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**JESUS' RESURRECTION:
A HISTORY OF ITS INTERPRETATION
FROM REIMARUS TO THE PRESENT**

MICHAEL AGGETT

AGGMIC001

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree.
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6. 9. 2006

ABSTRACT

JESUS' RESURRECTION: A HISTORY OF ITS INTERPRETATION FROM REIMARUS TO THE PRESENT

This dissertation looks at the scholarly interpretation of Jesus' resurrection from the time of Reimarus's work in the mid-eighteenth century to the present by examining the work of ten scholars representing different periods.

Seven scholars considered in this dissertation are deceased: Hermann Reimarus (rationalism and scepticism); Heinrich Paulus (extreme rationalism); Friedrich Schleiermacher (close of rationalism); David Strauss (mythical interpretation); Johannes Weiss (apocalyptic interpretation); Rudolph Bultmann (history of religions, kerygma, demythologising and existentialism) and Karl Barth (centrality of Jesus Christ). Three contemporary scholars are included: Wolfhart Pannenberg (diligent truth seeking); John Dominic Crossan (radical textual criticism) and N.T. 'Tom' Wright (traditional Christian interpretation).

The historicity of Jesus; the early Church's resurrection belief recorded in its ancient creeds; the advent of the Enlightenment following the Church Fathers, the Dark Ages, the Renaissance and the Reformation, and the earliest attempts to portray the historical Jesus are outlined in the Introduction.

Each scholar is then placed in his own time period, and discussed individually: roughly, an opening paragraph outlines his general importance to scholarship, then his major contribution(s) to the understanding of Jesus' resurrection is indicated. A short biographical sketch is followed by a description of his major general theological and philosophical convictions. The individual's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is then outlined, more or less subdivided into five: Jesus' death, his burial, Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, his ascension, and Paul's Damascus road experience. Scholarly criticisms, past and present, positive and negative, are noted before the chapter is closed with my own criticism, and a short recapitulation. (The chapter on Strauss has been arranged somewhat differently: it is written chronologically to help illustrate the way his views changed significantly over time).

Salient issues encountered in the body of the dissertation are summarized in the Conclusion. Then, recent research undertaken by Gary Habermas is presented, suggesting that contemporary scholarship from the English, French and German-speaking world presently favours a traditional, bodily interpretation of Jesus' resurrection.

Michael John Aggett
9, Griselda Place
SOMERSET WEST
7130
SOUTH AFRICA

Tele/fax (021) 8513457
e-mail aggettfam@xsinet.co.za

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DEDICATION:

These efforts are dedicated to my family: Mavis, David, Stephen, Jonathan, Simon, Timothy and my recently deceased parents, Aubrey and Joy.

‘In any case, in talking about the past we lie with every breath we draw’

William Maxwell in *So Long*,
See You Tomorrow

Scriptural quotations unless otherwise indicated are taken from the
New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

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PREFACE

In 1966, as a second-year medical student, I faced the claims of traditional Christianity.

I investigated and concluded that Christianity stood or fell over the question of Jesus' resurrection. If I could satisfy myself that Jesus had 'risen physically from the dead' I would accept the Christian position as essentially true.

I examined, therefore, the resurrection claim in some detail: How reliable were the Gospel records? Had Jesus' corpse been stolen; who might have profited thereby? Why did the authorities (Roman or Jewish) never produce his body and terminate the growing belief that Jesus was alive? How likely was it that the women were unable to relocate Jesus' burial place and, coming to a similar empty tomb, hallucinated? Similarly, were Jesus' followers likely hallucination candidates? How plausible was the 'Swoon Theory'? Whence the disciples' newly-found courage? How likely was it that several (traditionally eleven) of the twelve apostles, dispersed around the known world preaching the resurrection, would die martyrs' deaths for falsehood? Was the resurrection deliberate lie, myth or legend?

I found the evidence for Jesus' resurrection compelling and, after reflection, allied myself with the local believing Christian community.

This understanding, furthermore, had, authenticated for me the reality of God, the Old Testament and Judaism, and I concurred with Sir Norman Anderson, formerly Professor of Oriental Laws and Director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in the University of London, who wrote:

Easter is not primarily a comfort, but a challenge. **Its message is either the supreme fact in history or else a gigantic hoax** ... [w]e ourselves find it hard to see the issue so clear-cut, for ours is a tolerant age and one suspicious of all fanaticism. Most people have not the slightest desire to attack the Easter message; and yet they only half believe it. To them it is a beautiful story, full of spiritual meaning: why worry, then, whether it is literal fact?

But we miss the point. Either it is infinitely more than a beautiful story, or else it is infinitely less. If [the physical resurrection of Jesus] is true, then it is the supreme fact of history; and to fail to adjust one's life to its implications means irreparable loss. But if it is not true, if Christ be not risen, **then the whole of Christianity is a fraud**, foisted on the world by a company of consummate liars, or, at best, deluded simpletons. St. Paul himself realized this when he wrote, 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching meaningless, and your faith worthless. More, we ourselves are found to be false witnesses' [1 Cor. 15: 14,15].

So that is the issue, and it is vital for us to come to a decision about it one way or the other (Anderson 1950, 1 with my highlights).

In January 2001, I registered for a post-graduate degree in the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University of Cape Town. For my Master's thesis I had hoped to research the lives of the twelve Apostles, because I supposed their stories and fate would help me understand what they knew and believed concerning the resurrection. Very little reliable information, however, is available on the Apostles and I was advised it would not be a

suitable dissertation topic. I decided, therefore, to re-evaluate the resurrection from an academic perspective:

Why do so many individuals and scholars (Christian and non-Christian) minimize and even deny outright Jesus' resurrection? What new insights has modern scholarship provided? How should the several inconsistencies and contradictions between the four resurrection accounts be explained? Was Jesus' body, post-crucifixion, thrown into an unknown grave with other executed criminals? What did and do Jesus' contemporaries, the early disciples, the Gospel writers, Church historians and secular scholars understand by the term 'resurrection'? Has the meaning of the word changed over time? Did cultural perspectives concerning 'resurrection' during New Testament times differ significantly from our own? What was Paul's actual experience of the resurrected Jesus? Did he see a physical Jesus; was it a vision or a spiritual experience? Did Paul and the eleven have different experiences of the resurrected Jesus? Were the gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection influenced by Gnostic teaching? What contributions do the early secular historians and the extra-canonical writings make to our understanding of the resurrection?

Is there historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection? Can the resurrection be rationally discounted or authenticated? Could the Jesus of faith be other than the Jesus of history? Is the notion held by hundreds of millions of Christians, past and present, that Jesus rose physically from the dead, simplistic and reasonably untenable? Is the resurrection of Jesus that unique, defining historical event many hold it to be? Does it underlie all ultimate truth or is it something less?

Although it was my intention to re-investigate for myself the evidence for Jesus' resurrection, I have approached the subject indirectly: not possessing the necessary background knowledge and requisite skills, nor having the time for original research on Jesus' resurrection, I have proceeded by reviewing the modern scholarship of others.

Hence, **A HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF JESUS' RESURRECTION.**

A vast literature addresses the Resurrection, but little is devoted to the history of its interpretation. However, the subject is intimately bound up with the quests for the historical Jesus and tracking this theme has kept me close to my topic.

I accessed only English language material available in South Africa. (I was unable, for example, to access any primary source material on Paulus. Only two books by Paulus are catalogued in South Africa: both, in the University of Stellenbosch library, are in the original German). My primary reference source was the University of Cape Town library. Through the Universities' inter-library agreement, CALICO, I used extensively the University of Stellenbosch library and particularly their Theological Faculty library. SABINET (South African Bibliography and Information Network) permitted me computer access to public and academic libraries throughout South Africa. ATLA (American Theological Library Association), through Stellenbosch University, allowed me international computer access to theological book, encyclopaedia and journal references.

I have chosen ten scholars to represent, roughly chronologically, modern interpretations of the resurrection. They are biblical scholars and theologians chosen for their originality of thought, their influence on modern scholarship and their contribution towards understanding Jesus' resurrection. Baird (1992, xix), addressing the question of modern New Testament scholarship in general, states that 'a comprehensive survey of all the scholars and their writings would require several lifetimes.' Similarly, lacking space and time, I have not tracked, in detail, the thematic trajectories of modern theology. The ten scholars, however, are titans of their disciplines: creative individuals who have spent long hours developing their theories. All, in some degree, stand 'on the shoulders of their predecessors' and their

‘research is made possible by earlier results’ (Baird 1992, xx). To this extent they are inter-dependent.

I start with H.S. Reimarus (1694-1768) because he was the first scholar seriously to question, albeit in a posthumous publication, the Church’s long-held belief that Jesus had physically risen from the dead. Then follow H.E. Paulus (1761-1831), F. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), D.F. Strauss (1808-1874), J. Weiss (1863-1914), R. Bultmann (1884-1976), K. Barth (1886-1968), W. Pannenberg (1928-), J. Crossan (1934-) and N.T. Wright (1948-).

Concerning format and presentation, I have attempted to emulate Schweitzer in his ‘*Quest of the Historical Jesus*.’ A biographical sketch of each scholar is included in an attempt to place each life in historical context and pinpoint defining influences.

These efforts express part of my personal quest for the truth, and I believe they address one of life’s fundamental questions.

1

INTRODUCTION**Early Christian Belief**

Nobody seriously questions the historicity of Jesus today. The basic facts include the following: he was born sometime before 4 B.C.E. if we accept Matthew's story, and sometime around 6 C.E. if we accept Luke's story. He was reared as a Jew in Galilee. Luke (3: 1) sharpens our chronological focus, connecting Jesus with John the Baptist: 'In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius ... ' John appeared in the Jordan valley wilderness. This date would be 'not earlier than autumn 27 [C.E.], nor later than midsummer, 29 [C.E.]' (Meyer 1992, 777).

After an itinerant ministry of teaching and healing, mostly among the poor in Palestine, Jesus was arraigned before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14: 61) and "found guilty of blasphemy, which apparently lay in dishonouring the name of God by falsely claiming to be his 'Son'" (Meyer 1992, 792). Later, he was 'tried before the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate, on charges of sedition, the core element of which was the charge that he claimed to be a king (Luke 23: 2)' (Meyer 1992, 792). The actual date of Jesus' death by crucifixion is unknown but 'of the concrete possibilities the most likely is April 7 of the year 30 [C.E.]' (Meyer 1992, 792).

His followers claimed that, post-execution, he had 'risen from the dead,' vacated his grave, communed with them over a period of weeks and then 'ascended into heaven.'

Creedal fragments to this effect are recognizable in the New Testament record (Martin 1962, 274), and later this unremitting belief of the early Church was encapsulated into its formal creeds, which were often used during baptisms. During the second and third centuries C.E. the creedal form was interrogatory: 'Do you believe ... in [Jesus] ... [w]ho was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and died (and was buried) and rose the third day living from the dead, and ascended into the heavens ... ' (Leith 1992, 1204).

The Nicene Creed was formulated at the Council of Nicaea, 325 C.E. It was the first creed to have synodical authority and represented 'the views of the whole Church' at that time (Hammond 1954, 21). Later, at the Council of Constantinople, 381 C.E., the statement, 'He suffered and the third day he rose, and ascended into the heavens' was modified to affirm the bodily resurrection of Jesus. In the 5th century C.E., the Nicene Creed, used by the Eastern Churches, became part of the liturgy of the Eucharist. It states, *inter alia*:

[H]e was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father (Anglican Prayer Book
1989, 108).

The Apostles' Creed, another ancient creed of baptism, first appeared in S.W. France, 710-724 C.E. It became the most universal creed in the West but was not used in the East (Leith 1992, 1203-1206). It includes these words:

He suffered under Pontius Pilate
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven
And is seated at the right hand of the Father (Anglican Prayer
Book 1989, 429).

These Christian claims have been, and are still, keenly disputed. The modern history of their interpretation is the subject of my thesis.

Towards the Age of Enlightenment

The New Testament canon was still incomplete when questions about its meaning began to be asked by scholars: the author of 2 Peter, for example, warns that 'some things in [Paul's letters are] hard to understand' (3: 16).

The authority of the twenty-seven-book canon was only established at the end of the fourth century C.E. Its contents had been selected using a 'rudimentary form of historical criticism' (Baird 1992, xiv) and the early Church fathers (such as Clement, Origen, Tertullian and Augustine) interpreted it in both literal and allegorical ways. The early apostolic church, however, reached general agreement on one hermeneutical point: to itself belonged the prerogative of normative interpretation.

During the Dark Ages (5th to 14th centuries in European history) Scripture was frequently interpreted in one of four ways. For example, 'Jerusalem' (Gal. 4: 24-25) could be understood literally (the Judean city), allegorically (the Church), morally (the soul) and anagogically/didactically (the celestial city). In spite of loud calls for a literal and historical interpretation of the texts (Andrew and Aquinas, for example), the advocates of the spiritual meaning (such as Perez) were not silenced. Baird (1992, xvi) asserts, '[M]edieval exegetes were convinced that God's truth was a many-splendored thing and that Scripture reflected a spectrum of meanings.'

From the early fourteenth century Western thinking in general, along with Christian views about Jesus, were revolutionized by first, the Renaissance and then, during the sixteenth century, by the Reformation.

The reformers (such as Luther and Calvin) based their religious understanding squarely on the Scriptures (the Hebrew Bible and *New Testament*): *sola scriptura*. The Scriptural texts, considered authoritative, were understood literally unless an allegorical interpretation was obviously intended. '[T]he message of the whole Bible was one and the same, that Scripture could not contradict Scripture, [and] the words of the Bible were infallible' (Baird 1992, xviii). That there was a subjective aspect to Biblical interpretation, however, was now being appreciated for the first time.

The Bible was seriously studied during the Reformation and new exegetical tools were developed: Matthaeus Flacius, for example, in an essay on understanding the Bible, stressed the importance of words (Hebrew and Greek linguistics), sentences (Hellenistic and Semitic grammar), the intentions of the Biblical authors (historical criticism) and the contemporary messages of the Bible (biblical hermeneutics). During this period, the Bible was translated into different languages, and biblical commentaries were published giving primary consideration to historical and grammatical interpretation. The reformers understood that the Bible was interpreted by faith, but this was individually subjective and the results sometimes discrepant.

Slowly, it began to dawn on reformation scholars that perhaps human reason would provide a more suitable criterion with which to evaluate biblical truth: Luther had himself stated, at the Diet of Worms (1521), that he was prepared to admit error in his writings if convinced of it by Scripture 'and clear reason' (Baird 1992, xvi). A new period, characterized by hard-nosed belief in the abilities of human intellect to plumb divine mysteries, was being inaugurated: the Age of Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment, which followed the Renaissance and Reformation, was an even more significant intellectual revolution compared to what had gone before. It occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Before this time learning had centred about the church but as scholars from sundry disciplines increasingly thought, experimented, wrote and corresponded, a new age of reasoning was ushered in: the final arbiter of truth should be human reason or rationality.

'[T]he problem of biblical authority' states Klooster (1985, 307) was 'the central problem created by the Enlightenment' because the Enlightenment 'challenged the historical trustworthiness of the biblical message, permeated as it [was] with the miraculous and supernatural' (Klooster 1985, 312).

Progressive thinkers during this period sought to suppress the power of all traditional authorities, including (scriptural) revelation. It was a deliberate effort to establish a religiously neutral culture in the West, where politics, economics, ethics and intellectual formations would be independent of the Church.

The roots of New Testament criticism developed as individuals attempted to retrieve from the growing mass of gathered manuscripts the original words of Scripture and as they also began to realise that it was perhaps not possible to identify the original wording with complete certainty. This had the effect of subverting confidence in the divine inspiration of Scripture and in its ultimate authority, as did the notion that the *New Testament* was a book written by normal people, subject to human errors. Attempts were made to 'separate the Word of God from the words of Scripture (Luther's distinction) so that the former could be set aside when analysing the latter' (Duling 1979, 142). Furthermore, the Protestant conviction that there was a unity of inspiration in the Bible was menaced as individual books were studied separately (Duling 1979, 142). Almost every tenet of traditional Christianity came under attack, especially belief in Jesus' miracles that were considered the superstitions of backward people simply borrowed by Christianity. "Miracles were contrary to the 'new science,' for, it was thought, God does not stop the Great Machine of the Universe" (Duling 1979, 144).

Rationalists explained the acceptance of miracles by orthodox Christians in several ways: Hermann Reimarus combined the disciple deception theory (that Jesus' followers lied about his feats) with the concept of gradual miraculous embellishment (whereby events were gradually, over time, embellished with the miraculous.) The disciple deception theory was compounded by 'priests' deceiving

the faithful (priestly ecclesiastical deception.) Heinrich Paulus, on the other hand, 'used the misperception theory (unusual or misperceived events are given miraculous explanations by eyewitnesses who also write the literature) in combination with the theory of gradual miraculous embellishment' (Duling 1979, 144).

Be that as it may, Schweitzer (1954, 13) maintains that prior to Reimarus 'no one had attempted to form a historical conception of the life of Jesus.' The quest for the historical Jesus had not yet begun. Luther himself (1483-1546), for example, had sensed no need to investigate the true chronology of recorded Gospel events. Referring to the cleansing of the Temple which is related early in John, but late in the synoptists, he states: 'The Gospels follow no order in recording the acts and miracles of Jesus, and the matter is not, after all, of much importance. If a difficulty arises in regard to the Holy Scripture and we cannot solve it, we must just let it alone' (Schweitzer 1954, 13 quoting Luther). Osiander (1498-1552), a Lutheran theologian, maintained that 'if an event is recorded more than once in the Gospels, in different connexions, it happened more than once and in different connexions' (Schweitzer 1954, 13 quoting Hase). Thus, Jairus' daughter was raised three times (Matt. 9; Mark 5; Luke 8) and the Temple 'cleansed' twice by Jesus (Matt. 21; John 2).

One Life of Jesus, however, had been written before Reimarus' time: the Indian missionary, Hieronymous Xavier, a Jesuit priest, had produced it in Persian for the sixteenth century Moghul Emperor, Akbar. Schweitzer (1954, 14) considers it a false portrayal of Jesus' life: omissions and Apocryphal additions have been used simply to portray to the Emperor a perfect Jesus incapable of offence.

There was another Life of Jesus. It had been written by Johann Hess (1741-1828) and appeared in 1768. It was considered little more, however, than a paraphrase of the Gospels (Schweitzer 1954, 14).

At the risk of digressing, but to demonstrate the growing interest in the historical Jesus at about this time, it may interest my readers to learn that Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), third president of the United States (1801-1809) and principal author of their Declaration of Independence, had concerned himself, with the study of the historical Jesus for 'most of his adult life' (Pelikan 1987, 190). In 1804, the President spent 2-3 consecutive nights in the White House writing a pamphlet, *The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth*. In 1820, Jefferson wrote *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth Extracted Textually from the Gospels in Greek, Latin, French and English*. The Gospels in the four different languages were printed in parallel columns. Jefferson's omissions are probably more revealing than his inclusions because he was attempting to abstract 'what is really [Jesus'] from the rubbish in which it is buried, easily distinguished by its lustre from the dross of his biographers, and as separable from that as the diamond from the dung hill' (Pelikan 1987, 190 quoting Jefferson). The rationalistic Jefferson prided himself on his ability to differentiate the one from the other: he omitted the start and the finish of the Gospel story, and his account terminates with the conflation of John 19: 42a and Matthew 27: 60b: 'Then laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.' The resurrection is not mentioned (Pelikan 1987, 192).

But I am getting ahead of myself! Some 30 years before Jefferson's presidency, a bombshell had burst over the stirring, predominantly German, theological world.

HERMANN REIMARUS

The Age of Reason and mayhem from the grave

Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768), a true son of the Enlightenment, obtained posthumous fame as the individual who inaugurated the genuinely critical investigation of Jesus (Talbert 1971, viii). Schweitzer (1911, 15) believes the quest for the historical Jesus opened in 1778 when Gotthold Lessing published Reimarus's "On the Aims of Jesus and His Disciples." Gospel harmonies existed before this time but they had never been seriously studied historically (Stewart 2006a, 3). Theissen and Merz (1998, 2) state that along with David Strauss, Reimarus is credited with providing the first 'critical impulse towards the question of the historical Jesus.'

Reimarus's original, non-conformist views on Jesus' resurrection are powerfully asserted in the sixth Wolfenbüttel fragment: discrepancies exist in the evangelists' accounts of Jesus' resurrection. How, then, can 'the faith of the world ... depend on four remote witnesses who contradict each other' (Baird 1992, 170).

Reimarus came from an old clergy family. He was born in Hamburg and studied theology, philosophy and ancient languages in Jena and Wittenberg. He received his MA in 1716, and became an assistant to the philosophical faculty at Wittenberg three years later. He made a short study tour of England and Holland during 1720-1721, where he became acquainted with deism. In 1723, he became a rector in Wismar and five years later was appointed a professor of Semitic languages at the academic gymnasium, Hamburg. He remained in the city of his birth until his death, forty years later - his home becoming a centre of intellectual life.

The titles of his numerous publications breathe the spirit of the German Enlightenment. His works range from an early dissertation on Hebrew (1717), through various historical and scientific studies, to his philosophical inquiries. They assert the claims of rational religion as against the faith of the Church. In 1754, he denied the miracles and supernatural revelation in *The Principle Truths of Natural Religion*. Reimarus's views on the Bible and Christian origins were reserved for an unpublished manuscript on which his posthumous fame rests: *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes* (Apology or Defence for the Rational Worshippers of God). It was begun around 1736 and known only to an intimate circle of family and friends. He worked on it until shortly before his death. Reimarus did not publish this work during his lifetime because he feared for the consequences it might have on his family.

After Reimarus's death, his daughter Elise gave this manuscript to Gotthold Lessing, dramatist and man of letters, authorizing publication on his own responsibility. Lessing had become acquainted with the Reimarus family during his stay in Hamburg, where he had been both patient and friend of Dr. Johann Reimarus, Reimarus's son. Lessing took a copy of this manuscript with him when he was appointed librarian to the Duke of Brunswick at Wolfenbüttel. In 1774, six years after Reimarus's death, Lessing began publishing excerpts from this manuscript in a series of works '*On History and Literature*' ostensibly found among the treasures in the ducal library at Wolfenbüttel. Lessing called these

excerpts *Fragmente eines Ungenannten* (Fragments of an Unnamed Person), and they became known as *The Wolfenbüttel Fragments*.

Lessing had the foresight to obtain exemption from censorship for his series, which included a variety of other works. But the ensuing controversy around the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* led to forfeiture of this privilege and confiscation of his manuscript, which subsequently disappeared from history. Correct guesses as to the true identity of the author were made at the time, but the question remained in doubt until 1813-1814 when Dr. Johann Reimarus made the disclosure when donating copies of different drafts to libraries in Göttingen and Hamburg. Fragments were subsequently reprinted in various editions of Lessing's collected works (Brown 1998a, 347). Reimarus's *Apology* was only published in its entirety in 1972.

Reimarus lived in the context of German Lutherism, for which Scripture was the final authority (Talbert 1971, 26). Significant influences on his life, however, were the rationalist views of Christain Wolff and that religion of reason, English deism (Talbert 1971, 11). Wolff maintained that an alleged revelation must pass two tests of reason: necessity, and freedom from contradictions. Reimarus's work was in large measure an application of these criteria to the alleged Christian revelation in Scripture, in an attempt to discredit it. It was the second criterion that Reimarus used most explicitly (Talbert 1971, 25).

The seven *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* attack the historical foundations of Christian orthodoxy while presenting a rational defence of deism. The first and second fragments are titled 'On the Toleration of Deists' and 'On the Decrying of Reason in the Pulpit.' In them, a call is made for a natural theology and a rational approach to religion. The seventh fragment is titled 'On the Intention of Jesus and His Disciples' and is considered the most significant. Reimarus claims in it that Jesus' intentions during his lifetime were at variance with the expressed intentions of his disciples after his death: 'I find great cause to separate completely what the apostles say in their own writings from that which Jesus himself actually said and taught, for the apostles were themselves teachers and consequently present their own views ...' (Reimarus 1971, 64).

Reimarus maintains that the disciples remodelled Jesus' Jewish piety deceptively and fraudulently into a totally new religion: at the time of the crucifixion Jesus' followers were anticipating the establishment on earth of a heavenly kingdom. Their expectations, however, were thwarted because the kingdom did not come, and in this ruinous situation they formulated a new and novel theology, 'the doctrine of a spiritual suffering savior of all mankind' (Reimarus 1971, 129). This is an example of the eschatological interpretation of the resurrection, which will be discussed later, and in more detail, in connection with Johannes Weiss.

Jesus' followers, asserts Reimarus (1971, 151) taught and preached that '[Jesus] or the Messiah was bound to die in order to obtain forgiveness for mankind, and consequently to achieve his own glory; that upon the strength of this he arose alive from death out of his tomb upon the third day as he had prophesied, and ascended into heaven ...'

The disciples' theological edifice was built on the resurrection story, which was simply a fraudulent claim by the disciples, who by stealing Jesus' body, created an empty tomb. This conspiracy theory advanced by the disciples is considered typical of deism (Stewart 2006a, 4).

The sixth Wolfenbüttel fragment, *On the Resurrection Narrative*, deals exclusively with the resurrection. It is our central concern and herein Reimarus exemplifies his rationalistic approach to the subject. He detects numerous inconsistencies among the Gospel narratives, some of which I shall pick out as examples, and maintains therefore that the claim that Jesus rose from the dead cannot be sustained (Talbert 1971, 28).

‘Did Jesus, after he had been put to death, actually rise from the dead?’ Reimarus (1971, 153) asks rhetorically. He rounds on Matthew, and his testimony of the guard whom Pilate had set at the tomb, at the request of the Jewish council; who, to its great terror, had seen Jesus emerging from the grave and had later told this story to the high priest and elders (Matt. 27: 62-28: 15) (Reimarus 1971, 153).

Reimarus asserts that if this story is correct, the truth of Jesus’ resurrection would be known to both local Jews (members of the Sanhedrin) and Gentiles (Roman soldiers who provided the guard). Of the evangelists, only Matthew makes use of this story. It is not mentioned by any of the other apostles, even in their letters. Nor is this amazing incident mentioned in Acts. According to Matthew’s story, the chief priests told all the elders of the Sanhedrin what the guard had seen and said. The Sanhedrin, therefore, knew and believed that it was actually as the apostles preached it. Why, then, did the apostles not use this event, so advantageous to their claim, to move, convert and shame these people? What other conclusion can one make here than that either the story must be untrue, or the apostles would of necessity have used it wherever it supplied the sole convincing proof after everything else had failed to be effective (Reimarus 1971, 153-158).

Furthermore, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, council members, would not have kept silent about what had been told them. But, they are utterly silent about it. It is obvious, opines Reimarus, that such things never happened. Matthew simply invented his resurrection story to deny the accusation that the disciples stole Jesus’ body. It is quite possible, he continues, that Jesus’ body had been stolen from the tomb at night and buried in another place (Reimarus 1971, 159-161). Joseph, for one, was able to enter the tomb at will and do what he wished while there.

Suspicion, thus, logically falls on the disciples. All reasonable people, the entire Sanhedrin, all the chief priests and scribes gave this as their judgement. The disciples were accused of stealing the body: the guard was the only way that their credibility may have been saved but they did not use it. Only Matthew remembers the story and only Matthew tries to answer the accusation but cannot invent anything better. ‘It cannot possibly be true’ Reimarus (1971, 164) interjects ‘and cannot possibly have taken place.’

Reimarus states that until shortly after Jesus died, the disciples maintained that they knew nothing about a resurrection - they had neither heard nor thought of such a thing (John 20: 9). How then was it possible that the chief priests and scribes should have known any of this, which led them to have taken the precaution of providing the tomb with a guard?

It was also improbable that the ‘chief priests and entire council’ should have gone publicly to Pilate on the first day of the Passover, and then proceeded in procession with the ‘Roman guard’ out through the gate to seal the tomb (Reimarus 1971, 166). To mingle with gentiles and touch a tomb was contrary to the customs and laws of the Jews on such a festival day.

These seventy authoritative men who comprised the high council are made out to be rogues by Matthew, says Reimarus; upon reflection, they unanimously agree to commit fraud, and to persuade the 'Roman guard' to participate in the same thing. Matthew transfers fraud from himself to the authorities - the apostles' fraud is common gossip among the Jews, declares Reimarus. But the evangelists and apostles remain silent about the implied fraud perpetrated by the Jewish Sanhedrin (Reimarus 1971, 167).

Finally, referring to Matthew's resurrection account, Reimarus states in his *On the Resurrection Narratives* that Mark, Luke and John have the women visit the tomb, concerned only about who was to move the stone. No suggestion was made that there was a guard on the tomb and that the stone was sealed. Joseph and Nicodemus would have told the two women that the tomb was sealed and that they would not be admitted to the body. Matthew must have realized this. He does not tell of the women proceeding with spices to embalm Jesus' corpse, to roll the stone away and descend into the tomb. Rather, he simply asserts that they went out to inspect the tomb, which they did from a distance, in spite of the guard (Reimarus 1971, 168-169).

There is also contradiction between Matthew's account and that of the other evangelists. As the women (Mark 16: 1ff; Luke 24: 1ff; John 20: 1ff) are discussing who shall roll the stone away for them, and while they are looking at the tomb from afar, they become aware that the stone is rolled away; they find the stone gone and enter the tomb. Mary Magdalene sees that the stone is gone. There is no earthquake, no angel coming down from heaven, no rolling away of the stone in the presence of the women, no half-dead guard; rather, when they look upon the scene from a distance they see the stone already rolled away, the guard gone. The guard, therefore, cannot possibly have occupied any place in the thinking of these other evangelists.

Reimarus concludes that from these many contradictions we now see that the guard, mentioned by Matthew as posted before the tomb, will not bear investigation and cannot be accepted by rational minds. These accounts, intended to divert suspicion of fraud from Jesus' disciples, on the contrary, strengthen that suspicion. The guard disappears at all events, and it is always possible and extremely probable, if one looks into the matter, that the disciples came into the tomb at night, stole the body, and afterwards said that Jesus had risen (Reimarus 1971, 172).

But Reimarus is not finished. Having vilified Matthew's resurrection account, he proceeds to suggest that it would be reasonable to see whether the four Gospel narratives are consistent concerning Jesus' resurrection: 'It is a question of the truth of Jesus' resurrection, and insofar as it is to be judged by the mere testimony of witnesses, a unanimity of their testimony is necessary as to who saw him, where and how often, what he said and did in the meantime, and finally, what became of him' (Reimarus 1971, 174).

He finds that 'their stories diverge from each other in almost each and every point of the affair, and each one reads differently' (Reimarus 1971, 174). Even in a secular court of law witnesses who give such contradictory evidence would not be considered reliable. Besides, the issues here were substantial; they concern humankind and all creation. Reimarus, in the same sixth Fragment of his *Apology*, proceeds to demonstrate other obvious contradictions among the resurrection narratives (Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20). The following three inconsistencies are typical of the ten (Reimarus 1971, 177-197).

Firstly, a contradiction exists between John on the one hand, and Mark and Luke on the other, with regard to the preparation of Jesus' body for burial. According to John (19: 38-40), the anointing and swaddling of Jesus' body with spices and all else that was proper and implied in the Jewish custom, had already been done the evening before the Sabbath (Friday) by Joseph and Nicodemus. Mark (16: 1-2) and Luke (24: 1), however, state that the women only came out with their spices to give the body its due respect early morning the day after the Sabbath (Sunday).

Secondly, there is a contradiction among the evangelists concerning the appearances of the angels. In Matthew and Mark the women see only one angel. In Luke and John two angels appear to the women. The evangelists differ as to where the angels are positioned. Furthermore, in Matthew, Mark and Luke the angel (or angels) said to Mary Magdalene and the others that Jesus had risen. In John, however, the angels merely asked Mary, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' (John 20: 13). She looked about and saw Jesus, who she thought was the gardener. Jesus then revealed himself to her and she learned of the resurrection from Jesus himself, not from the angels. Reimarus (1971, 184) maintains that numerous contradictions in the account of an event can only come from people who discussed basically what they wanted to say, but forgot to agree among themselves about the small details, so that each then invents these in his own imagination and as he thinks best.

Thirdly, a contradiction exists between Matthew and John. In Matthew's (28: 1-10) story Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene on the way to the city, while according to John (20: 11-18) he appears to her in front of the entrance to the tomb. Reimarus claims that the rule of contradiction remains a guiding principle in law: if witnesses and historians contradict one another their account cannot be true. The evangelists' inconsistency is indefensible because they claim that in all respects and in all their words the Holy Spirit impels them, and leads them into the whole truth. In simple human terms, Reimarus (1971, 177-197) holds that it was not possible that Mary should not know whether she had seen Jesus standing behind her in front of the tomb, or coming to meet her far away on the road to the city.

Reimarus proceeds by asking whether one can accept as unanimous and sincere such testimony, concerning such an important matter, testimony that contradicts itself so often and so obviously in respect to person, time, place, manner, intent, word and story. Two of these evangelists, Mark and Luke, write merely from hearsay; they were not apostles and did not even claim that they saw Jesus with their own eyes after his death. Matthew and John, both considered apostles by Reimarus, claim to have seen Jesus but contradict each other most, so much so that 'I may frankly say that there is almost no single circumstance from the death of Jesus to the end of the story where their accounts may be made to agree' (Reimarus 1971, 197).

Reimarus continues. In Jesus' appearances before his ascension, of which there are five or six in the Gospels to be reckoned with, it is remarkable that only his disciples saw Jesus. Indeed, during the forty days he was supposed to be on earth after his resurrection, no mention of his presence in Galilee or Jerusalem is made to an outsider. It is kept secret. The Evangelists let him come to life only for themselves. Nobody in the city witnesses his ascension. That Jesus did not allow himself to be seen publicly dents the credibility of his resurrection. How can one complain about humankind's unbelief? Jesus could have easily provided the persuasive evidence that our rationality craves.

proved themselves untrustworthy. The council at Jerusalem distinctly warned us against them, saying that these disciples came to the grave secretly, by night, and stole away the body of Jesus, and that now they were going about, proclaiming that he had risen from the dead. One must not be blamed for placing more confidence in the members of the high council than in such insignificant and suspicious witnesses (Reimarus 1971, 197-205).

With the passage of time, the fraudulent claims of the disciples were compounded, Reimarus thinks. For example, post-crucifixion, the Messiah's triumphant return did not eventuate and Peter subsequently advanced an explanation: that 'with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day' (2 Peter 3: 8-10). Reimarus (1971, 237) considers Peter's explanation unconvincing: '[O]ne cannot refer to a single quoted prophecy that is not false ... they are all ambiguous and doubtful, and are not to be accepted from writers who trifle with things and words.' Likewise, a 'thousand asserted miracles cannot clear up and set straight one single evident contradiction in the accounts of the resurrection now before my eyes' (Reimarus 1971, 239).

Reimarus believes that the disciples' fraud was perpetrated for material and political reasons. During their time with Jesus these working class individuals had been provided for through the charity and generosity of others. Now that he was gone, they were reluctant to drop their dreams of 'future wealth and power, lands and worldly goods' (Reimarus 1971, 241) and return to their former occupations. They decided rather to continue their new mode of life, promising their supporters, whose possessions they shared, rewards in a future kingdom. Towards this end, they stole and hid Jesus' body. Fifty days later, when his remains would have been unrecognisable if inadvertently found, they proclaimed that Jesus had risen and was to return soon. Jesus' followers, suggests Reimarus, were able to perpetrate this fraud because the Jewish state was so disorganized. No efficient police force existed to prevent this deception, and the growth of their communistic fellowship. This fact was demonstrated by a recorded incident when a couple died within a few hours of each other in the apostles' presence. They were buried and ostensibly had their property confiscated by the disciples, but no challenges by the authorities were recorded (Acts 5: 1-11) (Reimarus 1971, 258-260).

Reimarus' rationalistic interpretation of these events seems very similar to that of the English deists but there is one major difference: Reimarus did more than simply discount the supernatural; rationalizing, he totally reconstructed the early history of Christianity (Baird 1992, 172).

Lessing was never in total agreement with Reimarus: he also believed that the biblical record was inconsistent but he used this fact rather to uphold his personal view that faith did not depend only on historical reality. Lessing, furthermore, believed that miracles were possible (Baird 1992, 173).

J.H. Ress was the Wolfenbüttel church superintendent who suggested that the unknown author of the *Fragments* was alleging contradictions in the biblical record when no such contradictions in fact existed. Lessing's opinion was that there were inconsistencies but that 'disagreements of witnesses do not necessarily discredit the historicity of an event' (Baird 1992, 173). In his view, Ress's cardinal error was basing faith on miraculous proofs.

Johann Goeze, a senior pastor in Hamburg, also berated the unknown writer of the *Fragments*: it was unconscionable to slander the disciples as malicious scoundrels. Furthermore, endorsing biblical orthodoxy, he upheld the principal of biblical

Johann Goeze, a senior pastor in Hamburg, also berated the unknown writer of the *Fragments*: it was unconscionable to slander the disciples as malicious scoundrels. Furthermore, endorsing biblical orthodoxy, he upheld the principal of biblical infallibility. Lessing, on his part, intimated that Goeze was dabbling in trivia; he maintained that Christianity existed before, and consisted of more than, the Biblical record (Baird 1992, 173-174).

Like Lessing, Johann Semler (1725-1791), the Halle theologian, had earlier renounced his Christian faith but considered the *Fragments* an ungodly onslaught on Christianity. In a 400-page book he contradicted Reimarus: Jesus did not appropriate for himself the Jewish anticipation of a coming Messiah; nor had the disciples been intentionally fraudulent because later they willingly endured persecution for their beliefs; historically, it had been shown that they truly believed what they preached; the use of prophecy and the miraculous as proofs were indeed credible in Jesus' time. Semler did not believe Christianity could be discredited, as in the *Fragments*, by historically disproving Jesus' resurrection. Against orthodox understanding, Semler and Lessing both believed the postulated historicity of the resurrection was not critical: it was, rather, a miraculous occurrence to be accepted by faith (Baird 1992, 174-177). Semler and Lessing provide here, therefore, our earliest intimation of an existential interpretation of Jesus' resurrection, an understanding most readily identified with Rudolf Bultmann about a century and a half later. It may interest my readers to learn that in 1788 Prussian preachers were required, by edict, to 'conform to the orthodox creeds' of the Church and Semler responded to this order by 'declaring his support' (Baird 1992, 177). He was, according to Baird (1992, 177) 'conforming to the pattern of the times, [practicing] an accommodation doctrine of his own.'

