James."
- g. "then to all the apostles."

Evidently there is a sequence of four movements expressed by four different verbs: "died"—"buried"—"raised"—"appeared."

This sequence agrees completely with the records of Jesus' resurrection in the four gospels which we have already investigated. He cites this information which had come to him in order to demonstrate to the Corinthian believers that Christ Himself rose from the dead (1 Cor 15:20).

2. *The List of Witnesses.* Paul refers to five different categories of persons to whom Christ appeared.

a. **"Appeared."** For the sake of clarity we will make some brief comments on the verb used by Paul for the appearances. Paul used the Greek verb *ophthe* which is properly rendered into English as "appeared." This nuance is quite different from what is meant when one speaks of a vision.¹⁷⁸

The verb "appeared" (*ophthe*) contains a distinctly visual aspect. It is seeing with human eyes, physical eyes and not the "eye of the mind" which sees that which is invisible to physical sight. In this sense what occurs in connection with the term "appeared" is a "real happening."¹⁷⁹

While the physical reality is maintained, there is also an aspect in the term "appeared" which includes the idea of recognition. "Appeared" thus includes both the seeing as well as the recognizing of the One who appeared.

b. **Cephas/Peter and the Twelve.** Paul names first Cephas, that is, Peter, and then the Twelve as persons to whom Christ had first "appeared." This accords well with the reports in the gospels considered above.

c. **Five Hundred brethren.** Paul also provides information that Christ "appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep." C. H. Dodd states, "There can hardly be any purpose in mentioning the fact that most of the 500 are still alive, unless Paul is saying, in effect, 'the witnesses are there to be questioned'."¹⁸⁰ B. Klappert speaks of the "evidence of witnesses"¹⁸¹ and argues that the statement that most of the 500 brethren are still alive means that "one can go to them and one can ask these witnesses."¹⁸²

The little detail that Jesus appeared to these five hundred "brethren," that is, Christians, "at one time" (1 Cor 15:6, NASB)¹⁸³

should not escape our attention. The Greek word *ephapax* (*one*) has in this context the meaning that the appearance of the resurrected Lord to this large group of believers occurred at a single gathering and not in a sequence of encounters over a period of time. On this basis we can understand Christ's appearance to be a one time appearance to a huge group of Christians.

Paul's appeal to eyewitnesses who are still alive has to be understood within the context of establishing a fact to prove a point. To provide proof by calling upon witnesses was a known practice in the Hellenistic world of Paul's time.¹⁸⁴ This is just what Paul was doing. The apostle wished to emphasize the "facticity of the resurrection" and the "historicity of the resurrection . . . by giving a convincing historical proof by the standards of that time."¹⁸⁵ By citing a list of witnesses for the post-resurrection appearances of Christ, Paul emphasizes that Christ's bodily resurrection and appearances were historical facts and not fiction, myth, or visionary experiences. The passage cannot be understood in its original intention as underscoring anything but historical reality and genuine fact.

d. **James and all the apostles.** The appearance to James is not mentioned in the gospels¹⁸⁶ or in the book of Acts. This is the only NT reference of Jesus' appearance to James, who is the "brother" of Jesus (Gal 1:19; cf. 2:9, 12; Acts 1:14; 12:17; 15:13; 21:18).

Jesus also appeared to "all the apostles" (vs. 7). The term apostles may include the "Twelve" mentioned previously (vs. 5), who were only eleven after Judas had killed himself. It seems to include Matthias (Acts 1:21-26) who was to witness with the others to Jesus' resurrection (vs. 22). It seems to include a few other eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry mentioned elsewhere in the NT (1 Cor 9:5-6; Rom 16:7; cf. Lk 24:33; Matt 28:16-17) who are described as pillars in the early church.

We are now in a position to draw some definite conclusions regarding 1 Corinthians 15:

(1) Paul cites what had been passed on to him and what he himself had passed on to the Corinthian believers regarding the resurrection of Jesus.

(2) Paul notes that there were a number of well known pillars

of the early church, as well as a crowd of more than 500 persons, many of whom were still living, who were eyewitness to the fact of Jesus' resurrection.

(3) Jesus "appeared" repeatedly in such a way that these appearances can only be understood as physical appearances of the risen Lord.

(4) The appeal to eyewitnesses demonstrates that the factuality of appearances was so obvious that persons still living could be asked about their reality.

(5) The resurrection of Jesus Christ on "the third day" is a special event in history which includes the fulfillment of OT predictions, "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:4).

