

# Jesus' Bodily Resurrection and the General Bodily Resurrection: A Critique of the Reductionists' Thesis: Implications for Theology and Christian Living

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Jesus' Bodily Resurrection and the General Bodily Resurrection: A Critique of the  
Reductionists' Thesis: Implications for Theology and Christian Living

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) Degree  
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By

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## DEDICATION

To

Bishop Hyacinth Egbebo Oroko, (MSP)  
Bishop, Apostolic Vicariate of Bomadi,

My eldest brother  
Dr. Patrick Ziakede Akpobolokemi

And

Fr. Brian McHugh  
Pastor of St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Anne and St. Joseph's Collaborative in Sumerville  
Who offered me free accommodation for two years.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Created *Imago Dei*, the human person naturally longs for perfect happiness in a state of immortality. However, death perpetually, and without invitation, frustrates this innate desire in us, holding us captives. The excruciating pain of death is felt by everyone; but not only death assaults us, we are assailed by innumerable moral, physical, psychological and spiritual evils from which we seek redemption. Who will free us from this life of pain and death? Is there any hope for humanity for salvation from the dominion of death? Thanks to God almighty, who in Christ Jesus has given us victory over death, as the words of St. Paul to the Thessalonians reveal, “For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died [...] For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess 4:14, 16).<sup>1</sup> This passage reveals that we have the promise of being raised from the dead immortal and incorruptible, to participate perfectly in the life of God (vv. 17-18).

This is the ultimate hope of Christians without which Christian life is useless in the Pauline and Christian imagination: “For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor. 15:16-19). Sadly, this sublime truth of Christianity is misunderstood and dismissed even by some theologians. As was the case in the Corinthian church during Paul’s days, some scholars approach resurrection from a reductionist perspective in our own time. Crucial to this thesis are Dale Allison’s equation of the “resurrection appearances” with mere “bereavement experiences,” Geza Vermes’ interpretation of Jesus’

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: The New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2011). All biblical citations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

resurrection as simply a change in the hearts and lives of the disciples, Brian Schmisek's rejection of the language of "resurrection of the flesh" or "resurrection of the body" in preference for "resurrection from the dead or of the self," Robert F. Scuta's dismissal of any hope of eternal life along with the denial of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, and the triad arguments of impossibility, undesirability and incredibility against bodily resurrection. Ultimately, the Christian reader finds herself or himself confused, as the meaning of the resurrection is distorted and emptied of its original content, with a corresponding misrepresentation of the Judeo-Christian God and his loving plan of salvation.

It is against the backdrop of the above that this project attempts a systematic and lucid exposition of the teaching of the scriptures about our future resurrection, with the resurrection of Jesus as its guarantee and pattern. The fundamental argument of this project is twofold: first, the resurrection of Jesus is historical and bodily, and it is the foundation for the Christian hope and proclamation; second, our future resurrection is guaranteed in the resurrection of Christ, the first fruit of the resurrection harvest, and it will be a "resurrection of the body" in a gloriously transfigured existence. Flowing from the above are the implications for theology and Christian living. This thesis hopes to enhance the readers' understanding about the resurrection and the impact of bodily resurrection belief on Christian theology and Christian living. Finally, what does the resurrection of Jesus promise to the entire cosmos? These form the scope of our thesis.

Let me at this point define an important concept for this thesis: the *historical* dimension. By historical I mean that the resurrection of Jesus, from all available evidence, took place in the past and it is this event that is responsible for the origin and spread of the Christian faith. Also, it is possible for historians to investigate this claim. Garry R. Habermas fittingly distinguishes the historical dimension of the question from the philosophical and theological, insisting that it is

possible for historians to investigate the historical portion of the resurrection, distinct from the philosophical or theological question, which needs additional parameters.<sup>2</sup> Thus, historian William Ward urges scholars to be open-minded, and not reject the possibility of miraculous events before investigation, since such *a priori* dismissal constitutes improper historical methodology. If it is established that an event occurred and it defies any scientific or empirical explanation, a supernatural cause should not be regarded as impossible,<sup>3</sup> when the event occurred in a context that was charged with religious significance.<sup>4</sup> Although, it is true that the past is gone forever and historians have no direct access to the objects of their study, “if a past event left traces, most historians hold that it can be the subject of historical investigation.”<sup>5</sup> Weighing the hypothesis according to proper criteria, historians can investigate the historicity of Jesus resurrection, and can affirm its historicity without inferring resurrection in its fullest theological sense.<sup>6</sup> To say, therefore, that the resurrection of Jesus is historical is to argue that given the available evidence, from the arguments to best explanation,<sup>7</sup> resurrection best explains what happened to Jesus after death. That is, other hypotheses are far weaker and “collapse of their own weight once spelt out,”<sup>8</sup> as Stephen T. Davis asserts.