Schweitzer (1911, 159) believes that Reimarus was keenly aware of the complexities offered by Jesus' life and the solution he offered was to hypothesize 'deliberate imposture on the part of the disciples.' But in dismissing his suggestions, Reimarus's contemporaries shelved the very problems that solicited such solutions, because they were having difficulty both grasping and addressing the biblical incongruities that he saw. In Schweitzer's (1954, 159) view 'the great men are not those who solved the problems, but those who discovered them [like Reimarus].'

Modern scholarship, however, does not agree with Reimarus's conclusions concerning the resurrection. Few are prepared to believe that the emergence of the Church, together with Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus, was the fraudulent invention of the first disciples (Brown 1998a, 349).

Textual tensions are not necessarily serious, indeed they may to be expected if they express independent oral traditions recorded two or three generations after Jesus. Reimarus believes that the sources should agree in detail because he reckoned more seriously with their apostolic, and therefore inerrant origins, than do critics today. He had not yet developed, concludes Talbert, a truly historical-critical approach to the New Testament. This advance only came with the nineteenth century (Reimarus 1971, 155, n.57).

Reimarus (1971, 152) states, 'Now everyone will readily acknowledge, as do the apostles, that Christianity depends entirely upon the truth of the story of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.' Modern theology in the main, however, would disagree: many maintain that the Christian faith does not rely solely upon Jesus' physical resurrection (Reimarus 1971, 152, n.54).

I believe the central issue Reimarus faced concerning the resurrection was the inconsistencies he found in the four traditional resurrection narratives. The Bible for him was the inerrant 'Word of God' and because God was by nature truthful, historical truth recorded in Scripture would never contain contradictions. Inconsistencies and contradictions did and do, however, exist in the resurrection stories. Reimarus, therefore, concluded that the gospel records did not, because they could not, portray the facts of history. Humbug lurked somewhere. The resurrection story, he reasoned, was a set-up fraudulently contrived by the disciples.

I have no doubt that, as the Age of Reason advanced, others would have soon come to a similar conclusion. In consequence, he turned his back, metaphorically at least, on Christian orthodoxy and developed a fixed deistic outlook. He became, as Kümmel (1972, 238) suggests, a 'rationalistic sceptic.' Unfortunately, because the *Fragments* were published posthumously, Reimarus is not credited with that degree of moral courage we accord David Strauss who, a century later, advocated and defended, in the face of lifelong opposition, the mythical interpretation of the resurrection.

It appears that Reimarus exercised a 'terrifying and disabling influence upon his time' (Schweitzer 1954, 159): a surge of intellectual excitement had followed the appearance in Germany of the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments*. Christian orthodoxy felt threatened: politicians were alarmed; displeasure was voiced among the upper classes and a growing disrespect for religion among students spread to involve the general public. Many young men in the Christian ministry experienced 'great perplexity in consequence of their own convictions being so fearfully shaken [and] determined to choose another profession ... rather than persevere so long amid increasing uncertainty ...' (Talbert 1971, 1 quoting Semler).

Reimarus represents, albeit posthumously, the emerging rationalism of the Enlightenment. A more severe and uncompromising rationalism regarding the resurrection's interpretation was still to come: the extreme rationalism of Heinrich Paulus.

3

HEINRICH PAULUS**Extreme rationalism and a childhood *bête noire***

Heinrich Paulus (1761-1851) was an academically multi-talented German Protestant theologian. Like Reimarus before him, he was a rationalist, and apocalypticist concerning his understanding of the New Testament (Duling 1979, 231). His 'natural explanation' became popular after Reimarus: 'Behind the actual stories lay an historical core which had been embellished in a supernatural manner by Jesus' disciples, who, for one reason or another, had either misperceived or misunderstood what had actually happened' (Harris 1973, 43-44).

Paulus's work is considered today the 'extreme attempt to rationalize the miracles' (Baird 1992, 201) and though he is frequently disparaged by historians, Baird (1992, 208) believes his 'influence in the nineteenth century was considerable.' Schweitzer (1954, 48) suggests that a childhood experience blurred Paulus's perspective, causing him to develop 'an unconquerable distrust of anything that went outside the boundaries of logical thought.'

Contrary to Reimarus's view, Paulus considers the biblical writers honest and fundamentally reliable. He does not, therefore, dismiss the resurrection narratives as fraudulent, but rationalizes the recorded events comprehensively from start to finish. Never, since Paulus, has the resurrection been re-submitted to such radical rationalistic interpretation.

Paulus was born in Leonberg, near Stuttgart. His father was a church deacon, who though rationalistic in outlook, became increasingly absorbed in spiritualism. Unsure of his own immortality, he entreated his dying wife to contact him bodily, if possible, after her death. When she died, Paulus's father thought he saw his wife sit up, before lying back. From that time on he claimed he was in contact with the dead, and because of this, in 1771, he was relieved of his ecclesiastical responsibilities. His children were the victims of this excessive spiritualism. According to Schweitzer, Heinrich was the most affected by this since he felt compelled to pretend that he, too, was in contact with the spirit of his deceased mother. This experience may well account for Paulus's aversion in later life to all forms of irrationality.

He attended the Theological Institute at Tübingen (1779-1784) and then became an assistant pastor. In 1789, he began his teaching career as Professor of Oriental Languages at Jena. Four years later he was appointed a professor of theology. In 1799, as Pro-rector and proponent of academic freedom, he unsuccessfully defended a colleague against a charge of atheism. In his commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, published in 1800-1802, he upheld the naturalistic, or rationalistic, interpretation of miracles. This aroused the indignation of the local church but attempts to have him removed from his university post were unsuccessful.

In 1803, he accepted a professorial appointment at the new university in Würzburg from the Elector of Bavaria, Maximilian Joseph II. Friedrich Schleiermacher was one of the others short-listed for this post. His participation in an abortive attempt

reorganizing the Bavarian school system. He spent four dutiful years here before moving to Heidelberg as professor of theology. He held this post until he retired.

His forty years in Heidelberg were remarkably productive: there was hardly a subject about which he did not write. He expressed rationalistic views on such diverse topics as homeopathy, academic freedom, the duelling nuisance, press freedom and the Jewish Question. His convictions on political and constitutional issues antagonized many of his contemporaries. Jesus' ethical teaching and philosophy remained particular interests of his. In Jena he made a serious study of Kant, and in 1803 he wrote a biography on Spinoza. He considered himself something of a guardian of philosophy and 'the moment he detected the slightest hint of mysticism, he sounded the alarm' states Schweitzer (1954, 50).

His pet aversion was Friedrich Schelling, a professor of philosophy in Berlin. The publications, avowed and anonymous, which he directed against this 'charlatan, juggler, swindler and obscurantist' as he designated him, would 'fill an entire library' (Schweitzer 1954, 50). In 1842, Paulus published, with his own added criticism, a series of lectures that had been newly delivered by Schelling on 'The Philosophy of Revelation.' A furious Schelling charged him with illicit publication but Paulus won the ensuing court case, coolly explaining that "'Schelling's philosophy appeared to him an insidious attack upon sound reason, the unmasking of which by every possible means was a work of public utility, nay, even a duty'" (Schweitzer 1954, 50).

Schweitzer (1954, 50) describes the elderly Paulus, thus:

the veteran rationalist was an isolated survival from an earlier age into a period which no longer understood him. The new men reproached him for standing in the old ways; he accused them of a want of honesty. It was just in his immobility and his one-sidedness that his significance lay. By his consistent carrying through of the rationalistic explanation he performed a service to theology more valuable than those who think themselves vastly his superiors are willing to acknowledge.

Paulus died in Heidelberg in 1851, aged ninety. One of the last things he said, a few hours before his death, was, 'I am justified before God, through my desire to do right' and reportedly, his last words were, 'There is another world' (Schweitzer 1954, 49-50; Duling 1979, 146-147; Baird 1992, 201).

In 1805, Paulus published a three-volume commentary on the Gospels. He concluded from these studies that 'the Gospel accounts do not consistently represent accurate history' (Baird 1992, 202). He felt free, therefore, not only to censure the biblical record, but also to propose his own interpretation of past events. He did this in accordance with the Griesbach hypothesis (that Matthew was the earliest Gospel; Mark was based on Luke and Matthew.) Paulus considered John's Gospel reliable and authentic. An early example of his 'notorious rationalism' is found in these volumes concerning the two disciples walking to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35): they did not recognize Jesus, Paulus suggests, because of his strange clothes, and the disfigurements he bore from the crucifixion (Baird 1992, 202).

Paulus, in 1828, published his *Life of Jesus*, his most important work. In it, he restated his belief that Christianity was historical and that 'Christianity is nothing more and nothing less than faith in the Jesus of scientific historical reconstruction.

more and nothing less than faith in the Jesus of scientific historical reconstruction. Although the Gospel miracles wither away under the burning light of critical enquiry, one incredible wonder remains – the Jesus of history’ (Baird 1992, 202).

There are many examples in Paulus’s *Life of Jesus* of his rationalization of miracles. He considers miracles simply the explanations simple people make to explain natural events they do not understand. A complete understanding of nature’s laws, on the contrary, would explain everything (Duling 1979, 147). Unlike Reimarus, who believes the Gospel writers had been consciously deceptive, Paulus holds to what is known as the ‘misperception’ theory. They both believed that over time events had also been ‘embellished with the miraculous’ (Duling 1979, 144).

I record now Paulus’s explanations of some specific miracles recorded in the *New Testament* in an attempt to help my reader later understand his thinking regarding Jesus’ resurrection. For example:

The exorcism in the Capernaum synagogue (Luke 4: 31-37), maintains Paulus, was actually the healing of a mental disorder. Likewise, the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5: 1-15) was healed: there was no question of possession or exorcism. Jesus did not miraculously still the storm on Galilee (Matt. 8: 23-27): it was a coincidence that at that moment the boat sailed under the lee of the surrounding mountains and drifted into calmer water. (This possibility should not have escaped the notice of the professional fishermen Jesus had on board with him then). Jewish pilgrims returning by road from Shavuot (the Feast of Pentecost) in Jerusalem, passed Jesus and the five thousand (Matt. 14: 15-21), and generously shared their provisions: nothing suggests miraculous food multiplication. A sandbar explained Jesus’ walking on the water and Jesus’ transfiguration resulted from the light effects of the rising sun behind him (Duling 1979, 147-148).

Concerning the biblical raisings of the dead, Paulus uses the explanation taken over from Bahrdt (1741-1792), one of the first to suggest that the Gospel miracle stories may have a natural explanation (Schweitzer 1954, 38). Jesus was actually preventing the premature burial of live individuals, something that happened occasionally in the Middle East, where it was customary for Jews to bury their dead soon after death. Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8: 41ff) had only been sleeping, temporarily indisposed by her first menstrual period; led by a hunch to access the funeral procession at the city gate, Jesus found the widow’s son (Luke 7: 11-15) unwell, but only sleeping; Lazarus (John 11: 1-44), likewise, had been ill but he too was only sleeping. (Paulus appears to ignore the fact that Jesus (John 11: 14) himself had said ‘Lazarus is dead’ (Baird 1992, 204-205).

Schweitzer considers Paulus’s standpoint on these raisings from the dead reasonable. All the more so, because ‘Paulus prided himself on a very exact acquaintance with the physical and geographical conditions of Palestine. He had a wide knowledge of the literature of Eastern travel’ (Schweitzer 1911, 53, no.1). He is surprised, however, that Paulus does not comment on the fact that no mention is made in the Gospels of Jesus attempting to enlighten his fellow Jews about the ‘criminal character of over-hasty burial’ (Schweitzer 1954, 53). Worse still, Jesus appears to have allowed his closest followers to believe in the miraculous nature of these events!

Paulus, who does not believe Jesus predicted his own resurrection, draws heavily on John’s Gospel for his reconstruction of this event because he considers the Synoptic accounts fragmentary. He submits that like Socrates before him, Jesus

was prepared to die for an ideal, and believed this was part of God's Messianic call and will for him.

Paulus believes that Jesus did not die on the cross but slipped into a death-like stupor. His resurrection must be considered essentially similar to the raisings from the dead, if it is accepted that the disciples saw him physically after death with the nail prints in his hands and eating in their presence. Death from crucifixion was a very slow death. Josephus, he recalls, mentions in his *Contra Apionem* that Titus granted him a favour at Tekoa, and had three crucified men, all known to him, taken off their crosses. Only one of these three survived the ordeal. Jesus, Paulus notes, 'died' surprisingly quickly. The loud cry that he uttered immediately before his head sank (John 19: 30) shows that his strength was far from being exhausted at that moment. In this stuporose condition the dying process would continue until the onset of physical decay (or corruption.) Only such putrefaction would have proved that death had actually occurred. In Jesus' case, as in the case of the Tekoa three, his life would have been gradually extinguished had not fate enigmatically intervened. Paulus reasons that after the horrors of the cross, Jesus, through a providential combination of circumstances, was brought back to consciousness: the Roman soldier who 'pierced his side with a spear' (Luke 19: 34) was only administering a 'superficial prick' to see whether he was still alive and responsive. This was similar to phlebotomy (the old surgical practice of blood-letting, which was thought to have therapeutic value) and may have roused him. The coolness of the tomb and the aromatic burial spices continued Jesus' resuscitation, until eventually 'the storm and the earthquake aroused [him] to full consciousness' (Schweitzer 1954, 54). The earthquake, fortunately, rolled the gravestone away from the mouth of the tomb permitting Jesus to exit, strip and put on the gardener's clothes. Then he managed to get a message to his disciples, via the women, requesting them to rendezvous with him in Galilee. Paulus maintains that Jesus' physical survival and restoration were factual: '[T]he fact of the resuscitation is historically certain' (Baird 1992, 207), (Duling 1979, 148). Paulus's understanding of Jesus' post-crucifixion resuscitation has been advanced more recently as the Swoon Theory.

In this way, continues Paulus, Jesus lived with his disciples for some forty days. Some of that time was spent in Galilee. Because of his wounds, he was very weak and obliged to conserve his strength; he emerged periodically to instruct his followers. The proof of Jesus' resuscitation was provided, not only by his appearances, but by the fact that his disciples observed and handled his physical body and that he was able to consume a piece of cooked fish. 'All this indicates' maintains Paulus 'that the resuscitated body was identical with the crucified body, and not at all like the spiritual body of 1 Cor. 15: 44-50' (Baird 1992, 207).

For Paulus, Jesus' bodily ascension was unhistorical: forty days after his resuscitation, still considerably weakened, Jesus realized he was about to die. As he was saying goodbye to his followers on the Mount of Olives a cloud enveloped him. The disciples were on their knees, looking up, and presumed Jesus had been carried up to heaven on the cloud. 'They never knew where and when he actually perished' (Baird 1992, 207).

Paulus believes that the resuscitation (resurrection) of Jesus 'was effected by the power of God who works through nature' and this understanding does not undermine faith because 'the true faith is only that which is most tenable' (Baird 1992, 207).

Towards the end of his life, looking back, Paulus (Baird 1992, 208) had this to say: 'The aim of my life ... in relation to scientific matters, was ... directed toward the presentation of a biblical and rationally grounded and harmonious totality of religious certainties.' Paulus's consistently rationalistic views about Jesus are found in his *Commentary*, his *Life of Jesus* (*Das Leben Jesu als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums/The Life of Jesus as the Basis of a purely Historical Account of Early Christianity*) published in two volumes in 1828 (Schweitzer 1954, 48) and in his *Exegetical Handbook of the First Three Gospels* published 1830-1833. The *Life of Jesus* aroused much opposition at the time and it was to be discredited by Strauss seven years later (Schweitzer 1954, 56-57).

Schleiermacher, according to Baird (1992, 208), concurred with Paulus's positive assessment of John's Gospel and 'sympathized with his explanation of the resurrection.'

Schweitzer believes Paulus's approach is both essentially and seriously flawed because he attempts to maintain his own integrity at the expense of that of his characters. Paulus believes that Jesus' disciples and the Gospel writers saw miracles (raisings from the dead) but he, himself, maintains that there were no miracles. He has Jesus performing miracles among the people and allowing them to believe the miraculous, while he, Paulus, maintains that miracles did not occur. Jesus is thus painted as a fraud – he allows his miracles to be imagined by the people, but makes no effort to correct the supposed delusion (Schweitzer 1954, 56-57).

Schweitzer maintains further that the deistic portrayal of Jesus by Reimarus, and the rationalistic depiction of Jesus by Paulus, have little in common. He does not believe that Reimarus influenced Paulus, though Karl Venturini (1768-1849), who holds that raisings from the dead are cases of individuals recovering from coma, may have done so (Schweitzer 1911, 45; 303, n.1).

Schweitzer also believes that many of Paulus's ideas still cropped up in all sorts of disguises in his own day. The through and through theological rationalists have, however, been thoroughly discredited by now. That said and done, concludes Schweitzer, we can learn a lot from Paulus and his contemporaries – they were loyal to their beliefs and, as far as theology is concerned, characterized by good, simple sincerity (Schweitzer 1954, 56-57).

Kümmel (1972, 90) states that Paulus, ever the 'consistent rationalist,' sometimes explains away the miracle Gospel stories by invoking the 'banal and the absurd.' Paulus (in Kümmel 1972, 91) understands that 'in the Gospels every word is a veritable and reliable reproduction of what actually happened' and that 'what really happened [could] be made clear by the disclosure of the natural events that the ancients had mistakenly regarded as miraculous.' Paulus allows that the rational explanation of a miracle is not always self-evident but this does not mean that an attempt to provide such an explanation should not be tried. 'Can a fact then be called inexplicable if one is not even permitted to attempt to understand it in the light of possible causes?' (Paulus in Kümmel 1972, 92-93). Kümmel (1972, 93) points out that Paulus practiced neither 'genuine source criticism' nor true 'historical criticism.' This, along with his rationalistic presuppositions, blocked Paulus's ability to appreciate the way faith influenced the early Christians' historical depiction of Jesus.

Baird (1992, 208) proposes that, like many other Enlightenment interpreters, Paulus attempted to change biblical accounts, reducing them to historical facts.

Jesus, so reconstructed, then became his ground for faith. More importantly, 'Paulus's rationalistic exegesis had an apologetic purpose': because the miraculous explanation is problematic for modern individuals, it should not be entertained unnecessarily. '[His] reduction of the miraculous was a service to faith and, at the same time, a means to reclaim the credibility of the biblical text' (Baird 1992, 208). In all this, however, Paulus failed to realize that his rationalized biblical account would have been unrecognisable to the early followers of Jesus because the Gospel writers clearly and repeatedly invoked the miraculous.

Lorenzen (1995, 36) suggests that Paulus is perhaps the earliest theologian to present a 'Liberal' approach to Jesus' resurrection. This acknowledges the reality of the resurrection, but insists that it can, and must, be explained in a way that is 'within the parameters set by modern science.' In other words, the laws of nature and history were not suspended to resurrect a dead person.

Like Reimarus before him, Paulus also offers a rationalistic interpretation of Jesus' resurrection. Reimarus, in the light of the apparently contradictory Gospel accounts, simply discounts the resurrection's veracity: the Evangelists were dishonest. Paulus, on the other hand, believes that the Evangelists were honest recorders, but discounts the possibility of the miraculous: there are natural explanations for all the recorded miracles associated with the resurrection.

Discounting the miraculous, on principle, is a major philosophical controversy. I intend to address it later. This position, nevertheless, underlies most modern notions rejecting Jesus' bodily resurrection and is of signal importance. Be that as it may, Paulus's understanding that the ostensibly miraculous has a natural explanation is found wanting in several respects:

His extreme rational interpretation of the miracles is one possible approach among many. David Strauss, for example, championed the concept of a mythical interpretation of the Gospels. Paulus could be mistaken. In fact, the Evangelists, the early Christians and most modern scholars today admit that the *New Testament* does invoke the miraculous. Paulus, moreover, is not totally consistent with his rational interpretation of the *New Testament miracles*. Baird (1992, 203), for example, states that according to Paulus, Jesus' birth story 'involved a special manifestation of divine power.'

Paulus is not logically consistent with his understanding of the *New Testament* record. For example, he believes the *New Testament* is true but also that Jesus' physical ascension was unhistorical. His interpretation of individual passages happens to be haphazard also. Paulus maintains that Jesus survived crucifixion and bodily tramped the Galilean and Judean countryside. According to Luke (24: 42-43), Jesus consumed a piece of cooked fish before his followers to demonstrate his physical presence. This accords with Paulus's understanding of Jesus' resurrection body and he does not therefore invoke a rational interpretation of the feat. Others, however, may regard this as a miracle. There is, thus, an arbitrary element to Paulus's interpretation of miracles.

Furthermore, Paulus's rational explanation of the miraculous is often idiosyncratic and suspect: the spear thrust (John 19: 34) into Jesus' side, for example, should not be regarded as a phlebotomy. Rather, as literally described, the spear penetrated Jesus' pleural cavity and caused the escape of bloodstained pleural transudate, fluid compatible with the heart failure brought on by crucifixion.

Paulus's extreme rationalism, his reasoned interpretation of Jesus' resurrection, is not entirely logically consistent. A palpable tension exists between the Gospels' postulated miracles, Paulus's rationalization of the same, and his claim that the Gospels were a true record of the historical events under consideration. Friedrich Schleiermacher, our next interpreter, confronted this tension but he was increasingly informed by two, new scholarly disciplines, historical and form criticism. Paulus never entirely discounts the things of the spirit, and the new hermeneutics notwithstanding, Schleiermacher even less so.

FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER

A stifled roar and the close of rationalism

The German, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), was theologian, philosopher, and philologist. Baird (1992, 208-209) states that he is considered 'the most important theologian of the nineteenth century, although his contribution to NT research is often overlooked.' Schleiermacher was the first person to lecture publicly on the life of Jesus. For all his erudition, however, he remained to his death a much loved and respected pastor.

With Schleiermacher came an increase in the sophistication of New Testament research, notably the historical-critical method. Rational New Testament interpretation and historicism had reached their zenith with Paulus but the goal of historically reconstructing Jesus' life was still being actively pursued. Schleiermacher believed that Jesus was God's revelation and the reason for faith, but how to determine the historical facts about him remained elusive. It was Schleiermacher who recognized the 'depth of the hermeneutical problem' (Baird 1992, 242): interpretation was more than language and grammar, understanding was involved; history was more than chronological reconstruction, a spiritual link between author and reader was invoked; could the natural and the supernatural be combined to explain, for example, the miracles or Jesus' resurrection?

Schleiermacher's portrayal of Jesus, suggests Baird (1992, 220) 'suffers from his christological presuppositions.' That Jesus was willing to die, and that he was perfectly conscious of and dependent upon God were important to Schleiermacher, but '[Jesus'] death and resurrection ... are only secondary' to him (Baird 1992, 220). Künneth (1965, 16) similarly observes this 'typical indifference of Schleiermacher to the resurrection.' Notwithstanding his scholarly eminence, Schleiermacher's observations on Jesus' resurrection are unexpectedly muted and inconclusive. His non-committal, diffident declaration about Jesus' resurrection becomes, therefore, a particular point of interest in the history of its interpretation. Schleiermacher (1975, 445) himself states that Jesus' resurrection alone remains 'incomprehensible.'

Schleiermacher was born into a family of clergymen – both grandfathers had been Reformed pastors and his father, a man of pietistic sympathies, was a chaplain in the Prussian army. His son began his education at a Moravian school, moving next to a Moravian seminary. Eventually, weary of pietistic theology, he moved to the University of Halle. After ordination, he became a private tutor to a Count's family (1790-1793), then a poorly paid Reformed chaplain at the Charité Hospital in Berlin (1796-1801). In this leading German city he socialized among the privileged and learned. His first book, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* was published anonymously in 1799. In it he argues that religion, which is basically 'concerned with inner experience and is essential to human existence' (Baird 1992, 209) was being rejected by intellectuals through misunderstanding. This book was his early romantic response to rationalism. The author was soon identified, however, and overnight Schleiermacher became a notable man in Germany (Schleiermacher 1975, xvii).

An unhappy love affair drove him from Berlin, and from 1802 until 1804, he was the pastor of a small Reformed congregation in Pomerania. In 1804, he was appointed professor of theology and university pastor at his Alma Mater, Halle. Only two years later he was forced to abandon this position because of Napoleon's victories: his house was ransacked and the university was forced to close. In 1807, Schleiermacher returned to Berlin, and remained there for the rest of his life. He was one of the founders of the new University of Berlin, where he held its first chair in theology. His *Christian Faith* was published in 1821-1822. This book concentrated on Jesus Christ and Christianity rather than on general religion, his earlier focus. As he grew older he became more interested in the historical Jesus. It was in Berlin that Schleiermacher's lecturing style impressed the young David Strauss.

His collected works on ethics, the philosophy of culture, psychology, the theory of education, the history of philosophy, aesthetics, political theory, hermeneutics and dialectics comprise more than thirty volumes (Schleiermacher 1975, xviii). He served as Reformed pastor of the influential Trinity Church, Berlin, from 1809 until his death in 1834 (DeVries 1998, 350). His preaching was reportedly simple, intellectually stimulating and extempore. The future Prussian chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, was one of his confirmation class students. Schleiermacher died from pneumonia and it is estimated that 'nearly 30,000 mourners thronged the streets of Berlin' at his funeral, 'a testimony to his breadth of learning and widespread popularity' (Duling 1979, 160).

Schleiermacher is variously known as the father of modern theology and the founder of modern hermeneutics. He is best remembered for his pioneering systematic theology, *The Christian Faith*. He made significant, groundbreaking contributions to critical biblical studies and from the beginning of his teaching career in 1804 he lectured almost continuously in New Testament studies. The texts for his lectures on the life of Jesus were published posthumously in his collected works, but the notes for his lectures on individual New Testament books were still only available as unpublished manuscripts in 1998. His hermeneutic lectures were also only published posthumously (DeVries 1998, 350).

Schleiermacher does not consider the Old Testament normative for Christianity, believing that Christianity is a genuinely new faith rather than an offshoot of Judaism. He shares the Enlightenment's view that the Bible ought to be read as any other book and that dogmatic appeals to divine authorship never ultimately settle questions of meaning (DeVries 1998, 351-352).

Because no consensus had been reached at the time on the synoptic question Schleiermacher proposed his own theory concerning the literary relationships between the Gospels. He believed the oral tradition about Jesus had resulted in multiple written 'fragments' that were incorporated, somewhat haphazardly, into the gospel records. He champions the Gospel of John over the other three because he believes an Apostle wrote it, its theology was mature and the life of Jesus there had been carefully constructed and presented. Schweitzer (1954, 85) suggests that the rationalists, like Schleiermacher, prefer John's Gospel because it contains 'fewer miracles than the others.' After John, Schleiermacher takes Luke as the most valuable source for historical details about Jesus' life (DeVries 1998, 353).

Schleiermacher is considered a pioneer in the quest for the historical Jesus because, in 1819, he became the first academic to present a series of lectures about Jesus' life. Books on this subject had appeared before, but the history of Jesus as a distinct part of academic studies commenced with his lectures. He was to repeat this series

of lectures four times during the subsequent twelve years. Strauss's reading of lecture notes from Schleiermacher's life of Jesus course spurred him on in his own quest, and resulted in his own publication of the *Life of Jesus*, in 1835 (Schleiermacher 1975, xx).

In 1864, Strauss published his second book on Jesus entitled *A New Life of Jesus for the German People*. It was in this same year that Schleiermacher's lectures on the life of Jesus were published for the first time, thirty years after his death. The appearance of his *Das Leben Jesu* had been delayed for two reasons: its content had been reconstructed from student notebooks from Schleiermacher's last course of lectures delivered in 1832, and Strauss's book had rendered Schleiermacher's work anachronistic. According to Schweitzer (1954, 62) - he 'had no answer for Strauss's questions.' By 1864, a banner year in the theological world, the nature of the debate over Jesus' life had shifted considerably: Ernest Renan, for example, in *The Life of Jesus* (1863) suggested that Jesus' historical nature had been misrepresented by the church; in the same year, Heinrich Holzmann had made advances unravelling the Synoptic Problem; Karl Weizsäcker (1864) was prioritising Mark and suggesting that a second source explained the Synoptic Problem; Timothée Colani (1864) was vigorously denying the applicability of apocalyptic eschatology and Daniel Schenkel, the author of a widely read book *Das Charakterbild Jesu*, was being accused of "attempting to reform conservative ecclesiastical politics by means of a 'liberal' [i.e. historical] Jesus" (Schleiermacher 1975, xv).

According to Duling (1979, 161), Schleiermacher believes that it is 'impossible to reconstruct the Jesus of history ... his significance was not in the past ... it [is] in the present.' Although Schleiermacher deals with Jesus' life from a rationalist's perspective, he is not as brazenly rationalistic as Paulus, and appears content, when confronting decisive events, to permit uncertainties rather than insist on solutions. Schweitzer (1954, 58) considers him 'a sceptic of rationalism.' Schleiermacher attempts to grasp the deeper meaning of Jesus' ministry, which would be inconsequential to a complete rationalist like Paulus. Unlike the younger Strauss, Schleiermacher lacks objectivity and brings his own preconceived ideas to the search for the historical Jesus. His preference for John's Gospel ultimately compromises his historical perspective of Jesus because John provided the most intensely theological interpretation of Jesus among the four canonical Gospels.

Schleiermacher maintains that the most interesting period of Jesus' life for a biographer is that of his public ministry, i.e. after his baptism and before his arrest. He implies that many of the miracles recorded in the *New Testament*, especially those regarding the person of Jesus himself, such as his conception, birth and resurrection, can be scrutinized and studied less seriously than those occurring during his public ministry, and with less anxiety about the results. Schleiermacher considers the accounts of Jesus' birth unhistorical and similarly speculates about Jesus in the post-crucifixion period, as we shall see. What chiefly interests him is the person of Jesus as communicated through what he taught his disciples and how he established thereby the beginnings of the Church. DeVries (1998, 353-354) suggests that to more radical critics, such as Strauss, Schleiermacher's historical reconstruction is significantly influenced by his pious Moravian imagination.

Attempting to explain miracles, Schleiermacher believes the rational method may have a place, but he also recognizes differences between the miracle stories themselves - he accepts the Johannine miracles as authentic whilst almost totally rejecting the Synoptic miracles. Schweitzer (1911, 64) observes that Schleiermacher arranges miracles in an order of probability,

depending upon the 'known influence of spirit upon organic matter.' For example, healing miracles are credible because functional disabilities are susceptible to mental influences. Schweitzer (1911, 63) suggests that Schleiermacher's many expressed views about the miraculous are vague and therefore unsatisfactory:

Nothing new has been added to what he says, and no one else has succeeded in saying it with the same amazing subtlety. [It is unclear concerning miracles just what] he ultimately retains and how much he rejects. His solution of the problem is, in fact, not historical, but dialectical, an attempt to transcend the necessity for a rationalistic explanation of miracle which does not really succeed in getting rid of it.

Schleiermacher is irresolute about Jesus' resurrection. The rationalist in him postulates that Jesus returned to consciousness from a state of trance, but resurrection, a supernatural restoration to life, was also a possibility. In Schweitzer's (1911, 64) words, he essentially believes that 'what really happened was a reanimation after apparent death.'

Schleiermacher (1975, 432) accepts that there are contradictions between the four accounts of Jesus' resurrection, which cannot be explained away by alleging that the 'early part of the life of Jesus is true and that untruth begins with the resurrection account, [for those that hold this view] are guilty of an illogical prejudice.' He recognizes the Gospel accounts of the resurrection are not inspired and should be read as secular historical narratives. Furthermore, the Evangelists were in different localities when they wrote the Gospels: 'If the first reporters obtained different details from different sources, the differences they reflect can be satisfactorily explained' (Schleiermacher 1975, 436).

Jesus' early death on the cross has always been a moot point for scholars. Some argue that his pre-crucifixion maltreatment and Roman flogging would have considerably weakened him and shortened his life. Others believe he was not seriously injured before execution and that his death was unexpectedly premature. This latter view insinuates that Jesus' death may not have been entirely genuine. Schleiermacher (1975, 415) maintains that there are insufficient facts available to settle the point; moreover, it 'seems to [him] a matter of complete indifference whether one maintains one view or another.'

Schleiermacher is equally obtuse about the reality of Jesus' death. The hallmark of death, he states, is physical decomposition and there was no direct evidence of that. He accepts Paulus's principle that apart from putrefaction or decay, there is no certain indication of death. Moreover, when Jesus' revivification/resuscitation was discussed, Psalm 16: 10b had been quoted in reply: 'Nor will [God] allow Your Holy One to see corruption' (New King James Bible). But, if Jesus did not really die how can one say that his revivification was a miracle? If one invokes a miracle, on the other hand, how can one prove it because '[a]s soon as one assumes ... an absolute miracle, how can [one] maintain that a given event is such a miracle? This requires an infinite amount of investigation ...' (Schleiermacher 1975, 416). He cannot imagine a state between life and death. '*The debate*' he concludes '*cannot be resolved one way or the other*' (Schleiermacher 1975, 416).

Schleiermacher (1975, 415-416) like Semler and Lessing before, alludes to the future existential interpretation of the resurrection by suggesting the divine righteousness is only satisfied with something spiritual or moral, it was 'the act of

dying ... in its spiritual significance [that was important] whether the physical part of death had been completed or not seems to me to be of no importance whatever.'

Jesus, however, appeared dead to those whose business it was to ensure this before his body was removed from the cross. The spear thrust was used to try and discover whether Jesus still showed signs of life. The fact that blood and 'water' came out was a sign that Christ had actually died because if he had been alive, the lymph and the blood would not have been distinguished separately. 'So a chemical decomposition of the body had taken place' admits Schleiermacher (1975, 427) enigmatically. He lamely concludes, 'We cannot discuss the matter in any further detail, for there is nothing more we know about it' (Schleiermacher 1975, 428). (Basic modern medical science contradicts Schleiermacher here, however: ante-mortem pleural effusion is commonly reported).

Matthew 28: 15 states that the report that the body of Jesus had been stolen 'has spread among the Jews to this day.' Schleiermacher suggests that what really lay behind this story was that when the apostles preached Christ's resurrection, the opposing party said that their claim was false and that Jesus' body had been stolen. Significantly, this presupposes that the finding of the empty tomb was a known fact and that the Sanhedrin was bound to explain it. The disciples needed to oppose the Sanhedrin's statement and Schleiermacher holds that the story of the guard was invented by Matthew to contradict its claim. 'The Sanhedrin said the body of Christ had been stolen, but the story of the guard was a concoction. There is no reason to believe that it has any historical content' (Schleiermacher 1975, 431).

Schleiermacher is certain that Jesus in his real body lived on for a time among His followers, as John's Gospel suggests. He does not think that the resurrection reports were based upon apparitions. If they were, 'then all the narratives of Christ are delusions ... [we] are compelled either to dismiss all accounts of Jesus' life or to accept them' (Schleiermacher 1975, 442). The accounts that Jesus suddenly disappeared, and entered closed rooms create confusion and as Schleiermacher (1975, 444) observes, 'Christ's declaration, his specific declaration, by which he tried to convince his disciples that he was the same as he had been before, must clearly carry the greater weight.' Jesus showed his disciples his crucifixion wounds and ate with them. This supports Schleiermacher's argument that reanimation of Jesus' normal human body occurred. He states that if Jesus 'had only eaten to show that He could eat, without having any need of nourishment, the whole thing would have been a deception, something docetic' (Schleiermacher 1975, 447). He maintains that one should attribute all that appears miraculous in the appearance accounts to the disciples' frame of mind.

Schleiermacher holds that Jesus bade His disciples meet him in Galilee because there he could enjoy greater privacy and freedom from observation with them. The difference between the present and the past was that he no longer showed himself to the world. It was possible that a movement in favour of an earthly messianic kingdom might break out, and this could fully explain why Jesus remained in such close retirement. Schleiermacher believes it was the premonition of the approaching end of this post-crucifixion (or 'second life') that led Jesus to return to Jerusalem from Galilee (Schweitzer 1954, 65).

The accounts of what happened between Christ and his disciples after his death in my judgment are so substantiated that I cannot entertain the idea that they were either an invention of a later time or were due to a self-deception on the part of the disciples. So then, the story of the ascension must be accepted as a fact (Schleiermacher 1975, 474).

Schleiermacher rejects without hesitation the miracles associated with Jesus' death. He believes the darkness that developed during Jesus' crucifixion was a natural weather phenomenon because no word meaning 'eclipse' was used in the narratives. The rending of the temple veil, or curtain, is also problematic for Schleiermacher: which curtain was it? (One partitioned the Holy Place from the Court of the Israelites; the other separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.) Only priests had a view of the latter and they would have been keen to suppress any knowledge of such an occurrence at the time of Jesus' death. The apostles, themselves, never mentioned this event, and Schleiermacher (1975, 420-421) postulates that the story most probably originated later from an unauthoritative source and represents the supersession of the old covenant by the new. '[This] was presented symbolically in terms of the rending of the temple's veil, and this symbolism was later interpreted as a fact' (Schleiermacher 1975, 421). This statement anticipates David Strauss's similar understanding and use of symbolism three years later in his *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*. Strauss would use the concept of symbolism widely; Schleiermacher, who

interprets such symbols as finally referring to the proper union of individuality and universality in Jesus ... [differs from Strauss, who] understands the symbol's reference to Jesus' individuality as itself being part of the myth and consequently in need of purging for the true reference of universality (Schleiermacher 1975, 421, n.53).