(6) The facticity of the resurrection can be accepted as a real historical event because it is supported by (a) the prior prediction "according to the Scriptures" and (b) prominent eyewitnesses who are still alive.

In sum, the apostle Paul denies today's liberal "scientific" presuppositions by insisting on a supernatural cause for Jesus' resurrection.¹⁸⁷ We have testified of God that he raised up Christ" (1 Cor 15:15, KJV). In this important passage Paul summarizes the core of Christian faith as it centers in Christ. Christ, upon whom the hope of salvation rests, died on the cross for our sins. He was buried in a tomb and "raised on the third day" according to the predictions made in the Scriptures. After His resurrection He physically "appeared" to many prominent eyewitnesses, "most of whom are still alive" and can be questioned regarding the reality of the bodily resurrection of Christ. Christians are challenged to hold on to this "gospel" (vs. 1) of the reality of Christ's real death, burial, resurrection and his physical appearances as the "word" (Greek *logos*) "through which also you are being saved" (vs. 2, NRSV).

Meaning of Jesus' Resurrection for Faith and Life

The centrality of the resurrection of Jesus for the "gospel" and the "word" to be proclaimed (1 Cor 15:1-2) is such that it cannot be emphasized enough. Christian faith stands or falls with the reality of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We may point to a few critical connections between the resurrection of Jesus and the faith and life of the believer.

Revelation of Divine Power. The resurrection of Jesus gave evidence that God has power over death. God's power is mightier than death and all other powers of earth taken together (Rom 8:38-39). The "power of God" which was manifested in the resurrection of Christ (2 Cor 13:4; Eph 1:19-20) guarantees that "we will live with him by the power of God" (2 Cor 13:4, NRSV). The life of the believer is associated with the life of the raised Lord.

Our present life with Christ and through Christ (physical and spiritual) is the life caused by God's creative act in conversion and manifested before in His creative act which also brought about the resurrection of Jesus. God proves Himself as Creator "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom 4:17, NRSV) and rescues believers from their trials (2 Cor 1:9-10).

Accomplishment of Christ's Mission Assured. The mission of our Lord Jesus Christ has two major focal points: one is the His role as the Suffering Servant; and the other is His role as the returning heavenly Son of Man.

The first mission was to be accomplished on the cross. Jesus fulfilled the role of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45, NASB). Jesus gained victory over sin and death on the cross; He died as "a ransom for many." He accomplished His task on the cross.

The second mission is yet to be accomplished. If Jesus were not raised physically from the dead, then He would still be resting in a grave in Palestine, and His teaching about His return in the clouds of heaven would be a massive deception. "If Jesus is dead, his entire message about the Kingdom of God is a delusion."¹⁸⁸

Christ's second mission is dependent on the reality of His bodily resurrection. Since Jesus was physically raised from the dead, He could ascend into heaven and is able to return again in the clouds of heaven (Acts 1:6-11). Scripture affirms without any doubt or hesitation that He who rose and ascended to heaven "will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (vs. 11, NRSV). Jesus Second Coming is guaranteed by the fact of His resurrection and His ascension.

Resurrection Makes the Cross Effective. Paul states, "If

Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15:17, NASB). Christ's resurrection has a direct relationship to the sins of believers.

How can "you still be in your sins," if Christ is not risen? Is Christ's death on the cross not efficacious without his resurrection? No, it is not. Paul affirms that the death of Christ is not enough in itself, "for how can a dead Christ save others from death, which is the penalty of sin?"¹⁸⁹ Without His resurrection the death of Christ is ineffective. "If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then He was an impostor; faith in Him would not bring pardon for sin, and the sinner would retain his guilt."¹⁹⁰ The resurrection is needed to make the cross fully effective for the forgiveness of sins for each believer.

The resurrection of Jesus *makes possible* the justification of believers. Paul says, Jesus "was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25, NRSV). Indeed, "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3), and He "was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25). The connection of the resurrection with justification (acquittal) has been linked to the future judgment.¹⁹¹ The final judgment requires a living Christ. He plays a key role in that awesome event (John 5:22; 2 Cor 5:10). Without the resurrected Christ believers would find ultimate justification meaningless. In the pre-advent judgment the righteous will find justification by being acquitted by the Judge (cf. Dan 7:22).