The methodology employed for this thesis appeals to both scripture and systematic theology. Biblical passages relevant to our topic are cited, analyzed and explained systematically so as to bring to bare the import of what scripture teaches about resurrection, especially in chapters two and three. In basing my thesis on the scripture, I presume sacred scripture to be

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<sup>2</sup> Garry R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus & Future Hope* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 5; Cf. William Ward, *Christianity: A Historical Religion?* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1972), 29-31.

<sup>4</sup> Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic; Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2010), 196.

<sup>5</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 134.

<sup>6</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 175, 198. Some proper criteria are listed in chapter two of this project.

<sup>7</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 108-113.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen T. Davis, “Is Resurrection Belief Rational?” *Philo* 2 (1999): 57-58.

inspired, whole and entire, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* teaches that the human authors consciously made full use of their powers and faculties and consigned to writing everything that God wanted written, and no more, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hence, “we must acknowledge that the books of scripture, firmly and faithfully and without error, teach that truth that God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures.”<sup>9</sup> Based on their apostolic origin, the Church unhesitatingly, firmly and with absolute constancy maintained the historicity of the four gospels on the life and actions of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, “sacred theology relies on the written Word of God, taken together with sacred Tradition, as on a permanent foundation. By this Word it is most firmly strengthened and constantly rejuvenated, as it searches out, under the light of faith, the full truth stored up in the mystery of Christ.”<sup>11</sup> It is within the context of this understanding of Scripture, and the reliance of theology on Scripture that this thesis is based.

This thesis is divided into four parts. Chapter one analyzes the reductionist theses of Robert F. Scuka, Dale Allison, Geza Vermes, and Brian Schmisek. Chapter two focuses on the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The nature of Jesus’ resurrected body and the cosmic significance of his resurrection are brought to light, being the guarantee and pattern for our future resurrection. Chapter three will explore in detail the general resurrection. Here, central to the exposition are: whether or not we shall be raised and the nature of our resurrected selves. Will human beings rise with their bodies, or will there be only a resurrection of the soul? Will

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<sup>9</sup> Vatican Council II. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965) § 11, in *Vatican Council II (Vol. 1): The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (North Port, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Vatican Council II. *Dei Verbum*, §§ 18, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Vatican Council II. *Dei Verbum*, § 24.

there be continuity with, and (or) discontinuity from our former selves. Finally, chapter four draws out the implications for both theology and existential Christian living.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE REDUCTIONIST THESES OF ROBERT F. SCUKA, GEZA VERMES, DALE C. ALLISON, AND BRIAN SCHMISEK

Believers from the apostolic era have constantly expressed their faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and their own future resurrection on the last day. This faith is profoundly reflected in explicit terms in the canonical scriptures, the creeds, catechetical formulas, in the liturgy, and in the martyrs' accounts. Jesus is believed and proclaimed literally as being raised from the dead, by virtue of which we too shall be truly raised as co-heirs with Christ, the firstborn from the dead.<sup>1</sup> However, because the risen Jesus was not manifested to everyone but only to a chosen few, this faith was not shared by all *ab initio*; and even among those who believe, the understanding of the resurrection body differs. In recent decades, there have been theological attempts to reduce the literal understanding of this central article of the Christian faith to a mythological motif, a metaphorical and symbolic use of resurrection to convey the transformation experienced by the disciples of Jesus soon after the crucifixion. If so, the resurrection does not correspond to a historical event for Jesus, nor shall we experience resurrection literally. In a milder form, this reductionist approach affirms the event but reduces it to a purely spiritual event, both for Christ and for us. Ultimately, theological reductionism minimizes, obscures, and distorts the meaning of resurrection faith. This chapter briefly exposes and analyzes the reductionist theses of Robert F. Scuka, Geza Vermes, Dale C. Allison, and Brian Schmisek on the resurrection. Through this brief treatment, the reader is brought to the consciousness of the need to explicate clearly the meaning of resurrection faith through the light that comes from the divinely inspired scriptures. We begin with the thought of Robert F. Scuka.