The opening of graves and the resulting emergence of individuals 'cannot be thought of in physical terms' states Schleiermacher (1975, 421-422) because '[w]e cannot form a conception of the occurrence.' Schleiermacher (1975, 422) believes that this is another example of the early Church using rhetoric and poetry symbolically, and later having this symbolism expressed as fact by the synoptists: 'This is the easiest and most natural conclusion we can reach.' Schleiermacher implies that this explanation may fit other recorded events.

Schleiermacher (1975, 479-480) is not dogmatic by nature:

I gladly waive any claim to understand Christ's second life as a historical event with a beginning and an end. On the contrary, I regard this whole second life appearance of Christ just as I do every individual miracle. There is something in it which is wholly factual, but the genesis of it is incomprehensible to us because it is connected with something that in its way is unique and for which there is no analogy. That is true also of the facts that occurred during Christ's second life. The facts are genuine facts, but how that second life began and how it ended are matters that we cannot conceive factually, and we also should not be able to have any factual idea of the end.

Schleiermacher's passing reference to a lack of analogy presages a growing intellectual standpoint that opposes the likelihood of Jesus' physical resurrection based on this principle. I shall deal with analogy in the chapter on Wolfhart Pannenberg.

Schleiermacher's interpretation of Jesus' resurrection leaves many questions unanswered. Baird (1992, 219) states that he is 'often confusing' when discussing the resurrection events. Jack Verheyden (Schleiermacher 1975, 456, n.60), contradicting Schweitzer, holds that Schleiermacher believes Jesus did die on the

cross and that death was 'behind him' when he appeared to his disciples. This position sharply controverts Paulus's who maintains the cold tomb had revived the wounded but still living Jesus, for whom death still lay ahead. Karl Hase was a contemporary of Schleiermacher and agreed with him that Jesus had actually died, states Verheyden (Schleiermacher 1975, 456-457, n.60), but it was only an 'apparent death' because the body was still 'usable.'

Schweitzer (1954, 65) observes that Schleiermacher freely uses the term 'resurrection' but elsewhere also states that after crucifixion Jesus lived on in 'a condition of reanimation.' Resurrection and reanimation are not synonymous terms and Schleiermacher does not clarify his understanding. Schweitzer (1911, 65), furthermore, intimates that Schleiermacher appears indifferent to whether Jesus appeared to his disciples as '[risen] from the dead' or 'recovering from a state of suspended animation.' The difference is critical for faith, however, and Schweitzer suggests that in the face of important questions like this, the older rationalists like Paulus are at least less ambivalent and more consistent.

Schweitzer (1911, 66) believes that Schleiermacher's distinction between the Synoptic and Johannine miracle stories accounts for his views: Schleiermacher's historical perspective is compromised by his 'one-sided preference for the Fourth Gospel ... the Fourth Gospel is alone authoritative.' Schleiermacher believes John's gospel was written by an eyewitness and therefore, unlike the Synoptics, forms a structured whole. The Synoptic Gospel narratives, on the contrary, arose independently and made the grouping of incidents difficult. These points applied equally to the resurrection narratives and allow Schleiermacher to simplify matters for himself, in a way the pure rationalists never do (Schweitzer 1954, 65-66). Schleiermacher (1975, 434) states that Matthew does not treat the resurrection historically; in Mark, the resurrection events are presented in a disconnected way, and Luke presents his account historically but there are many inconsistencies in it. John stands closest to Jesus. Schleiermacher's antipathy towards the Synoptics, states Schweitzer (1911, 67) and his patronage of John, would permit him 'to write a Life of Christ [but not] a Life of Jesus. It is, therefore, not by accident that Schleiermacher regularly speaks, not of Jesus, but of Christ.'

Baird (1992, 219) suggests that Schleiermacher steers 'an unsteady course between natural and supernatural' regarding the resurrection. As examples, he cites Schleiermacher's understanding of two Jesus' post-resurrection appearances: it was unlikely that Jesus entered a house through closed doors (John 20: 19) because it would have been someone's duty to open up for a visitor. Similarly, Jesus may have left the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24: 31) quite naturally. It is not necessary to postulate a supernatural event.

'[A]dmitting that not all historical statements are clear because they do not consist of properly arranged elements, we see that nothing incomprehensible remains, except [Jesus'] resurrection itself' Schleiermacher (1975, 445) states. His enigmatic understanding, in principle, of Jesus' life may be better grasped by completing this quotation: '[T]he same thing is true of [Jesus'] whole appearance upon earth. His coming was a miraculous act, but all that followed was wholly natural' (Schleiermacher 1975, 445).

DeVries (1998, 354-353) suggests that

[w]hat is perhaps most remarkable about Schleiermacher in retrospect is how well he was able to combine in one person such a diverse set of attitudes and approaches to the Biblical text: relentless historical

criticism, dogmatic abstraction, philological precision, pious reverence and enthusiastic conviction. He models an integration that has become difficult in the increasingly specialized world of the twentieth century.

Thoroughgoing rationalism as typified by Paulus is unable to answer unequivocally the dilemmas posed by Reimarus. Similarly, Schleiermacher's attenuated rationalism is also found wanting, principally concerning the resurrection: rational parameters alone will not accommodate the extraordinary resurrection claims of the first Christians. Schleiermacher does provide a rational explanation for events that occurred during Jesus' public ministry, but the new and developing hermeneutical sciences prevent him from doing the same for the resurrection. We find him isolated here, as it were, in a no man's land between the rational and supernatural interpretation of events.

Schleiermacher, however, is honest if anything, and where his attempts at the rational explanation become intolerable, he retires, pleading ignorance: as I have already stated, he displays an 'indifference' to the resurrection; it is 'incomprehensible' to him; he holds ambiguous views about aspects of the subject; he is unmoved by aspects of the resurrection polemic and states that 'we cannot know anything more about it.'

Schleiermacher's suggestion that Jesus' resurrection lacks analogy presages a growing and presently dominant viewpoint claiming that the want of analogy proscribes the possibility of a miraculous resurrection. It has become my contention that these two principles, the lack of analogy and the endless pursuit of the rational explanation, underlie the contemporary rejection of the possibility of Jesus' supernatural resurrection.

Schleiermacher's quest for insight into Jesus' resurrection does not appear to have been successful. His search is not characterized by fresh discoveries or major breakthroughs but is distinguished, rather, by uncertainty and indifference. The failed rational interpretation of Jesus' resurrection, typified by Paulus and Schleiermacher, was about to be overtaken by a totally different exegesis: the mythical interpretation of the resurrection, advanced by David Strauss.

Their theological convictions aside, Strauss and the popular Schleiermacher were totally different characters.

5

DAVID STRAUSS

The mythical interpretation and sustained moral courage

David Strauss (1808-1874) is identified with the mythical interpretation of the Bible. He is considered by Harris (1973, ix) the 'most notorious ... of all the nineteenth-century theologians.' His *Life of Jesus* published in 1835, caused great consternation in theology by discounting both the supernatural and rational interpretations of scripture in favour of two alternative possibilities, the mythical and historical interpretations (Schweitzer 1968, xii; Stewart 2006a, 5). Harris (1973, ix) also considers Strauss 'the most consequent [theologian of the century] and the rise of historical criticism owes more to Strauss than any other theologian.' Schweitzer (1954, 68) esteemes him highly: 'He was not the greatest, and not the deepest, of theologians, but he was the most absolutely sincere.' Harris (1973, 279) contends that it was Strauss who set in motion the whole 'Quest' for the historical Jesus. Kümmel (1972, 120) concurs, holding that during the period 1833-1842 Strauss, along with Ferdinand Baur, was the first to present 'a consistently historical view of the New Testament.'

Strauss believes that the historical rise of Easter faith in the early Church is accounted for by visions experienced by Jesus' followers in Galilee. He initially discounts the empty-tomb-in-Jerusalem narrative, believing it only emerged later as a secondary legend, and he makes no attempt to rationalize it. He maintains that the appearances reported by the disciples were historical visions 'governed by mythical notions, for example when in them a divine being goes through closed doors and suddenly disappears' (Theissen and Merz 1998, 477). These accounts were manipulated apologetically, Strauss holds, to emphasize their reality by, for example, having Jesus speak, eat and be touched.

Strauss explains these visions psychologically: Jesus' followers experienced a distressing tension when Jesus, whom they considered the long-awaited Messiah, was crucified and died. This dashing of their hopes resulted in subjective visions. (Subjective visions are the 'product of human agencies' (Milligan 1905, 82) and contrast with objective visions, which imply that divine manipulation of the disciples generated their visions).

Strauss then combines this subjective vision theory with an '*objective interpretation of the Easter faith*: the myth of the God-man contains at its centre the idea of the unity of God and man: this idea is not realized in a human individual but in the human genre' (Theissen and Merz 1998, 477).

He sums up his understanding of Jesus' resurrection thus: 'It is Humanity that dies, rises, and ascends to heaven, for ... from the suppression of its mortality ... arises its union with the infinite spirit of the heavens' (Strauss 1972, 780).

David Friedrich Strauss was born the third child of four in Ludwigsburg, just north of Stuttgart. His father, a struggling businessman, was far more religiously inclined than his rationally orientated mother. She could not believe many of the miracles of the Bible, and regarded Jesus only as a wise and virtuous man. Later, she was to stand by her son when he published his controversial *Life of Jesus*. From this

unpretentious family, the astute young Fritz proceeded, in 1821, to the theological seminary at Blaubeuren. All else considered this happened to be the cheapest way of obtaining a university education (Duling 1979, 177).

In 1825, Strauss enrolled at the University of Tübingen. It was during dogmatics lectures here that Strauss became increasingly aware of inconsistencies in the Synoptic narratives (Harris 1973, 17).

In 1828, Strauss entered for a 'prize essay' competition. The subject was 'The Resurrection of the Dead.' Years later, he wrote: 'A Catholic prize essay, which I worked upon in 1828, was perhaps the first turning point in a critical direction. I proved the resurrection of the dead with full conviction, both exegetically and also from a natural-philosophical point of view, and as I made the last full stop, it was also clear to me that there was nothing in the whole idea of the resurrection' (Harris 1973, 19 quoting Vischer).

Strauss and his colleagues, however, were devouring at this time Hegel's works. When he graduated, top of his class in 1830, he was 'as much a philosopher as a theologian' and 'no longer held to traditional orthodox beliefs' (Duling 1979, 177). He accepted, nevertheless, a church appointment.

An apparently insignificant event in 1831 may have further alienated Strauss from traditional Christianity. He had travelled to Berlin to attend a course given by Hegel. One morning, only two lectures into the series, he called on the now famous Schleiermacher, only to be informed that Hegel had died the day before of cholera. Unthinkingly, Strauss blurted out that it was, in fact, for Hegel's sake he had come to Berlin. This apparently piqued Schleiermacher, who from then on treated the young curate somewhat offhandedly.

Strauss, nevertheless, remained in Berlin and attended Schleiermacher's lectures. He liked the older man's easy manner and was impressed by his presentations on Jesus' life. But he had determined to write his own book on the subject. Expressing these ideas for the first time, he wrote to a friend, Christian Märklin:

I'm very busy with plans for my own future lectures ... as regards the third part which would deal with the history of [Jesus'] death and resurrection, there would be two possibilities to consider: either that Christ never died or that he was never bodily resurrected; the last is more probable since he only appeared to the rest of the disciples as he appeared to Paul, and in his case it was certainly only an inward experience, and also because the narratives of the appearance of the Resurrected One are completely contradictory: he has [flesh and bones], lets himself be touched; that means a material body which has the attributes of all material, repulsion, impermeability – then he passes again through locked doors, which means that he is permeable. In this way I would partly destroy, partly shake the infinite significance which faith attributes to this life – certainly only in order to restore it again in a higher way (Strauss in Harris 1973, 33).

Later in this same letter, Strauss states his intention to show '[F]irst, the crudity of supernaturalism, secondly, the emptiness of rationalism, and thirdly, the truth of science' (Strauss in Harris 1973, 34). Thus Strauss anticipates the threefold nature of his future theological enterprise.

Strauss returned to Tübingen, where he spent the next three years tutoring at the seminary. But he was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his work and decided to concentrate on his book.

The first edition of his *Life of Jesus* burst on the theological world in 1835. Exposing contradictions and belittling supernatural explanations in the Gospel narratives, he questions and repudiates their historical truth, offering his 'mythical interpretation' as the alternative. Schleiermacher's lecture notes on Jesus' life had provided the impetus Strauss needed for his own work. Strauss (1977, 36-37), writing years later, maintains that Schleiermacher erroneously compounds the Jesus of history with the Christ of faith by trying to blend supernaturalism with rationalism. For his part, Strauss (1977, 161) regards Jesus as 'a person ... the greatest personality in the series of religious geniuses, but still only a man like others, and that the Gospels are to be regarded as the oldest collections of the myths which were attached around the core of his personality.' Strauss (1977, 161) continues by allowing that there is 'much historical material' in the gospel narratives, 'but the medium in which they transmit this to us is thoroughly the mythical, that is, the concept of Jesus as a supernatural being.'

Strauss' theory is that the fictional Gospel narratives are not accounted for by dishonest trickery nor gullible stupidity, but by an unconscious mythologizing in which the supernatural and historical events recorded in the Gospels are all gleaned from the Hebrew Bible. Mythical Gospel stories arose spontaneously and unconsciously in the minds of certain individuals who were quite unaware of any dishonesty when they told these tales – which they themselves had come to believe – to others. They considered the stories true, since the events had been prophesied in the Hebrew Bible, and they therefore soon became established as historical facts. This, essentially, was the new mythical interpretation of the texts proposed by Strauss.

Harris (1973, 270-271) and Duling (1979, 180) both consider Strauss's mythical principle independent of Hegelian idealism. Strauss was indeed immersed in Hegelian thought and presented his material dialectically: traditional supernatural interpretation (thesis), rational interpretation (antithesis) and resulting mythical interpretation (synthesis). But his chief concern was how the Gospel myths arose historically, not their philosophical explanation.

Strauss (1972, 86) defines the term myth, thus: 'a narrative relating directly or indirectly to Jesus, which may be considered not as the expression of a fact, but as the product of an idea of his earliest followers.' He recognizes two types of myth: pure myths arose 'in the Jewish mind before Jesus' from its Messianic expectations, and sometimes from 'that particular impression which was left by the personal character, actions, and fate of Jesus, and which served to modify the Messianic idea in the minds of his people' (Strauss 1972, 86). Historical myths, on the other hand, are legends grounded in ancient stories that have a factual basis. Baird (1992, 251) states that Strauss typically employs the term myth for supernatural events, implying they are unhistorical and fictitious.

Before Strauss, others had declared the existence of myth in the *New Testament*. Heyne, in the eighteenth century, had differentiated historical myths (based on actual events) from philosophical ones (invented for educational purposes). The mythical nature of miracles and angels had been argued by Eichhorn and Gabler; Bauer had suggested that the virgin birth and transfiguration were myths, and Schleiermacher maintained Jesus' infancy stories were fictitious. How these

different stories originated and developed, however, had not been seriously addressed (Harris 1973, 45-46).

Harris (1973, 46) suggests that when Strauss wrote his *Life of Jesus* he was conversant with the prevailing mythological ideas (that, for example, vision stories and angels were myths) but the mythological interpretation as a whole was something new - isolated myths were accepted, but now he was adopting the mythological principle. Strauss (1972, 65) declares:

[T]his writer [Strauss himself] applies the notion of the mythus to the entire history of the life of Jesus; recognizes mythi or mythical embellishments in every portion, and ranges under the category of mythus not merely the miraculous occurrences during the infancy of Jesus, but those also of his public life; not merely miracles operated on Jesus, but those wrought by him.

In the *Life of Jesus* each Gospel narrative is examined separately. In the Church's view, the Gospels contained history and that history was supernatural. Strauss first considers the supernatural interpretation, but concludes by pointing out mistakes and contradictions. He finds the rationalistic interpretation also absurd and unacceptable because it insists on the veracity of the *New Testament's* natural history. His own mythical interpretation, he believes, is the only reasonable explanation (Harris 1973, 47-48).

Strauss deals with the resurrection of Jesus in the final section of his book. He considers the historical details unclear. He believes that Jesus really died. (Habermas (2006, 84) mentions that since Strauss's 1835 critique, the Swoon (or apparent death) Theory is rarely seriously advanced and by the 1900s it had become little more than an 'historical curiosity.') What happened to Jesus' body afterwards is uncertain. His post-resurrection appearances he ascribes to visions probably engendered by the stress the disciples experienced at that time (Harris 1973, 50-51).

Strauss was arraigned before the Church for his unorthodox Christian views. Regret was expressed that the book had not been written in Latin so that the laity would not read it. These developments were viewed as perhaps the biggest theological upset since the time of the Reformation. Strauss was asked to leave the seminary in Tübingen and transfer to the secondary school in Ludwigsburg, taking responsibility for classical languages. He subsequently removed to Stuttgart, then Zürich.

In response to opposition regarding his appointment to a chair in Zurich, 1839, Strauss wrote an open letter to Bürgermeister Hirzel. His views concerning the resurrection presage the modern existential understanding of the subject:

According to the old Christian faith Christ rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven. And according to us too; only not merely once, and not first of all at the end of his life. But he rose at all times from the dead whom he commanded to bury their dead (Matt. 8,22) and he awakens now, to this life, this side of the grave, all those who follow him; as he himself says: He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and has passed from death to life (John 5,24). Likewise there was no necessity for him to be taken in a cloud to God in heaven at the end of his life on earth, since he raised himself thence during his lifetime in every prayer ... ' (Strauss in Harris 1973, 131).

The third edition of his book appeared while he was in Zürich. Strauss concedes that all might not be myth; the use of the mythical principle was conditional on the sources, and was not to be invoked when a rational explanation could be given (Harris 1973, 121). Opposition, however, continued to mount against him and he was accused of dividing the citizens of Zürich. He was finally pensioned off, never again to hold office in church or university.

In 1840, Strauss published the fourth edition of his *Life of Jesus*. The third edition had been more moderate but this edition, like the first, was again radical (Baird 1992, 250-251, n.19). It was an undisguised attack on orthodox Christian theology with Strauss returning to the unalloyed mythical interpretation of the scriptures characteristic of his first edition. The twenty-three year old George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans), later to become an acclaimed novelist herself, translated this edition of his book into English in 1846. (In 1972, this translation was considered the only good English transcription readily available from among Strauss's copious writings [Harris, 1973, xii]).

In this final edition of *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* the historical facts pertaining to the resurrection events are still both unclear and uncertain to Strauss: he holds that Jesus had no precise foreknowledge of his impending death and resurrection. '[T]he foreknowledge, as well as the prediction of the resurrection, was attributed to Jesus only after the issue' Strauss (1972, 582) states, because 'it was an easy matter, with the groundless arbitrariness of Jewish exegesis, for the ... authors of the New testament to discover in the [Hebrew Bible], types and prophecies of the resurrection.' The eventual belief that Jesus had predicted his resurrection arose as a model of his postulated myth-development:

[A]s he who has looked at the sun, long sees its image wherever he may turn his gaze; so they, blinded by their enthusiasm for the new Messiah, saw him on every page of the only book they read, the [Hebrew Bible], and in the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, founded in the genuine feeling that he had satisfied their deepest need ... they laid hold on supports which have long been broken, and which can no longer be made tenable by the most zealous efforts of an exegesis which is behind the age (Strauss 1972, 582).

Strauss does not gainsay the historicity of Jesus' crucifixion (Strauss 1972, 677-690) but the narrative concerning the soldier's spear-thrust and the out-pouring of Jesus' 'blood and water' he considers untrustworthy, and unbelievable (Strauss 1972, 697-701). He considers Joseph of Aramathea's ownership of the grave controversial and its exact location unknown (Strauss 1972, 704-705). He finds Matthew's narrative of the setting of a tomb guard 'full of difficulties' (Strauss 1972, 706). Strauss (1972, 707) does not think that the august seventy-member Sanhedrin would have stooped to falsehood by bribing the soldiers. He suggests, rather, that when the disciples were accused of spiriting away Jesus' body, the evangelist responded by concocting the guard-on-the-tomb story. This anecdote, Strauss (1972, 708) believes, was fuelled 'by the rancour of the primitive Christians.'

He still believes that Jesus actually died and does not subscribe to the rationalistic suggestion of a seeming death. But the events that occurred after Jesus' death remain a mystery to him, beyond ascertaining:

There is a 'very complicated divergency relative to the number of the women who made [a visit to the grave]' Strauss (1972, 709) observes, for example. Neither the plan of incorporation (each evangelist telling the resurrection story as it first became known to him) nor the theory of selection (regarding one account as pre-eminently apostolic and using this to correct the others) proves satisfactory to Strauss (1972, 713-715). Strauss makes no attempt to explain what actually happened to Jesus' body. Concerning the first disciples' accounts of the resurrection, he concludes that 'we have before us nothing more than traditional reports' (Strauss 1972, 718).

Strauss (1972, 727) suggests that the marked contradictions in the narratives describing the appearances of the risen Jesus to his disciples are explained by no evangelist knowing what another had written: 'no one of the narrators knew and presupposed what another records; that each again had heard a different account of the matter; and that consequently at an early period there were current only uncertain and very varied reports concerning the appearances of the risen Jesus.'

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians is 'undoubtedly genuine' states Strauss (1972, 727) and on this authority he believes there were early Christians 'convinced that they had witnessed appearances of the risen Christ.' He attributes these appearances to visions lacking objective reality (Strauss 1972, 741-744). This became known as his 'Subjective Vision Theory' (Theissen and Merz 1998, 477).

Strauss had tired of theology, and in 1848 he entered provincial politics. He soon experienced opposition, however, from his own constituents, and in a letter to the Fatherland-Association, Ludwigsburg, he writes

I have always gone my own way, might it please or displease whom it would, and I intend to continue so in the future ... and anyway, whoever wanted to have a mere yes-man of the daily opinions should not have voted for me; for I have been just the opposite throughout my whole life (Strauss in Harris 1973, 174-175).

Strauss was nothing if not his own man!

He subsequently resigned his parliamentary membership and, isolated and lonely, began to write: biographies and history, tracts and essays on literature and politics.

The Life of Jesus for the German People was published in 1864. It was an attempt to emulate Renan who had used his *Life of Jesus* to communicate with the French public. Strauss completely rewrote his own *Life of Jesus*, adding the results of the latest critical research, but the mythical interpretation remained unchanged (Harris 1973, 201). The most important new feature of the whole book is Strauss's more detailed interpretation of the resurrection. Again, but even more rigorously than in 1835, Strauss ridicules the rationalist hypothesis that Jesus had not actually died on the cross.

Strauss questions what had become of Jesus' body. The laws of science disallow that it should simply vanish into thin air. There has to be an explanation for its disappearance. He holds that Reimarus' explanation that the disciples had stolen the body from the tomb was unacceptable. Strauss suggests that when the body had been taken down from the cross it was buried in some shameful spot alongside other executed criminals. Some weeks later, when the disciples were proclaiming that Jesus had risen from the dead, the body would have been unidentifiable. Moreover, Jews have an aversion to dead bodies, and this might explain their

reluctance to search for his corpse. That Jesus was buried in a rock-hewn tomb is, according to Strauss, a late mythical invention based on Isaiah 53: 9a. That Jesus rose on the third day was a fabrication probably based on Jonah's three days in the whale, and Jesus' resurrection prophecies were reported to give credence to the disciples' claims that he had risen (Harris 1973, 208-209).

But how had the disciples come to believe that Jesus was still alive after his death? Strauss, writes Harris (1973, 209), maintains that they had hallucinated. In rural Galilee, far from the threats of Jerusalem and Jesus' body lying in a common grave, their faith had begun to revive. As Jesus' followers contemplated the whereabouts of his corpse, they slowly conceived the possibility of a resurrection. Once that idea had taken root, 'they gradually conceived the idea of a resurrection whose reality was to be attested by the disappearance of Jesus' body' (Harris 1973, 209). When this idea became fixed in their minds, it was not long before they were experiencing visions of their recently departed teacher. 'The constant retelling of these visions brought about their slow sublimation into an historical fact; and once this fact had been accepted by the disciples, then under the aegis of apostolic authority, its development into rigid dogma was henceforth assured' (Strauss paraphrased by Harris 1973, 210).

A similar ecstatic episode occurred to Paul, Strauss believes, and he, too, became fully persuaded of Jesus' resurrection. These psychological and emotional experiences caused the disciples to develop the idea of a resurrected Lord, and out of this monumental illusion sprung early Christian belief.

In 1872, Strauss published his *The Old Faith and the New*. It is his final proclamation of belief (or unbelief) and is reactionary in the extreme. He points towards 'a more solid ground' that is to be found in 'the modern world-view, the laboriously attained result of continued scientific and historical research, in contrast with that of Christian theology' (Strauss in Harris 1973, 239). Along with other traditional cardinal orthodox beliefs of the Church, Strauss rubbishes the resurrection. At the time of Jesus' death, his bewildered disciples had experienced hallucinations and had begun to proclaim his rising from the dead. Not only was Jesus a fanatic and a deluded Jew, his proclaimed resurrection was 'historical humbug of world significance' (Strauss paraphrased by Harris 1973, 241).

Strauss died in 1874, a committed materialist, aged 66. He had first experienced scruples concerning traditional Christian faith as a 17-year-old Tübingen university student, but he had finally become a convinced and outspoken sceptic. He had completely lost his belief in a transcendental personal God and, furthermore, remained true to this, his own understanding, to the end. For all his intellectual integrity, he died an isolated and lonely man and his will excluded the church from participating in his burial.

Theissen and Merz (1998, 477) believe Strauss offered three new insights into the resurrection: first, the historical genesis of the Easter faith occurred when the disciples experienced visions of their lord in Galilee. Second, the 'tomb' was far away and only considered empty in a secondary legend; therefore rationalizing its emptiness was never necessary. Third, the reported experiences of the disciples signify historical visions but they were developed and managed mythically, and manipulated apologetically to enhance their reality. These Easter visions are explained psychologically. They are stress-related and caused by the prevailing crucifixion - messianic faith tension: Strauss's Subjective Vision Theory.

When Strauss was dismissed from the seminary in Tübingen he was called the anti-Christ and likened to Judas Iscariot. It was his old revered teacher, Ferdinand Baur, who perhaps provides the most judicious appraisal: he believes the Gospels are more historically accurate than Strauss allows, and he does not think Strauss's interpretation of events adequately accounts for the dramatic rise of resurrection faith among the early disciples. Baur also holds that Strauss neglects to analyse adequately the gospel sources (Baird 1992, 254-255). Similar views are expressed by Kümmel (1972, 126-127) who states that although Strauss 'by his clear and radical criticism' compels scholars to research the New Testament 'whatever its consequences,' he is 'negatively orientated' and besides lacking a foundation of source criticism, is not committed to explaining the historic rise of early Christianity.

Albert Schweitzer holds Strauss in high esteem as both a courageous man and honest scholar. Concerning the first edition of his *Life of Jesus* Schweitzer (1911, 78) writes, '[A]s a literary work ... it is one of the most perfect things in the whole range of learned literature ... not a superfluous phrase ... his analysis descends to the minutest details ... the style is simple and picturesque, sometimes ironical, but always dignified and distinguished.'

Walter Künneth (1965, 26) describes Strauss as the 'classic representative of the famous subjective-vision hypothesis' of the resurrection, placing Strauss alongside other rationalists such as Reimarus, Paulus, Pannenberg, Crossan and other representatives of contemporary theology. Künneth (1965, 47-62), dealing at length with myth and the reality of the resurrection, does not mention Strauss again and I consider this fair because reading Strauss's *Life of Jesus* I am struck by the frequency and intensity of his rationalization rather than the pervasiveness of his mythical interpretation. Duling (1979, 179) corroborates this impression: he states that it is somewhat ironical that Strauss became known for his mythological interpretation of the New Testament because he 'did not himself believe in a Christ myth' and never held an intellectual view of primitive myth similar to that held by some moderns. (Phillip Tobias [personal communication], South African anthropologist and Professor Emeritus of Anatomy, for example, holds an essentially mythical understanding of Jesus' resurrection). Duling's (1979, 182) view is that when Strauss suggests something is 'most mythical' he really means 'least historical.' (John's Gospel, for example.) Weiss, Bultmann and Barth, as we shall see, are all later identified to different degrees with the mythical interpretation of the New Testament and of the resurrection.

Künneth (1965, 58-62) maintains a huge gulf separates the mythical and traditional Christian interpretation of the resurrection: the first disciples were not culturally linked with myth traditions; Jesus' resurrection took the disciples by surprise because the idea was quite foreign to them; Israel's general outlook was inimical to any mythological understanding. Jesus' resurrection seems factual: '[t]hat the resurrection of Jesus is clearly rooted in history ... shatters the basic pattern of all mythological symbolism' (Künneth 1965, 60). The resurrection message was proclaimed prioritizing the historical facts, 'an attitude totally foreign to the mythical frame of mind' (Künneth 1965, 60). Unlike myth that deals with the death and rising of 'deity,' the resurrection narrative concerns itself with a physical man, Jesus of Nazareth. '[M]yth is concerned with the symbolic presentation of a natural process' Künneth (1965, 61) states, which the resurrection is not: it is rather a 'sovereign act of God, which has no parallel in mythology.' Finally, Künneth (1965, 62) indicates how offensively otherwise the disciples' resurrection message was to the people: this was not a new, palatable myth but an 'intolerant claim to absoluteness [calling] in question the validity and truth of all mythology.'

Habermas (2006, 87), crediting Strauss with the Subjective Vision Theory of Jesus' resurrection, identifies Theodor Keim as its chief confuter in 1872. Keim later postulated the Objective Vision Theory, but invoking the supernatural and miraculous made this hypothesis, later, generally unacceptable.

Strauss, perhaps more philosopher than theologian, writing two years before he died in *The Old Faith and the New*, stated that in the literary field he had laboured constantly with only one aim: to endorse what appeared to be true and to expose obvious falsehood. He took no pleasure in doing the latter, but for those who sought his counsel he believed the truth lay within the advancing fields of historical and scientific research - the modern world-view - rather than in traditional Christianity. He faced death with no major regrets (Strauss in Harris 1973, 238-239).

Along with Schweitzer, one cannot but respect Strauss, who for a lifetime single-mindedly pursued his goal facing bitter personal, religious and scholarly hostility. The seeds of unbelief had been sown early in his life, and as a true child of the Enlightenment he rejected the possibility of the supernatural and miracles. The rational and historical interpretations of Jesus' life he also deemed unsatisfactory. The only viable alternative for him was the mythical interpretation of the New Testament and the resurrection.

I understand why Strauss uses the mythical to avoid invoking the supernatural, but the resulting mythical/historical boundary line then blurs. For example, if he considers the crucifixion historical and aspects of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances mythical, where does the one become the other in the Easter Passion and resurrection sequence? Besides, a generally accepted abundance of historical fact in the New Testament precludes free and liberal use of mythical explanation.

As I have already intimated, Strauss's mythical interpretation lacks both depth and totality. His *Life of Jesus* is a bulky, tightly printed, erudite tome but most of his conclusions are reached rationally. The following sentence is a typical example of this: 'Truly it is difficult to perceive how it can be hence shown probable that Jesus, who when taken from the cross showed all the signs of death, should have come to life entirely of himself, without the application of medical skill' (Strauss 1972, 737). Furthermore, for Jesus' post-resurrection appearances it is mystifying that Strauss does not solicit the full mythical interpretation. He invokes rather the Subjective Vision Theory, which I consider another example of this rationalizing process.

Concerning the resurrection essentials Strauss remained over time unwavering in his views. His stated opinions concerning some details did, however, change: the fate of Jesus' corpse, he holds initially, was unknown but later, he postulates a common grave; the disciples' visions later become their hallucinations. Furthermore, with time he began to express his beliefs with increasingly radical and immoderate language.

I believe Strauss deals inadequately with the empty tomb narrative: he sidesteps the issue. The suggestion that Jesus' corpse had been dumped into a common grave while his followers were away in Galilee, and that his body would soon have become unrecognisable, is speculation. (Strauss's postulate of a common grave anticipates, nevertheless, a similar view held by Crossan about a century later).

Albert Schweitzer (1933, 59) says this of his fellow-countryman:

Strauss ... accepts as historic only a small portion of what the two-oldest Gospels [Mark and Matthew] report about Jesus. The greater part of it he considers to be narratives of a mythical character ... If Strauss comes finally to such a serious calling in question of the credibility of the two oldest narratives, that is not because he is by nature a sceptic, but because he is the first to realize how difficult it is really to understand the details which they give of the public life ... of Jesus.

Duling (1979, 182) encapsulates for me, in a sentence, what I have come to understand about Strauss: 'Strauss did openly and completely what had heretofore been done only anonymously or partially: He cast doubt on the historical credibility of much of the life of Jesus.'

Strauss is remembered today for his mythical interpretation of the scriptures and Jesus' resurrection. Although the mythical principle in its totality has been discredited, Rudolph Bultmann, some 50 years after Strauss, was advocating the 'de-mythologization' of the scriptures. An existential angle to Jesus' resurrection has again been alluded to in this chapter on Strauss, but it is not important here. Both these topics will be addressed shortly when we meet Bultmann. Strauss's interpretative work on Jesus' resurrection, furthermore, is not free of rationalism or historicism.

JOHANNES WEISS

The apocalyptic interpretation and the coercions of hope

Johannes Weiss (1863-1914) is described by Frederick Grant (Weiss 1970, v) as ‘...[O]ne of the ablest New Testament scholars’ of the twentieth century.’ Weiss was one of the first proponents of the eschatological interpretation of Jesus’ life and teaching, and along with Albert Schweitzer, who held similar views, transformed twentieth century Jesus research. In his *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* Schweitzer (1954, 237) suggests that from Reimarus to his own time research on the historical Jesus had been directed in stages to four different but critically important questions. Strauss had posed the first: historical or supernatural? Holtzmann and the Tübingen school the second: the Synoptics or John? Weiss, in his book *Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* presented the third great question concerning the historical study of Jesus: was Jesus’ outlook eschatological or non-eschatological? (Schweitzer (1968, xviii) himself, in 1906, posed the fourth: concerning Mark’s Gospel, suspect or historical?)

The eschatological outlook postulates, *inter alia*, that Jesus expected the imminent inauguration of the kingdom of God before, or soon after, his death. Weiss and similarly thinking scholars believe that this did not happen and therefore consider Jesus’ mission, essentially, a failure. The significance of this eschatological-apocalyptic interpretation of Jesus’ life for the resurrection is that it conceptualises a significantly charged atmosphere around the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, when he and his disciples were anticipating the supernatural induction of the long-awaited Kingdom. His followers were primed with anticipation and would have been unusually susceptible to intimations that Jesus had actually survived his execution and was, in fact, alive, well and in full control. The disciples’ resultant psychological state accounted for the visions they experienced of a risen Jesus. The eschatological idea has subsequently been intermittently taken up by scholars to explain the resurrection.

That said, Weiss bases his conclusions about the resurrection on a rational, detailed survey of the Easter narratives in the gospel and apocryphal sources. They are presented in what is widely considered his most important publication, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30-150*. (This book was originally titled *The History of Primitive Christianity*, the first volume of which appeared in 1914. The second volume was unfinished when Weiss died, but was completed by his friend Rudolf Knopf, Professor of Theology at Bonn University, who wrote the last three chapters. An English translation of the whole work was published in 1937, and in 1959 a second English translation appeared with the new title.)

Johannes Weiss was the son of the venerable and brilliant Bernhard Weiss, a serious, conservative scholar of the New Testament. His father’s works included, among many others, a *Life of Jesus*, several *Commentaries* and an *Introduction to the New Testament* (Weiss 1970, v). Johannes was born in Kiel, and from his youth was earmarked for academic pursuits (Baird 2003, 223). He received his university education at Marburg, Berlin, Göttingen and Breslau. In 1888, he started teaching in Göttingen, where he married the daughter of a leading liberal theologian,

Albrecht Ritschl. In 1895, Weiss was appointed ordinary professor at Marburg University. He was a 'gifted person' and an 'accomplished pianist,' reportedly 'revered by his students' (Baird 2003, 223). One such student, who studied under Weiss for two semesters at Marburg, was Rudolf Bultmann. Seven years later Weiss transferred to Heidelberg University, where he died, suddenly, in 1914, in the 'fifty-first year of an active and wonderfully fruitful life' (Weiss 1970, vi-vii).

Weiss had established his scholarly reputation in 1892 with a short, ostensibly simple work of only sixty-seven pages, which is ranked by Schweitzer (1954, 238) as '... one of the most important works in historical theology.' It is titled *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*. Weiss only published this book after Ritschl, his father-in-law, had died because the older man believed the kingdom of God referred to a moral order. Weiss understood, however, that for Jesus and primitive Christianity the kingdom was 'a religious, eschatological-apocalyptic event that would introduce a new world order' (Brown 1998b, 532). Besides his eschatological views, Weiss was associated with the history of religions school and wrote extensively on his New Testament specialities: Acts, John's Revelation, Mark and 1 Corinthians.

Hermann Reimarus in the eighteenth century appears to have been the first to identify the eschatological nature of Jesus' beliefs. He suggested that Jesus and his disciples held the eschatological beliefs of their contemporaries; they were expecting the rise of a political messiah, who would overthrow Rome and establish a messianic Kingdom. Weiss concurred with Reimarus that Jesus held radical political intentions, but Weiss contended that God, not men, would establish the Kingdom. David Strauss in his *Life of Jesus* (1835) partially grasped Jesus' eschatological beliefs. The author, Friedrich Ghillany, had expressed Weiss's views thirty years earlier. Paulus had 'verged' on the eschatological idea. Wilhelm Weiffenbach in 1873 had investigated and compared Jesus' resurrection and parousia. In 1888 Wilhelm Baldensperger had 'persuaded theology to admit the hypothesis ... that Jesus possessed a fully-developed eschatology' (Schweitzer 1911, 236). Otto Schmoller and Ernst Issel published on the subject in 1891. But it was Weiss, the following year, who set out the matter simply and clearly in his *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*.