Thus, we may take the phrase, "was raised for our justification," in the sense that He was raised to reaffirm ultimate "justification" to the righteous in the future judgment. He will bring justification by showing that they have fully and totally relied upon their Lord for their salvation. In this case the benefits of His death on the cross are applied by the risen Lord in the judgment for the justification of the saints. This means that "justification" is "*both* a past event in history and a future eschatological event [in judgment]."¹⁹² The doers of the Law "will be justified" (Rom 2:13).

Resurrection and Christian Baptism. Christian baptism is represented as dying and rising with Christ. Certain statements in the NT link Jesus' death and resurrection with the believer's dying-with and rising-with Christ so that he/she may live with Christ. Paul states, "Therefore we have been buried with Him

through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4, NASB). In vs. 11 Paul continues, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus" (NASB). In Colossians 2:12 a briefer statement of the same idea is presented: "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (NASB).

Three ideas seem to be brought together. First, the present dimension of obedience in terms of walking in newness of life, is expressed in Romans 6:4, 11. In baptism we died with Christ, "in order that as Christ was raised . . . so we too might walk in newness of life," and we need to consider ourselves "dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus."

To "walk in newness of life" means to live the life of genuine discipleship, being alive to God. The believer is now "alive to God" in relationship with Christ who was raised from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus makes it possible to "walk in newness of life." If Christ were not physically raised from the dead, then there would be no foundation for the believer to be able to walk the walk of faith with Christ (cf. 1 John 1:3, 7).

The second idea relates to the first but is different. It is "a present dimension of faith"¹⁹³ in addition to the present dimension of obedient discipleship. It is a "consideration" of faith: "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God through Christ Jesus." The present faith dimension is the consideration to be "dead to sin" and "alive to God." The latter is made possible by the resurrection of Jesus as well.

The third idea involves a move from the present with its faith and obedient discipleship dimensions to the future dimension of faith. "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom 6:8, NASB). As Christ was raised from the dead and is alive, so the believer knows by faith that he/she will be raised in the future and "live with Him." This eschatological dimension of the believer's resurrection is based in the reality of Jesus' own resurrection.

Resurrection and "First Fruits." In 1 Corinthians 15:20 Paul makes another profound statement, "But in fact"¹⁹⁴ Christ has

been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (NRSV). Christ is here presented as the "first fruits" of those who have died. This passage reveals in its two parts the relationship between the reality/factuality¹⁹⁵ of the resurrection of Jesus and the subsequent general resurrection of the dead who died in Christ.

Every expectation of a future resurrection of the dead is dependent on the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus was not raised from the dead as a physical reality, then no one will be raised from the dead in such a reality either. There can be no future expectation of eschatological hope unless Christ was raised bodily from the dead. "Every future expectation which is not determined by the bodily resurrection of Jesus is for Paul no real hope."¹⁹⁶

The risen Lord Jesus Christ is the "first fruits" of all believers who have fallen asleep. His bodily resurrection is the guarantee that they too will be raised as He was raised.

The idea of "first fruits"¹⁹⁷ also implies that the resurrection of the righteous will as surely follow the resurrection of Christ as day follows night (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 4:14; 1 Thess 4:14; Rom 8:11). Believers still fall asleep, but because they are connected with Jesus Christ, the Risen One, they no longer belong under the power of the first Adam. Death has no final and ultimate power over them (1 Cor 15:25-26).

All the righteous "will be made alive in Christ" (1 Cor 15:22). The verb *zoopoieo*, "to make alive," expresses a future act of creation.¹⁹⁸ This new creative act will happen at the proper time. All believers who remained loyal to Christ (vs. 23: "who belong to Christ," NRSV) will be raised "at his coming" (vs. 23). This reveals that the resurrection of the righteous is still a future event involving divine creative power. It will take place when Christ returns in the clouds of heaven; it has not taken place as yet.¹⁹⁹

The bodily resurrection of Jesus is required so that there will be a genuine resurrection of His people from the dead when He returns at His Second Coming. Then the righteous will be raised (1 Thess 4:14-16) and will be "glorified with Him" (Rom 8:17), will be "with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:17), will "live together with Him" (1 Thess 5:10) and will "reign with Him" (2 Tim 2:12).

As believers we are reminded that even now "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:22), and when Christ returns, He "will trans-

form the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (vs. 23, NASB). The resurrection body of the righteous will be in affinity with the immortal resurrection body of Christ. "At his coming" (1 Cor 15:23, NRSV), "at the last trumpet" (vs. 52), the righteous "dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality" (vss. 52-54, NRSV).