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<sup>1</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Typica Editio (New York: Image Book Doubleday, 1997), §§ 638-647. The canonical gospels and other New Testament (NT) scripture, especially the letters of Paul cogently speak of the resurrection of Jesus as an historical fact. Equally taught is the belief in our future resurrection. Both beliefs are part and parcel of the deposit of faith for the early Christians (Luke 24; John 20-21; Acts 2:22-36; Rom 1:4; 6:4-11; 8:11, 23; 1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4:14-16).

## 1.1 ROBERT F. SCUKA

The Christian tradition affirms the historicity of Jesus' resurrection as the basic reason for the beginning and spread of the Christian faith. In contrast to this understanding, Robert F. Scuka argues that it was the Christian experience of new life in the Spirit and liberation from bondage that was the basis for the elaboration of the resurrection kerygma. In his article "Resurrection: Critical Reflections on a Doctrine in Search of a Meaning," he contends that the proclamation concerning the resurrection of Jesus is not to be understood historically, but primarily as a way of acknowledging believers' own experience of the vivifying power of the Holy Spirit believed to derive from Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Both historically and theologically, he says, the Christian experience has its origin and continuity with the preaching, actions and crucifixion of Jesus, and not in resurrection as it is evident in the transformations that occurred in people's lives during the earthly ministry of Christ.<sup>3</sup> According to him, "the salvific grace that is said to be made manifest in and experienced through Jesus Christ is not different from the grace we experience in creation generally."<sup>4</sup> That is to say, creation is God's perpetual act of providing all that is necessary to make living possible; and with creation God endows every grace necessary for salvation, the content of which is the same with the very conditions of life that are given in and with human existence that makes the very living of life possible.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the natural human condition is

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<sup>2</sup> Robert F. Scuka, "Resurrection: Critical Reflections on a Doctrine in Search of a Meaning," *Modern Theology* 6 (1989), 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> Scuka, "Resurrection," 79-80.

<sup>4</sup> Scuka, "Resurrection," 81.

<sup>5</sup> Scuka, "Resurrection," 82-84. He seems to indicate that grace is synonymous to creation since he emphasizes the superfluity of additional and distinctive salvific grace, 83ff.

sufficient for salvation. The upshot of this is that “whatever Jesus and/or his resurrection, represents, it cannot be what guarantees the very possibility of human salvation.”<sup>6</sup>

Put differently, the life, death, resurrection of Jesus, and the Pentecost events are not decisive elements for human salvation. It is true that creation and salvation (redemption) as acts of the One Triune God are not two radically isolated and unrelated events. Creation has an eschatological goal: the final participation of creatures in the life of God beyond the level of natural happiness, a participation that is often called the “beatific vision of God” or “deification” for the human person. But while there is intrinsic relationship between creation and salvation, and that humanity was graced from creation, the NT, especially the Pauline letters, lucidly emphasizes the need for supernatural grace on account of human sinfulness and fallen state (John 3:16-18; Rom 3:21-26; 5:12-21; 6:23; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Gal 2:15-4; Titus 2:11-14). Thus, the assertion that the natural human condition is sufficient for salvation is not convincing.

Also, Scuka posits that the Hebrew bible did not speak of an afterlife, and that the promise of eternal life and resurrection is made in the NT metaphorically. Paul’s dialectic of sin and death, life in faith and freedom from death refers to a symbolic, mythological language that depicts alternative existential orientations and possibilities of living that makes life more meaningful. Hope for eternal life hereafter is futile. That, he says is an example of the primary sin: attempting to grasp and secure life (the very conditions of human existence) possessively; it is the most intense form of self-preoccupation with the sad effect of *contemptus mundi*.<sup>7</sup> This occurs “when we ignore the dual fact that there is nothing that we can do to secure our salvation from God and that there is no need to do so because the grace necessary to the very living of life

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<sup>6</sup> Scuka, “Resurrection,” 84-5. This evidently contradicts Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3-4, 12-23, and Pauline teaching on justification by grace through faith especially in the letters to the Romans and Galatians.