Weiss maintains (1971, 129) that Jesus' activity was 'governed by the strong and unwavering feeling that the messianic time [was] imminent'. In fact, in 'moments of prophetic vision ... he declared with daring faith that the Kingdom of God had actually already dawned' (Weiss 1971, 129). Jesus, states Weiss (1971, 133), never thought of this kingdom as 'something subjective, inward, or spiritual, but [as] always the objective messianic Kingdom ...'. It was not a moral or ethical order, nor was its inception anticipated in two stages. God, in his own time, would establish this kingdom in one mighty act of creation.

Weiss (1971, 130) believes Jesus' messianic consciousness consisted 'of the certainty that when God [had] established the Kingdom, judgment and rule [would] be transferred to him.' He would become the 'Son of Man' (John 3: 14), and would be made 'Lord and Messiah' (Acts 2: 36). With the passage of time, however, Jesus' views changed:

Although Jesus initially hoped to live to see the establishment of the Kingdom, he gradually became certain that before this could happen, he must cross death's threshold, and make his contribution to the establishment of the Kingdom in Israel by his death. After that, he [would] return upon the clouds of heaven at the establishment of the

Kingdom, and do so within the lifetime of the generation which rejected him (Weiss 1971, 130).

The old world would be destroyed at the inauguration of the Kingdom, and a new world created. Individuals would be transformed to become like angels. The living and the resurrected dead at this time would face the Judgment, resulting in Jesus' rule over the twelve tribes of Israel and a Gentile multitude. This glorious and many-splendoured Kingdom would be centred in alien-free Palestine.

Weiss considers that the beliefs of Jesus and the first disciples were conditioned by Jewish apocalyptic, a view suggestive of his affinity with the history of religions school. 'The messianic consciousness of Jesus was [then to become] the ultimate basis for the messianic faith of the disciples' (Brown 1998b, 533). The messiah may have been an abstract concept to the Jews, but he bore, suggests Weiss (1970, 30), Jesus' features to his followers: '... [A]fter his death they could not get away from him, and in spite of his apparent defeat, were still convinced in their very souls that he had been divinely ordained to rule, [thus] the Easter-experience had a determinative influence upon their whole future.' The disciples' expectation of the coming Lord transferred, therefore, to a concept of a risen Christ, a conviction reinforced by Jesus' compelling personality. He said he would return and this is what the disciples were now expecting. Their initial expectations of an established divine kingdom now frustrated, they experienced visions of him.

In *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30-150*, Weiss examines in considerable detail the gospel accounts of Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection as well as some apocryphal accounts, and his verdict may be summarized thus: 'What St. Paul and the Gospels really tell us, in the end, is only this: that the disciples were certain the Lord was still alive; and that their experiences were so overwhelming and convincing that they based their whole lives, henceforth, upon them' (Weiss 1970, 103-104).

Weiss pictures the disciples depressed and discouraged after the Easter events but not entirely without hope. Many of Jesus' followers were anticipating the inauguration of the new kingdom but Jesus had prepared some, part of a closer and more intimate group, for a more tragic denouement in Jerusalem (Mark 8: 31; Mark 10: 33ff). They had come a long way with their master. It is unlikely that 'every impression of Jesus' personality, his power over the human soul, and every recollection of his greatness and of his union with God would be simply obliterated at the moment of his death' (Weiss 1970, 21). Jesus had told his disciples that he would face a crisis when he reached Jerusalem. When 'the recollection of Jesus' words and the memory of his majestic personality, ineradicable even in defeat and death, came into play – the 'bent spring' began moving back into place' (Weiss 1970, 21) and the disciples began to regain their balance.

How does one account 'for the disciples' recovery from such a state of abysmal disillusionment' asks Weiss (1970, 21). He suggests that this ability to recover from severe setback is an inherited Jewish characteristic: 'It was a product of the whole history of Israel, under whose shaping influence these individuals had grown up. That discipline of feeling and will, carried on for centuries and destined to be characteristic of Judaism, was the indispensable condition for the appearances of the Risen Christ upon the shores of Galilee' (Weiss 1970, 22). 'As the disciples experienced the setbacks of those days the more ardently they looked forward to the 'lifting up' of the Son of Man (John 3: 14), the more firmly they believed in his absolutely certain 'justification' (John 16: 10), the more fervently they prayed for the confirmation of their faith' (Weiss 1970, 23).

And these prayers were answered by the ‘appearances of the exalted [Jesus]’ (Weiss 1970, 23).

All the foregoing would not have occurred if Jesus had been an impostor: ‘[I]n the final analysis it was the impression of Jesus’ own personality which nourished and sustained this faith. The ‘supernatural’ faith rested upon the ‘moral’ conviction that he and none other was the Chosen One, and that he, unlike any other, was really worthy of such a vocation’ (Weiss 1970, 32).

Thus far, Weiss’s eschatological view of the resurrection has been portrayed using broad brushstrokes. A consideration of the details is more complex and not quite so convincing.

Concerning Jesus’ specific appearances to his followers, Weiss suggests that the earliest, (actually the only known list of appearances) is contained in a tradition fragment found in Paul’s letter to the Corinthian church, 1 Cor. 15: 3-8. They were cited as proof that ‘[Jesus] was raised’ (1 Cor. 15: 4):

Jesus first appeared to Peter. This fact is only mentioned in one other place, Luke 24: 34, but Weiss accepts it as true. (This runs contrary to another strand of Gospel tradition (Mark 16:9) that says he first appeared to Mary Magdalene). The appearance ‘to the twelve’ (1 Cor. 15: 5) was considered by Weiss to be a subsequent addition to the text. No further information concerning the appearance to the five hundred is found in either the canonical or apocryphal Gospels. Little more is told about Jesus’ appearance to James, though the apocryphal *Gospel according to the Hebrews* contains a legendary account. The appearance ‘to all the apostles’ (1 Cor. 15: 7) may accord with John 20: 19-23, states Weiss (1970, 23-26), but he may be unaware that Paul’s category of the apostles (a distinct inclusive group of 12) is different to John’s understanding of the disciples.

Considering the record, Weiss attempts to understand what the disciples themselves experienced then, and what should be made of those appearances today. He states that the term ‘he appeared’ as used in the *New Testament* indicates ‘a manifestation of the supernatural in virtue of some special divine revelation’ (Weiss 1970, 26). Similar examples were Moses and Elijah appearing to the disciples during the Transfiguration, God appearing to Abraham and the observation of a heavenly sign (Rev. 12: 1): ‘[S]omething heavenly sweeps into the range of vision of the favoured person, and it is noted incidentally that those with him saw nothing unusual’ (Weiss 1970, 26). The observer, it is understood, would be ‘in the Spirit’ (Rev. 1: 10) implying that, as a mortal, he has been especially privileged to witness spiritual things. In this way, Jesus also appeared to Paul (1 Cor. 9:1; 1 Cor. 15: 8) and Peter (1 Cor. 15: 5). The recurrent use of the expression ‘he appeared’, Weiss continues, indicates that Paul thought the appearances of Jesus to the other disciples were the same as those to him. ‘[W]here an ‘appearance’ is spoken of, the idea involved is that of a vision of someone or something super-earthly’ (Weiss 1970, 27).

Weiss further suggests that there is another aspect of the narratives about Jesus’ death that the modern reader may miss. Jesus (whether his soul/spirit/body, we are not told) immediately after his death returned to God. This similarly happened to Lazarus the beggar, where there is no suggestion of burial or resurrection (Luke 16: 2); Jesus told the penitent thief that that very day they would both be in Paradise (Luke 23: 43); Luke 23: 46 and John 14: 12 convey the same sense. It is ‘the idea that the death of Jesus carried with it his immediate exaltation’ and it was

in 'this state of heavenly glory that he manifested himself to his disciples' (Weiss 1970, 27). If this had remained the dominant understanding of the resurrection, there would have been little further contention about the nature of the event. The fact that Jesus 'had been exalted to the divine presence, was sufficiently established for all those concerned by the appearances of the glorified Christ' (Weiss 1970, 27-28).

Weiss suggests there are two ways we may look at Jesus' appearances today. Invoking the miraculous is the traditional approach: '... the exalted Christ in his body of light came within the disciples' range of vision ... ' (Weiss 1970, 28).

However, the 'modern scientific doctrine of the unbroken sequence of causation' (Weiss 1970, 28) insists that these appearances were rather visions. An object is 'seen' when light rays reflected off it stimulates the retina and the cerebral pathways behind it. A 'vision' occurs to an individual when physiological changes in his/her nervous system results in 'sight' for which there is no objective verification. Weiss maintains that Paul would have vigorously repudiated 'vision' as an explanation for Jesus' appearance to him. He was 'convinced that [Jesus] actually appeared before his eyes' (Weiss 1970, 28). Peter's personal vision (Acts 10: 10-17) was similarly so real that it changed the course of his life. It was unlikely that the first disciples would have been so bold in their proclamation of Jesus' resurrection 'had they felt the slightest doubt of the objective reality of [Jesus'] appearances' (Weiss 1970, 28). It is unlikely, continues Weiss, that the Christian faith stands on such precarious foundations as 'delusions, fancies, [and] hallucinations' (Weiss 1970, 29).

There is another possibility concerning 'visions.' Nobody is in a position to judge the purposes of God; it is conceivable that God, in a way that some believe he has used in the past, chose the mechanism of 'visions' to promote in the disciples a conviction of Jesus' 'survival and exaltation' (Weiss 1970, 29). Perhaps, '[f]or them, the vision sufficed, and produced a certainty of conviction which made them inspired missionaries and martyrs' (Weiss 1970, 29). Faith based on visions rather than on a miraculous event would be deeper and more genuine. 'Little real faith or courage would be required in advocacy of what was so positively and undeniably a fact' (Weiss 1970, 30).

Weiss concludes this discourse on Jesus' appearances by suggesting that the disciples' visions were not God-given but rather self-generated. They were convinced that Jesus had been appointed to rule and

... it is an easy step to affirm that the appearances were not external phenomena but were merely the goals of an inner struggle in which faith won the victory over doubt. They are the sign of a deep disturbance, but they show clearly what ideas and hopes were uppermost in their souls. To this extent the appearances were not the basis of their faith, though so it seemed to them, so much as its product and result ... [i]nstead of a faith rendered compulsory by miracle, we have to do with a profound inner conviction which through an overwhelming final experience emerges at last into certainty and reality (Weiss 1970, 30).

In other words, Jesus' appearances to the disciple were actually not the basis of their faith, but rather the result of it.

A careful reading of Weiss, above, concerning visions is both problematic and confusing for the modern reader: a delusion, a fancy, a vision and an hallucination may each be scientifically defined and differentiated today, but the differences between them are far too subtle to permit Weiss his conclusion that delusions, fancies and hallucinations would have proved too precarious a foundation for the Christian faith, but that it may have been grounded on visions. The distinction between subjective visions and (God-given) objective visions (which are miracles) is also not drawn. Furthermore, Jesus in a state of heavenly glory manifesting himself to the disciples is a far cry from our present understanding of visions.

In time, Weiss believes, the early disciples began systematizing their beliefs. Not only were they clarifying their own ideas, they were responding to the church's apologetic and rhetorical needs. Soon, doctrines of the resurrection were developed, but they remained peripheral to the 'certainty of Jesus' exaltation, which rested upon the experiences of the disciples' (Weiss 1970, 83).

Paul's belief, Weiss suggests, is that the risen Jesus, who belonged to heaven, possessed a spiritual body, invisible to the human eye, which needed to 'appear' supernaturally to the disciples: '[W]hen Paul speaks of the resurrection, he is not thinking of a purely physical resuscitation and return into the earthly life; for him Jesus' resurrection means the same thing as his glorification and exaltation' (Weiss 1970, 84).

In the Church's developing theology, 'raised' meant, as in Jewish usage, to be returned to life on earth (John 5: 21; Rom. 4: 17; 1 Cor. 15: 22). This was the popular conception of resurrection as understood by Weiss. Concerning Jesus, he was raised again to life on earth, but he failed to remain on earth and establish his kingdom. 'Resurrection' does not completely apply to Jesus' case and Weiss suggests that Acts recognizes this paradox and corrects it by introducing the ascension (Acts 1: 9f). Paul, however, knows nothing of the ascension. 'For him the two are one, though strictly taken, resurrection and exaltation are mutually exclusive ideas' (Weiss 1970, 85). The ascension is not recorded in the gospels because in the oldest texts Luke 24: 51 is translated 'While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them.' The verse does not end 'and was carried up into heaven' as our modern versions have it.

In Matthew, Luke and John the risen Jesus is generally depicted as a free spirit, the already-exalted one and not the resurrected, returned-to- life one. He vanishes suddenly from sight (Luke 24: 31), suddenly appears (Luke 24: 36) and enters a locked house (John 20: 19). These resemble the 'appearance' episodes already discussed and Weiss calls them vision narratives. There are other narratives, however, called resurrection narratives by Weiss, which suggest that Jesus returned in full corporeality (John 20: 27; Luke 24: 39; Acts 10: 41). Weiss (1970, 86) claims that these resurrection narratives were introduced by a redactor to counter the accusation that the disciples had been seeing a 'ghost' because there was a generally held belief among the Jews that the souls of individuals who had died violently tended to return and trouble the living.

Weiss intimates that the Jews from that time would have accepted the concept of a resurrection/physical restoration (Mark 6: 14; Luke 9: 7), but there are potential problems here with the way he uses his sources: he is using a Christian source to prove that Jews thought in a certain way, and he provides no other corroboratory evidence from the Jewish side. Educated Greeks might have balked at the idea (Acts 17: 31f). Hengel

(1974, 312), on the other hand, considers a general '*hope for the future*' in the form 'of an imminent eschatological expectation' one product of the Hellenism-Judaism interaction. Weiss (1970, 87) suggests that '[T]hese massive resurrection stories must first have originated upon Hellenistic soil, for the purposes of missionary apologetics.'

Weiss also investigated the empty grave tradition. This was linked to the resurrection, not to the appearances, because the former involved the physical body of Jesus. Paul does not mention the empty grave. It is first mentioned in Mark's Gospel (16: 1-8), about a decade after Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 15). Mark states that the women neglected to inform the disciples what they had heard and witnessed at Jesus' tomb because 'they were afraid'. The retention of this report in the Gospel, Weiss believes, adds credence to the tradition that the first disciples did not know at that stage about the empty tomb. He proposes that '*a faith in the resurrection of Jesus existed without any reference whatsoever to the empty grave*' (Weiss 1970, 87).

Weiss submits that the story of the empty grave is a classic example of how some traditions developed. Paul, as has been mentioned, did not allude to Jesus' empty grave. Mark's account apparently did not satisfy the later gospel writers. Luke (24: 8ff) had the women reporting back but their story seemed 'an idle tale, and they did not believe them.' Matthew goes further. He cannot conceive the women disobeying the angel at the tomb, nor the fact that the disciples were ignorant of the empty grave. He, therefore, has the women leaving the 'tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and [running] to tell his disciples' (Matt. 28: 8). Weiss suggests that because, up to this point, only the women have been privy to the fact of the empty tomb, it was necessary to introduce respected male witnesses into the story. This was done in Luke 24: 24 and in John 20: 2-10. Further, mention is made of the neat disposition of Jesus' grave clothes in Luke 24: 12 and John 20: 5-7. This was to help counter the claim that Jesus' corpse had been stolen from the grave by his disciples rather than being 'released in an orderly manner from its death posture' (Weiss 1970, 88). Matthew goes further in his attempt to refute this same rumour. He introduces the story of a guard set over the grave by the Sanhedrin (Matt. 27: 62-66). But Weiss (1970, 89) writes 'that the whole tradition of the empty tomb was simply foreign to the earliest period ... [t]he appearances of [Jesus] entirely sufficed to establish their confidence. The legend offered by Matthew arose in an effort to support the later, literary account of the resurrection.'

Weiss (1970, 89) believes that by 'a completely illegitimate tampering of the facts' the tradition of Jesus' empty grave has been developed. Furthermore, the resurrection story continued to be modified. In the *Gospel of Peter*, an apocryphal fragment, additional details include the appointment of an officer, Petronius, by Pilate to command the tomb guard; the application of 'seven seals' to the tombstone; elders and scribes in the background where they have 'pitched a tent' watching the grave with the guard (Weiss 1970, 90). The author of this Gospel proceeds to describe in detail the occurrence of the resurrection itself as though he had been a witness, causing Weiss (1970, 91) to respond:

This perfectly apocryphal, purely fantastic narrative shows us at least how the need was felt for ever more explicit information upon details, and how in picturing the miraculous it seemed impossible to overdo it. But we also observe that the beginnings of such apocryphal elaboration are to be found even in the New Testament. The narrative of Matthew is already one stage on the way toward the *Gospel of Peter*.

In summary, Weiss's (1970, 91) beliefs about the Easter tradition are that the empty grave and the corporeal resurrection traditions are later than the appearances of the glorified Jesus; the former were produced with an apologetic motive and were 'the creation of unfettered fancy.' It does not follow that because there were 'appearances' of Jesus, he was raised. These imply, rather, that he 'has been exalted to heaven, transfigured [and] glorified' (Weiss, 1970, 92).

Weiss's contribution, 'his recognition of the apocalyptic character of Jesus' message of the kingdom of God' (Baird 2003, 229) prevailed for the next one hundred years or so, but proved a 'stumbling block for scholars and theologians.' Weiss himself, suggests Baird (2003, 229), did not like the conclusions he had reached, but remaining true to the new standards of Enlightenment research, drew the conclusion that 'the central message of Jesus ... its expectation of imminent divine intervention, was ... mistaken and hopelessly irrelevant.' Grounds for authentic Christianity, however, still remained for Weiss.

Wilhelm Bousset (1892) responded to Weiss by questioning whether Jesus' kingdom was wholly or only partly eschatological, because although Jesus was world accepting, his teaching was strictly world-renouncing. Ehrhardt, a Parisian, in 1896 supported the eschatological idea but also believed there was a place in the world for its own ethical system and natural goods. Albert Réville maintained that contemporary thought had forced Jesus into a Messianic role and the Apocalyptic.

In 1901 Albert Schweitzer published his *Sketch of the Life of Jesus*. Surprisingly, because Weiss's book had caused such a furore in theological circles when it appeared nine years before, Schweitzer was not familiar with Weiss's work. But the two had come to similar conclusions and agreed with the eschatological nature of Jesus' preaching. Schweitzer, however, believed that Jesus' total public ministry, 'everything [he] thought, taught, and did' (Duling 1979, 231), was based on his eschatological beliefs and he termed this 'consistent' or 'thorough-going' eschatology. 'Without its intense eschatological hope the Gospel would have perished from the earth, crushed by the weight of historical catastrophes' Schweitzer (1911, 254) avers, and in his autobiography, Schweitzer (1933, 50) states that the 'error of research hitherto is that it attributes to Jesus a spiritualising of the late-Jewish Messianic Expectation.'

Schweitzer's eschatological-apocalyptic understanding is worth closer attention because he is a seminal figure in historical Jesus' studies. Schweitzer (1933, 52-54) maintains that Jesus expected the imminent manifestation of the Son of Man (himself) and the Kingdom of God during his life (Matthew 10). Because this did not appear to be developing, Jesus began to believe he was going to have to die an atoning death for his followers, enabling them to escape the pre-Messianic Tribulation (Isaiah 53. This passage originally referred to the sufferings of the people of Israel in Exile). He duly informed his disciples he was the Messiah (Mark 8: 27-33). Judas' treachery consisted in 'disclosing to [the Sanhedrin] the claim which [Jesus made] to the dignity of Messiah' (Schweitzer 1933, 53). Jesus shared a last meal with his followers, anticipating renewed fellowship with them, after his death, at the coming 'Messianic meal'. He expected, through this death, the immediate establishment, without a preliminary Tribulation, of the Messianic Kingdom (Mark 14: 62). Post-crucifixion, the disciples found Jesus' grave empty the day after the Sabbath. '[I]n their enthusiastic expectation of the glory in which their Master is soon to appear, [they] have visions of Him as risen from the grave, [and] are certain that he is with God in heaven, soon to appear as Messiah and bring in the Kingdom' (Schweitzer 1933, 54).

In Schweitzer's view the anticipated Kingdom was not, and has not, been established and thus Jesus' mission still remains frustrated and unfulfilled. '[E]schatology ... must itself wither, because [Jesus] died upon the cross with a loud cry, despairing of bringing in the new heaven and the new earth-that is the real tragedy' (Schweitzer 1911, 254). Schweitzer (1911, 254) enlarges: '[I]n its death-pangs eschatology bore to the Greek genius a wonder-child, the mystic, sensuous, Early-Christian doctrine of immortality, and consecrated Christianity as a religion of immortality to take the place of the slowly dying civilisation of the ancient world.'

Schweitzer's apocalyptic ideas were not generally accepted when they were published. I find it paradoxical that Mark's Gospel, written approximately 65 C.E. by Christians, should be used by Schweitzer to show that the kingdom Jesus and his disciples anticipated soon after his death, never materialized. In my view, there is no suggestion that Mark's author was disillusioned: perhaps Schweitzer's apocalyptic grasp is faulty. Of more consequence for this thesis is the fact that Schweitzer does not attempt to account for the empty tomb. Weiss as we have seen, does not believe the empty tomb was part of the original tradition, but neither Weiss nor Schweitzer addresses the question of the likely whereabouts or fate of Jesus' corpse: the very heart of the early Church's claim.

Were Jesus' thoughts eschatological or not? Most scholars after a cursory reading of the Gospels would reply in the affirmative, and it is easy to understand why: after the publication of Weiss's *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, most theologians accepted his thesis. Rudolf Bultmann, Weiss's student, has an eschatological understanding of Jesus (Duling 1979, 272). He believes that the thought world of Jesus' time was strongly influenced by 'Jewish apocalyptic eschatology and Gnosticism' (Brown 1998b, 534) but insists it first requires demythologising. Karl Barth considers eschatology, but not apocalypticism (Harvey 1989, 336), fundamental to Christianity (Schweitzer 1968, xxii).

Wolfhart Pannenberg (1984, 119) suggests that the eschatological view needs re-emphasizing in contemporary theology: Jesus' proclamation 'was not primarily a program for moral or social action, but ... envisaged a cosmic catastrophe that would occur when God in the imminent future would replace this present world by the new creation of his own kingdom without any human ado.'

The debate about the nature of the kingdom, initiated by Weiss and Schweitzer, is ongoing. Brown (1998b, 534) believes that individuals such as Tom Wright, and others, are radically challenging the older views, contending that 'for Jesus the kingdom did not mean the end of the world but God's presence in power.'

Wright (2003, 582) himself acknowledges numerous interpretations of the resurrection from an eschatological perspective, all having in common anticipation of an impending event. Umpteen scholars disallowing Jesus' bodily resurrection have focused on an eschatological 'second coming.' But the early Christians had a different outlook, he believes: they looked forward, it is true, to a momentous future event, but for them the greatest incident had already occurred. It was Jesus' bodily resurrection that gave significance to his anticipated return.

Weiss's eschatological interpretation of Jesus' life, the idea popularised later by Schweitzer, is in the main deemed increasingly 'quaint' by modern scholarship. It is a subject, however, quite different from Jesus' resurrection and not much space is devoted to eschatology in books about the resurrection. The two do share points

of convergence, nevertheless: the resurrection has eschatological implications and the disciples' eschatological expectations have been offered as an explanation for their resurrection faith; more specifically, their hopes and yearnings generated visions of their master who, subsequently they believed, still lived. This is Weiss's view, which incidentally later became known as the vision theory of Jesus' resurrection.

Weiss actually adds little new to our understanding of the resurrection itself. In substance, Strauss and Ernest Renan had already promoted the vision theory (Milligan 1905, 117). As another true child of the Enlightenment, Weiss rationalizes throughout his work. His interpretation of the resurrection events may help explain the rise of early Christian faith but he is silent on the essential issue, the fate of Jesus' body. The eschatological/ apocalyptic question remains unsettled, but it must be understood that scholars like Pannenberg and Wright who hold a traditional view of Jesus' resurrection uphold, of necessity, an eschatological understanding of Jesus.

On Good Friday, 1913, Albert Schweitzer left Günsbach for Lambaréné: his New Testament studies had led him into a theological cul-de-sac, and he was taking up medical work. Weiss died the following summer, just three months short of World War 1.

Two young men, similarly and personally, but indirectly affected by the monumental upheavals of those times, went on to achieve prominence between the great wars for their theological endeavours: Bultmann subjected the New Testament to a modern existentialist interpretation, and Karl Barth re-engaged the Scriptures in a singular quest for their authenticity.

RUDOLPH BULTMANN

The history of religions, kerygma, demythologizing, existentialism and the emperor's new clothes

Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976) towers over twentieth century theological scholarship. He pioneered with Karl Schmidt and Martin Dibelius New Testament form criticism, and was a forceful proponent of the history of religions school. He believed that Jesus was apprehended through the kerygma (the proclamation and preaching of the early Church) but because it was couched in mythical terms it required demythologizing. Bultmann propounded and defended the existential interpretation of Jesus' word and held methodological, philosophical and theological objections to historical Jesus study. His '*dass*' (knowing '*that*' Jesus had existed) was all he considered attainable with certainty regarding the historical Jesus.

'The concern for a new understanding of the resurrection' following the stalling of the 'First Quest' of the historical Jesus, resulted in Bultmann relating the resurrection 'to the fundamental principles of existentialism' (Künneth 1965, 40). This attempt to provide an existential interpretation of the resurrection was of decisive significance for theological scholarship because it sidestepped the question of the historicity of Jesus' bodily resurrection (in fact, all historical details of Jesus' life) to simply pose the question 'What significance does Jesus' resurrection have for me?' The events of Jesus' life, explains Bultmann (1964, 35), only become meaningful 'when we ask what God is trying to say to each one of us through them.' Bultmann holds views on Jesus' empty grave (the accounts are 'secondary and apologetic') and the post-resurrection appearances (these involve a 'commission to mission') but they are to him, an early post-modern, relatively inconsequential (Baird 2003, 284).

Bultmann came from a family, many of whom, his father included, had been pastors in the Lutheran Church - his paternal grandfather had been a missionary in West Africa, his maternal grandfather was a pastor in Baden. Rudolph was born in northwest Germany, the oldest of three brothers. In 1903, he commenced his theological studies at Tübingen University, transferring to Berlin after three semesters. Three key influences on Bultmann at Berlin were to shape his scholarly and theological development: Liberal Protestantism, typified by Adolf Harnack, advocated rationalism and the scientific outlook; the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (history of religions school) was represented there by Hermann Gunkel, and Wilhelm Herrmann, who "believed that the gospel sources were insufficient to yield a 'life' of Jesus" (Duling 1979, 63).

A year of teaching at the Oldenburg Gymnasium preceded further studies at Marburg University where, in 1912, he became a lecturer in New Testament.

In 1917, Bultmann's youngest brother was killed in France. His sermon following this event, commenting on 'the pain and misery of war', that 'God was "hidden" and "mysterious" and quoting the existentialist Friedrich Nietzsche, was an early inkling of a change in his thinking (Duling 1979, 263-264).

After periods at the Universities of Breslau and Giessen, now married with two children, he returned in 1921 to succeed Wilhelm Heitmüller, a proponent of the history of religions school, at Marburg. He was to hold his chair of New Testament there until his retirement thirty years later.

At Marburg, Rudolf Otto drew Bultmann (and Karl Barth) away from Liberalism. He believed that 'the reality of religion lay in the experience of a mysterious, fascinating, and awe-producing power outside humanity, the "Wholly Other" (Duling 1979, 264). Bultmann was moving then inexorably towards dialectical theology. Another influence at Marburg was the existentialist philosopher, Martin Heidegger. From about 1926, Bultmann's publications became increasingly existential in outlook and in that year he, himself, recorded the impossibility of recovering 'the life and the personality of the historical Jesus' (Duling 1979, 264). In 1941, in a seminal essay titled *New Testament and Mythology*, he 'proposed an existentialist interpretation of the New Testament myths' (Duling 1979, 265).

During the Third Reich, Bultmann spoke out publicly against the Nazis, but was never politically involved.

Throughout his working life, Bultmann regularly preached; he also published more than 15 books, well over 100 articles, some 50 dictionary articles and word studies, about 200 reviews, comments and numerous sermons. Many of his students gained international recognition: Ernst Käsemann, for example, initiated the 'New Quest' of the historical Jesus in 1953, the liberal First Quest having been concluded by work from Schweitzer, Martin Kähler, Ernst Troeltsch, Wilhelm Bousset, and Bultmann himself.

Bultmann's door, Baird (2003, 280) states, 'was always open to students, who revered his genial spirit, his lively sense of humour, and his profound religious faith.' He died in Marburg in 1976, where he had lived and worked.

Throughout his life Bultmann's convictions remained remarkably consistent: a break with liberal theology, a commitment to dialectical theology, an existential interpretation of Pauline and Johannine theology and his demythologizing program of the 1940s and 1950s characterize them.

His training as a New Testament scholar, sometime under Weiss, in the history of religions school was an early important influence. The history of religions school attempted to understand the 'origin of the Christian religion within its first-century religious and cultural context' (Fergusson 1998, 450). It held that by Jesus' time, under Babylonian and Persian influence, a Jewish apocalyptic belief within a system of cosmic eschatology had been established. The old Jewish world-view had been modified – the sovereignty of God was now opposed by evil spirits; an end was approaching, when there would be a resurrection of the dead, and judgment. The resurrection of the dead, a doctrine foreign to most of the Old Testament (Daniel 12 being the one clear exception) had been clearly taken over by Judaism from Persian sources, and excepting the Sadducees, was widely accepted. Even the dead, it was believed, could share in this redemption. The ungodly faced destruction or torment in hell fire.

Mystery religions were 'secret religious cults that flourished during the Greco-Roman period' and involved 'the worship of deities from Greece, Anatolia, Egypt, Persia and Syria' (Meyer 1992, 941). They are so named because their initiation rites were held in secret. They were 'originally national or tribal cults' (Bultmann 1956, 157) and included Mithraism, the cults of Adonis, Attis, Isis and Osiris, and

involved exorcism, necromancy and magic. Jesus and the early disciples would have been aware of them. An important function of the mysteries was to enable man to acquire immortality – the initiate identified with the death of a god and then rose in rebirth with him to immortal life. Meyer (1992, 944) states that modern scholarship initially mooted the inter-dependence of Christianity and the mystery religions but more recently this has been seen, rather, as parallel development: perhaps their similarities resulted from a comparable response to the ‘religious challenges of the Greco-Roman world ... [offering] to devotees similar experiences, rituals, and ways of salvation and transformation.’ Bultmann believes the mysteries culminated in mysticism and Gnosticism (Bultmann 1956, 161).

The term ‘Gnosticism’ (from the Greek *gnosis*, knowledge) was first used in the eighteenth century and, Rudolf (1992, 1033) states, refers to a ‘current in the religious life of late antiquity ... [having a] direct bearing on the development of the belief and practice of the early Church.’ Essentially, the Gnostic myth recounts the story of a soul, man’s true inner self - its origin in the world of light, its tragic fall, and life as an alien on earth, imprisoned in the body. The supreme deity takes pity on these imprisoned souls and sends down his son to redeem them. The son clothes himself in the garment of an earthly body lest the demons should recognize him. The Gnostic redeemer delivers discourses in which he reveals himself as God’s emissary: ‘I am the shepherd,’ ‘I am the truth.’ After accomplishing his work he returns to heaven to prepare for his own to follow him. This they will do when they die (Johnson 1991, 175-176).

The ‘first certain early Christian reference’ to Gnosticism is found in 1 Timothy 6: 20, according to Rudolf (1992, 1033).

The history of religions school (for example, W. Bousset, H. Gunkel, W. Wrede and R. Reitzenstein) was involved in groundbreaking work on Gnosticism. Rudolf (1992, 1035) maintains that gnosis eventually came to be seen as ‘part of a broader religio-philosophical protest movement-as a manifestation of the dissolution of the classical world view-and as a fragmentary attempt to master social, political and ideological complexes by opposing dualities ... as was done by other religions.’

Bultmann (1956, 162) concurs, suggesting that though the phenomenon was initially considered a ‘purely [perverse] Christian movement’ subsequent research has shown ‘it was a religious movement of pre-Christian origin, invading the West from the Orient as a competitor of Christianity.’ There are ‘[affinities] and [differences] between Gnosticism and Christianity’ Bultmann (1956, 203) wrote, but he believes John in his Gospel drew heavily upon Gnostic ideas and imagery to illustrate Jesus’ significance.

Bultmann’s (1956, 11) survey of the ‘historical antecedents of primitive Christianity’ is published in his *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, within which he is surprisingly unopinionated: Christianity’s ‘uniqueness is thrown into sharper relief by setting it against the background of its environment’; only by considering ‘what Christianity has in common with these other movements [would] we be able to discern its difference from them.’ The book was an attempt to enlarge his ‘understanding of human existence’ (Bultmann 1956, 12).

He used another method to study the influence of ancient cultures and beliefs on early Christianity, form criticism. Strauss, as we have seen, was the first to recognize that the gospels were based on discrete, independent units (forms) of oral tradition. It was Wrede in *The Messianic Secret* who questioned Mark’s historical chronology of Jesus’ life. K.L. Schmidt (1919) had distinguished ‘traditional from

editorial material' and in the same year, M. Dibelius had 'brilliantly' demonstrated the fruitfulness of a method 'for discovering the stages in the development of the tradition as well as for the Gospels as a whole' (Bultmann 1972, 3). This Jesus tradition had been preserved, reworked and even created by Palestinian and Hellenistic Christian communities, some of whom, Bultmann believed, had been influenced by Persian, Babylonian and Gnostic myths. He also investigated the influence the gospel writers had had on one another and explored the evolving tradition resulting in the apocryphal gospels of the second century C.E. He compared these changes with those that occurred in secular religious stories from the Greco-Roman world, and formulated 'rules' governing tradition transmission. He divided the gospel material into two categories, the discourses of Jesus and narratives about Jesus. He then subjected this data to the "laws of oral tradition and *religionsgeschichtliche* parallels, giving a total picture of the developing 'Jesus tradition'" (Duling 1979, 67).

Bultmann concludes from these studies that very little can be known about Jesus from the gospel narrative material. For example, he considers Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the Last Supper, legends (Bultmann 1972, 261-262). He had, in fact, become a complete sceptic about the historical Jesus (Baird 1992, 287). A biographical record of Jesus' life was impossible: 'I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist' (Bultmann 1958, 14).

However, a coherent re-creation of Jesus' *message* is a different matter. In contradistinction to the narrative material, Bultmann finds, on analysis, that the discourse material is significantly more helpful in providing a consistent record of Jesus' teaching and preaching - his documented message is far more reliable than the narrative record we possess of his historical person and movement. He believes that by engaging with God's Word one apprehends divinity and is thereby challenged. The early Church subsequently replaced Jesus' kingdom message with the message of the cross and resurrection: the kerygma, the proclamation of the Church. '*The message of Jesus*', Bultmann (1952, 3) states, 'is a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament rather than a part of that theology itself'. The Church's message, he believes, outweighs Jesus' historical person: 'Christian faith did not exist until there was a Christian kerygma; i.e., a kerygma proclaiming Jesus Christ-specifically Jesus Christ the Crucified and Risen One ... [h]e was first so proclaimed in the kerygma of the earliest Church, not in the message of the historical Jesus ... ' (Bultmann 1952, 3).

In 1941, Bultmann delivered a lecture to pastors of the German Confessing Church in Frankfurt, titled 'New Testament and Mythology.' It inaugurated his demythologizing program and brought him into international prominence after the Second World War. Bultmann maintained that Jesus' message, the kerygma, even the entire New Testament tradition, is veiled in myth and requires 'demythologizing'. He could only understand primitive Christianity from the history of the surrounding religions. Their adherents lived in this 'mythical' world. For them, the 'world is viewed as a three-storied structure, with the earth in the centre, the heaven above, and the underworld beneath' (Bultmann 1964, 1). Celestial beings inhabited heaven with God; on earth, natural events were interrupted by divine and demonic activity and good and divine powers would eventually overcome evil. Divine intervention would be followed by a general resurrection of the dead, judgment, salvation and damnation. Jesus' resurrection 'marks the beginning of the cosmic catastrophe' (Bultmann 1964, 2). This too is myth because the 'resuscitation of a dead person' would be an incredible miracle;

besides, Bultmann (1964, 8) asks, how could 'an event like this ... be the act of God, or how [could it] affect his own life.' Bultmann's 'approach was to attempt an interpretation of the mythical statements of the kerygma by seeking to discover [an] understanding of the human condition, or human existence, that lay behind the language of New Testament myth' (Duling 1979, 275). To do this, he uses insights (such as the concept of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' existence) provided by Heidegger's existential analysis. 'Existentialist interpretation made it possible to *internalise* the myth ... Within the existentialist perspective, the eschatological and Gnostic myths of the End are transformed into one's own internalised myth' (Duling 1979, 277).

Bultmann believed that if the New Testament references are 'to have any meaning, they must be understood existentially, that is, in reference to the individual's world of concerns and the individual's choices' (Duling 1979, 284).

Bultmann expressed his initial conclusions about Jesus' resurrection in his *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, published in 1921. He accepts that Jesus had been crucified and had died, but, nevertheless, considers Mark's account of the crucifixion to be characterized by 'a legendary editing of what is manifestly an ancient historical narrative' and his account of Jesus' death to be 'strongly disfigured by legend' (Bultmann 1972, 73). These conclusions are reached using form criticism: for example, Mark 15: 33-39 (the death of Jesus) is considered legendary, being derived from Ps. 68: 22. 'Luke was offended by the cry of dereliction based on Ps. 21: 2 and replaced it in [Luke] 23: 46 by Ps. 30: 6, while John gives it a different interpretation' (Bultmann 1972, 274). This is a typical sentence in his book: comparing and contrasting; the Hebrew Bible and New Testament; secular history and the original Greek; word by word, line by line Bultmann edges forward.