This biblical certainty is provided in and through Jesus' bodily resurrection. Knowing this, believers can "be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord" (vs. 58, NRSV). Our present faith finds its source of immovable power in the physical death and bodily resurrection of our Lord, historical events of the past, and in the certainty of the promised bodily resurrection and expected immortality as gifts of our Lord in the future.

Endnotes

1 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?" *Dialog* 4 (Spring 1965): 128.

2 Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM Press, 1965), p. 165.

3 William Childs Robinson, "The Bodily Resurrection of Christ," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 13/2 (1957): 81.

4 James I. Packer, "Response to the Debate [on the Resurrection]," *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate*, Gary R. Habermas and Antony G. N. Flew, ed. Terry L. Miethe (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), pp. 143-144.

5 In England Thomas Woolston, *Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour* (1729) maintains that Jesus' disciples had stolen his body and subsequently they themselves spread another story which in the course of time they themselves believed in. In Germany G. E. Lessing published anonymously H. S. Reimarus' *Wolfenbüttel Fragmente* (1747). The latter was deeply influenced by English Deists and argued that the disciples invented the resurrection of Jesus. For an excellent survey of studies from Reimarus to the beginning of the twentieth century, see P. Hoffmann, "Die historisch-kritische Osterdiskussion von H. S. Reimarus bis zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Welt der Forschung* 522 (1975): 15-67.

6 Published by Thomas Nelson Publishers in Nashville, TN.

7 I have read the titles of all of them. Any scholar is forced to consider only a limited selection of representative articles when there is such a wealth of information available.

8 See for the most recent ones the books and articles by Jacob Kremer, "Entstehung und Inhalt des Osterglaubens, zur neueren Diskussion," *Theologische Rundschau* 72 (1976), 1-14; H. Hübner, "Kreuz und Auferstehung im Neuen Testament," *Theologische Rundschau* 54/3 (1989): 262-306; Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection. New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984).

9 E. Schweizer, "Resurrection - Fact or Fiction?" *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 1 (1979): 137-159.

10 Daniel L. Migliore, "How Historical is the Resurrection?" *Theology Today* 33 (1976): 5-14.

11 J. W. D. Smith, "The Resurrection of Christ: Myth or History?" *Expository Times* 72 (1961): 370-375.

12 The wording of the "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventists" as voted in Dallas, Texas, at the 1980 General Conference session refers to the resurrection of Jesus in the statement under "4. The Son" as follows: "He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, *was raised from the dead* [italics supplied], and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf." It should not go unmentioned that there were major Adventist theologians, Bible teachers, and others who suggested and urged that one word be inserted to make the statement on the resurrection of Jesus more clear. They suggested that the clause read, "was raised bodily from the dead." Unfortunately the word "bodily" was never included in the various revisions that were made over a period of more than two years before it came to the final vote on the floor of the General Conference session. As a result this statement as voted is less precise and more open to various interpretations than is necessary.

13 Jürgen Moltmann, "Christianity in the Third Millennium," *Theology Today* 51/1 (April, 1994): 80-81.

14 This author has made a mark in scholarship in the history of ancient Near Eastern law and its relationship to the NT.

15 Published in Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire, by P. Drinkwater.

16 W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 214-215.

17 Published in New York by Bantam Books, 1967.

18 George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1975), p. 135.

19 Karl Friedrich Bahr, an orthodox cleric turned rationalist, wrote several works in German between 1782 and 1792 in which he developed his version of the "swoon theory." Karl Heinrich Venturini, another rationalist, held to the same theory in his four volume work on the non-supernatural history of Jesus published between 1800-1802. See the work of Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 43-44, 46-47.

20 Heinrich E. G. Paulus, *Das Leben Jesu als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums* (1828) I, 2, pp. 303-331.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 331.

22 See G. Oepke, "anistemi," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), I:668-372; L. Coenen and C. Brown, "Resurrection," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. C. Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), III:259-281; J. Kremer, "Anastasis, Resurrection," *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. H. Balz and G. Schneider (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), I:88-92.

23 R. C. Roberts, "Bultmann, Rudolf," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. W. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), p. 180.

24 See Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 222-235; R. C. Briggs, *Interpreting the New Testament Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1973), pp. 240-249.

25 R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. H.-W. Bartsch (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 39. This programmatic essay was first written and presented in 1941.

26 R. Bultmann, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?" *Existence and Faith. Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, ed. S. M. Ogden (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing, 1965), p. 291, writes, "The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect."