<sup>7</sup> Scuta, “Resurrection,” 87-89.

has already been given to us.”<sup>8</sup> From the scriptural evidence (Gal 5:6; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Phil 2:12-13; Col 3:1-10; Heb 12:1ff; Rev 15-21), it is more plausible to assert that though our salvation comes primarily from God as a gift, secondarily, it is imperative for us to cooperate with God’s grace through faith, hope and charity to benefit efficaciously from the divine benevolence. In this sense, salvation is both a gift and a task.

It is hardly possible to imagine from the NT evidence that the early Christians understood Christ’s teaching about eternal life to be a mere drawing attention to the fact that divine grace is present here and now, or that Jesus’ resurrection meant a spiritual re-awakening in their hearts and minds, as Scuka suggests, consciously rescinding from what Jesus and the disciples might have said, meant or believed.<sup>9</sup> As Gerald O’Collins puts it: “In essence the first Christians announced that through the divine power Jesus himself had been raised to life. The pre-Pauline tradition spoke of God (the Father) raising Jesus from the dead (e.g., Rom 10:9; Gal. 1:1; 1 Thess 1:10). Or else it spoke of Jesus “being raised” (e.g., 1 Cor 15:4; Mark 16:6) implying that this had occurred through the divine power. The agent (God) was understood.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, in Garry R. Habermas’ words, “It is a historical fact that some of Jesus’ followers came to believe that he had been raised from the dead soon after his execution. This early belief in the resurrection is the historical origin of Christianity,”<sup>11</sup> as is clearly evident in the Gospels, Acts and the Pauline letters. It is the event of the resurrection that gave birth to the Christian faith. Additionally, in claiming that the Hebrew scriptures do not speak of an afterlife, Scuka lays aside texts from Jewish scriptures such as Isa 25:6-10; Wis 3: 1-8; Dan 12:1-3; 2 Macc 7, and the exaltation of

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<sup>8</sup> Scuka, “Resurrection,” 89.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald G. O’Collins, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Some Contemporary Issues* (The Pere Marquette Lecture in Theology) (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1993), 7.

<sup>10</sup> O’Collins, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Gary R. Habermas, “Resurrection Research From 1975 to the Present: What are Critical Scholars Saying?” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 3, issue 2 (2005), 151.

Enoch and Elijah that reveals afterlife beliefs in Judaism. In sum, Scuka's thesis that the Christian affirmation concerning Jesus' resurrection is a mere symbolic affirmation of liberation from bondage and new life that the disciples experienced in and through the earthly ministry of Christ, and continues after the crucifixion,<sup>12</sup> does not take adequate account of the NT data, nor does it offer any lively hope for Christian living. However, it was important for him to emphasize the perennial closeness of God to his creatures, and the nexus between creation and salvation.<sup>13</sup> Our next author, Geza Vermes also concludes with a rising in the hearts of the disciples' hypothesis.

## 1.2 GEZA VERMES

In his book, *The Resurrection*, Geza Vermes attempts an historical investigation into the resurrection of Jesus, which he considered "an unparalleled phenomenon in history" having centrality in Christian doctrine from the early church, with the aim of discovering its true meaning and constructing a "tenable hypothesis."<sup>14</sup> Vermes begins with a look at afterlife beliefs in Judaism from the earliest times<sup>15</sup> and concludes that the notion of bodily resurrection propagated by the Pharisees, which the Sadducees opposed, was alien to first century Hellenistic Jews and was on the whole unfamiliar in most layers of Palestinian Jewry.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, he assumes that the story of the encounter between Jesus and the Sadducees on the question of the resurrection (Matt. 22: 23-30; Mk. 12:18-25; Lk. 20:27-36) is inauthentic. He writes: "Most critical commentators rightly assume that the conflict is inauthentic and probably reflects by

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<sup>12</sup> Scuka, "Resurrection," 85.

<sup>13</sup> Scuka, "Resurrection," 82-84, 86.

<sup>14</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Resurrection* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), x-xi, xv.