Bultmann (1972, 274) considers Jesus' burial, in Mark 15: 42-47, 'an historical account which creates no impression of being a legend apart from the women ... It can hardly be shown that the section was devised with the Easter story in mind'. The resurrection narratives, however, he considers are legends (Bultmann 1972, 284-290).

Concerning the empty tomb, Matt. 28: 11-15 is an 'apologetic legend' linked with Matt. 27: 62-66; John 20: 1, 11-18 is a 'late formulation' (the two angels are 'stage furniture'); because Matthew's and Luke's accounts originate in Mark, the 'material reduces itself to the one story in Mk. 16: 1-8' (Bultmann 1972, 287). The empty tomb narrative is 'completely secondary' because it only serves to '[prove] the resurrection' Bultmann (1972, 290) states. Bultmann (1952, 45) reminds us that Paul does not mention the empty grave.

Concerning the appearances of the risen Jesus, Bultmann (1972, 288) suggests that it is understandable ('[belonging] to the very nature of things' and 'self-evident') that appearances to individuals should be mentioned before appearances to groups: Jesus' appearance to his disciples (Mk. 24: 36-49) is therefore mentioned after the Emmaus story. Bultmann (1972, 288) suggests two motifs are found in the appearance stories: 'proving the Resurrection by the appearance of the risen Lord' (for example, Luke 24: 13-35) and the '*missionary charge of the Risen Lord*' (for example, Matt. 28: 16-20). Historically, of most importance was the fact that missionary charges were delivered to Peter and Paul, rather than the body of disciples. 'Thus the original Easter happenings' maintains Bultmann (1972, 290), 'are almost as good as overlaid by legend' which he later saw as bearing the mark of the Hellenistic Christian community.

With the passing of time Bultmann, advancing his understanding, incorporated the conclusions of his Synoptic studies into his developing existentialist perspective. He rejects an objective resurrection of Jesus' physical body, declaring, "the resurrection body is a 'spiritual body'" (Bultmann 1952, 157). Enigmatically describing these events in terms of the Gnostic myth, Bultmann (1952, 299) suggests 'Christ's death and resurrection ... are cosmic occurrences, not incidents that took place once upon a time in the past.' In fact, Bultmann (1952, 295) states, the 'resurrection, of course, simply cannot be a visible fact in the realm of human history.' He believes that Paul was pressured by the Gnostics to prove the objective resurrection of Jesus and attempted to do so by listing those who had seen Jesus alive (1 Cor. 15: 5-8). But this roll does not entirely convince Bultmann. Moreover, he considers reasonable, but unlikely, Karl Barth's suggestion, that the listing of witnesses had another motive: an attempt to 'guarantee the identity of Paul's message with that of the earliest Jerusalem Church' (Bultmann 1952, 295 footnote).

Malet, in his *Thought of Rudolf Bultmann* attempts to clarify Bultmann's reasoning for us: '[These legends] spring from Christian faith itself ... In no time they had taken on various forms ... [t]he apparitions of Christ are not the source of faith but its result and expression' (Malet 1969, 159). The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to his followers were really a 'subsequent expression of faith in Jesus as God's word and deed;' they are 'professions of faith ... not objective events' that reflect the understanding of Jesus' followers (Malet 1969, 159). The development of this faith did not require miracles or any other observable events. Moreover, it lay outside the realm of rational enquiry or intellectual 'work,' which Bultmann repeatedly contrasts with 'faith.' Should 'the apparitions [be] made chronologically prior to faith, as having been its source, nothing is left' for Bultmann, claims Malet (1969, 159), 'but a sham resurrection and a sham faith.'

Bultmann believes that the Evangelists were guilty of the objectification, not only of other gospel 'legends,' but also of the resurrection 'legend.' This is an echo of what Strauss maintained: the *story* of the *empty tomb* is presented as hard evidence; the guards *saw* the angel; the women *took hold* of Jesus' feet. Even the chief priests recognized the resurrection as real (Matt. 28: 11,13). The Evangelists were attempting to authenticate Jesus' objective resurrection by writing a credible narrative about it. Similarly, in the post-resurrection appearances, Jesus *ate*, and was *seen*, he was both *felt* and *heard*.

In Christian understanding, the resurrection for Bultmann, as Malet (1969, 180) reads it, is of secondary significance 'since Jesus is already glorified by the cross.' Before his crucifixion, he already was 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (Jn. 14: 6) and everyone who was living and believing in him would never die (Jn. 11: 26).

Bultmann (1952, 306) puts this another way: 'The meaning of Jesus' resurrection is not that he is translated into the beyond, but that he is exalted to the status of Lord (Phil 2: 11).' This resurrection belief crystallized into formula-like statements, as did the growing conviction of Jesus' exaltation (for example, Acts 2: 33) (Bultmann 1952, 82). Bultmann maintains that initially Jesus' resurrection and his exaltation (or glorification) was one and the same thing; only later, the resurrection was interpreted as 'a temporary return to life on earth, and this idea then gave rise to the ascension story (Luke 24: 50-53; Acts 1: 3-11)' (Bultmann 1952, 45).

Using John, Bultmann persists: the resurrection and the parousia is one and the same thing (Jn. 14: 19). And there is a similar third promise: that of the Spirit (Jn.

14: 15-17) or Pentecost. Thus, Easter, Pentecost and the parousia are the same event. Malet (1969, 181), interpreting Bultmann, states, 'So there is only one event, which of course is not an objective reality but the eschatological triumph Jesus wins when faith surmounts the scandal that he is to natural man.'

Bultmann (1952, 188) maintains that for Paul, the historical Jesus only meant three things: he had been born a Jew (Gal. 4: 4), he had lived under the law (Phil. 2: 7) and he had been crucified (Gal. 3: 1; 1 Cor 2: 2; Phil. 2: 5ff), and he believes that many of Paul's references to resurrection in the *New Testament* were simply the transmitting of sanctioned creeds:

That God raised him (Jesus) from the dead is a statement that, obviously quite early, was a constituent of more or less crystallized creedal statements, for without doubt Paul is alluding to a creedal formula in Rom 10: 9. '[I]f you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved' (Bultmann 1952, 81).

Paul was either quoting or 'paraphrasing statements of tradition which were obviously ... formulated when he speaks of Jesus' death (Rom. 3: 24f) or his resurrection (Rom. 1: 4; 10: 9), or both together (1 Cor. 15: 3f)' (Bultmann 1952, 293).

But Bultmann understands the resurrection existentially: its importance lies in its significance for the individual. Braaten and Harrisville (1962, 132) have captured the existential character of Bultmann's analysis when they write,

The resurrection is not a verifiable miracle ... which could be acknowledged as a historical fact, but it is an eschatological fact accessible only to faith ... this eschatological fact signifies our redemption by Christ ... Easter is only a picture of the resurrection of faith – the form of a man's existence born out of the encounter with Christian doctrine.

Bultmann (1952, 345) re-states his existentialist interpretation of Jesus' resurrection thus:

The believer, having died in Christ, also shares in his resurrection. Paul expresses this in language that stems from the mystery religions and Gnosticism in order to say: By faith in the word in which the risen Christ himself speaks to him, man lets the resurrection of Christ, like his cross, become the power that henceforth determines his life. He now no longer lives – so Paul can paradoxically say – but in him Christ lives (Gal. 2: 19).

Bultmann's aim with form criticism was to investigate the record of the oral tradition behind the gospels. Baird (2003, 283) draws attention to the circular argument of this method: rudiments of the tradition are used to reconstruct the community's history, but the community's history is used to analyse the tradition. Furthermore, the nature of a tradition's form is not always a true reflection of its truth. The usefulness of Bultmann's form criticism may have been exaggerated but it did communicate the fact that the gospel record and Jesus' life were not always the same. Wright, acknowledging that gospel form criticism was strongly in vogue from 1920-1970, believes that the situation has changed. Tradition criticism, which includes form criticism, is a broader concept and one presently practiced by himself

and other scholars such as Crossan. Wright (2003, 596) suggests that the early form critics, such as Bultmann, may have been 'driving the project' too strongly with their own agendas.

Bultmann, taking up the earlier ideas of Wrede, Weiss and Dibelius, understands the New Testament tradition as 'mythological': primitive Christianity is only understood by considering the history of religions in that ancient environment. The similarities he finds between early Christianity and the cults are reasonable and convincing: the post-mortem resurrection of a divine redeemer, the linking of Easter with spring rites, rebirth and deities returning to life. These pagan cults, moreover, flourished precisely where Christian congregations were starting and growing. Nonetheless, the suggestion that the resurrection is of a mythical nature strikes at the very heart of Christianity: the disciples and the early Church witnessed with finality to a once off historic occurrence. Their claim was irreconcilably opposed to and incompatible with postulated myth. Künneth (1965, 62) states, 'The complete otherness of the reality of the resurrection forbids in principle any application of the concept of myth and brings out in detail the impossibility of any analogical relationship with the myths of religious history.' In other words, a mythical resurrection spells *finis* to historic Christianity (Künneth 1965, 52-53).

Karl Barth had influenced Bultmann towards dialectical theology in the early 1920s but their common understanding crumbled in 1922. Bultmann considered the act of faith an existential event and denied the reality of an objective supernatural dimension; the relevance of the biblical texts is that they help people take decisions on moral and religious issues. Barth, however, insisted that one's object of faith requires appraisal. He allowed that Bultmann's humanist and subjective existential interpretations did influence human existence but that is not what the scriptural narratives essentially are – they are records of God's activity in the world and we 'must not reduce them to propositions about the interior life of man' (Malet 1969, 378 quoting Barth).

Bultmann's existentialist interpretation of Jesus' resurrection is a grave threat to its postulated objective reality. Künneth (1965, 44) wonders whether it is really still 'concerned at all with the unique event of the resurrection of Jesus in the past, or is the whole Easter witness not transformed into the momentary subjective consciousness of the interpreter's faith?'

The language Bultmann uses complicates his position, and contours of reality disappear. He addresses the 'present act of self-understanding' rather than the historic factuality of the resurrection (Künneth 1965, 45). This approach, Künneth (1965, 46) suggests, belongs rather 'to idealism and mysticism.' Robinson (Schweitzer 1968, xxv) alludes to this post-World War 1 development when he suggests that neo-idealism was maturing then as existentialism: Bultmann is not free to pronounce on the 'once for all' aspect of the resurrection because he has espoused a 'philosophical metaphysic of timelessness' (Künneth 1965, 46). In fact, how important, discounting its result in faith, is the historic resurrection to Bultmann? Künneth (1965, 45) suggests that Bultmann is merely offering a 'philosophical reinterpretation of the Christian faith ... Bultmann's kerygma is ... no longer identical with the kerygma of the evangelists and apostles.' Paul, himself, according to Künneth (1965, 46-47), contradicts Bultmann by defining Christian faith 'as faith in the past perfect saving act' of Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 14ff; Rom. 10: 9). Bultmann's existentialist interpretation, contrariwise, actually eschews the real existential significance of the resurrection of Jesus. Furthermore, the witness of the early Church stands solidly against Bultmann. 'Bultmann is

surely wrong' Smith (1960, 372) writes 'in minimizing the importance of the historical question.'

In 1953, a professor in the University of Tübingen, Ernst Käsemann, famously addressing a group of past Bultmann students in Jugenheim, inaugurated what has become known as the 'New Quest' of the historical Jesus. His generation, having been subjected to the upheavals of World War 2, was now forced 'to find new angles of attack on [their common] problems' Käsemann (1964, 9) stated. He agreed with Bultmann that the first Christians were more interested in preaching than the historical facts about Jesus. Although the 'First Quest' had been terminated by the verdict, essentially, that the gospels had been shaped by the disciples' Easter faith, he suggested it was a docetic error to totally ignore Jesus' historical person. Bultmann was attempting to unearth the earliest stratum of primitive Christian proclamation but he was failing to distinguish, possibly on purpose, between Jesus' preaching and 'its reflection in the kerygma of the community' (Käsemann 1964, 16). Käsemann suggested that if Jesus' language in the gospels was scrutinized, his authentic utterances could be separated from his inauthentic ones using the criterion of dissimilarity. Thereafter, genuine aspects of the historical Jesus could be recognized when his teaching dovetailed with the primitive Church's preaching: for example, the Sixth Commandment (Ex. 20: 13) states 'You shall not murder.' Jesus, however, is reported to have said (Matt. 5: 22) '*But I say to you that if you are angry ...*' Jesus here supersedes Moses, counting himself equal with God, the original lawgiver. The early Church concurred with this (Jn. 1: 1-2; Col. 2: 9).

Käsemann (1964, 46) concluded his address to the old Marburgers by stating, 'The question of the historical Jesus is, in its legitimate form, the question of the continuity of the Gospel within the discontinuity of the times and within the variation of the kerygma.' He believed a renewed quest of the historical Jesus was possible.

Bultmann (1972, 374) wrote, '[T]he Synoptic Gospels ... are completely subordinate to Christian faith and worship. And what we know of the Apocryphal gospels does nothing to change the picture; they are but legendary adaptations and expansions.' John Dominic Crossan rebuffs this rejection of the utility of the extracanonical Gospels, and Evans (2006, 51) suggests that Crossan's work on the extracanonical Gospels may yet prove Bultmann wrong.

Bultmann has been criticized for generally underestimating the importance of Jesus' Jewish background, and for introducing simple distortions when alluding to Judaic components. Bultmann never visited the land of Israel and had little knowledge of 'its geography, topography, archaeology, or material culture' Evans (2006, 51) states, somewhat judgmentally. He believes Bultmann's authority has diminished significantly during the last few decades, although it survives 'in a somewhat mutated form in the Jesus Seminar' (Evans 2006, 51).

Harvey (1989, 339) concurs, suggesting that Bultmann's resurrection conclusions (that nothing out of the ordinary happened to the disciples after the crucifixion besides a dramatic rise in their faith which propelled them to mission) are 'oddly mundane' and have not been sustained: they are 'too obviously at variance with the thrust of the New Testament witness and of other available testimonies for it to have much resonance now.'

Perhaps Bultmann's early studies in the history of religions provide the key to understanding his eventual interpretation of the resurrection. He may have harboured early reservations about traditional Christianity, and believed he had fingered the truth when he pictured Christianity - part rabbinic Judaism, part mystery and part Gnosticism - emerging centuries ago in the Middle East. Perhaps he thought, 'Shouldn't the biblical narratives all be read as myth?' If so, he had joined the intellectual company of Strauss. As Harris (1973, 272) puts it,

Strauss and Bultmann have the same view of myth ... everything supernatural and other-worldly is regarded as unhistorical and therefore mythical. Strauss maintained that there was no transcendental, personal God and therefore miracles are impossible in the natural world. Perhaps this is the one premise that also underlines the theological views of Bultmann.

Bultmann may have lost his belief in a personal God as a young man and only began to find meaning again in the old faith by applying an existentialist interpretation to it, and rationalizing the biblical records further by his program of demythologization.

In the Gospels the tradition of Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection are recorded sequentially. Bultmann (1972, 273-274, 284-291) allows the historicity of crucifixion and burial, but not resurrection and he gives labyrinthine erudite reasons for this. But why should the evangelists in the course of their narratives have shifted from essential history to essential legend so effortlessly? Where exactly did this transition occur? Bultmann, the modern scholar, may be trying to avoid implicating the miraculous, but is it logical to do so?

Bultmann suggests that the early Christians developed an existential resurrection faith. However, whatever may have transpired intellectually and emotionally, the question of the historical fate of Jesus' corpse is not addressed by him. He implies we do not know because the available accounts are legendary and unreliable. Furthermore, his modern, scientific worldview demands the decay of Jesus' corpse, wherever it was. The Gospels (reporting traditions some 40-50 years after the events, granted) give us an answer about Jesus' body (Lk. 24: 5b), but Bultmann is silent. Matthew (28: 13) reports that the Jews accused the disciples of stealing the body. Bultmann is silent. Luke records Peter's address, seven weeks later, to the Jerusalem crowd at Pentecost, 'This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses' (Acts 2: 32). No demurring voice is recorded, but Bultmann is silent. He is silent because he does not accept the gospels record is real history: it is rather a statement of faith. Paul (in 1 Corinthians 15, writing some 25 years after Jesus death) appeals to the witness of some 500 people who saw Jesus alive, following his burial and rising on the third day. But, concerning the fate of Jesus' physical remains, Bultmann makes no suggestion and I consider this a major deficiency.

Bultmann was a prolific writer but there is little devoted to the resurrection. The English translation of his *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1972), for example, is a book of 462 pages. Only seven pages are devoted to the *Easter Narratives*, and there is no entry for 'Resurrection' in the General Index. Bultmann, unlike Pannenberg and Wright, who are discussed later, does not consider the resurrection fundamental to Christianity.

Fergusson alludes to the debt we owe Bultmann for his lifelong scholarship and original contributions. He also hints at his deficiencies: 'While Bultmann's writings represent one of the most significant attempts to resolve many of the problems

inherited from liberal theology and biblical criticism, his specific conclusions [the resurrection, for example] have ceased to command widespread consent' (Fergusson 1998, 455).

8

KARL BARTH**Solus Christus rather than sola Scriptura and
the centrality of Jesus Christ**

Karl Barth (1886-1968) was a Swiss Protestant theologian whose 'engagement with the Christian Scriptures marked a watershed in twentieth century theology' (Johnson 1998, 433). He was described in the mid-thirties (McNab 1936, vii) as '... the Church's greatest living thinker ...'

A growing interest in the resurrection in modern times, unprecedented since the first centuries of Christian history, is ascribed by O' Collins (1973, 85) to Barth, 'whose *Epistle to the Romans* in its second edition of 1922 marks the real beginning of twentieth century theology.' Barth's inscrutable understanding of Jesus' resurrection is aptly expressed by Lorenzen (1995, 71): '[t]he resurrection is an objective and historical event, but modern scientific reason does not have the tools to know the resurrection on its own terms. [It is only known by] the eyes of faith.'

Barth was born in Basel. Both his father and grandfather were Swiss Calvinist ministers. His father was also a professor of Church History. Young Karl commenced his theological studies at the University of Bern, transferring later to the Universities of Berlin, Tübingen and finally Marburg. Influential teachers here included Adolf Harnack and Wilhelm Herrman.

In 1909, he was ordained into the Swiss Evangelical Reformed Church and worked as an apprentice pastor for two years in Geneva. In 1911, he was appointed pastor of a Reformed church in Safenwil, a small industrial town in North-Central Switzerland.

Eight years later, Barth published *Der Römerbrief*, a theological interpretation of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which brought him immediate fame in Continental theological circles. In 1922, he was appointed to the chair of Reformed Theology at the University of Göttingen. He moved three years later to become professor of Dogmatics and New Testament Exegesis at the University of Münster, Westphalia.

In 1930, he transferred to the University of Bonn. Four years later, as professor of Systematic Theology there, he was the principal author of a document known as the Theological Declaration of Barmen, which opposed the encroachments of National Socialism upon German churches. It called for total obedience to Jesus Christ, the 'church's only Führer' (Johnson 1998, 433). He lost his chair soon afterwards because he refused to swear an unqualified oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler. The following year (1935) Barth was arrested while attending a theological conference at Barmen (Wuppertal). He was deported to Switzerland, where he was immediately offered an academic appointment in Basel.

He was professor of Theology at the University of Basel until his retirement in 1962. Between 1932 and 1967 he published four multi-part volumes of *Church Dogmatics*, his life's major work, in which '[c]reation, the fall of Man, the history

of Israel, and the New Testament are interpreted in the light of Jesus Christ' (Hofmann 1967, 642).

Barth died in 1968.

Barth was trained in a liberal theological tradition, but became disillusioned with its anthropocentric focus while working as a pastor at Safenwil during the general sufferings and privations of World War 1. Here, re-examining the Scriptures and studying the Reformers, principally Luther, he had violently rejected liberal theology and developed a 'Christo-centric theology' (Hofmann 1967, 642). This Christo-centric theology had important implications for his understanding of Scripture since Scripture was, in his view, not the word of God itself, but a witness to the living Word of God, Jesus Christ. As Johnson (1998, 433) puts it:

There is no other Lord, no other authority, than God – the God revealed in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, the God attested to in canonical Scripture. This complex understanding of an authority that resides not in the biblical texts themselves but in God lies at the heart of Barth's theological project.

Barth accepts the fallibility of human language about God, including, in contrast to Protestant scholasticism, the fallibility of biblical texts (Johnson 1998, 433). He believes these documents are products of their own time and reflect the cultures, worldviews and mythologies out of which they come. Individuals, as human witnesses, are fallible, and material content and incidental facts (such as dates, places) may be wrong. Texts should be treated as testimonies rather than sources. Barth recognizes that the very texts of the Bible are problematic since the original Biblical texts cannot be ascertained with complete certainty (Johnson 1998, 436). He concurs, however, with the early Protestant Reformers that the Scriptures were God-inspired. They remained, however, in Barth's view, 'norma normanda,' 'a fallible norm that must itself continually be normed by the Word of God in revelation' (Johnson 1998, 436). In principle, he believes the Judeo-Christian Canon remains open to revision but its validity forever rests on God's authority alone.

In contradistinction to Roman Catholicism, Barth rejects the principle of irrefutable biblical interpretation and believes biblical texts should be studied using standard principles of hermeneutical scholarship. The truth, however, lies beyond even these reaches:

The historical-critical method of Biblical investigation has its rightful place: it is concerned with the preparation of the intelligence – and this can never be superfluous. But, were I driven to choose between it and the venerable doctrine of Inspiration, I should without hesitation adopt the latter, which has a broader, deeper and more important justification. The doctrine of Inspiration is concerned with the labour of apprehending, without which no technical equipment, however complete, is of any use whatever. Fortunately, I am not compelled to choose between the two. Nevertheless, my whole energy of interpreting has been expended in an endeavour to see through and beyond history into the spirit of the Bible, which is the Eternal Spirit (Barth 1977, 1).

Barth (1977, 6) was called an 'enemy of historical criticism' but, writing in 1921, he acknowledges the discipline, considering it 'both necessary and justified.' Historical reconstruction, nevertheless, is not an exact science for him: 'The

modern science of history employs a reckoning of probability which rests on a conception of truth which is quite definitely limited. Its categories make no provision for the idea of a God [w]ho acts in history and testifies to [h]imself in history' (Barth 1936, 187). He adds, "If only the theologians of the nineteenth century had not on their part succumbed to the historical way of thought, but had held fast to the wisdom of the Fathers, 'It is written!' there would have been none of this difficulty in the situation as between exegesis and historical science" (Barth 1936, 189).

Barth states that some texts in the Bible, in the light of historical science, are not able to stand up to the test of truth and should be labelled 'saga' or 'legend'. God caused these happenings in Scripture to occur. 'There must be no question of explanation, of envisaging in the historical sense' Barth (1936, 190) declares. He does not use, however, the concept of 'myth,' which, for him, is pure human fantasy not based in actual events.

Barth's understanding of the nature of Scripture can be complex, convoluted and unpredictable. His response to a student's question about "whether the serpent in Paradise 'really' spoke," may provide some insight (Barth 1936, 190). The serpent in Eden was neither mythical nor historical, he suggests. But because this narrative is found in Scripture, one rather concentrates on *what* was said: the serpent was enticing man to question God's command, just as we persist, nowadays, to critically and apologetically question the Scriptural record. This indicates very plainly that the serpent did, in fact, actually speak. Thus Barth's rather existentialist interpretation avoided offering any real answer to the student's question.

Scholars and students of Barth have long recognized that his theological views changed over time. This includes his understanding of the resurrection, as we shall see. The term 'early' Barth refers to his views in the 1920s; the term 'later' relates to his opinions from about 1931, when he published his Anselm study (*Fides Quaerens Intellectum*), onward. In spite of having rejected the liberal theology of his younger days, there was still a modicum of Christian 'existentialism' in his *Epistle to the Romans*; his theological thinking then was still dialectical, and he had 'not yet become uncompromisingly Christocentric' (O' Collins 1973, 85):

His Anselm book shows how he has rethought the theological task in terms of 'faith seeking understanding'. The new phase is definitely inaugurated with the publication of the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* in 1932. The influence of Kierkegaard's and Dostoevsky's existentialist philosophy gives way to a concentration on the Word of God. Dogmatic thinking based on the analogy of faith displaces dialectical thinking. There is a shift towards the unqualified dominance of Christology (O' Collins 1973, 85).

Three aspects of Barth's understanding of the resurrection enable a differentiation to be made between his early and later views. These three involve: its centrality, its historicity and the question of the empty tomb.

The resurrection was always central to Barth's thinking but the 'early' Barth understood Jesus' resurrection as essentially revelatory. It was the miracle by way of which Jesus was revealed as God to man. 'The [r]esurrection is the revelation: the disclosing of Jesus as the Christ, the appearing of God, and the apprehending of God in Jesus' Barth (1977, 30) wrote in *Der Römerbrief* (1919). This is similar to

Bultmann's view that holds 'the resurrection is the expression of the meaning of the cross' (O' Collins 1973, 87, n.1).

Although the revelatory aspect of the resurrection remained important for the 'later' Barth, he came to believe, unlike Bultmann, that the resurrection amounted to more than revelation. Barth began to emphasize the factuality of Jesus' rising and his appearing to his followers. 'Either we believe with the New Testament in the risen Jesus Christ, or we do not believe in [him] at all' (Barth 1960, 443). The resurrection had become history for the 'later' Barth, it was no longer just message.

The 'early' Barth understands the resurrection to be a "non-historical" happening" (Barth 1977, 203). '... the disclosure and revelation of the invisible glorification of the Father. This is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead' (Barth 1977, 203). 'The [r]esurrection is the non-historical relating of the whole historical life of Jesus to its origin in God' (Barth 1977, 195). There exists an intimation of historicity, however, about the resurrection to the 'early' Barth. It becomes historical in that known men and women recognized the event and began to proclaim it: "The [r]esurrection is therefore an occurrence in history, which took place outside the gates of Jerusalem in the year [30 C.E.], inasmuch as it there 'came to pass', was discovered and recognized" (Barth 1977, 30). Oddly, however, the 'later' Barth continues to deny the historicity of the resurrection: '[T]he Resurrection is not an event in history at all. Jesus is *declared to be the Son of God* wherever He reveals Himself and is recognized as the Messiah, before the first Easter Day and, most assuredly, after it' (Barth 1977, 30).

Barth could be confused with Bultmann here, but his understanding does slowly change with time.

The empty tomb is of little concern to the early Barth. He appears to trivialize the issue, and writes elusively (at least in the English): 'This tomb may prove to be a definitely closed *or* an open tomb; it is really a matter of indifference. What avails the tomb, proved to be this or that, at Jerusalem in the year [30 C.E.]?' (Barth 1933, 142).

Later, the question of the empty tomb became more important for him:

... it is the only sign, although an indispensable sign. Christians do not believe in the empty tomb, but in the living [Jesus]. This does not mean, however, that we can believe in the living [Jesus] without believing in the empty tomb. ... It is the sign which obviates all possible misunderstanding ... Far better, then, to admit that the empty tomb belongs to the Easter event as its sign (Barth 1960, 453).

The empty tomb prevents us misinterpreting the resurrected Jesus as anything

[P]urely beyond or inward. It distinguishes the confession that [Jesus] lives from a mere manner of speaking on the part of believers. It is the negative presupposition of the concrete objectivity of [h]is being (Barth 1956, 341).

Barth reiterates here the reality of Jesus' physical resurrection.

Concerning the witnesses to Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, the 'early' Barth (1933, 143) states, 'Time and place are a matter of perfect indifference. Of what these eyes see it can really be equally well said that it was, is, and will be, never

and nowhere, as that it was, is, and will be, always and everywhere possible.' Barth implies here that the witnesses to Jesus' post-resurrection appearances did not experience any unique or exceptional event.

The 'later' Barth desists from underplaying the historical reality of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. The resurrection is now a spatio-temporal event that occurred shortly after Jesus' death: 'Jesus has a further history beginning on the third day after his death ... it is a second history – or rather, the fragments of a second history – of Jesus. It is the Easter history, the history of the forty days between [h]is resurrection and ascension' (Barth 1960, 441).

But Barth does not go so far as to proclaim the total historical verification of the historical resurrection. He calls for a 'decision of faith ... [which] remains unattainable by historical research' according to O' Collins (1973, 89). The resurrection is history but its acknowledgment is through the Holy Spirit's mediation. He hopes that an increased historical realism will lead to objective knowledge translating in turn to 'genuine' informed faith. Historical investigation cannot 'prove' the resurrection. Barth disagrees here with Wolfhart Pannenberg who holds that before the ingress of faith it is possible, in principle, to 'know the resurrection' (O' Collins 1973, 89). In Barth's view, objective assurances of Jesus' resurrection and post-resurrection appearances from impartial outside observers (i.e. not disciples) are not provided by the *New Testament* texts. For example, the witnesses appealed to by Paul and listed in 1 Cor. 15: 4-8 are not impartial observers. They constitute, rather, a tradition within the believing community that calls for a faith-based verdict, rather than the simple acceptance of a well-grounded historical report.

Barth, concerning the 'historical' nature of Jesus' resurrection, hedges his bets. He appears to claim the historical reality of the resurrection, but begrudges scholars wanting to judge the matter because there were no independent witnesses. Acknowledgment of the reality of the resurrection, states Barth, depends upon the Holy Spirit's work. Because normal historical methods fail to substantiate the resurrection, Barth classifies this event as 'saga' or 'legend'. He understands sagas or legends as 'events which – unlike myths – did in fact occur [but] were of such a nature that they evade verification by the historical method' (O' Collins 1973, 90). Jesus' life up to and including his crucifixion and burial are historically verifiable, unlike Easter and its aftermath where 'we are led into a historical sphere of a different kind' writes Barth (1956, 334).

The later Barth increasingly believes in the objectivity of Jesus' resurrection. The apostles had become unique witnesses of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, and Barth stresses the recorded physical nature of Jesus' encounters with his followers. Jesus is, 'risen – bodily, visibly, perceptibly, in the same concrete sense in which [h]e died ... not in an abstract but in a concrete otherness ... [h]e encountered them formally (eating and drinking with them) in the same way as [h]e had encountered them before ...' (Barth 1956, 351-352).

Further, adds Barth (1960, 448), '[t]he [r]esurrected is the man Jesus, who now came and went among them as such, whom they saw and touched and heard, who ate and drank with them, and who, as I believe, was still before them as true man, *vere homo*.'

Besides the fact that Barth's understanding of Jesus' resurrection changed with time, the English reader of his work encounters a further complexity. The English 'historicity' translates two German words, *Geschichte* and *Historie*. *Geschichte*

roughly translates 'history' while *Historie* translates 'events'. *Geschichte* indicates significant past occurrences that cannot be verified, or a general understanding that a past happening may be interpreted differently over the passing years. *Historie* refers to the 'bare facts,' events that occurred, whose details such as time and place can be checked. (This distinction was first articulated in Martin Kähler's book *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus* [The so-called historical [historisch] Jesus and the historic [geschichtlich] Biblical Christ] published in German, 1896). The English reader, consequently, misses the subtle differences apparent in Barth's original German.

For Barth, resurrection is *Geschichte*: 'a certain kind of happening ... [an act] of God especially, which occurs in ordinary history but which is not a part of ordinary history' (Klooster 1962, 155). Are these resurrection events 'miracles', or are they occurrences that have taken place out of human sight and are therefore beyond explication?

The Easter story is differentiated from myth, both formally and materially, by the fact that it is all about a real man of flesh and blood. But the stories are couched in the imaginative, poetic style of historical saga, and are therefore marked by the corresponding obscurity. For they are describing an event beyond the reach of historical research or depiction. Hence we have no right to try to analyse or harmonise them (Barth 1960, 452).

While denying the historicity of the resurrection as *Historie*, Barth accepts the Passion, crucifixion and the empty tomb (the sign of the resurrection) as such. On the other hand, he lumps together the resurrection and ascension as *Geschichte*; further, he states that the resurrection, Pentecost and Jesus' second coming are one: 'Yet, as we must plainly distinguish the resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit and the final return of Jesus Christ, so we must understand and see them together as forms of one and the same event' (Barth 1961, 294). This apparent double speak is vintage Barth; in this instance he is expressing his theological understanding that while Jesus' crucifixion was the decisive 'reconciliation' event, resurrection and ascension (along with Pentecost and the second coming) are/is (because they are parts of one whole), the definitive 'revelation' event. Paradoxically, and in dialectical vein, Barth adds that these events occur in unchangeable sequence. It does not seem rational for Barth to maintain, like he does for the crucifixion, the factuality and biblical reality of Jesus' resurrection: he considers the crucifixion *Historie*, but denies this of the resurrection. Barth's rejection of resurrection as *Historie* may simply be indicative of his repudiation that God acts directly in history.

Klooster (1962, 141) states that at the time of his (Klooster's) writing, Barth had yet to differentiate the meaning of these two German words. Barth's resurrection as *Geschichte* is intriguingly similar to Bultmann's position on the resurrection. They would certainly agree that the resurrection is not *Historie*.

Barth (1960, 452) does not accept a simple literal interpretation of the resurrection narratives: '... the forty days are not to be taken literally but typically. They do not offer precise chronological information as to the duration of the appearances.' Again, concerning the whereabouts of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, Barth (1960, 452) maintains the New Testament record is vague on detail. The question does not disturb him because he does not read these narratives as simple history.

At times Barth (1936, 100) appears to subscribe to the traditional, biblical understanding of the resurrection. The miracle of the resurrection, he states, consists of two essentials, which

... in the opinion of all the New Testament witnesses, are not explicable on the assumption of fraud or deception or by the possibility of a mere vision – the one, that the *grave* of that Jesus who died on the [c]ross on Good Friday was found *empty* on the third day, the other that Jesus [h]imself “appears,” as the characteristic expression puts it, to [h]is disciples as visibly, audibly, tangibly alive. The concrete content of the memory of the forty days is: [Jesus] is risen, [h]e is risen indeed! To be exegetically accurate we must understand by this “indeed” corporeally risen ...

That the resurrection narratives should be understood in the light of the norms of modern historiography is brought out in the following two quotations: ‘[W]e can understand why the evidence for the resurrection can only be fragmentary and contradictory, as is actually the case in the New Testament’ (Barth 1960, 452). He is suggesting that it is understandable why, decades after the event, Paul, the Evangelists and some other *New Testament* authors, theologically and geographically disparate, should write contrasting accounts of Jesus’ resurrection:

It is of course a notorious fact that the tradition that we have received of this memory of the forty days is in its details in remarkable disorder, far from satisfactory to the historian. But alongside of that stands the other fact that, in spite of very pressing apologetic needs and although that disorder could not even then be concealed from anyone, this tradition was unconcernedly taken up into the New Testament in this very condition. This indicates that there have at any rate been times when no surprise was felt at the witness of apostles and evangelists seeming (just at this central spot) to fall into a stammering, into contradictions as if from the effect of an earthquake. That will occasion no astonishment when the object of this witness is known (Barth 1936, 100).

Barth’s understanding of the resurrection contains many paradoxes and conundrums, and a simplistic interpretation of his views is not possible. Over time we know he moved nearer a traditional, biblical interpretation but still his final outlook is considered ‘unbiblical’ (Klooster 1962, 169).

Barth came to believe that the risen Jesus himself, rather than anything else, should be the focus of our attentions. He sought a rational approach to the Scriptures and because of this was reluctant to accept the ‘miraculous’ into his understanding. He could not shift his thinking to acknowledge God acting, historically, in the world. *Geschichte* thus became part of Barth’s vocabulary. (Barth’s wider Christology was also subject to this dualism of *Geschichte/Historie*: Jesus the Nazareth Rabbi, for example, is *Historie*, but Jesus the Christ is ‘a matter of *Geschichte*’ [Klooster 1962, 170]).

Central to everything, in Barth’s thought, is Jesus. He writes from an ‘above’ (Jesus’) perspective: Jesus was his frame of reference. His work is, therefore, understandably theologically orientated: Barth may not accept the trustworthiness of the Scriptural records; he rejects the *status integritatis* (the state of man’s integrity before the fall); he does not regard Jesus as carrying the guilt of God’s elect and therefore does not see Jesus passing from a state of humiliation to a state of exultation during his redemptive work. Thus, the resurrection is not the turning

point in Jesus' life: 'Barth teaches a universal election ... [and] ... a universal justification and a universal sanctification ... every thing that needed to be done for man was done in the incarnation-crucifixion. All that remained was the revelation of this completed event of reconciliation ... ' writes Klooster (1962, 171).

Barth regards Jesus' resurrection as a supreme revelatory event, but resists the conclusion that it was genuinely historical.

There is 'no simple answer' Klooster (1962, 154) maintains 'as to whether Barth acknowledges the historicity of the resurrection.' Barth desires an 'objective, datable event ... to which the scientific historian has access' (Klooster 1962, 154). Orthodox Christianity has accepted the resurrection's historicity on these terms, but Barth only acknowledges Jesus' resurrection as the supreme revelatory event.

Barth's contribution to the resurrection debate, therefore, is weakened by his equivocal call on its historical nature. O' Collins (1973, 99) states,

[Barth] attributes genuine historical character to the resurrection and yet denies historians the right to pronounce on the matter! [Consider] too the sheer bulk of his writings on the resurrection and other themes. Before the *Church Dogmatics* we are like blind men around an elephant: they can size it up, but they cannot really take it in.

Barth's unique contribution to our understanding of the resurrection is the insight that Jesus himself stood behind not only our scientific methodologies but also behind Scripture itself: Jesus, first and foremost, then the Bible. The Bible's authority, moreover, supersedes any scientific historical view.