27 *Ibid.*

28 So correctly translated by Carl E. Braaten, *History and Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 86.

29 *Ibid.*

30 Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," *Kerygma and Myth*, p. 42.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

34 R. Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), p. 42. Cf. R. Bultmann, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus* (4th ed.; Heidelberg: Karl Winter, 1965), p. 27.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," p. 39.

37 Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," p. 42; *idem*, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*, p. 27.

38 Braaten, *History and Hermeneutics*, p. 78, speaks of the irony of the form-critical study of the NT to which Bultmann was a main contributor.

39 "Interview With Rudolf Bultmann," p. 255.

40 Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Kerygmatic Christ," p. 42.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 30

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Der Spiegel* (July 25, 1966).

44 "An Interview With Rudolf Bultmann," *Christianity and Crisis* 26 (Nov. 14, 1966): 255.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 254.

46 See the description in Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer* (2nd ed.; Toronto: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 3-37; E. Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 56-58.

47 It would go beyond the intention of this essay to mention every publication which has dealt with his views. See the insightful discussion of Bultmann's demythologization program in the light of his views on miracle (the resurrection of Jesus being one of them) in Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 248-255; W. Schmithals, *An Introduction to the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (London: SCM Press, 1968), pp. 126-146; C. Brown, "Bultmann Revisited," *The Churchman* 88 (1974): 167-187.

48 For a detailed description of the either/or of history and faith in Bultmann and its problems, see Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament*

Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans and Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), pp. 205-292; idem, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 274-276, 279-282.

49 See the insightful study on the relationship of the laws of physics and the resurrection by T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976) and G. O'Collins, *What Are They Saying About the Resurrection?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 76-81.

60 Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 138.

61 Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels. A Study of Origins* (first published in 1924; London: Macmillan & Co., 1951).

62 B. H. Streeter, *Foundations: A Statement of Christian Belief in Terms of Modern Thought: By Seven Oxford Men* (London: Macmillan, 1912), p. 140.

63 Ibid., p. 136.

64 W. Kasper, *Jesus, The Christ* (New York: Paulist, 1976), pp. 135-140, also speaks of the "sign" nature of Jesus' resurrection.

65 G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 180.

66 Ibid., p. 183.

67 Ibid., p. 182.

68 Ibid., p. 183 (italics his).

69 Ibid., p. 183.

60 Willi Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem," *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, ed. C. F. D. Moule (London: SCM Press, 1968), pp. 15-50; idem, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970).

61 Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem," p. 24.

62 Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus," p. 16.

63 Ibid., p. 31.

64 Ibid., p. 41.

65 Ibid., p. 34 (italics his).

66 For a description of Marxsen's views, see Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 154-162.

67 Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 128.

68 U. Wilckens, *Auferstehung. Das biblische Auferstehungszeugnis untersucht und erklärt* (Stuttgart/Berlin; Kreuz Verlag, 1970), pp. 157-158.

69 The English translation was produced from his 5th edition of 1965 by James Leitch and first published in English in 1967 by SCM Press in London.

70 For an assessment of Moltmann's theology, see Richard Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1987).

71 Richard Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989): 202.

72 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 165.

73 Unfortunately, some have interpreted Moltmann as if he supports a literal resurrection of Jesus as a historical phenomenon. For example, Langdon Gilkey, *Religion and the Scientific Future: Reflections on Myth, Science, and Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 150 n.; Dale Vree *On Synthesizing*

Marxism and Christianity (New York: Wiley, 1976), p. 100; John Macquarrie, *Christian Hope* (New York: Seabury, 1978), p. 77.

74 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 173.

75 Jürgen Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution and the Future* (New York: Scribner's, 1969), p. 54.

76 Jürgen Moltmann, "Die Kategorie *Novum* in der christlichen Theologie," *Perspektiven der Theologie: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (München: Christian Kaiser, 1968), p. 179.

77 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 197.

78 Ibid.

79 Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 168.

80 Ibid., pp. 167-168.

81 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981) p. 85.

82 It is incorrect to include Moltmann as belonging to those who "speak of the resurrection as a historical event" as was done by Braaten, *History and Hermeneutics*, p. 92.

83 Against Bauckham, "Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* Revisited," p. 210, who suggested that Moltmann holds to a physical resurrection.

84 Randall E. Otto, "The Resurrection in Jürgen Moltmann," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35/1 (1992): 88.