<sup>15</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 5-7, 30-35.

<sup>16</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 55ff.

anticipation argument opposing the haughty Sadducees and the representatives of the apostolic Church in the latter part of the first century, but there is no reason to doubt that the ideas expressed here correspond to the eschatological thought of Jesus. The tale itself smacks of fiction.”<sup>17</sup> Jesus could not have answered them.<sup>18</sup> From the words “they are like angels” in the passages Vermes concludes that Jesus, like his first century Jews, meant a spiritual, non-corporeal resurrection, in which case, in Jesus’ mind, the distinction between resurrection and spiritual survival was minimal.<sup>19</sup> Vermes affirms that the theme of “eternal life,” or “life” and not “resurrection” was prominent in the teaching of Christ; more so, rarely did Jesus associate eternal life with resurrection. Jesus and his contemporaries believed that the reign of God was about to begin in this world. Hence, they imagined that they could pass into the age to come without death and resurrection.<sup>20</sup>

In his analysis of the resurrection predictions, Vermes comes up with the following summary: the predictions are couched in clear and simple language and it is hardly possible that the disciples did not hear; and the expressions “on the third day,” “after three days” are said repeatedly. More so, the predictions and reactions ascribed to the disciples are filled with oddities; contrary to what is found in connection with the sayings of Jesus about life after death, resurrection took the center stage in the post Easter proclamation; and the predictions reveal that the execution and resurrection of Jesus were part of his foreknowledge and belonged to the traditional Jewish messianic expectation. Thus, they must have been dead certainties for the

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<sup>17</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 65.

<sup>18</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 65-66. For him, the accounts of the Gospels about Jesus as a polemicist reveals that he could not have answered such a question from the Sadducee, just as he refused to declare to the chief priest, scribes and elders the source of his authority. How could Jesus then naively put up with this cynical leg-pull by the Sadducees?

<sup>19</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 66. “They are like angels” does not suggest a bodiless resurrection. The import of this likeness resides primarily in their state of immortal and unmarried existence, as we shall see in chapter three.

<sup>20</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 70-3.

disciples; yet, the disciples did not understand; they were surprised, scandalized and frustrated.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Vermes concludes that the dishonorable behavior of the disciples and the predictions are mere inventions, which “appear to represent the tracing back to Jesus of some of the weapons of the apologetical-polemical arsenal of the Jewish-Christian Church.”<sup>22</sup>

Next, in evaluating the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus in the gospels, Vermes notes unique elements present in some of the gospels but missing in others, some of which lack parallels. Some unique missing elements include: in John, Mary Magdalene alone went to the tomb and tells of the disappearance of the body to Peter and the beloved disciple, while in the Synoptic gospels more than one woman went to the tomb; Luke alone emphasizes the prophecies announcing the resurrection; Matthew alone speaks of guards and earthquakes; there is unparalleled characteristics in Mark’s short ending with complete absence of apparitions.<sup>23</sup> He notes also flat contradictions that include: differences in the number and identity of the women who visited the tomb; differences in the number of the persons seen by the women and the message they received from them; difference in the number and location of the apparitions of Jesus; differences in the places the apostolic mission was conferred; and differences in the places where Jesus’ ascension took place.<sup>24</sup> More so, Jesus was never identified in any of his appearances, thus a double argument is offered by the evangelists to prove the resurrection of Jesus: the discovery of the empty tomb, and the visions and apparitions.<sup>25</sup> Though Vermes

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<sup>21</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 76-82.

<sup>22</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 82. Chapter two of this essay will on the contrary give plausible reasons why the accounts of the predictions and the disciples’ strange reactions are not mere inventions of the early church.

<sup>23</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 104-5.

<sup>24</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 106-7. In chapter two, we consider briefly the differences in the gospel accounts.