In Barth's understanding, Lorenzen (1995, 71) states, the 'real content of the resurrection is not open to the instruments of historical and modern scientific reason, but only to the eyes of faith.' It is historical, and an objective event but modern science does not have the wherewithal to know it and understand it because it is an exploit of God: God alone, and therefore accessible only through faith. Barth, along with two other modern biblical scholars having similar views, Walter Künneth and Edward Schillebeeckx, insists that God is known and responded to through faith. Their understanding of the resurrection is not determined 'within the parameters of modern science' but, 'within the circle of faith, they tend to affirm the biblical historical details about the life of the risen [Jesus]' (Lorenzen 1995, 83).

Barth disorients me with his enigmatic views, but I believe I am in good company. For all this, Barth genuinely broke new ground in his attempt to understand Jesus' resurrection: unlike many of his predecessors and contemporaries, he entered the quest firmly imbued with a measure of faith and was determined to endorse the pre-eminence of the risen Jesus in all things.

WOLFHART PANNENBERG

Diligent truth seeker

Because of the breadth of his theological interests, Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-) was described in 1988 as the 'most comprehensive theologian at work' (Braaten and Clayton 1988, 9). His contributions to theology over nearly five decades have been characterized by critical reasoning based on a 'fundamental trust in reality' (Buller 1996, 3) while methodologically conceding the limits of human knowledge. The philosophy of history, the 'doctrine of God' and Christology have been his lifelong interests.

Within Christology, Pannenberg is best known for his views on Jesus' resurrection. In fact, his understanding of the resurrection 'constitutes a linchpin for Pannenberg's entire enterprise' (Grenz 1988, 38). Pannenberg acknowledges the historicity of Jesus' resurrection and rejects the modern liberal scepticism that disparages the possibilities of acquiring reliable historical knowledge about it. Furthermore, the resurrection debate (unlike, for example, the virginal conception of Jesus) is considered fundamental by Pannenberg because it holds momentous implications for all humankind (Polk 1989, 239, n.186). The attention that Pannenberg has devoted to understanding the resurrection of Jesus has led Thorwald Lorenzen (1995, 17) to suggest that Pannenberg is the 'most sophisticated modern proponent' of the 'traditional' interpretation of the resurrection.

Wolfhart Pannenberg was born in Stettin, Germany (now Szczecin, Poland) into a home that was secular and nonreligious. His father was a customs officer. The family moved to Berlin in 1942, where, two years later, during an Allied bombing raid, they lost their home. They transferred to Pomerania, from where his father, towards the end of the war, was conscripted into the Wehrmacht.

Young Pannenberg, a member of the *Hitlerjugend*, had been little influenced by the Church up to this time but in January 1945, walking home after school, 'an extraordinary event occurred in which I found myself absorbed into the light of the setting sun and for one eternal moment dissolved in the light surrounding me' (Pannenberg 1988, 12). This incident, he believes, marked his conversion to Christianity, but at the time he only knew with certainty that 'it was the most important event of [his] life' (Pannenberg 1988, 12). Some weeks later, Pannenberg's mother and his three much younger sisters joined other refugees fleeing west ahead of advancing Russian forces. Pannenberg himself, now 16, underwent a short period of military training during which he developed severe scabies. He was hospitalised for this, and subsequently taken prisoner there by the British. During this period many of his comrades died in action against the Red Army. He was later released, and travelling east, rejoined his family and managed to return to school for two more years. Though conditions in the Russian zone of Germany (what became the German Democratic Republic or more popularly East Germany in 1949) were appalling, Pannenberg (1988, 13) informs us that he had by then become a serious student.

It was a German Literature schoolteacher that further sparked his interest in Christianity, and 'still worrying at the meaning of that extraordinary experience of January 6, 1945' Pannenberg (1988, 13), in 1947, commenced studies in theology and philosophy at Humboldt University, East Berlin. 'Before long' Pannenberg (1988, 13) remembers, 'I knew I was to be a theologian for the rest of my life.'

In 1948, he moved to the University of Göttingen for a year to study philosophy under Nicolai Hartmann, 'the most learned German philosopher of the time' (Pannenberg 1988, 13). Pannenberg was now becoming increasingly sympathetic to the intellectual claims of Christianity. He next spent a term at the University of Basel where he studied under Karl Barth. He admired the influential, older man but felt that Barth's work lacked philosophical rigor. Pannenberg already disagreed with Barth over several fundamental issues and felt constrained to declare, according to Tupper (1973, 22), that systematic theology ought to be committed to, guided and informed by critical historical Bible study; the church should 'subject its theology to the canons of rationality operative in the larger human community' (Tupper 1973, 22), and Christian theology should attempt to regain its universal appeal through dialogue with secular thought.

In 1951, Pannenberg turned towards the historical disciplines, registering at the University of Heidelberg, where he spent the next seven years. He was to be significantly influenced there by Hans von Campenhausen, Gerhard von Rad and Günther Bornkamm, members of the theological faculty. Under von Rad he 'discovered a new world, the traditions and history of ancient Israel' (Pannenberg 1988, 14). The Hebrew Bible started to come alive and soon the New Testament, too, started making more sense to him. *History* became the catchword, and a group of graduate students banded together to explore systematic theology using historical biblical exegetical principles. They became known as the 'the working circle' and later, the 'Heidelberg Circle.' It advanced a "unique 'theological conception of history'" (Tupper 1973, 22) that eventually broke free from the dominant influences of Barth (his theology of Christian dogmatics) and Bultmann (his critical New Testament interpretation). The group focussed on the relationship between history and faith, and studied apocalypticism as it related to the evolution of Biblical traditions.

The 'working circle' later became known, albeit against his wishes, as the 'Pannenberg Circle.' In 1961, the circle published *Revelation as History*: a revolutionary book aimed against Bultmann and Barth's understanding of God's word. Maintaining that history forms part of God's revelation, they called for a historically invested theology to replace Bultmann's kerygma and Barth's divine self-revelation in Christ. Pannenberg and his colleagues were suggesting that history precedes and elicits faith, rather than faith antedating revelation. The circle eventually disbanded in 1969 over disagreements about the fundamental significance and historicity of the resurrection: Hans von Campenhausen maintained with Pannenberg that the historicity of Jesus' resurrection was critical for theology, and this view had become divisive within the 'Circle'.

Pannenberg obtained his doctorate under Edmund Schlink, a Lutheran theologian, in 1953. Schlink then advised him to study the theological and philosophical principle of analogy. Analogy is based on nomological universality: 'the same laws that govern the past and present will govern the future as well' (Peters 2006, 167). The question of analogy is important for Jesus' resurrection because it does not predict it. This remained Pannenberg's focus for the next seven years. Although his work was never published, he found it 'invaluable ... because it made me familiar

with the history of thought from the pre-Socratics to the modern period' (Pannenberg 1988, 15).

In 1955, still at Heidelberg University, Pannenberg was appointed *Privatdozent* in the department of systematic theology. That same year, he was ordained a church minister in the Lutheran Church.

Three years later, he left Heidelberg for the Wuppertal church seminary, where he became a professor of systematic theology. He moved again in 1961 to the University of Mainz. Three years later his *Jesus – God and Man* was published. It was an influential book showing how the historical Jesus was fundamental to Christian faith. In particular, Pannenberg argued for the acceptance of Jesus' historical Easter resurrection. Peters (1996, 366) considers this book a giant theological step that 'turned away from the existentialist theologians who had locked faith into a subjectivized and psychologized and privatised closet toward a more objective and public arena for theological discourse.'

In 1968, Pannenberg accepted the post of Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Munich. He had become a Continental theologian of repute with guest lectureships at Harvard, Claremont and Chicago. He lectured regularly and extensively in North America (Tupper 1973, 21-27) and made many return visits there over subsequent decades, even after he had officially retired in 1993. He published his *Systematic Theology* in three volumes between 1991-1996. His attention during the last years of his working life was focused on the resurrection and revelation.

Pannenberg has sweeping academic credentials, with training and experience in theology, history and philosophy. He considers theology 'a public discipline, subject to the same critical canons as are the other sciences' (Grenz 1988, 19). His work does not belong to any one traditional school of theological thought and this has been cause for both personal praise and criticism.

Buller (1996, 13) states that Pannenberg's theology is based '... on the assertion that God is the all-determining reality' and 'truth is one ... it is the anticipatory known goal toward which the open-endedness of human existence is directed' (Buller 1996, 17). Pannenberg believes in a fundamental unity throughout reality. He sees 'no radical disjunction between natural and revealed knowledge of God, between reason and faith' (Buller 1996, 2).

In contrast to Barth's methodology of theology from 'above,' Pannenberg's methodology is from 'below.' In other words, faith is dependent on history; for the Christian, the historical Jesus, specifically. Barth's approach may not do justice to the real man Jesus, and may underplay his Judaistic roots: Jesus known only from God's perspective remains veiled for us. Pannenberg's position may be compromised by the fact that Jesus is effectively viewed as man, not divine: his divinity must first be vindicated by critical historiography. Macleod (2000, 20) believes that this position is dishonest because 'before [Pannenberg] is a theologian he is a believer ... already looking at 'below' from 'above.' Pannenberg is, however, examining the evidence at his disposal. That he is a 'believer' before a 'theologian' begs the question: he presumably became a 'believer' after examining the historical evidence, although considering his biographical details, he may not have had the tools to fully evaluate the historical evidence at that time. Another argument against Pannenberg's from 'below' perspective is that the New Testament writers and the narratives that they wrote themselves start from 'above'

(for example, Jn. 1: 1-18 and Phil. 2: 5-11). These authors, notwithstanding, were also writing with some knowledge of the historical facts of Jesus' life.

Pannenberg's theological enterprise has been neatly summarized by Peters (1996, 364-365): '[h]ow can the Christian faith, first experienced and symbolically articulated in an ancient culture now long out-of-date, speak meaningfully to human existence today amid a modern world-view that is dominated by natural science, secular self-understanding, and the world-wide cry for freedom?'

Pannenberg, unlike Barth (Grenz 1988, 52), has been reasonably consistent in his views for almost four decades, and answers thus: modern self-understanding does not recognize that God is present everywhere; Christian theologians in dialogue with secular scholars should pursue the truth; the biblical claim that Jesus rose from the dead is historically true; Jesus' resurrection anticipates a greater, future event which is the eschatological inauguration of God's kingdom; God's future is presently reaching back into our present, enabling us to break with the past; divine love is presently preparing God's future kingdom. Lorenzen (1995, 17) notes, however, that with the passing of time 'the importance and significance of rational and historical verification is more cautiously asserted' by Pannenberg.

Pannenberg's theology has an argumentative rather than an apologetic thrust. His academic exchanges are characterized by an open, synthetic and creative approach. His interest is not so much to justify the assertions of faith before the bar of reason, as to communicate the Christian truth to the modern rational mind.

Pannenberg does not accept the pervasive modern view that Jesus' resurrection could not have happened, nor that it might not have a logical historical claim because it does not express analogy. Contingency, along with individuality, are themselves both fundamental historical qualities, and the transcendent God has the ability to act unexpectedly and unpredictably in creation to initiate new events. God did this when Jesus was raised from death. This contradicts Bultmann's view that the resurrection could not be an historical event because it did not fit into the chain of the closed causal nexus. Pannenberg has room for Jesus' resurrection occurring as a unique, unprecedented, historical event.

Others, suggests Pannenberg (1968, 97-98), may have a different understanding of reality and are convinced that 'the dead are not raised' (1 Cor. 15: 16). They cannot believe in Jesus' resurrection because they have been methodologically self-excluded. Contrariwise, those who maintain that there may be some truth in the apocalyptic expectation of the resurrection should contemplate the possibility of Jesus' resurrection when reconstructing events, so long as they are not confronted with overwhelming contradictory evidence (Pannenberg 1968, 97-98).

Pannenberg takes pains to lay a philosophical foundation for his resurrection methodology:

First, is the resurrection rationally conceivable? The possible historicity of Jesus' resurrection has been opposed because it supersedes the laws of nature and the conclusion is drawn that it is therefore historically impossible. Concerning the laws of modern physics Pannenberg advises caution: that the sum total of all natural laws will ever be known is unlikely; furthermore, a single event is never wholly determined by natural laws. 'Conformity to law embraces only one aspect of what happens. From another perspective, everything that happens is contingent, and the validity of the laws of nature is itself contingent' (Pannenberg 1968, 98). Natural science, therefore, expresses the overall legitimacy of natural law while at the same

time being unable to express itself over the validity of a single unique occurrence. 'The judgment about whether an event, however unfamiliar, has happened or not is in the final analysis a matter for the historian and cannot be prejudged by the knowledge of natural science' Pannenberg (1968, 98) claims.

Second, is it reasonable to consider the resurrection of Jesus as an event *of history*? Most definitely, asserts Pannenberg (1968, 99): 'There is no justification for affirming Jesus' resurrection as an event that really happened, if it is not to be affirmed as a historical event as such.' Even if the resurrection were the opening event of an eschatological 'new age,' it would be an historical event. For Pannenberg whatever is real is historical.

Third, does Jesus' resurrection fall within the ambit of the critical historian? Pannenberg (1968, 99) maintains that historical research is the only way we have of accessing historical events: an appeal to 'intuitive certainty' or 'the certainty of faith' cannot establish the historicity of a past event.

Thus, in Pannenberg's view, the resurrection can only be honestly studied historically: 'Whether or not a particular event happened two thousand years ago is not made certain by faith but only by historical research, to the extent that certainty can be obtained at all about questions of this kind' (Pannenberg 1968, 99).

Pannenberg has described the resurrection of the dead as a 'metaphor.' The metaphor compares the rising of the dead with the waking of a sleeper. It is a metaphor because the actual event of resurrection 'eludes everyday experience' and can 'therefore only be expressed indirectly ... through the image of waking from sleep which is taken from ordinary experience' (Pannenberg 1968, 74). The only way we can conceive of the resurrection, Pannenberg (1968, 75) writes, is through metaphorical language, 'using images of this-worldly occurrences.' Michalson (1980, 356-359), among his critics, asserts that Pannenberg's mention of metaphor in this context implies he harbours a Bultmannian understanding of the resurrection. I disagree with Michalson here: his suggestion is gainsaid by Pannenberg's accumulated publications on the subject. Furthermore, as Pannenberg (1968, 75) states, '[t]his is [merely] a metaphorical way of speaking about an event that is still hidden to us in its true essence.' These images, furthermore, are found among the oldest specific references we have in the Hebrew Bible for a resurrection hope: Isaiah (26: 19) couples waking with resurrection; Daniel (12: 2) states that many of those who 'sleep' in the dust of the earth shall 'awake' at the end of time. Pannenberg (1968, 78) enlarges by stating, '[w]e must recognize that prior to Paul there already was a tradition in which the expectation of the resurrection of the dead was cultivated and within which Paul himself stood. This is the hope for the future in postexilic Judaism that was derived from apocalyptic.'

Pannenberg indicates that Jesus' own resurrection was radically different from those he himself accomplished in the Gospels, such as the raising of the widow's son (Lk. 7: 11-17; Matt. 8: 5-13) and the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11: 38-44). In these cases we have the transient return to life of a corpse. Both would die again. In Jesus' case, however, his new life means something else: 'an imperishable life not limited by any death' something different from the life of 'ordinary organic structures' (Pannenberg 1970, 106).

Addressing the nature of the resurrection body, Pannenberg reminds us that Paul alludes to 'those who are asleep' in the context of the future resurrection (1 Thess. 4: 13 ff). The apostle also uses this imagery in other places when he refers to the dead (1 Cor. 11: 30; 15: 6, 51) and calls the resurrected Jesus 'the first fruits of

those who have fallen asleep' (1 Cor. 15: 20) (Pannenberg 1968, 74-75). For Paul and the early Church, resurrection meant the new life of a new body; not the return of life into a physical body that has died but not yet decayed. According to Paul, the future body would be a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15: 44, 53). Pannenberg (1970, 107) concludes that both 'Jesus and Paul with their ideas of the life of the resurrection thus stood in a specific tradition of the apocalyptic theology.' Furthermore, Paul's anticipation of this general resurrection became a premise for his acknowledging Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 16).

Pannenberg commences his justification for endorsing Jesus' bodily resurrection by considering an argument for it advanced by Paul. A list of witnesses of Jesus' resurrection is found in 1 Cor. 15: 3-11. Pannenberg believes that this stands as a proof, as commonly used in legal proceedings at that time. Paul also had reason to emphasize that most of the witnesses were still alive and could be submitted to interrogation (1 Cor. 15: 6). One can hardly question Paul's intention of giving a 'convincing historical proof by the standards of that time' writes Pannenberg (1968, 89), although he concedes that Paul did not write from a disinterested perspective.

Nowadays, this argumentation would be considered unsatisfactory, continues Pannenberg, without added explanation. By using modern historical methods, one garners further positive information about these past events for which there are now no living witnesses by turning to the literary and archaeological records. Can we, asks Pannenberg, using the modern methods at our own disposal, 'achieve what Paul achieved by his first-hand proof for his time: a proven knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus?' (Pannenberg 1970, 104)

Pannenberg considers the historicity of Jesus' resurrection the only genuine foundation for Christological statements made by the first Christians. Furthermore, Jesus' post-crucifixion appearances and the finding of his empty tomb are two further independent early Easter traditions (Pannenberg 1970, 108) that may be examined:

Pannenberg believes that the historical question of Jesus' Easter appearances is centred on Paul's letter, 1 Corinthians (15: 1-11). He considers the Gospel reports of Jesus' appearances unreliable, however. They 'have in their whole literary form such a strong legendary character that it is hardly possible to find any particular historical root in them' Pannenberg (1970, 109) says.

He believes that Paul's enumerating the appearances of the resurrected Jesus – chronologically to Peter, to the Twelve, to the five hundred, to James, to all the apostles, and finally to Paul himself – is Paul's way of proving the factuality of the resurrection by means of witnesses, most of whom would still have been available for questioning.

Pannenberg (1970, 109) stresses the need to evaluate Paul's report carefully. 1 Corinthians was in all probability written about 54-55 C.E., tolerably soon after the reported events. Most likely, it was written with knowledge Paul obtained during a Jerusalem visit made about 36 C.E., 'only six to eight years after the events' adds Tupper (1973, 155). Furthermore, Paul invokes a traditional appearance formula (1 Cor. 15: 3 ff) that was most likely used by Jesus' followers even before his Jerusalem visit: one considers that Paul would have conversed with these other witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and compared their experiences with his own.

Pannenberg believes that some of the early Christians did actually experience appearances of the risen Jesus. Reasons he gives for this belief are 'the age of the formulated traditions used by Paul and the proximity of Paul to the events' (Pannenberg 1968, 91). He is confident that these appearances were not invented and developed later as legends. In fact, Pannenberg continues, few current historians doubt that the post-crucifixion appearances of Jesus reported by Paul actually took place. What is in contention, he grants, is the real character of those occurrences. Paul presupposes in 1 Corinthians 15 that the appearances he witnessed were of the same character as those experienced by the other Apostles (Gal. 1: 12, 16). A more detailed report of Jesus' appearances to Paul was not written until thirty to forty years later in the Acts of the Apostles. Three different versions (9: 1-22; 22: 3-21; 26: 1-23) are recorded there, and at several particular points the reports are not in agreement. They have to be examined cautiously, and only so far as they harmonize with Paul's own statements.

Pannenberg uses Paul when attempting to determine the nature/substance of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances because, as reported by Tupper (1973, 155-156), the Gospels stress 'the corporeality of Jesus' risen body' reflecting 'a polemic against an incipient Docetism.' Pannenberg (1970, 110) summarizes his conclusions thus: there was an unmistakable relationship between the man Jesus and the appearance (1 Cor. 9: 1; Gal. 1: 16); Paul saw a spiritual (not physical) body near Damascus; in this encounter the appearance came from above, from 'heaven.' This accords with the fact that the earliest Christians did not seem to differentiate between resurrection and ascension (Phil. 2: 9; Acts 2: 36; 5: 30 f; Mk. 14: 62); the appearance to Paul may well have been a bright-light type of phenomenon; this appearance was connected with an audition, and what was heard corresponded with the meaning the appearance held for Paul at that time. With the possible exception of the fourth point (light phenomenon), Pannenberg states that all the recorded appearances of the resurrected Jesus were similar and the witnesses recognized Jesus of Nazareth each time. Grenz (2005, 189-190) finds the expression 'spiritual body' the most significant one used by Pannenberg to describe Jesus' post-resurrection state.

Harvey (1989, 335-336) underlines Pannenberg's apocalyptic understanding of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances: he considers Pannenberg the 'leading representative of those ... who hold that the disciples were deeply influenced by the climate of apocalyptic expectation characteristic ... of pharisaic Judaism in their day.' In Pannenberg's (1970, 111) words: 'That this strange reality could be understood and proclaimed as an encounter with one resurrected from the dead can only be explained by the ... apocalyptic expectation of a general resurrection of the dead, and that in the near future.'

Pannenberg vigorously rejects the suggestion that Jesus' appearances were 'visions.' He considers a vision a sort of illusion, an event rooted subjectively in the visionary, not corresponding with reality. In this sense, and in the psychiatric sense, he does not believe the Easter appearances of the resurrected Jesus were visions. Attempts to explain the appearances of the resurrected Jesus by the psychological and historical circumstances of those events, without accepting a specific reality of resurrection, have been made many times since David Strauss but the reality of the resurrection is always excluded a priori. 'The Easter appearances' states Pannenberg (1968, 96) 'are not to be explained from the Easter faith of the disciples; rather, conversely, the Easter faith of the disciples is to be explained from the appearances.'

The 'subjective vision hypothesis,' postulating that the disciples' enthusiastic imaginations induced Jesus' appearances, is therefore unconvincing to Pannenberg. The death of Jesus, without a doubt, severely stressed their faith but he does not believe this type of situation would result in the production of enthusiastic imaginations. The second basic difficulty with this hypothesis, maintains Pannenberg, lies in the number of appearances that were reported over a lengthy period of time. This militates against the likelihood of a chain reaction type of response. Furthermore, according to 1 Cor. 15: 8, Paul had one such encounter with the risen Jesus and it was Jesus' last known appearance. Later, Paul reported further 'visions and revelations of the Lord' (2 Cor. 12: 1) but this suggested, rather, that not all visions were the same (Pannenberg 1970, 112-113).

The account of Jesus' empty tomb is the only Easter tradition found in all three Synoptic Gospels. It is retained in its most original form in Mark 16. Pannenberg (1968, 102) states that dogmatic and redactional motives account for the deviations in Matthew and Luke (a point already noted by Reimarus) and these two Gospels should therefore be discounted for purposes of historical enquiry. Pannenberg thus questions the historical accuracy of these two Gospels' Easter tradition. He unequivocally maintains, nevertheless, that Jesus' tomb was empty post-resurrection (Pannenberg 1968, 100-106).

Paul does not mention the empty tomb anywhere, but, Pannenberg cautions, in apocalyptic texts of the resurrection it is held throughout that the earth will return the dead. Moreover, the situation for Paul was quite different from that of the early Christian community in Jerusalem. With no reliable testimony of an empty tomb, the early Christian community could not have survived in Jerusalem proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection kerygma 'could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned' asserts Pannenberg (1968, 100 quoting Paul Althaus).

The Jews, Pannenberg points out, actually agreed with their adversaries that the tomb was empty, but they explained this in their own way: they alleged the disciples themselves had carried away Jesus' corpse. This allegation strengthens the case for an empty tomb, although it tends to undermine the early Christians' message by implying that the disciples disposed of Jesus' body themselves (Pannenberg 1968, 101). Again, the Jews never reportedly prioritised the fact that the location of Jesus' tomb was unknown, a theory that has subsequently been postulated to account for Jesus' missing body. Above all, it is inconceivable, maintains Pannenberg (1970, 114), that disciples of Jesus, fresh from secreting away their teacher's corpse, should boldly proclaim his resurrection: the early Church's 'enthusiasm of an ultimate devotion in the face of all obstacles which leads to sacrificing one's own life could not arise out of [intentional] deceit.'

Pannenberg maintains that for purposes of historical judgment the relationship between the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances is most important. Nowadays, those that sustain a belief in Jesus' post-resurrection appearances generally accept that they took place in Galilee and that the empty tomb was found in Jerusalem. Possibly, the disciples set out for Galilee, expecting to meet Jesus after finding the empty tomb, but Pannenberg suggests that the disciples set out for Galilee when they realized Jesus' situation in Jerusalem was foundering and becoming a fiasco. They met the risen Jesus in Galilee about the same time that the women, who had remained behind in Jerusalem, discovered Jesus' empty tomb. Pannenberg finds this version more likely because the two traditions have always been considered distinct. The fact that the disciples were apparently absent at both Jesus' crucifixion

and burial, and initially showed no interest in the empty tomb (Mark 16), suggests they were not in Jerusalem. Contrariwise, why should the disciples have left Jerusalem for Galilee on finding the empty tomb, because Jesus apparently thought that Jerusalem would be the place from which God would oversee the world's imminent end? This apocalyptic image, suggests Pannenberg, is the very reason that the disciples returned to Jerusalem and established their first community there. '[I]t is very likely that the appearances and the discovery of Jesus' empty tomb happened independently of each other and became connected only in the later stages of the tradition' (Pannenberg 1970, 115). If the two traditions are independent of each other, the fact that they mutually complement one another is important for endorsing the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. It becomes 'historically very probable, and that' asserts Pannenberg (1968, 105) 'always means in historical enquiry that it is to be presupposed until contrary evidence appears.' If the two traditions are truly independent of one another, there then exists a compelling reason to show 'that the Easter events were not [the] imaginations of disturbed men, but were the starting point in a unique but real event which occurred prior to all human experience of it' Pannenberg (1970, 115) writes.

Pannenberg's (1970, 115) understanding of Jesus' resurrection may be summarized thus: it is 'an historical event, an event that really happened at that time.' The event itself is absolutely unique and 'we have no other name for this than the metaphorical expression of the apocalyptic expectation' (Pannenberg 1970, 115). The disciples were confronted by actualities whose reality could only be expressed by that 'symbolical and metaphorical expression of the hope beyond death, the resurrection from the dead' (Pannenberg 1970, 115).

The resurrection, Pannenberg (1970, 116) elaborates, does not mean corpse revivification: '[T]his would hardly be thinkable from the point of view of the natural sciences ... [and] although not entirely impossible theoretically, must practically be excluded.' He appears to be contradicting here his arguments for contingency, against analogy, but expands further: 'The 'concept of transformation is different, however, since we only know the starting point of the process. We speak of this on the basis of the appearances and, indeed, only in a metaphorical language' (Pannenberg 1970, 116).

Pannenberg, Tupper (1973, 285, n.85) expands, does not invoke the supranatural, which means 'above history,' nor the metahistorical or 'other than history' to describe the resurrection of Jesus but

he does mean something more than historical event. Perhaps it would be appropriate to categorize Pannenberg's interpretation as 'trans-historical' – historical because it really occurred as an event *within* history, trans-historical because it finally lies *beyond* the specificity of history (though it remains a historical event). Thus Jesus' resurrection is subject to but not *comprehended* by historical research.

'[T]he problem of the appropriateness of our language' states Pannenberg (Tupper 1973, 285 quoting Pannenberg from the German) 'proves to be similar to the problem of talking about God.'

Jesus' resurrection, for Pannenberg (1970, 116-117), has an absolute meaning - a meaning embracing humankind's final destiny: 'With the resurrection of Jesus, what for all other men is still to come has been realized ... [M]an has a hope beyond death through community with Jesus.' This doctrine does not add to the historical

events of Jesus' resurrection; 'it only makes clear the inner meaning of that event' (Pannenberg 1970, 117).

Pannenberg, states Tupper (1973, 159), acknowledges that the fact of Jesus' resurrection 'will remain permanently controversial' although its historicity is 'neither refuted nor without reliable evidence.' Tupper (1973, 159) alludes to Pannenberg's quest for the ultimate in life when he adds, 'Indeed, the issue is sharply disputed not only because it finally eludes the category of the historical but also because it cuts so deeply into questions about the nature of reality itself.'

Criticisms of Pannenberg's understanding of Jesus' resurrection has been grouped into four by Grenz (1988, 38-45):

Some uncertainty exists about his exact understanding of the nature of the resurrection. Pannenberg acknowledges the resurrection as an historical event, but does he accept God's supernatural intervention therein and fully endorse Jesus' literal bodily resurrection? The significance for him of the Gospels' Easter traditions is uncertain and he uses Paul's concept of the 'spiritual body' as a symbol without obvious meaning. Pannenberg has been charged with subscribing to a Bultmannian position by introducing the concept of metaphor to resurrection which places it into the category of 'meta-history' or 'special history.' These descriptions, however, are welcomed by Fuller (1972, 23) who maintains they become more genuinely representative of the real nature of Jesus' resurrection: '... [it] ... took place at the boundary between history and meta-history [other than history], between this age and the age to come ... an event beginning at the end of history, and extending into beyond-history.' Pannenberg's view that Jesus' resurrection was unique and incomparable with other *New Testament* revivifications has been questioned because the differences are not found in John's Gospel. Where does Pannenberg think Jesus' body is presently located? This is an important question because Pannenberg 'rejects the non-bodily continuation of human experiences after death – for reality is bodily reality' (Tupper 1973, 280). If Pannenberg maintains that Jesus will reappear in the future, then the future must somehow already exist, a dualism Pannenberg seeks to avoid. Tupper (1973, 280) believes that Pannenberg "has enmeshed himself in unnecessary difficulties in maintaining 'bodily' resurrection. If he accepts the tradition of the empty tomb can he at the same time rationally deny the revivification of Jesus' corpse?"

Pannenberg's postulated relationship between humanity's future resurrection and that of Jesus' has been questioned. Abraham (1982, 212, n.62) claims that '[Pannenberg] appealed to the future general resurrection of all men in order to make the resurrection of Jesus possible.' It is surely false, Abraham continues, to claim, as Pannenberg does, that a general resurrection in the future is an 'obvious philosophical truth [because] men cannot understand themselves as men without the conception of the resurrection from the dead.' Furthermore, postulating a future general resurrection does not warrant the corollary that an individual (Jesus) was raised three days after his death. Although I do not consider these facts essential to Pannenberg's thesis, I believe Abraham's inference here is valid.

Concerning methodology, it has been suggested that he uses the resurrection illegitimately to answer 'Lessing's ditch.' (This is a question posed by Lessing asking how any particular past historical event can be of significance to someone living today). Another criticism levelled at Pannenberg is that he overlooks the historiographical principle of 'best account.' The suggestion here is that because Pannenberg is unfamiliar with resurrection, other more commonplace explanations for the recorded events would be more plausible. Finally, methodologically,

Pannenberg has been censured for an over-dependence upon Paul: Jesus, the earliest Christians and Paul lived and died, as Evans (1970, 181) states, in the 'expectation of universal resurrection [which] already carried its meaning in itself, and Paul was able to read off from it the whole of the gospel he was subsequently to preach.' Paul had no need for an interpretation of the event. Most of the New Testament writers, however, such as the Evangelists, the authors of the deuteropauline epistles and Hebrews are second-generation witnesses who perceived Jesus' resurrection as a special event but also one that happened to him alone. Their anticipation of an imminent general resurrection was waning. Pannenberg's interpretation of the resurrection, therefore, is skewed along Pauline lines.

Pannenberg's understanding of Jesus' resurrection as an historical event has been criticized: Pannenberg's advocacy of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection is based upon two of the earliest Christian traditions: the appearances and the empty tomb. Possibly, Paul's experience of the risen Jesus does not demand his objective rising. Again, though Pannenberg considers the appearances part proof of the resurrection, Paul's contemporaries were only remembering certain 'appearances' – hardly solid scientific history. Ladd (1975, 138) concurs with Pannenberg that the subjective vision theory of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances is invalid, having been discredited by William Milligan in 1927. He observes that not all the appearances were equivalent to the one experienced by Paul. The Gospel accounts bear this out and Paul himself (2 Cor. 2: 1) speaks about other visions and revelations. Pannenberg's description of Jesus' appearances does not suggest a physical resurrection of the body. Furthermore, the appearances suggest experiences of the living Jesus rather than the accomplished resurrection event—they are not resurrection proofs.

For Marxsen the resurrection is a non-event. '... it is the disciples who, so to speak, create the visions by their faith' (Marxsen 1968, 30). In other words, Marxsen (1970, 139) states, 'The early church was interpreting a reality, the reality of personal faith.' He understands Jesus' post-resurrection appearances thus:

[I]t did happen that witnesses saw Jesus who was crucified ... more precisely ... [w]itnesses claim ... to have seen *him*, and it is just this vision which they express in different ways, partly already with incipient interpretation of what they saw ... they then, by a process of reflective interpretation, arrived at the statement: Jesus has been raised by God, he is risen. *At that time* they naturally also took the view that they were speaking of an event which had really taken place. They were now convinced that the resurrection of Jesus had taken place (Marxsen 1968, 30).

Pannenberg finds Marxsen's hypothesis 'abstractly artificial.' He grants that resurrection, as an interpretative category, seems logical because nobody observed the event. But how would Marxsen explain the fact that the wider apostolate, which was itself open to reflection, did not understand these appearances the same way? Furthermore, would Marxsen allow the possibility of alternative interpretative categories? "With Marxsen's method, could not the assertion that the appearances were the appearances of *Jesus* also be easily proved to be a secondary 'interpretative category'?" (Pannenberg 1967, 266). One implication of Marxsen's reasoning is that the whole question of the appearances could have been avoided had the witnesses of them not been reflecting on Jesus' death.

The tradition of the empty tomb may be even more problematic for Pannenberg than the appearances. Resurrection in the first century C.E. did not necessarily

imply an empty grave. This fact is borne out by the apocalyptic literature and by Paul who never once mentions Jesus' empty tomb. The question of the empty tomb is still much disputed.

Finally, Pannenberg's claim that the resurrection should be understood in the context of apocalypticism has been challenged. Ladd (1975, 124) suggests that there are significant dissimilarities between Paul's understanding of the transfigured 'spiritual body' and Jewish apocalyptic, specifically the Apocalypse of Baruch, as postulated by Pannenberg. Dependence cannot be established, he asserts, and continues,

It is far better therefore to conclude, against Pannenberg, that it was Paul's familiarity with the theology of glory, and his experience of meeting Jesus in his glorified state, that led Paul to his theology of glorified bodies in the eschatological resurrection (Ladd 1975, 125).

'[The apocalyptic tradition] would not account for Paul's conversion experience, nor for the resurrection faith' concludes Ladd (1975, 124). Post-resurrection, there have been other non-apocalyptic ways of understanding the resurrection. Many scholars have criticized Pannenberg's apocalyptic view of world history, maintaining that his special interest lies with the eschaton (the end) rather than with history and God's influence upon it (Grenz 1988, 44). Furthermore, many maintain that resurrection is not necessary for the apocalyptic outlook.

Pannenberg thus provides a different theological outlook to Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth. The difference is 'bound up with his emphasis on the historical facticity of the resurrection of Jesus' (Lorenzen 1995, 25) and this is why he is considered an exponent of the traditional interpretation of the subject. His understanding is firmly rooted in the rational tradition initiated by Reimarus and upheld by Paulus. He falls within the apocalyptic-eschatological interpretative trajectory advocated by Weiss and he has a radically historical approach to the scriptural account of the resurrection, based on Paul rather than the Synoptists. His overall outlook is evangelical.

Pannenberg is considered a consummate all-round scholar who has been involved in a serious lifelong quest for truth, but the radical historical approach to the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection has been taken yet one step further by John Dominic Crossan, as we shall see in the next chapter.

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN

Excavating texts and following the dogs

John Dominic Crossan (1934-) is a leading contemporary scholar of the historical Jesus. He is Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies at DePaul University (Chicago), former co-chair of the Jesus Seminar and former chair of the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature. Crossan is 'widely regarded as one of the most creative and knowledgeable Jesus scholars writing today' (Stewart 2006a, xiv). 'I am probably' Crossan (1996, xv) writes of himself 'the only scholar in the world who has spent an entire lifetime on the search for the historical Jesus.' His scholarship, encompassing all aspects of the historical Jesus, is informed by years of methodical, radical historical research. In the last thirty years Crossan has written twenty books on Jesus, four of them national religious bestsellers.

For Crossan, another true son of the Enlightenment, the very notion of Jesus' bodily resurrection is implausible. He has therefore used his refined skills of textual criticism to attempt an understanding and explanation of how the Jesus tradition developed: 'resurrection' is but one metaphor among others used 'to express the sense of Jesus' continuing presence with his followers and friends' (Crossan 1996, 153). He believes that Jesus' friends did not bury him: if he were buried at all, it would have been by his enemies in a shallow grave, subject to scavenging animals. Furthermore, the Gospel Easter stories do not describe one day's events but reflect 'the struggles of Jesus' followers over a period of months and years to make sense of both his death and their continuing experience of empowerment by him' (Crossan 1996, 153). The appearances of the resurrected Jesus were not about visions but are 'literary fiction prompted by struggles over leadership in the early Church' (Crossan 1996, 153). In Stewart's (2006b, 76-77) words, Crossan suggests that 'the resurrection narratives are parables *about* Jesus because of their similar structure to parables *by* Jesus.' Furthermore, how we respond in the course of our lives to Jesus' resurrection is more important to Crossan than whether it was a literal or metaphorical phenomenon.

Crossan grew up in Ireland and at the age of 16 joined the Servites, a Roman Catholic monastic order that goes back to the Middle Ages. Seven years later he became a priest. His penchant for scholarship was recognized early, and he spent years in higher study at Rome (Pontifical Biblical Institute) and Jerusalem (French School of Archaeology) as well as teaching in Chicago seminaries, colleges and universities.

In 1969, twelve years after his ordination, he was permitted to resign his priesthood and leave the Servite Order to marry. There was, according to Crossan (1996, xiv), another reason for this move: it was to avoid a developing 'conflict of interest between priestly loyalty and scholarly honesty.' He left the priesthood with 'a profound conviction that faith and fact, revelation and reason cannot contradict one another, unless the human mind has misunderstood either or both' (Crossan 1996, xiv) and joined the academic staff at DePaul University, Chicago, where he decided 'to concentrate on the historical Jesus' (Crossan 1996, xv).