85 See particularly Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?" *Dialog* 4 (1965): 128-135; idem, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968); idem, *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967); idem, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970-1973). On Pannenberg's view of the resurrection of Jesus, see D. P. Fuller, *Easter Faith and History* (1968), pp. 177-187; E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), pp. 146-160; William Lane Craig, "Pannenberg's Beweis für die Auferstehung Jesu," *Kerygma und Dogma. Zeitschrift für theologische Forschung und kirchliche Lehre* 34 (1988): 78-104.

86 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Response to the Debate," *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate: Gary R. Habermas and Antony G. N. Flew*, ed. Terry L. Miethe (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), pp. 134-135.

87 Pannenberg, "Response to the Debate," p. 126.

88 Ibid.

89 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Dogmatische Erwägungen zur Auferstehung Jesu," *Kerygma und Dogma* 14 (1968), p. 111.

90 Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, p. 99.

91 Ibid., p. 93.

92 Ibid., p. 8.

93 Ibid., p. 92.

94 Ibid., p. 76.

95 Ibid.

96 Pannenberg, "Response to the Debate," p. 132.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid., p. 129.

- 99 Pannenberg, "Dogmatische Erwägungen zur Auferstehung Jesus," p. 112.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 Pannenberg, "Response to the Debate," p. 132.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Ibid., p. 131.
- 104 Ibid., p. 133.
- 105 Ibid., p. 133.
- 106 Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, p. 74; idem, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 129-130.
- 107 Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, p. 135.
- 108 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie* (2nd ed.; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966), p. 90.
- 109 The normal NT noun for a "vision" is *horama*. See W. Michaelis, "horama," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1967), 5:369-370.
- 110 The Greek terms *ouranios optasia*, traditionally rendered "heavenly vision," is best rendered "heavenly appearance." W. Michaelis, "optasia," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1967), 5:372-373, states, "In terms of current usage Lk. is not calling this a vision, and he commonly uses *horama* for it. Less, or even no emphasis at all is placed on the visual element as compared with the revelation by word and its demand for obedience."
- 111 So perceptively Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles. A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 686.
- 112 Michaelis, "optasia," p. 372.
- 113 Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), p. 900.
- 114 William Lane Craig, "Pannenberg's Beweis für die Auferstehung," pp. 96-98.
- 115 H. Clavier, "Brèves remarques sur la notion de *soma pneumatikon*," *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, eds. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 361, as cited by Craig, "Pannenberg's Beweis für die Auferstehung Jesus," p. 100.
- 116 K. A. Bauer, *Leiblichkeit—das Ende aller Werke Gottes* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1971), pp. 137-140.
- 117 Christian Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1982), pp. 198-199.
- 118 Ernst Käsemann, *Leib und Leib Christi* (1933) as cited by E. Schweizer, "pneuma, pneumatikos," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 4:420.
- 119 Pannenberg, "Response to the Debate," p. 134.
- 120 Daniel P. Fuller, "The Resurrection of Jesus and the Historical Method," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 34 (1966): 24.
- 121 Craig, "Pannenberg's Beweis für die Auferstehung Jesus," p. 92.
- 122 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," *Basic Questions in Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 1:56, states himself that "faith loses its independence by being bound to the results of historical research and thus [it is] subjected to the authority of science. . . . But historical science by no means claims to be the kind of authority that demands blind subjection. It invites every competent person to make his own test of its results."
- 123 There are a number of other views; see PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection:*

- New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), pp. 331-420; Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).
- 124 So C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1970), p. 1.
- 125 Perkins, *Resurrection*, p. 17.
- 126 I follow the texts listed in Perkins, *Resurrection*, pp. 5-6, but in the order of the NT writings.
- 127 I follow the sequence presented by William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity*, vol. 16 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989).
- 128 The issue of the Wednesday crucifixion theory cannot be discussed at this time. See Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1985); Josh McDowell, *The Resurrection Factor* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1981), pp. 121-123.
- 129 Note Mark 16:6 with the statement "here is the place where they laid him" (NASB).
- 130 Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, p. 179.
- 131 John 19:41. It is reported that the remains of a garden were still in existence next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in AD 350 as reported by Cyril of Jerusalem (Cyril, *Catechesis* 14.5, see PG 33.829B).
- 132 For a critique of the supposed conflicting traditions and the alleged flight of the disciples to Galilee, see Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, pp. 188-196. He shows that the different aspects of the gospels harmonize admirably. See also John Wenham, *Easter Enigma: Are the Resurrection Accounts in Conflict?* (Exeter: Devon, 1984): 55-67.
- 133 So most critical NT scholars; see for example, Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, pp. 44-47; F. Neirynck, "John and the Synoptics: The Empty Tomb Stories," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 161-187.
- 134 So in this century Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1925), p. 357.
- 135 G. Baldensperger, "Le tombeau vide," *RHPR* 12 (1932): 413-443; 13 (1933): 105-144; 14 (1934) 97-125.
- 136 This claim is old and already referred to in the NT as a false claim (Matt 28:11-15).
- 137 Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: Putnam & Sons, 1907), pp. 251-252; P. Gardner-Smith, *The Narratives of the Resurrection* (London: Methuen, 1926), pp. 134-139.
- 138 This is also an ancient theory mentioned by the church father Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, 30.
- 139 Leslie D. Weatherhead, *The Resurrection of Christ* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1959), pp. 43-45.
- 140 This theory was discussed above.
- 141 So Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 290. This position is held also by Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), p. 93; Hans-Werner Bartsch, *Das Auferstehungszeugnis* (Hamburg: Herbert Reich, 1965), 22; W. H. Lampe and D. M. Mackinnon, *The Resurrection* (London: Mowbray, 1966), pp. 46-48, among others who follow Bultmann.