While there, in 1985, Crossan established, with Robert Funk, the well known but controversial (because of its methodology) Jesus Seminar. Originally, this was a study group of some forty-five scholars interested in historical Jesus research that met over four days, twice yearly. The participating scholars have changed over the years but the seminar has continued. This group, after discussion, established corporate judgments concerning the authenticity, or otherwise, of Jesus' recorded words and deeds, by voting individually with coloured beads. For example, the casting of a red bead indicated that Jesus 'did' say or do it, or something very similar; a pink bead meant that Jesus 'probably' said or did it; a grey bead meant it was 'unlikely' and a black bead is a vote that indicated that Jesus 'did not' say or do it (Mack 1987, 32). The procedures, work and results of the Jesus Seminar are open to the general public and media attention is invited. Furthermore, anyone interested in major Jesus research is invited to participate in the group's dialogue.

In 1991, Crossan came to wider prominence with his publication of *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. It was a summary of his research at that time of Jesus' life, work and sayings and is considered today his major work. Some of his other notable publications include: *Four other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (1985); *The Cross that Spoke: the Origins of the Passion Narrative* (1988); *Jesus: a Revolutionary Biography* (1994); *Who Killed Jesus* (1996) and *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering what happened in the Years immediately after the Execution of Jesus* (1998). In 2001, he co-authored *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts*.

Crossan retired from DePaul University in 1995, but continues to travel, lecture and publish.

Crossan's understanding of the historical Jesus is based on the exegesis of biblical, non-biblical and postulated textual antiquities along with the findings of modern archaeology. In his view, 'the historical Jesus was ... a peasant Jewish Cynic' (Crossan 1991, 421). Different conclusions about Jesus, however, have been reached by other serious scholars: publications between 1967 and 1985 alone have suggested he was a political revolutionary (S. Brandon), a magician (M. Smith), a Galilean charismatic (G. Vermes), a proto-Pharisee (H. Falk), an Essene (H. Falk), a Galilean rabbi (B. Chilton) or an eschatological prophet (E. Sanders) (Crossan 1991, xxvii-xxviii). Crossan (1999, 5) believes these discordant conclusions result from methodological flaws, and states that appropriate method strictly applied 'is our one best hope for honesty.' He considers this 'stunning diversity [to be] an academic embarrassment' and attempts to avoid the same mistake by grounding his own theory and practice on a triad of historical social anthropology, ancient history and Jesus literature (Crossan 1991, xxviii).

For Crossan (1991, xxx) the literary problem in textual Jesus research is that if the Gospels are compared 'horizontally' rather than 'vertically,' 'it is disagreement rather than agreement that strikes one most forcibly.' Comparative modern research on the Gospels has, however, yielded results: extracanonical Gospels have been identified; scholars realize that material constituting the four intracanonical Gospels was deliberately selected for content as well as form; and both intra- and extracanonical Jesus sources are characterized by 'retention, development and creation;' discrepancies between accounts are primarily due, not to the caprice of memory nor variations in emphasis, but rather to deliberate, different theological portrayals of Jesus, and, Crossan (1991, xxx) concludes ironically, to a 'creative freedom [one] would never have dared postulate were it not forced upon [one] by the evidence.' This liberty experienced by those that transmitted the Jesus tradition

was activated and sustained by their belief in the living presence of their resurrected master.

Crossan has attempted to document the three layers of Jesus tradition (retention, development and creation) in a huge database of sources and texts over a period of more than twenty years. He has *catalogued* all major texts of the Jesus tradition, biblical and non-biblical, and then they have then been *stratified* in chronological sequence (for example, Crossan's First Stratum of Chronological Stratification covers the period 30-60 C.E. and lists thirteen texts, which include 1 Thessalonians, the Gospel of Thomas, the Egerton Gospel, Papyrus Vindobonensis Greek 2325, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Miracles Collection and the Cross Gospel) and *attested* 'in terms of multiplicity of independent attestation for each complex of Jesus tradition within those sources or texts' (Crossan 1991, xxxi). This data has been processed further by establishing a 'focus on the *sequence of strata* ... [on a] *hierarchy of attestation* ... [and a] *bracketing of singularity*' (where any unit only found once is deemed suspect) (Crossan 1991, xxxii).

Crossan (1991, xxxiv) does not claim a 'spurious objectivity' for his methodology because almost 'every step demands a scholarly judgment and an informed decision. [Rather, he is] concerned, not with an unattainable objectivity, but with an obtainable honesty' and he challenges his academic colleagues to accept his methodology or 'replace [it] with better ones.'

Crossan and Reed (2001, 6) have listed 10 exegetical discoveries they consider significant for elucidating aspects of the historical Jesus. Those bearing directly on Jesus' resurrection are: the 'dependence of Matthew and Luke on Mark [and] the *Q Gospel*,' the 'dependence of John on Mark, Matthew and Luke,' and the 'existence of an independent source in the *Gospel of Peter*.'

The *Gospel of Peter* is an extra-canonical Passion gospel but a complete version of it has never been discovered and thus its full contents and nature remain unknown (Crossan 1985, 125). Part of the *Gospel of Peter* (sixty verses) was found in a small codex recovered during the winter of 1886-1887 from an ancient Christian cemetery at Akhmim, on the banks of the Nile. Another portion (two and a half verses) was identified in 1972 on two smaller fragments among the Oxyrhynchus Papyri. The author of the gospel text is identified therein as Simon Peter, one of 'the twelve disciples of the Lord' and Andrew's brother (Crossan 1985, 128 quoting Gos. Pet. 14: 59-60). The *Gospel of Peter* was known by the second half of the second century C.E., at the latest. Scholars have divided the material into some sixty verses grouped into fourteen chapters (Crossan 1985, 130).

Its present content recounts the story of Jesus' passion, burial, resurrection and presumed apparition. Crossan (1987, 3-5) postulates that within the *Gospel of Peter*, which consists of six units, there exists a 'specific source,' the 'Cross Gospel,' comprising the first three of these units, namely 'Crucifixion and Deposition,' 'Tomb and Guards,' and 'Resurrection and Confession.' Significantly, he believes the Cross Gospel to be 'the earliest narrative of the passion and resurrection of Jesus presently available to us as well as the source of all the others which we have' (Crossan 1987, 3). The Cross Gospel, writes Crossan (1987, 5), 'was known and used by all four of our canonical gospels. It is, [therefore], not only *not* dependent on them but *they* are dependent on it.' Elsewhere, Crossan (1985, 133-134) names the Cross Gospel the 'Passion-Resurrection Source.'

Crossan's (1987, 9) thesis is 'that the three Cross Gospel units are the single and unique source of the passion-resurrection narrative, first, for Mark; second, along

with Mark, for Matthew and Luke; and third, along with the three synoptic texts, for John himself.' He does not exclude the possibility of another source for the resurrection narrative, but believes it is not necessary to postulate one: the differences in the resurrection accounts are quite adequately explained by editorial emphases alone. For example, the guards at Jesus' tomb are only found in Matthew who relies upon the Cross Gospel, rather than vice versa. If the guards are removed from Matthew's narrative, one achieves a Mark-like account; guards removed from the Cross Gospel leaves 'nothing' Crossan (1987, 11) writes, which happily accords with his proposition.

Expanding on this theme, Crossan (1985, 180) asserts that the similarities in the four Gospel passion accounts are explained by their common source in the Cross Gospel, whereas the exact opposite is found for the resurrection narrative. Although the Cross Gospel was the earliest tradition, it was unacceptable to Mark who moved it into the Transfiguration account (Mk. 9: 2-8), and inserted into Mk. 16: 1-8 the Women at the Tomb scene. Matthew, Luke and John were unwilling to end their narratives 'with the harsh negativity of the empty tomb' (Crossan 1985, 180) so they incorporated Mk. 16: 1-8 into their own accounts as Matt. 28: 1-8, Lk. [24]: 1-11 and Jn. 20: 1, 11-13. Then, each one proceeded individually with the apparition occurrences. Crossan (1985, 180) concludes: 'It is the acceptance or rejection of the Passion-Resurrection Source that accounts for the unity of the passion and the diversity of the apparition narratives in the four intracanonial gospels.'

Crossan (1987, 12) believes 'the tight narrative sequence and logic ... the textual identity' of the Cross Gospel is typical of a particular Jewish intertestamental genre dealing with resurrection, immortality and eternal life. These stories were characterized by themes of 'Rescue, Vindication and Exaltation' (Crossan 1987, 13) examples of which include stories of Joseph (Genesis 37-50), Esther, Daniel (3 and 6), 2 Maccabees 7 and Wisdom of Solomon (2 and 4-5). The exaltation in the first three occurred on earth, in life. This genre, maintains Crossan (1987, 12), was eventually 'influenced by Isaiah 52-53' and for the last two 'the persecuted righteous one [was] rescued, vindicated, and exalted up in heaven and in the next life.' Crossan (1987, 13) not only finds the evidence for this genre 'extremely persuasive' but he finds evidence of it also in Mark and suggests that the Cross Gospel narratives are modelled on 'persecution and vindication stories ... from pre-Christian materials in biblical, apocryphal and pseudepigraphical sources.' Crossan's views expressed above give some idea of the complexity and elaboration that so often characterizes his scholarship.

The fact that 'Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate' (Nicene Creed) is 'as certain as anything historical can ever be' Crossan (1996, 122) avers. He cannot imagine Jesus' disciples making up this story but believes the details in the gospel narratives 'are much more problematic [and] ... far, far less historically certain' (Crossan 1996, 122).

Hengel (1977, 87), in his treatise on crucifixion, notes that 'quite often' victims of crucifixion would not be buried and their rotting corpses would become food for scavenging animals such as dogs and crows. This occasioned the dishonour of non-burial, an ultimate and dreaded humiliation in antiquity that was actually part of the punishment. Crossan (1996, 123) endorses this view, although he adds that sometimes a body would be returned, on request, to the family. Edwards (1986, 1460), addressing primarily the medical aspects of Jesus' execution, corroborates Hengel's view about the usual fate of the victim's body after Roman crucifixion: '[I]t was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory

animals' but enlarges similarly that '... by Roman law, the family of the condemned could take the body for burial, after obtaining permission from the Roman judge.'

Crossan's opinion, however, is that Jesus was never buried as recorded in the Gospels: those accounts are unhistorical. He believes that Jesus was actually buried in an exposed shallow grave. 'The norm was to let crucifieds rot on the cross or be cast aside for carrion. The point was to deter lower-class violations of Roman law and order' (Crossan and Reed 2001, 246). Archaeology, Crossan (1994a, 127) states, has only uncovered the remains of one individual who had obviously been crucified. The implication is that we have no remains of the many thousands crucified by the Romans during the first century C.E. because scavengers devoured them totally. I wonder myself, however, how many skeletons we do actually have anyway from the hundreds of thousands who died there in that century.

Jesus' burial story was the product of 'an intense and understandable effort to avoid the stark horror of crucifixion's final act' (Crossan 1996, 143). The worst scenario imagined by his followers was that Jesus had been left hanging on the cross and exposed to wild animals. Somewhat better, was the thought that his enemies had buried him, even if only under a pile of stones. [The fragmentary *Gospel of Peter* (5: 15-6: 21) implies that his executioners buried him themselves (Crossan 1994a, 154-155)]. Better still, that an authority figure such as Joseph of Arimathea, a personage Crossan believes was created by Mark (15: 43), interred him (Matt. 27: 57 ff). That his loving friends, Joseph and Nicodemus (conceived by John) had regally embalmed and buried him (Jn. 19: 38-42) was the scenario that pained his followers the least and this became the developing tradition's terminus, Crossan concludes.

Not only does Crossan consider Jesus' 'empty tomb' unhistorical, he also doesn't believe Jesus' disciples ever knew where his body had been placed after his death because they had fled: '*Nobody knew what had happened to Jesus' body*' (Crossan 1991, 394). '[B]y Easter Sunday morning, those who cared did not know where it was, and those who knew did not care' (Crossan 1994a, 158). Crossan (1994c, 16) maintains that Jesus' early followers knew almost nothing about his crucifixion, death and burial: '[W]hat we have now in those detailed passion accounts is not *history remembered* but *prophecy historicized*.' 'Why should even the soldiers themselves remember the death and disposal of a nobody?' questions Crossan (1991, 394). But, I don't believe Jesus was a 'nobody' in Jerusalem on the eve of his execution. Besides, what then turned Jesus into a 'somebody,' an individual who subsequently engaged Crossan for life? Another reason why Crossan questions the veracity of the empty tomb is that Paul, the first writer to mention the resurrection, in 1 Corinthians 15, does not mention it.

That motives other than history were at work in the compilation of the Gospel accounts of the tomb and the Easter tradition is borne out, suggest Crossan and Reed (2001, 254), by the many inconsistencies that exist between them: Mark records no post-resurrection appearances, several of which are documented in Acts and the other Gospels; he believes that this omission unsettled Mark's early transcribers who then proceeded to append three different endings, each describing Jesus' 'risen apparitions;' descriptions of these 'resurrectional visions' in the Gospels differ considerably in number, location, chronology and content and diverse accounts are given of Jesus' final encounter with his followers. It is not impossible, Crossan concedes, that this may be explained by their lapses of memory and excitement level but the likelihood is that all these accounts of the risen Jesus are contrived.

What would the Jews in Jesus' time have understood by 'resurrection?' Crossan outlines the meaning of the word by tracing it back into history. During its first thousand years, Israel had no notion of afterlife, immortality of souls or bodily resurrection: the dead descended into Sheol, 'a place that was simply the grave writ large' (Crossan and Reed 2001, 256). Life, its rewards and punishments, referred to the here and now. During the 160s B.C.E. Antiochus Epiphanes, one of Alexander the Great's successors, attempted to incorporate the Land of Israel into his political kingdom. During the ensuing conflict, Jewish religious martyrs were created and the Jews increasingly pondered the conundrum, 'Where is God's justice when, in obedience to him, we die for affirming our faith but live by denying it.' Slowly the notion developed that '[s]omeday, somehow, sometime, someplace, there had to be a general bodily resurrection when the martyrs [and those who had lived just and righteous lives] would receive justice from their God' (Crossan and Reed 2001, 258). Thus, the concept of a future compensatory resurrection, an apocalyptic and corporate event, took root and developed.

This is what the majority of Jews at the time of Jesus would have understood by 'resurrection' maintains Crossan: not resuscitation, as in Lazarus' case; neither apparition, although in cases of grief, as experienced by Jesus' disciples immediately post-crucifixion, modern psychiatry considers this a familiar feature; nor exaltation/apotheosis as in the cases of Enoch, Elijah and Julius Caesar.

Paul believed that the 'general resurrection' had started with Jesus' resurrection. These two resurrections stand together, they are at different ends of the same process (1 Cor. 15: 12-20). Further intimations that these two were considered to have occurred contemporaneously are found in Matthew's Gospel (27: 51b-53) when, at Jesus' death, '[t]he earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.'

Crossan maintains that this concept of a corporate resurrection can also be traced beyond the Christian canon:

[T]hree men come out from the sepulchre, and two of them sustaining the other, and a cross following them, and the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but that of him that was led of them by the hand overpassing the heavens. And they heard a voice out of the heavens crying, "Thou hast preached to them that sleep," and from the cross there was heard the answer, "Yea" (The Gospel of Peter 10: 39-42 in Crossan 1985, 166).

The resurrected Jesus is asked by God, 'Have you preached to them that sleep?' that is, "have you proclaimed liberation to the just awaiting you below in Sheol. And the answer is, 'Yes'" (Crossan and Reed 2001, 265). Crossan (1987, 20) believes that the '*following cross* represents the holy ones of Israel who ... follow Jesus out of Sheol ... [And] the *speaking cross* is not the voice of Jesus himself but the voice of those who were sleeping.'

For us today, Crossan (1996, 156) suggests that 'resurrection is simply a word-picture of Jesus' continuing presence among his followers.' The *Gospel of Thomas*, a second century Nag Hammadi gospel, corroborates this idea in his view. In it, only one title is used throughout for Jesus: the '*Living Jesus*.' In this Gospel his followers 'do not speak of resurrection but of unbroken and abiding presence'

(Crossan 1994c, 163). They were experiencing him as God's wisdom on earth; he was empowering them still. In a sense, 'Jesus was still with them' as 'they struggled to find a way to express that powerful and empowering *presence* of Jesus' (Crossan 1996, 156). Crossan suggests that this 'way' was essentially the story of Easter.

Crossan thinks of Easter occurring over a period of months or years, not one day. He illustrates this idea using the Emmaus Road story (Lk. 24: 13-35). He does not believe the events described were literally true but 'it is *certainly* historical in the sense of describing a process *over time* that happened in the Christian community' (Crossan 1996, 158). The early believers came to understand that Jesus, the Living One, was helping them understand their scriptures. They read the Hebrew Bible and this hinted that Jesus might well have been God's agent on earth. They also experienced a sense of his presence and nearness when they ate together, a practice Jesus had encouraged. The closeness they felt to him became their empowerment by him. The Emmaus story, then, maintains Crossan, was symbolic of deepening Christian faith. It actually never happened but the process, nevertheless, was authentic.

Resurrection, claims Crossan (1996, 159), was only one way of describing the early disciples' conviction that Jesus was still present with them. He believes that this emphasis on 'resurrection' came from Paul. Paul was a Pharisee and as such, he would have believed that at the end of the 'present age' there would be a general resurrection of the righteous. Paul had interpreted his Damascus road experience of Jesus as the beginning of the general resurrection of the dead: Jesus 'has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died' (I Cor. 15: 16). His Pharisaic conviction occasioned him to write 'For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised' (I Cor. 15: 16) rather than 'If Jesus' grave is not vacant, our faith is vain.' Crossan implies that the notion of a resurrected Jesus was peculiarly Paul's. Peasant followers of Jesus in Galilee, on the other hand, 'knew Jesus' presence in their sore feet' and those 'scribes in Jerusalem were meeting him again in their study of scripture' (Crossan 1996, 160).

For Crossan (1996, 161) Jesus' resurrection is the divine empowerment which he imparted first to his early followers but which may now be received by 'anyone, anywhere in the world, who finds God in Jesus.' 'As far as I'm concerned' Crossan (1996, 161) writes, 'it has nothing to do, literally, with a body coming out of a tomb, or a tomb being found empty, or visions, or anything else. All those are dramatic ways of expressing the faith.'

Crossan's conclusions about Jesus' post-resurrection appearances are unanticipated. He does not believe they were visions, because then one would have expected associated phenomena such as blinding lights, heavenly voices and individuals being 'knocked to the ground' (Crossan 1996, 162). Jesus, furthermore, did not return from the 'unknown' with new insights and revelations, as might be expected. However, he will not completely discount the possibility of visions and trances because Paul, no less, experienced a vision, and visions and trances also happen in every religion.

What is important to Crossan (1996, 162), however, is '*who Jesus appears to*' because he believes 'these stories are dramatizations with a political purpose. And that purpose is to tell us who's in charge [which individual or group], now that Jesus is no longer personally present.' Crossan (1996, 162) uses the story of the race to Jesus' tomb by Peter and 'the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved' (Jn. 20: 1-10) to illustrate this point. The Beloved Disciple (John) outran Peter, reached

the tomb first and peered in. Peter then came up and actually entered the tomb. Crossan states that an older extant tradition had Peter reaching the tomb first, and for this reason John has Peter actually entering first. The Beloved Disciple, however, then went in himself, and 'he saw and believed.' In Crossan's (1996, 162) opinion, the story recorded thus in John indicates that the Beloved Disciple, within the community of early believers, had taken 'first place away from Peter.' Further on in John (20: 24-29) the Beloved Disciple is similarly portrayed ascendant over Thomas: Thomas intimated that he would only believe if he saw Jesus but '[b]lessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe' refers to the disciple whom Jesus loved. These, and similar extracanonical narratives found in the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Gospel of Thomas*, are informing us, not about historical fact, but about the rise of authority in the early Church. 'The trend is away from Jesus' egalitarian community towards investing authority ... in ... the Twelve ... or in specific individuals ... Already we're on our way towards a church led by a male hierarchy' (Crossan 1996, 164).

Crossan (1994a, 167) states that Paul's experience of Jesus on the Damascus road doubtlessly involved trance. This generic term embraces such states as '*ecstasy*, *dissociation*, and *altered states of consciousness*' (Crossan 1994a, 87). The three accounts of this incident recorded in Acts suggest to Crossan that Paul was in a dissociative state at the time: he was bitterly opposed to this growing (Christian) sect and, paradoxically, this dissociative experience caused him 'not just to stop persecution' of the early Christians, but to 'become the apostle to the pagans' (Crossan 1994a, 168).

Crossan maintains that Paul (1 Corinthians 15) was also following a profoundly political agenda when he first wrote about resurrection. He was attempting to prove his own apostleship and standing among the early Christian community. Luke states that when Judas' place among the Twelve Apostles was to be filled, they sought someone who had been among Jesus' close followers from the time of John the Baptist 'until the day when [Jesus] was taken up from [them] – one of these must become a witness with [them] to his resurrection' (Acts 1: 21-22). By these criteria Paul could not be considered an apostle. Therefore Paul, who regarded himself an apostle (2 Cor. 1: 1) must distinguish in 1 Cor. 15: 1-11 "between 'the twelve' and 'all the apostles,' for if there are but Twelve Apostles, he [would be] outside that charmed inner circle forever" (Crossan 1994a, 167).

Furthermore, according to Paul, Jesus appeared to three different groups of people: named leaders, such as Peter, James and Paul himself; leadership groups, which included the Twelve and the apostles, and a general company of people numbering over 500. Crossan (1994a, 169) states that '[t]hose stories, then, are primarily interested not in trance and apparition but in power and authority.' Paul was outlining the genesis of leadership rather than the rise of faith among the early believers.

Crossan (1994a, 174) finds the same principle operative in Luke's description (Acts 1: 1-4, 8, 12-14) of Jesus dealing with his followers, post-resurrection. Thus, he speaks only with the chosen Apostles, upon whom he confers authority and it is they who witness his ascension. The eleven are then named, starting with Peter, and later in Acts (1: 21-26) Matthias is appointed. Crossan finds here Luke's recognition of Peter's primacy, the ascendancy of the male Twelve and the cursory acknowledgement of others, some of them women.

'But the basic reality is that those whom Jesus empowered as healers and invited around an open table kept his vision and program alive, and continued to

experience his presence in that vision and program' (Crossan 1996, 165). That, essentially, for Crossan, is Easter.

In conclusion, concerning the passion and resurrection, Crossan (1994c, 149) states, 'First, the passion narrative arises from prophecy historicized rather than history memorized; second, there is only a single source for all our five accounts ... I find it now embedded in the *Gospel of Peter* and I termed it the *Cross Gospel*, to which others responded that it was the Crossan Gospel.'

Crossan (1999, 5) considers correct methodology the bedrock of sound academic endeavour: 'Method, method, and, once again, method' he writes. But it is this aspect of his work that has been most criticized, principally on theoretical grounds.

Bernard Scott acknowledges the value of Crossan's criteria of multiple attestation and stratification for interpreting data but states that some of his decisions concerning dating and data dependence/independence are questionable. A case in point is the Cross Gospel, 'a gospel that some might accuse Crossan of authoring' states Scott (1994, 26). He indicates that although numerous attestations and early stratification suggest authenticity, it is not guaranteed. Both criteria, moreover, may favour the 'atypical and useful' because 'memorable thoughts' characterize an oral culture (Scott 1994, 28). Crossan is an opponent of the criterion of dissimilarity or negative criterion. Proponents of this criterion maintain, at the risk of portraying an anomalous Jesus, that if the earliest recording of a saying is dissimilar to its other usage in ancient Judaism or the early Church it is more likely to be authentic. Differences exist between Crossan's 'clusters' and their 'core' in his inventories of topics and sayings. It is the 'core' whose authenticity Crossan judges: he traces the trajectory of a cluster but does not address its development. 'Is the core an illusion?' asks Scott (1994, 27) who goes on to ask whether this 'method properly [honours] the oral, and therefore temporary, nature of the Jesus tradition prior to the writing of the Gospels?'

Overall, Scott (1994, 26) intimates, Crossan's methodology 'does not produce automatic or unambiguous results' and may not be infallible. He warns that methodology may become a distorting straightjacket but believes, nevertheless, Crossan has handled a significant volume of data well. He has rearranged it in an 'interesting and innovative new configuration' ... '[he] has not imposed but discovered' (Scott 1994, 30).

Frans Jozef van Beeck considers the early *oral* tradition important for hermeneutical theory. He believes that unresolved tension is part of the dramatic process; logical inconsistency and mixed metaphor are tolerated in oral performance. 'Texts for oral performance rely on acoustic synthesis; [they] need not [to be taken apart] to determine their meaning' (van Beeck 1994, 92). He maintains that 'the hermeneutics of suspicion are far less appropriately applied to documents written down, *for community use*, to support oral performance than to documents intentionally composed for purposes of persuasion or propaganda' (van Beeck 1994, 90). There are differences between the oral and written traditions: 'Live formulary speech is precritical [having] no interest in differentiating between prophecy ... realistic narrative, and historical fact' he states (van Beeck 1994, 92) contradicting Crossan's understanding of this narrative development: 'Hide the prophecy, tell the narrative, and invent the history' (Crossan 1991, 372). He charges Crossan with overstepping the fringe of historical scholarship: the bounds of an 'hermeneutic of suspicion' have been exceeded by Crossan who is now, in fact, alleging fraudulence by the Gospel writers: 'Instead of befriending the texts, which are [Crossan's] allies, [he] has turned against them. If the sole function of

prophetic narrative about ... [Jesus'] burial [for example] is to fill a gulf of ignorance about the facts, it begins to sound hollow' (Van Beeck 1994, 92).

If the narrative can be based on total ignorance, as intimated, van Beeck suggests that any reconstruction therefore becomes hypothetically impossible. Crossan postulates silence about the actual details of Jesus' burial but then declares (1991, 390-391), on the strength of one reading in Philo, (alleging there existed no precedent for granting the family of an executed individual his body for burial, unless he had died during a Roman festival occasion) that 'those who executed Jesus must have buried him in an unidentified grave.' Van Beeck (1994, 92) considers this sweeping conclusion by Crossan 'learned fantasy' rather than 'reconstruction.'

Another example of Crossan's possible misinterpretation of the accounts is his understanding of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. Crossan believes that they were written to establish apostolic authority among the early Christians. The view that the disciples' initial understanding of Jesus' resurrection (that Jesus' influence continued to inspire them) had been replaced by another (his appearances, no less) that had been foisted upon them, 'obliterating, *in less than two decades*, a much less striking belief ... that the significance Jesus had in life continues even after his embarrassing death, in anticipation of an eventual *parousia*' (van Beeck 1994, 92) is implausible. Van Beeck finds such a source reading incredible because the believing community was unlikely to have been quite so dim-witted to be so duped.

Crossan makes free use of non-canonical material. He does not discriminate between canonical and extra-canonical material, and rates both legitimate sources. Those who lived during the first three centuries after Jesus, however, did not: they recognized the 'necessity of building squarely upon what was undisputed' Walls (1962, 881) states somewhat simplistically. Van Beeck (1994, 84) detects a tendency for Crossan to assign later dates (that is, limited authority) to canonical documents and earlier dates to extracanonical writings: a 'bias in favour of the underdog' perhaps?

Charles Quarles (2006, 106-120) questions the conclusions Crossan reaches concerning *The Gospel of Peter (GP)* and the postulated three earliest units of it, comprising the hypothetical Cross Gospel. He states that Crossan's interpretation has not been widely accepted by scholars: Petrine dependence on Joshua 10 (narrative motifs) are not shown; there is no conclusive evidence that Matthew was dependent on *GP*, in fact the opposite was much more likely; popular second century compositional strategies can explain how the *GP* was derived from the canonical Gospels, and other characteristics of the *GP* (its anti-Jewish and pro-Roman sentiments, for example) suggest that it is a 'second-century work.' Quarles (2006, 119-120) concludes that it is unlikely the *GP* is the one source for the Gospel Passion and resurrection narratives, but rather 'the canonical Gospels are the earliest record ... these contain narratives based on eyewitness accounts ... as the internal evidence suggests ... [these] earliest narratives ... may be viewed as prophecy fulfilled rather than prophecy historicized, and speculation that Jesus was not even buried, much less raised, is groundless.'

I believe that Crossan (1998, xvi-xx) is not consistent concerning his understanding of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. He maintains that formal psychiatry accepts that up to 80% of recently bereaved individuals experience a sense of the 'presence' of the lost one: the phenomena of voices heard and images seen may last more than a year and occur more commonly in women.

Hallucinations are pathological but '[t]rance and ecstasy, vision and apparition are perfectly normal and natural phenomena' (Crossan 1998, xviii). Having said that he continues, '[I]t is quite likely that none of [the] gospel accounts is describing visions at all. What happened to Paul was certainly a vision, but [the] gospel accounts are more about establishing an authority than about receiving an apparition' (Crossan 1998, xx). Is Crossan suggesting that the disciples experienced the symptoms sometimes normally associated with grief? Or is he postulating that the gospel accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances are rather to do with the entrenchment of apostolic prerogative? The one is a far cry from the other. What Crossan also intimates is that Paul's vision differed from that experienced by the disciples. The likelihood that Jesus' followers did in fact see him, as traditionally believed, is not discussed. Crossan (1994b, 4) clearly indicates elsewhere, however, the suggestion he favours: 'I hold that that those final chapters in our present gospels have nothing whatsoever to do with the *origins of Christian faith* but have everything to do with the *origins of Christian authority*.'

That the Easter gospel texts, chapter after chapter, compiled some 40-60 years after the events they describe, should focus on aspects of apostolic authority, does not ring true to me because Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospels, put a premium on service, humility and self-effacement (Mk. 9: 35, for example). I do concede, however, that it may not have involved just the apostles, but also communities that were claiming the authority of various apostles for themselves. Crossan may have erroneously taken a reductionist position about Jesus' post-resurrection appearances because the tradition is more complex than what he has portrayed.

I sense an intellectual arrogance about some of Crossan's conclusions. He writes, for example:

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul begins by enumerating all the apparitions of the risen Jesus. But, having recited them in 15:1-11, he never mentions them again throughout the rest of the argument in 15:12-58. The reason is quite clear. The Corinthians knew all about visions and apparitions and would not dream about denying their validity. Of course the shades return from below with visible and even tangible bodies. Of course the immortals, born of human and divine parents and assumed among the gods and goddesses after death, return from above with visible and even tangible bodies. Of course the gods and goddesses assume bodies to contact mortals, to make love, to make war, to make conversation. But those are seeming-bodies, play-bodies, in-appearance-only bodies. They are not made from flesh and ... (Crossan 1999, 43).

It is not 'quite clear' to me why Paul did not mention again from 1 Cor. 15: 12-58 the apparitions of the risen Jesus that he had already enumerated in verses 1-11? Crossan's judgment pleads for less certitude. Scholarship itself has limits. As van Beeck (1994, 85) states: '... to decide that the data are too slender to support firm conclusions is a genuine (if largely unsung) form of understanding.' Overall, van Beeck (1994, 97) believes that Crossan's historical reconstruction 'while ingenious, does strain the bounds of reasoned interpretation ...'

Crossan maintains that Jesus was undoubtedly crucified, but suggests that the details of this story in the Gospels are suspect. On the other hand he finds that the burial stories, the findings of the empty tomb and the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus are essentially untrue because the historical evidence for Jesus' proper burial is highly improbable and therefore a proper resurrection is also unlikely. Crossan's explanation is somewhat inconsistent: Jesus was not decently buried yet

we are informed by Crossan himself, and others, that sometimes the corpse of an executed individual would be returned to his family for burial. That 'nobody' knew what became of Jesus' body seems unlikely. Not only did he have close friends, he also had enemies, all of whom would have had some interest in the fate of his body after his high-profile public execution. That the burial tradition should close, portraying Joseph and Nicodemus interring Jesus in a private tomb because that scenario 'pained them least,' is unconvincing. William Craig (2006, 144) goes further, stating that the 'historicity of the burial narrative, which is recognized by the majority of New Testament historians today, is a dagger in the heart of Crossan's scepticism.'

The history of the probable site of Jesus' burial spot (the present Church of the Holy Sepulchre) has been researched and its likely authenticity upheld (Theissen and Merz 1998, 501-502). Crossan and Reed (2001, 248) themselves state that 'the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is one of the few Christian holy sites with any credibility.' In view of Crossan's understanding of Jesus' burial, I find this statement incongruous.

Crossan also bases his view that the empty tomb is unhistorical on his reading of the extracanonical Cross Gospel: they are typical, he believes, of a particular genre of Jewish intertestamental literature. He considers, by implication, the Gospel authors historically unreliable, if not plainly fraudulent. He changes tack again to explain Jesus' recorded post-resurrection appearances: metaphorical stories dealing with the establishment of a hierarchy of authority among the early Christians (Crossan 1996, 162). I find his views inconsistent and hardly persuasive because, having judged the crucifixion 'as certain as anything historical can ever be' (Crossan 1996, 122), he considers the Gospel burial accounts suggestive of a period-specific literary genre, and Jesus' appearances, (mere sentences later), the result of communal politicizing.

Jeffrey Carlson (1994, 38) points out that Crossan himself acknowledges that 'his reconstructed Jesus is an interpretive construct, a matter of probability and not certainty ...' Crossan is an archetypical modern scholar, situated within the rationalistic tradition, but strongly identified with the radically historical school. In spite of his years spent in the Roman Catholic priesthood, his outlook is not traditional.

Crossan is a respected academic who has assembled a massive database of biblical, apocryphal and secular texts during a lifetime of historical Jesus study. I do not believe, however, that he is an impartial scholar concerning Jesus' resurrection. He has become another modern apologist for the denial of a real, historical resurrection because, fundamentally, he disallows that possibility.

N.T. (TOM) WRIGHT

Tertia die resurrexit a mortuis - traditional Christian belief

During the second half of the twentieth century the movement known as Evangelical Christianity became a major force in Christendom. This movement is characterized by its belief in personal conversion, its maintenance of traditional Protestant church doctrines, and a strong commitment to the divine authority of the Bible. Along with the growth of Evangelical Christianity, particularly among the European and North American middle classes, there has developed a strong intellectual tradition focusing on the academic study of the Bible. One of the recognized and most prolific of these New Testament Evangelical scholars is N.T. (Tom) Wright (1948-), currently the Church of England Bishop of Durham.

I have chosen Tom Wright, a senior member of the Christian clergy, as apologist for the traditional Christian understanding of Jesus' resurrection because he has written extensively and recently on the subject, and is in ongoing published academic dialogue with J.D. Crossan.

Besides his pastoral duties, Wright is presently writing the fourth volume (*Paul*) of a projected six-volume series, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*. Volume three, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, a tome of 700 pages, was published in 2003. In it, by systematically confronting and studying evidence from the first two centuries C.E., Wright upholds the traditional Christian view that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead. He begins by discussing whether Jesus' resurrection is accessible to historical enquiry and ends by outlining the implications our understanding of the resurrection has on our world-view and praxis. Wright is nothing if not methodical and from beginning to end tackles, somewhat imperiously at times, assertions and claims that do not accord with his own understanding. He reciprocates with the latest scholarship and readily acknowledges the difficulties and uncertainties resurrection study faces.

Wright was born in Morpeth, Northumberland. His father was a businessman, and he received his tertiary education from Oxford University – BA (1971), MA (1975) and DPhil (1981). He has taught at the Universities of Cambridge, McGill (in Montreal, Quebec, Canada) and Oxford. He belongs to the Church of England, and was Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey before being appointed dean of Lichfield Cathedral in 1993. As Bishop of Durham he is the third most senior clergyperson in the Church of England (Peacock 1998, 428-429). Among his many publications are found *The Original Jesus* (1996), *What Saint Paul Really Said* (1997) and *The Climax of the Covenant* (1992). He is also the author of the For Everyone commentary series. Robert Stewart (2006a, 2) describes Wright as a 'committed critical realist.'

Wright (2003, 588) maintains that for 'many years' a broad, non-traditional, consensus about the Easter narratives has existed among 'many critical scholars from various backgrounds.' Bultmann (*History of the Synoptic Tradition*), James Robinson (*Jesus from Easter to Valentinus*) and Gregory Riley (*Resurrection Reconsidered*) would be recognized representatives of this accord that has come to dominate scholarly theological discourse: what happened first, it holds, was a belief

in the exaltation of Jesus. 'Easter legends' then developed around Jesus' appearances and the empty tomb. The first gospel account of these events was Mark's. His Easter narrative was

short and mysterious, deliberately stopping with the women being so afraid that they said nothing to anyone. There are no actual appearances of the risen Jesus, and no announcement by the women, even to the disciples. All we have is an empty tomb (introduced into the tradition late in the day as an apologetic motif connected with these recently invented 'Easter legends') and an angel who says that Jesus will be seen in Galilee (Wright 2003, 588).

Matthew's account followed Mark's. In Matthew 28, Jesus appeared briefly to the women, and later, to the disciples in Galilee. Jesus' final words to his followers, in Matthew (28:18-20), were used to close themes addressed earlier in this gospel. This broad 'modern consensus,' Wright continues, then advances an hypothesis concerning further developments in the narrative: Luke and John addressed the question whether Jesus was really human or only 'appeared' to be so, so-called docetism. It is 'assumed,' Wright states, that this is the reason these two gospels emphasized the physicality of the risen Jesus by reporting his breaking bread, expounding scripture, inviting Thomas' touch and cooking for the disciples on Galilee's shore. Second, a problem had been created by the need to harmonize the initial notion of Jesus' exaltation with the subsequent stories of the empty tomb and his appearances. Thus, "there are invented, around the same time and in the same texts as the anti-docetic material, stories of an 'ascension' which affirms both the initial embodied resurrection and the exaltation, which is now seen as a second stage" (Wright 2003, 589).