142 It is to be noted that the results of form criticism, a methodology of the historical-critical method, is utilized to demonstrate that the empty tomb reports of the gospels are unreliable. See Braaten, *History and Hermeneutics*, pp. 78-82, who speaks of the "irony of the form-critical consensus."

143 So correctly Paul Althaus, *Die Wahrheit des kirchlichen Osterglaubens* (Gütersloh: H. Bertelsmann, 1941), p. 26.

144 This is the approach of Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*, pp. 79-89; Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, pp. 68-89. The most careful to fit the various aspects of the picture together is Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, pp. 197-222.

145 T. R. W. Longstaff, "The Women at the Tomb: Matthew 28:1 Re-examined," *New Testament Studies* 27 (1980/81), pp. 277-282.

146 See Michael Perry, *The Easter Enigma* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), pp. 98-99.

147 Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, pp. 211-222; McDowell, *The Resurrection Factor*, pp. 54-58.

148 McDowell, *The Resurrection Factor*, p. 54.

149 Note again the refutation of the historicity in Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, pp. 244-247.

150 C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 466.

151 This is argued among others convincingly by Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus und die Korinther*, p. 161.

152 Oscar Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (London: SCM Press, 1949), p. 32.

153 The following is a representative sample: James W. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1975), pp. 115-122; Paul Hoffmann, "Auferstehung," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 4 (1979), pp. 450-567; Gerald O'Collins, *The Easter Jesus* (2nd ed.; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980), p. 84; James M. Robinson, "Jesus from Easter to Valentinus (or to the Apostles' Creed)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982): 6-17; W. Winden, *Wie kam es und wie kommt es zum Osterglauben* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1982); I. Boer and J. Werbick, eds. "Der Herr ist wahrhaftig auferstanden" (Lk 24, 34). *Biblische und systematische Beiträge zur Entstehung des Osterglaubens* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988); H. Hoffmann, ed., *Zur neutestamentlichen Überlieferung von der Auferstehung Jesu* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988).

154 Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte* (4th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), p. 28.

155 There are many others in addition to the examples cited above. R. Scroggs, *The Last Adam* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), p. 92: "The New Testament Church does not agree about the nature of Christ's resurrection body. Material in Luke and John perhaps suggest this body to be corporeal in nature. Paul, on the other hand, clearly argues that the body is a spiritual body. If any historical memory resides in the accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts, he must not have understood the appearance of Christ to have been a corporeal appearance."

156 Hans Grass, *Christliche Glaubenslehre* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1973), 1:101-102; idem, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, pp. 138-186, for his extensive attempt to place a deep and unbridgeable gap between Paul and the gospel records.

157 There are a host of others who declare these gospel accounts to be legend and/or legendary. The following are representative on the North American continent: Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (London: SPCK, 1972), p. 79; Richard R. Niebuhr, *Resurrection and Historical Reason* (New York: Scribner's, 1957), pp. 60-61; R. E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection* (London: G. Chapman, 1973), p. 91, argues for the transformation in the resurrection which makes it impossible to take a photographic picture of the risen Christ.

158 Eduard Schweizer, "Die Leiblichkeit des Menschen: Leben—Tod—Auferstehung," *Beiträge zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, ed. E. Schweizer (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1970), pp. 177-180.

159 This designation is used here for the reading of the biblical text at face value without reading above, behind, below, or in any other way the text of Scripture. It is a literal reading of the text as it stands in its final form.

160 This is even admitted by those who wish to discount the gospel records as legends; see Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterglauben*, p. 92.

161 The form is an aorist passive of *egeiro* which means "be raised, rise . . . of one who has died" as is stated in Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*, p. 215.

162 V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 607.

163 E. Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, n.d.), p. 344.

164 Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, p. 341.

165 Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, n.d.), p. 416.

166 Johannes Schneider, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (2nd ed.; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1978), p. 324.

167 C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1972), p. 572.

168 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), p. 807.

169 Schneider, *Johannes*, p. 324.

170 Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, p. 342.

171 Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, p. 411.

172 R. Meyer, "sarx," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:116.

173 Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, p. 205.

174 Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence*, p. 343.

175 E. Schweizer, "sarx," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:124: "In Lk 24:39 'flesh and bones' denotes the substance of earthy man. The contrast is between the corporeal and the non-corporeal worlds."

176 Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, p. 416.

177 Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection*, p. 88, speaks in summarizing contemporary scholarship as follows: "Scholars generally agree that the formula in 1 Cor 15:3-5 embodies a pre-Pauline tradition." Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*, 3: "Taken together these considerations have persuaded

virtually all New Testament scholars that vs. 3-7 do contain a pre-Pauline formula."

178 Jacob Kremer, *Das älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Christi* (2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1967), pp. 57-58.

179 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

180 C. H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ: A Study in Form-Criticism of the Gospels," *More New Testament Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), p. 128.

181 Bertold Klappert, ed., *Diskussion um Kreuz und Auferstehung* (2nd ed.; Wuppertal: Aussaat Verlag, 1967), p. 10.

182 *Ibid.*, p. 10 n. 3.

183 NRSV reads "at one time"; NIV reads "at the same time"; REB reads "at once."

184 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Ist Jesus wirklich auferstanden?" *Ist Jesus wirklich auferstanden? Geistliche Woche für Südwestdeutschland von der Evangelischen Akademie Mannheim vom 16. bis 23. February 1964* (Karlsruhe: Evangelische Akademie Mannheim, 1964), p. 24.

185 Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, p. 89.

186 The apocryphal "Gospel of the Hebrews," which is of Egyptian provenance and is assigned to the second century A.D. reports that the Lord "went to James and appeared to him," translated from the citation in Jerome, *vir. inl.* 2 in E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 165.

187 The resurrection of Jesus is the result of a supernatural cause. The point regarding this issue made by Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*, 420, is worth citing: "... the methodological principle that prohibits any historian from adducing a supernatural cause for an event in history seems to be either arbitrary or based on bad science or philosophy. For as long as the existence of God is even possible, an event's [sic] being caused by God cannot be ruled out."

188 Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 146.

189 A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1967), p. 349.

190 F. D. Nichol, ed., "1 Corinthians," in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publ. Assoc., 1957), 6:803.

191 Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 147.

192 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

193 L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:103. We rely on Goppelt for the three dimensions in this section but do not agree with him on all details.

194 The Greek word *nuni* means "in fact" (so the rendering of NRSV which we have followed in the first part of this verse) or "in reality" (so Wolff, *Der Erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, 2:176 n. 140). Cf. G. Stählin, "nun," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1967), 4:1109 n. 33, renders this particle in 1 Cor 15:20 with "in reality." This usage of the particle in this context refers to the factual reality.

195 See the previous note.

196 Wolff, *Der Erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, 2:175.

197 The terminology of "first fruits" seems to be connected with the wave

sheaf of the barley harvest which was performed on Nisan 16 (cf. Lev 23:10). The resurrection of Christ took place on this very day and is a typological fulfillment of this offering (Lk 23:56; 24:1). In the same manner as the "first fruits" of that OT sacrificial system was a pledge of the full harvest at the end of the agricultural year, so the resurrection of Jesus was the "first fruits" of the final resurrection of all the faithful at the time of the end when the harvest of the world will be collected.

198 H. Schwantes, *Schöpfung der Endzeit* (Berlin: Evang. Verlag, 1963), pp. 56-61.

199 The reference here is clearly to the Second Coming for which Paul uses the technical term *parousia*. On the timing of the Coming of Christ in relationship with the "end," see Kremer, *Das älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Christi*, p. 92.

"I will praise You, O Lord, faithfully
and wonderfully make:
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well,
Your eyes saw my calamities,
being yet unformed;
and in Your book they all were written.
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them."