Third, the modern consensus believes that the early church faced questions of rival claims for authority within its ranks, and stories developed, setting, for example, the men against the women, Peter against John, and Thomas against the rest. Matthew, Luke and John therefore do not give us a good description of the Easter events but 'rather put us in touch with the theology, exegesis and politics of the early church' (Wright 2003, 589).

Finally, as we have seen, Crossan considers the *Gospel of Peter* 'the major source for the canonical accounts' of the resurrection (Wright 2003, 589).

Wright, however, disagrees with this explanation of developments. He insists that any honest consideration of Jesus' resurrection must be primed by understanding what Jesus' contemporaries understood by 'resurrection.'

The Hebrew Bible 'mostly denies or at least ignores the possibility of a future life, with only a few texts coming out strongly for a different view' (Wright 2003, 129). Dan. 12: 2-3 is one such text. Resurrection had two basic meanings during the second-Temple period and in both cases the referent was concrete. It alluded to the restoration of Israel, where the term was used metaphorically. Here, it indicated socio-political events and implied fresh creation and/or covenant restoration. It also referred to human bodies, where resurrection denoted re-embodiment and was understood literally (Wright 2003, 204). All God's people would be resurrected "at the very end of 'the present age,' the event which would constitute the 'age to come'" (Wright 2003, 205).

Wright maintains that the Jewish second-Temple period literature did not confuse bodily resurrection with any form of spiritual resurrection. Resurrection referred to

the second stage of post-mortem existence, not the immediate destination upon death: "Resurrection ... meant life *after* 'life after death': a two-stage future hope, as opposed to the single-stage expectation of those who believed in a non-bodily future life" (Wright 2003, 130). It was 'the *reversal* or *undoing* or *defeat* of death, restoring to some kind of bodily life those that had already passed through that first stage [of death]' (Wright 2003, 201). Thus, the biblical exaltations of Enoch (Gen. 5: 24) and Elijah (2 Ki. 2: 11) were not considered resurrections. Neither had resurrection anything to do with phantoms, spirits or ghosts.

With time, the notion of resurrection came to be more generally accepted: during Jesus' lifetime a majority of Jews believed in some sort of resurrection or at least knew that that was what was being taught. (It is most unlikely, for example, that Herod Antipas hearing about Jesus and imagining John the Baptist 'raised' (Mk. 6: 14-16) should have supposed him a ghost.) Resurrection-talk, Wright concedes, was not specific about details at that time: pre-70 C.E. texts did not discuss the future nature of the resurrected body, nor how it might differ from the original one. Later, this continuity/discontinuity inconclusiveness became 'one of the striking contrasts between mainstream Jewish belief' and the resurrection convictions of the early Church recorded in the New Testament (Wright 2003, 205).

The terms 'resurrection' and 'immortality' were, and sometimes still are, used interchangeably and incorrectly, Wright maintains. Jews of the second-Temple period who believed in resurrection considered the already dead alive somewhere, somehow awaiting resurrection. 'Whether we call this state 'immortality', or find another word to indicate a continuing though disembodied existence, is itself a delicate question' Wright (2003, 130) adds. 'Immortality' rather implies that the individual somehow continues to live after death because there has always been within him/her, Plato-like, an indestructible, immortal element, sometimes called the soul. The biblical writers, however, believed that ongoing existence did not depend on innate human characteristics, but on God. Although the nature of the resurrection body was conjectural, "[r]esurrection' meant embodiment; that was equally so for the pagans, who denied it, as it was for the Jews, at least some of whom hoped for it" (Wright 2003, 694).

Discounting the historical meaning of words such as 'resurrection,' I believe it is somewhat immaterial what pre-crucifixion views Jesus' contemporaries had on the subject. Their understanding and general expectations then are as likely to confuse us now, as enlighten us, because they may have been wrong. In fact, Wright's understanding that the resurrection transpired as was anticipated, I consider a point soliciting caution rather than validation.

Chronologically, Paul is the first to document Jesus' resurrection. He does so in 1 Thess. 4: 14 and 1 Cor. 5: 3-8, dated, respectively, 50 and 55 C.E. These epistles antedate the four gospels, the *Book of Acts* and the later *Gospel of Peter*. Paul's understanding of resurrection in general, and of Jesus' resurrection in particular, bears critically on our subject. His understanding of resurrection was that of the Pharisaic party: he believed 'in the future bodily resurrection of all the true people of the true God ...' (Wright 2003, 372).

Paul, according to Wright (2003, 372), held two additional facts as 'mutations within the Jewish worldview.' The Messiah's resurrection would occur first, and be followed, at the 'parousia,' by that of his people - a divided resurrection. Further, bodily resurrection would involve transformation: changed bodies, 'transphysical' ones, still physical but essentially different (Wright 2003, 477-478) would supplant the old dead and decaying ones. Wright (2003, 373) also notes that

Paul did use the term 'resurrection' metaphorically when referring to aspects of Christian life such as baptism, holiness and renewal of the 'inner human being': this was not, however, a "move towards the later Gnostic use of 'resurrection' language to denote a spiritual experience understood within an ontologically dualistic world-view." Paul, Wright (2003, 374) states, made many statements about resurrection then and in the future, but he consistently maintained a 'firm and sharply delineated belief in a past event, the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.'

Wright (2003, 587) makes several assertions concerning the Easter stories:

[W]hatever we think of these stories, it is clear that they were told and retold, and finally written down, within the ongoing life of the early church, and it is therefore important that we come to them having acquired as clear an understanding as possible of what the early church seems to have believed about the resurrection in general and that of Jesus in particular.

Unlike Bultmann, for example, who believes the gospel narratives arose as a progression from an early tradition, Wright (2003, 679) holds that 'each evangelist has told the story in his own way.' They have retold these primitive stories 'in such a way as to form a fitting climax to [each one's] particular book' (Wright 2003, 679). The evangelists have been free to reshape the stories to bring out what was important to them ... what remains remarkable is that the 'basic outline remains so constant' (Wright 2003, 680). There is no indication that these stories were created at a significantly later date for apologetic reasons. Each of the evangelists 'in their very different ways, believed that they were writing about events that actually took place' (Wright 2003, 680).

Wright (2003, 682) believes that the essential resurrection stories 'though they have been skilfully shaped and edited by the four evangelists, retain simple and very early features, features which resist the idea that they were made up decades later ...' In fact, Wright (2003, 680) states

If you were a follower of a dead Jesus, in the middle of the first century, wanting to explain why you still thought he was important, and why some of your number had (inexplicably) begun to say that he had been raised from the dead, you would not have told stories like this. You would have done a better job.

Wright maintains that the Easter narratives are difficult to categorize by the normal rules of form criticism, and they hold surprises for the discerning scholar. For example, there is little quotation from the Old Testament by any of the three synoptists, though Paul mentioned that the events happened 'in accordance with the scriptures' (1 Cor. 15: 4). The broad consensus view holds that the stories were developed over time as the evangelists studied the Hebrew Bible and modified their writing accordingly. It is surprising, then, that the resurrected Jesus is not depicted along the lines of resurrected individuals mentioned there (e.g. Dan. 12: 2-3). Jesus is not detailed 'like the stars' nor does he 'shine like the brightness of the sky.' (This portion of the Hebrew Bible, however, does not actually refer to individuals, but to God's people). He is depicted rather in an unusual way: he ate fish and could be touched; he appeared and disappeared at will; his companions did not always recognize him and he was finally taken up into heaven. This was not a consistent anti-docetic position. Further, in the gospel accounts of the resurrection no mention is made of any possible future resurrection, or life-after-death hope, for Jesus' followers.

Wright (2003, 610) suggests that the gospel writers' lack of speculation about the likelihood of post-mortem existence for Christians, who in the mid-first century C.E. were being increasingly persecuted and killed, is a telling point against the likelihood that they wrote these narratives as a way of turning into myth the growing belief that Jesus' resurrection was the model and the means of his disciples' future hope. Each evangelist wrote a different story but none of them touched on this theme. (Wright may be overstating the case here, because, apart from the Neronian persecution in 64 C.E. there is not much evidence for the murder and execution of Christians, not even in the Book of Revelation, written about 95 C.E. Traditionally, eleven of the Apostles were martyred (Thompson 1964, 241) but little is actually known about their final years. James the son of Zebedee is believed to have been the first to suffer martyrdom (Acts 12: 1-2) at the hands of Herod Agrippa I, about 44 C.E. (Hagner 1992, 617); Peter likely reached Rome, where he was martyred and buried (Donfried 1992, 263); the *Acts of Thomas* reports Thomas's martyrdom in India (Collins 1992, 529); Andrew was crucified in Patras, and died after preaching from his cross to the assembled townspeople for three days (Priour 1992, 244); Matthew's death is still contentious. The Church has long revered him as a martyr, the most influential tradition being that he died in Ethiopia (Newport 1992, 643-644). Nothing reliable is known about Matthias, Bartholomew, James the son of Alphaeus, Judas the son of James, Philip and Simon the Zealot). The stories are rather about Jesus' vindication, 'the validation of his messianic claim, and the commissioning of his followers to act as his heralds, announcing to the world its new, surprising, but rightful Lord' (Wright 2003, 604).

Wright considers it most unexpected that Mary Magdalene along with the other women were portrayed in the gospels as being the first witnesses of the empty tomb. If the Easter narratives were late creations (some 20-40 years after the events) it is inconceivable that women would have been introduced dishonestly as witnesses. A woman's testimony in Israel was (and in Orthodox and Hasidic Judaism today, still is) legally invalid, and the fact that the evangelists did not expunge this detail from the record suggests that this part of the story, at least, was true. Furthermore, if the resurrection stories were late inventions, and personages were introduced by the writers to legitimise them as leaders in the early church, it would be unlikely, for example, that we would read so little of James, Jesus' brother, who later became leader of the Jerusalem church.

The reality, Wright (2003, 610-611) maintains, is that the early Christians believed that something unusual had happened to Jesus. Bodily, he was alive but physically he was changed. Paul had provided a broad, theological framework for the well-known resurrection narratives in 1 Corinthians 15; Matthew, Luke and John had recorded the accounts as they knew them from 'very early oral tradition, representing three different ways in which the original astonished participants told the stories' (Wright 2003, 611). 'These traditions have received only minimal development, and most of that probably at the final editorial stage, for the very good reason that stories as earth-shattering as this, stories as community-forming as this, once told, are not easily modified. Too much depends on them' (Wright 2003, 611).

In places (for example, the narratives about the risen Jesus in Matthew, Luke and John) there is little consistency in the accounts, and where there is consistency, the stories are told in different ways. This is what typically happens in the oral stage, rather than literary stage, of tradition development. 'The surface inconsistencies between Mk. 16: 1-8 and its parallels' Wright (2003, 612) maintains '[are] in fact a strong point in favour of their early character.' The later they were written, the

more likely it is that the inconsistencies in the records would have been edited out. Wright's assumption here sounds rational, but it may not be based on any hard evidence of studies in tradition modification at the oral and/or literary stages.

There are, however, significant agreements between the four Easter narratives: the key events occurred early on the third day, the first day of the week. All the gospels have Mary Magdalene at the tomb. Other women were also there. Moving Jesus' tombstone was problematic, but this difficulty was solved without the women's involvement. An unusual stranger or angel conversed with the women. Mary Magdalene met Jesus and she, with some of the other women, proceeded to report this to the men. Peter and another disciple then set out for the tomb to verify the report of its emptiness.

Wright believes two realities may be considered historically secure concerning the first Easter: the empty tomb, and the encounters with a risen Jesus. These together provided the necessary impetus for belief in Jesus' resurrection. Besides the resurrection, Wright does not believe there is another explanation for these two phenomena, nor another explanation for early Christians' belief. Crossan, for one, has offered other explanations but in my view, as we have seen, I do not consider them overly credible.

Concerning the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus: the ancient world was quite aware that visions and appearances of the recently deceased did occur. There are also modern examples of people who have seen a friend or family member in a room with them, only subsequently to discover that they had died at that time (Wright 2003, 69, n.15). It is conceivable that the disciples did experience such visions, but it is easier to first invoke a mental or dietary imbalance of the observer. Such visions, however, would not have involved physical contact nor would they have involved watching the individual actually eating food or drinking fluid that had been prepared and set by the observer. Because it was well known that these encounters did occur they would not, by themselves, 'have given rise to the belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead' (Wright 2003, 690). In fact, the more normal these visions were considered, the less likely would it have been that they meant Jesus had been raised from the dead. Such a vision implied a recently deceased, rather than a living, individual. 'The empty tomb and the appearances' Wright (2003, 693) reiterates, 'were sufficient, not for every single person who heard about them to arrive at Christian belief, but for that belief to arise within a community which began with Jesus' followers and spread outwards from there.'

Two rival theories have been proposed to account for the early disciples' belief in the resurrected Jesus. The first is that the disciples may have experienced 'cognitive dissonance.' Leon Festinger described Cognitive Dissonance Theory in 1957. Wright believes it is not a credible option that the first disciples clung to an understanding that the executed Jesus was the expected Messiah. Furthermore, nobody expected the Messiah to rise from death. 'Even if there were anything in Festinger's theory' Wright (2003, 700) adds, 'it is incapable of providing an alternative sufficient explanation for the rise of early Christian belief.' Wright may be wrong here because we have very little information about the psychological state of Jesus' followers either before or after his death. Cognitive dissonance would have arisen between their expectations that Jesus would redeem Israel (Lk. 24: 13-21, for example) and his death. The resurrection, in whatever form it was thought to occur, then provided a solution to the dissonance (for example, Rom. 1: 3-4). By definition, this was actually a classic case for cognitive dissonance.

The second theory, the Illumination Theory (Habermas 2006, 83), was that the earliest Christians, especially Peter, had experienced around the time of Jesus' death an overwhelming enlightenment, a sense of grace, forgiveness and seeing; in fact, 'conversion.' At some point, partly 'through the cultic practice of visiting Jesus' tomb ... stories of an empty tomb began to be told' (Wright 2003, 701). This tradition was gradually enlarged to include stories about Jesus being seen, and words spoken by Jesus on earth were later credited to the risen Jesus. Edward Schillebeeckx, a Dominican theologian who wrote at length about Jesus in the 1970s (*Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*) is a proponent of this view. (It is contrary, however, to Bultmann's normal method who understands that the words of the 'risen' lord were later put into the mouth of the earthly Jesus by the evangelists). Wright (2003, 703) states, among other assertions, that 'the cultic practice of visiting Jesus' tomb ... is without foundation.'

Wright (2003, 706) sums up by writing that, "[l]ike the theory of 'cognitive dissonance', the theory that the early Christians had a profound religious experience which only slowly grew into the (misleading) language of bodily resurrection provides no kind of explanation for the rise of the early Christian belief."

Wright does acknowledge, however, the possibility that other conditions, or combination of conditions, could have been foundational for belief in the resurrected Jesus: 'the matter lies beyond strict historical proof. It will always be possible for ingenious historians to propose yet more variations on the theme of how the early Christian belief could have arisen, and taken the shape that it did, without either an empty tomb or appearances of Jesus' (Wright 2003, 694).

It may be instructive at this point to explore Wright's understanding of some of the more bizarre and contentious aspects of Jesus' resurrection:

Alone among the gospel writers, Matthew tells the story of an earthquake, and individuals rising from local tombs to appear in Jerusalem (Matt. 27: 51-54). These events allegedly occurred at about the time of Jesus' death and resurrection. They strike one as being quite unreal. What does one make of them? Wright acknowledges that this account is problematic, not only because the story is only told by one evangelist, but because many secondary questions are raised. What does Matthew, himself, think was happening and what did it mean to him? Does the earthquake account for the torn Temple veil? Who saw the tombs opening and the dead awakening? Why does Matthew say that these individuals only exited their tombs two days after Jesus' own resurrection? What were they doing during this interval and what eventually happened to them?

Wright trawls the Bible for clues. He suggests there are several passages alluding to resurrection events of this nature: Ezek. 37: 12-13; Is. 26: 19; Dan. 12: 2 and Zech. 14: 4-5. He postulates that Matthew knew 'a tradition which speaks of these strange happenings, and is retelling it in such a way as to give a biblically alert reader a sense of their meaning' (Wright 2003, 633-634). The return of Israel to its own land and a national restoration are two implied events. Matthew would have been quite aware, Wright suggests, that the resurrected bodies were no longer walking around. Matthew offered no explanation for what became of them.

Wright (2003, 636) concludes:

It is impossible, and for our purposes unnecessary, to adjudicate on the question of historicity ... [t]his is hardly a satisfactory conclusion, but it

is better to remain puzzled than to settle for either a difficult argument for probable historicity or a cheap and cheerful rationalistic dismissal of the possibility. Some stories are so odd that they may just have happened. This may be one of them, but in historical terms there is no way of finding out.

The sentence beginning 'Some stories ...' begs the question and is meaningless. For the modern rationalist Wright's remarks above are condescending and unhelpful. But he is a scholar acknowledging the possibility of the contingent and supernatural, and in that context his judgment is understandable.

Matthew, alone again, tells another story which occurs between Jesus' crucifixion and his post-resurrection appearances. It is the story of the chief priests and Pharisees requesting Pilate to set a guard on Jesus' tomb (Matt. 27: 62-66); then the bribing of these same guards by the chief priests to say that Jesus' followers had ferreted away their master's corpse (Matt. 28: 11-15). Both halves of the story alone are plausible, but when put together, and read as one, the result is curiously bizarre: the guard was set to prevent the disciples stealing Jesus' corpse, whereas in the second part, the tale is that the disciples have managed to do just that, in spite of the guard.

Wright does not suggest that the account is entirely true; neither does he deem it likely that the whole story was invented *de novo* by the early Christians. The chief priests and Pharisees were anticipating something happening to Jesus' corpse when they asked for a guard to be placed on the tomb. If they had interpreted Jesus' prediction that he would rise after three days (Matt. 27: 62; Mk. 8: 31) to mean his soul or spirit, there would have been no need for a guard or a sealed tombstone. The report is likely to have been in response to accusations that the disciples had stolen Jesus' corpse. It is not logical to imagine Jesus' followers denying this charge when no such accusation had been levelled at them. Nor would they have voluntarily given their adversaries this idea. That such charges were circulating, Wright (2003, 638) maintains, is strong evidence for 'an empty tomb, and/or a missing body, requiring an explanation.'

Wright (2003, 638) concludes:

For our present purposes the main thing is not to argue that the story, in both its parts, is historically true in all respects, though as we have seen it is unlikely to have been invented as a late legend. The point is that this sort of story could only have any point at all in a community where the empty tomb was an absolute and unquestioned datum.

Paul's Damascus road experience is recounted six times over in the *New Testament* record; thrice by Paul himself in his epistles (the primary accounts) and thrice by the author of Acts (the secondary accounts). 'Paul' Wright (2003, 393) writes, 'says that he saw Jesus, and that remains our primary historical datum.'

Wright believes many scholars have wrongly assumed Paul's sighting of Jesus was a vision. They maintain that Paul experienced a profound spiritual event which involved 'seeing' Jesus with the heart. Jesus was not physically there, they say, except as a 'light being.' This episode of luminosity is said to have occasioned Paul's conversion. They go on to say that if this is what Paul experienced, and his writings are the earliest resurrection accounts we have, it is likely that the other early disciples experienced the same phenomenon themselves. "Reports of different kinds of 'seeing,' as for instance in Luke and John, are therefore later

attempts to turn a primary 'spiritual' vision into a more solid 'eyewitness' mode" (Wright 2003, 376).

Wright invites us to consider the evidence for and against a non-bodily 'seeing' of Jesus. A modernist concept of religion that includes much of present critical scholarship has thought of all revelations from, for example, heaven, as necessarily 'internal'. "This is part of the classic post-Enlightenment paradigm ... 'God' or 'religion' [has been] removed ... from contact with the world of space, time and matter" (Wright 2003, 377). Whenever, therefore, someone with this worldview is faced with a report detailing heavenly visions, he/she will categorize it as 'internal.' There is no other option for them. But first-century Jews would have seen things differently – 'heaven' for them was real, and 'external' to their feelings and minds – as much as the 'earth.'

It is possible, Wright concedes, that drugs, dreams and processes both physiological and psychological could do this. But

it would be arbitrary, and historically without warrant, to assume ahead of time that any claim about remarkable happenings in the external world, whether earthly or heavenly, which produce remarkable consequences in those who report them, can be reduced to terms of the state of consciousness of the person concerned (Wright 2003, 378).

When Paul wrote about this profound encounter, seeing and hearing Jesus, he should not be thought of as simply having had a subjective 'religious experience' outside objective reality. Although '[a]ll experience is interpreted experience' Wright (2003, 378) comments, 'not all experience can be reduced to terms of the interpretation.' Paul, Wright maintains (2003, 398), 'believed he had seen the risen Jesus in person, and that his understanding of who this Jesus was included the firm belief that he possessed a transformed but still physical body.'

Although Paul (1 Cor. 9: 1) intimated that he had 'seen' Jesus, nowhere in the *New Testament* did he suggest that he had observed, post-resurrection, a 'physical' Jesus. Jesus may have been recognizable to Paul, but that does not necessarily imply a 'physical body' as stated by Wright. Paul is in fact at pains to demonstrate a massive discontinuity between the physical and resurrected body (1 Cor. 15: 44-49).

Wright (2003, 398) continues by stating that '[a]ttempts to undermine this conclusion by appeal to 'what really happened' at Paul's conversion, on the basis either of Acts or of other passages in Paul, carry no conviction.' But this is an a priori argument by Wright, which has no supporting evidence.

That Jesus had been bodily raised after death 'was held by virtually all the early Christians for whom we have evidence. It was at the centre of their characteristic praxis, narrative, symbol and belief ...' Wright (2003, 685) states. They believed this because they were convinced of two essentials - the emptiness of Jesus' tomb and the appearances of the resurrected Jesus. Whether Paul can be classed with this group, however, is debatable because nowhere does he mention an empty tomb, as we have seen. A missing body and the discovery of the person thoroughly alive again would indicate that resurrection had occurred, and '[I]t is ... historically highly probable that Jesus' tomb was indeed empty on the third day after his execution, and that the disciples did indeed encounter him giving every appearance of being well and truly alive' (Wright 2003, 687). Wright believes that this is what the early Christians themselves understood.

Wright (2003, 707) continues: 'In terms of the kind of proof which historians normally accept, the case we have presented, that the tomb-plus-appearances combination is what generated early Christian belief, is as watertight as one is likely to find.' Other historical facts supporting this thesis include the early Christian observance of the first day of the week as the special one. Also, Jesus' tomb was never venerated, nor was a secondary burial ever performed for him: after a period of decomposition from 6 months to 2 years, this would have entailed folding his bones in a traditional pattern and placing them in an ossuary. Joseph (of Arimathea) would have been expected to do this. In Jerusalem, stone ossuaries were popular during the middle years of the first century C.E. (Wright 2003, 707, n. 64). This act would have occurred at about the time the early believers were proclaiming Jesus risen and Lord, affirming that no decomposition of his body had taken place.

Many alternative theories have been proposed over the decades to explain Jesus' resurrection: that mistakes were made by the women in the dim dawn light of Easter Sunday – they couldn't identify the tomb; they mistook someone else for Jesus. The Swoon Theory holds that Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but revived in the cold tomb and emerged, later, alive. This view has been thoroughly discredited, asserts Wright – Roman soldiers knew their job. A more modern suggestion by Crossan, as we have seen, is that Jesus' body was never buried, but thrown out for scavenging animals. 'Had that happened,' suggests Wright (2003, 710) 'no matter how many 'visions' they had had, the disciples would not have concluded that he had been raised from the dead.' Perhaps '... it was *highly unlikely* that the disciples would not have concluded ...' would have been a better judgment by Wright.

We are left with the secure historical conclusion: the tomb was empty, and various 'meetings' took place not only between Jesus and his followers (including at least one initial sceptic) but also, in at least one case (that of Paul; possibly, too, that of James), between Jesus and people who had not been among his followers. [It can be argued, however, that in the Acts version of his encounter with the risen Jesus, Paul never says he was *still* a persecutor of the Church]. I regard this conclusion as coming in the same sort of category, of historical probability so high as to be virtually certain, as the death of Augustus in 14 [C.E.] or the fall of Jerusalem in 70 [C.E.] (Wright 2003, 709-710).

The empty tomb and meetings were historical events, significant, real events, 'they are, in the normal sense required by historians, provable events ...' (Wright 2003, 709). It may be claimed that twentieth century historiography going back to Ernst Troeltsch excludes the possibility of what Wright claims a priori: Wright, a modern historian, is rejecting one of the major canons of modern historiography, namely, that history is a closed causal nexus, i.e., God does not randomly intervene in history. Wright does not accept this precept, entertaining rather the ongoing possibility of divine involvement in creation. He is therefore philosophically sanctioned to make such an absolutist claim, be it correct or not.

Does the explanation of data given by the early believers, that Jesus had risen,

“‘[explain] the aggregate’ of the evidence better than these sophisticated scepticisms. My claim is that it does” Wright (2003, 717) states. ‘These sophisticated scepticisms’ would be the intricately designed hypotheses according to which anything and everything that pointed towards the

resurrection (the gospel accounts, of course, in particular) is to be explained as the work of the early church expounding, legitimating and defending theological, exegetical and church-governmental conclusions reached on quite other grounds (Wright 2003, 716-717).

Wright (2003, 717) continues:

Once grant that Jesus really was raised, and all the pieces of the historical jigsaw puzzle of early Christianity fall into place. My claim is stronger: that the bodily resurrection of Jesus provides a *necessary* condition for these things; in other words, that no other explanation could or would do. All the efforts to find alternative explanations fail, and they were bound to do so.

Wright's claim that Jesus' bodily resurrection is a 'necessary' condition is problematic, because it is polemical: not only do some scholars consider other scenarios credible, but also the sum total of knowledge will never be attained.

Wright (2003, 718) restates his thesis: not only do the claims for Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead demand engagement, but '[t]he proposal that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead possesses unrivalled power to explain the historical data at the heart of early Christianity.' Again, some argue that Paul did not know a physical-bodily resurrection of Jesus as intimated in Matthew, Luke and John. As far as we know, Paul did not find it necessary to offer a narrative account of the resurrection appearances: perhaps the Easter narratives developed after Paul, perhaps he did not know them; perhaps he found them unnecessary in the situations he addressed. We do not know. Perhaps Paul neither mentions the empty tomb nor addresses Jesus' bodily resurrection because he considered them a *sine qua non* of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances.

The early Christians believed Jesus had been bodily raised from the dead. Their world-view, moreover, remained essentially Jewish, and from it they deepened their knowledge with what they experienced and believed about Jesus' resurrection.

This was what made them a messianic group within Judaism. This was what made them take on Caesar's world with the news that there was 'another king'. This was what made them not only speak of the one true God, but invoke him, pray to him, love him and serve him in terms of the Father and the lord, of the God who sent the Son and now sends the Spirit of the Son ... God who makes visible the otherwise invisible creator of the world. This is why, when they spoke of the resurrection of Jesus, they spoke of the resurrection of the Son of God (Wright 2003, 736).

In other words, 'because Jesus had been raised from the dead ... he was Messiah and Lord, the true King of the Jews and the true Lord of this world' (Wright and Crossan 2006, 22).

Evans (2006, 54) considers Wright's emphasis of Jesus' Jewishness to be his most significant contribution to Jesus research. Wright understands Jesus in this Judaic context and sees continuity between the Hebrew Bible and the Gospels. 'Wright finds history looking for scriptural explanation and prophetic fulfillment' whereas Crossan 'believes what we really have are scriptural promises generating historical narrative' (Evans 2006, 55).

Unlike Crossan who believes, as we have seen, in the paramountcy of the *Gospel of Peter* for details of Jesus' Passion and resurrection, Wright (2003, 596) discounts the historicity of its contents: 'The *Gospel of Peter* remains an enigma, but an enigma which need not materially affect our assessment of the [Gospel] accounts of Jesus' resurrection.' For Wright (2003, 615) it is the 'four canonical resurrection accounts' that 'provide the answer to the question of the origin and shaping of Christianity.' If these are the earliest, eyewitness accounts of Jesus' resurrection, as affirmed by the early Church, 'speculation that Jesus was not even buried, much less raised, is groundless' Quarles (2006, 120) concurs.

Essentially, Wright remains an apologist for the traditional interpretation of the resurrection: he foregoes the principle of analogy, allowing contingency and the miraculous, and he reads the Gospels essentially as historical records. Unlike Crossan, who thinks that 'texts create their own world' and who focuses on texts for their 'effect rather than their content,' Wright believes that 'texts generally refer to the world outside the text' and 'content matters' (Stewart 2006, 63). Wright attempts to draw 'authoritative meaning' from biblical texts, whereas Crossan seeks their diverse and nuanced implications. Stewart (2006, 64), commenting further, states that 'the intentionality of the historical characters' is important for Wright: the texts must be allowed to 'speak fully,' allowing for their 'historical, literary, and theological meaning' and '[t]o this end, worldview analysis, narrative criticism, and critical realism serve as useful tools.'

Craig (2006, 139-148) suggests that Wright's argument that Jesus' empty grave and his appearances adequately explained the disciples' resurrection faith can and should be considerably tightened. Wright should insist on the empty tomb because evidence for its historicity can be 'easily' presented and a 'majority of New Testament historians today' accept it (Craig 2006, 144). Furthermore, Wright should differentiate between an 'assumption into heaven' which implied visionary appearances to the Jewish mind, and resurrection (Craig 2006, 144). Craig (2006, 144) states that 'the original disciples would not have proclaimed Jesus' resurrection from the dead had they not experienced appearances of Jesus alive after his death and found his tomb empty. It seems ... this claim is quite correct and capable of being argued more forcefully than Wright has done.'

Craig (2006, 145) believes that Wright's critique of cognitive dissonance as an explanation for the disciples' resurrection faith could be stronger: a persistent belief based on cognitive dissonance 'would not have produced the sort of narratives we find in the Gospels.' The 'lack of scriptural prooftexting and allusion,' the absence of any mention concerning the disciples' eschatological resurrection hope, the 'conspicuous absence of apocalyptic descriptions of the risen Christ in luminous glory,' and the women's prominent role do not suggest the narratives were 'the free creation of persons who imagined the resurrection of Jesus as a means of resolving the cognitive dissonance brought on by his death' (Craig 2006, 145).

Further, Craig (2006, 146) suggests that when Wright applies the test of 'best explanation' to the facts of an empty tomb and Jesus' post-mortem appearances, he focuses on 'explanatory power, leaving aside such other criteria as explanatory scope, plausibility, [and] degree of ad hoc-ness,' among others.

Concerning Wright's worldview, Craig asserts he is uncertain what exactly Wright's answer to 'Enlightenment naturalism' is, but if a theistic worldview makes better sense than a naturalistic one Wright should not hesitate to justify it.

Arguments for 'a creator and designer of the universe, which are analogous to Wright's case for the resurrection, can be provided using historical sciences like cosmology' and arguments for 'Jesus' resurrection from the dead [would then] be all the more compelling' (Craig 2006, 146). Geivett (2006, 105), acknowledging Wright's (and Crossan's) 'intellectual humility' in that he recognizes the 'real limits of our knowledge and understanding,' similarly suggests that 'greater attention to evidence available concerning the existence and nature of God will be rewarded with a fuller appreciation of the epistemic status of resurrection belief.'

Craig (2006, 146) finally points out that Wright's rejection of some major alternative explanations for the empty tomb and appearances ("the immortality of Jesus' soul, Jesus' non-physical 'resurrection,' a parallel trajectory of Jesus' exaltation, and retrojection of later Christian beliefs") are, actually, rejection of 'denials of the empty tomb and appearances, not explanations of them.' Craig (2006, 147) essentially agrees with Wright: 'attempts to explain the empty tomb and postmortem appearances apart from the resurrection of Jesus are hopeless ... [o]nce these are admitted, no plausible naturalistic explanation of the facts can be given.'

Wright is presently an apologist for the traditional interpretation of Jesus' resurrection in that he allows the miraculous and reads the *New Testament* historically. A literal, supernatural understanding of the resurrection was for many centuries the stated belief of the Church. Presently, however, the Christian Church encompasses diverse perceptions of Jesus' resurrection and is erroneously identified with the traditional interpretation alone.

12

CONCLUSION

For centuries after Jesus' death, the Church monopolized the interpretation of his resurrection. In its view, Jesus' resurrection had been a unique supernatural event, the essential facts of which were to be found in the *New Testament*. This changed when scholars began to study the Bible rationally during the last half of the eighteenth century.

Reimarus vilified the Church's doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture by demonstrating, among other things, contradictions among the four resurrection accounts in the *New Testament*. This ambiguity negated the Church's claim that the scriptures were God's Word. Other attempts to understand the scriptures rationally, denying the miraculous, such as Paulus's, followed. Schleiermacher also interpreted the Bible rationally, advancing the new sciences of hermeneutics and historical criticism with it. The pure rational interpretation of the scriptures, like Reimarus' proscription of the supernatural, proved academically unsatisfactory, and Strauss proposed his purely historical and/or mythical interpretation of the Bible. Weiss, supported later by Schweitzer, introduced an eschatological understanding of the *New Testament* and resurrection.

After World War 1, Barth advocated an innovational re-engagement with the *New Testament* by prioritizing the 'living' Jesus over his Word. Bultmann believed that if the Church's kerygma was discounted, the historical Jesus would be totally inaccessible. He advocated an existential interpretation of Jesus and his resurrection.

Pannenberg, Crossan and Wright are living scholars. Pannenberg, concedes the contingent and favours Jesus' historical, bodily resurrection. Crossan disallows the supernatural and believes the key to correct resurrection understanding lies, presently, in the apocryphal record. Wright champions the traditional Christian interpretation of Jesus' resurrection.

Although Reimarus's demonstration of disparities within the Gospels indicated they were not the 'infallible Word of God,' it was the Enlightenment's insistence on rationality that caused scholars to question the Church's traditional understanding of Jesus' resurrection. That the resurrection could be a supernatural, non-analogous occurrence was disallowed on principle, and Paulus, Schleiermacher, Strauss, Weiss, Bultmann and Crossan, among many other modern scholars, proffered assorted alternative explanations. The merits and demerits of some of these interpretations have been touched on in my dissertation, but what remains disconcerting is the lack of scholarly consensus on the subject in the face of such unflagging endeavour.

Substantial rationalism is evident in the work of all ten scholars considered. Matthew's story of the tomb guard, for example, is rationally analysed by Wright although he allows the supernatural. Conceding the miraculous, itself, is a rational decision.

Barth and Pannenberg, along with Wright, admit the contingent and sanction the possibility that Jesus' resurrection was a miraculous event for him (Jesus). Fundamentally, this group recognizes the limitations of human knowledge.

While working on this dissertation I have been constantly re-evaluating my former understanding of Jesus' resurrection, but have found no reason to change my initial judgment. I continue to hold a traditional Christian interpretation of the resurrection: I remain persuaded of the possibility of the miraculous; I believe the Gospel resurrection narratives are essentially historical records, and the empty grave and Jesus' appearances together accounted for the rise of resurrection faith among the early Christians.

Professor Gary Habermas is a Research Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Theology at Liberty University, Lynchburg. He has authored or co-authored thirteen books on the subject of Jesus' resurrection (Stewart 2006a, x) and is a well-known supporter of the traditional interpretation of the resurrection. In a recent article Habermas (2006, 78-92) documents the present position and trends in resurrection scholarship.

He has attempted over the last five years to 'map recent developments in research on the resurrection appearances of Jesus' by tracking more than 'two thousand scholarly publications on the resurrection [written since 1975 in English, French and German] ... by a wide range of critical scholars' (Habermas 2006, 78). He states that 'most contemporary scholars agree that, after Jesus' death, his early followers had experiences that they at least believed were appearances of their risen Lord [and these were] the chief motivation behind the early proclamation of the Christian gospel' (Habermas 2006, 79). A majority of these scholars, furthermore, concede an empty tomb.

Habermas (2006, 81) believes that contemporary explanations for the disciples' experiences may be divided into five broad groups: a group of non-miraculous events, such as visions/hallucinations and the illumination proposal, focuses on the subjective state of the disciples at that time; other rational possibilities exhibiting analogy include apparent death, malefactor burial, legend, history of religions/ancient mystery religion parallels, and illusion. An agnostic middle category includes those who remain unable or unwilling to make up their minds on the question. Two groups allow the contingent, or miraculous: objective visions, and Jesus' supernatural bodily rising from the dead to appear 'in a spiritual body' (Habermas 2006, 88).

Habermas (2006, 90), who acknowledges the 'sketchiness' of his study, states:

it seems that fairly traditional views have again moved to the forefront of research and discussion. While sporting a few new wrinkles as well as some improvements, the view that Jesus was raised bodily is currently the predominant position, if judged in terms of scholarly support. Moreover, some scholars who reject this view still hold that it was at least the New Testament position, including Paul's own teaching.

During 'recent decades' there has been an 'upturn' of scholars supporting the naturalistic explanation of the resurrection but they are a decided 'minority' accounting for 'less than one quarter of critical scholars' (Habermas 2006, 91). Moreover, 'virtually none of these natural paths has been traveled by the scholarly pens of the most influential writers contributing to the Third Quest for the historical Jesus' (Habermas 2006, 91).

'Few' scholars were specifically identified as agnostics.

In 'recent years' there has been a 'migration' of scholars to the supernatural camp. This group, according to Habermas (2006, 91), makes up 'almost three-quarters of [the] remaining scholars' and among the 'supernatural positions, we have the further subdivisions of those who prefer more visionary views (less than one-quarter ...) and those who take the position that Jesus was resurrected in a real, though still transformed, body (more than three-quarters).' It is of some interest that in the supernatural category, the 'objective vision theory' was 'most popular' during the second half of the twentieth century, but 'it has been relegated to a minority response in recent years, in favor of bodily appearances of the risen Jesus' (Habermas 2006, 92).

In other words, according to Habermas, by balancing probabilities, it appears that recent scholarship favours the traditional Christian interpretation of Jesus' resurrection.

Bishop Butler: 'Probability is the very guide of life'
(Crossan 1994a, ix).

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