<sup>25</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 108. It seems an overstatement to say Jesus was never identified in any of the appearances, as we shall see in the next chapter. The discrepancies in the Gospel accounts too will be attended to in that chapter briefly. Michael R. Licona tells us that Vermes abandoned his Christian faith in 1957; thus, Vermes would most likely not accept the gospels as inspired by God. So such differences would render the accounts invalid

affirms the historicity of the empty tomb, he does not affirm the historicity of the reports of the resurrection and visions, but looked for some enlightened speculations to make sense of the resurrection.<sup>26</sup> Dismissing six hypotheses that he considered insufficient to explain the resurrection of Jesus, and two he considers extreme,<sup>27</sup> Vermes concludes from the existential, historical, and psychological states of the original disciples few days after the crucifixion that the resurrection is not historical. According to him, under the influence of the Holy Spirit the disciples' self-confidence revived, and filled with apostolic zeal and boldness, they preached and performed miracles in Jesus' name, with their lives transformed. They became inwardly convinced of his spiritual presence among them. Thus, Jesus only rose in the hearts of his disciples who loved him. This is what the resurrection of Jesus Christ means; and belief in the resurrection of Jesus as a central Christian doctrine is largely due to the supreme doctrinal and organizational skills of St. Paul.<sup>28</sup>

By way of critique, the following can be said briefly on Vermes' hypothesis. On a positive note, Vermes rightly claims that the resurrection was not a prominent theme in Jesus' kerygma, but the concepts of "eternal life" and "the kingdom of God" featured frequently. He notes well that in spite of the predictions, the disciples were puzzled with the whole event; and as pointed out, discrepancies and seeming contradictions are manifest in the resurrection narratives in the gospels, some of which cannot be resolved historically. Moreover, the reason for his acceptance of the women's witness of the empty tomb is plausible: if the infant church created

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for him [*The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic; Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2010), 470].

<sup>26</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 140-41.

<sup>27</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 141-8. 1) The body was removed by someone close to Jesus; 2) the body was stolen by his disciples; 3) the empty tomb was not the tomb of Jesus; 4) buried alive, Jesus later left the tomb; 5) the migrant Jesus; and 6) the appearances suggest a spiritual bodiless resurrection. For a similar list of seven categories see Dale C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and its Interpreters* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 201-14.

<sup>28</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 151.

the story of the empty tomb to demonstrate the resurrection of Jesus, there would have been a uniform and foolproof account attributed to legally reliable witnesses.<sup>29</sup>

However, I disagree with Vermes on several grounds. First, it is hard to believe, as he asserts, that bodily resurrection as taught by the Pharisees was alien to most of the Jews at the time of Christ and that the Sadducees and their non believing attitudes were more influential among the people. Rather, as Claudia Setzer points out, on account of the belief, in divine providence, retribution and the resurrection, the Pharisees were more influential among the people since their teachings offered them hope amidst the anxieties of life.<sup>30</sup> Further, Vermes' conclusions on the encounter between the Sadducees and Jesus about the resurrection fails to note the difference between the question posed by the chief priest about the source of his authority (Mk. 11:27-33), which was to confront his authority that was diminishing theirs because of his miracles and unique wisdom, and the question posed by the Sadducees concerning the resurrection from the dead (Matt. 22:23-30), which was with the intention to know from one whom they thought could give the right answer to such an important question. So, he answered the later in order to enlighten them about the reality of the resurrection, but gave a response that reveals the hypocrisy of the former. In asserting that spiritual resurrection was in the minds of Jesus, the disciples and most Jews,<sup>31</sup> Vermes contradicts his earlier definition of Jewish concept of resurrection in its strict sense as "the corporeal revival of the dead, the reunification of the spiritual soul and the material body of a deceased person."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 141.

<sup>30</sup> Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community and Self-Definition* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 21-33.

<sup>31</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 66.

<sup>32</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, xvi. The passages and Martha's profession of faith in "the resurrection on the last day" (John 11:24) seem to indicate that bodily resurrection was in the mind of Christ and the Sadducees.

Again, “If for Vermes the testimonies of women meet *historical* standards to establish the historicity of the empty tomb, why would he exclude them for failing to meet Jewish legal standards of the first century, or standards employed in a discipline outside of history?”<sup>33</sup> If, as Vermes concludes, the resurrection of Jesus meant “his rising in the hearts of the disciples,” and if belief in bodily resurrection was remote in the mind of Christ, his disciples and the majority of first century Jews, why did the disciples not preach “spiritual” resurrection or immortality, in harmony with the belief of the people? Their chances of being believed would have been greater. Does the invention of stories of appearance not contradict the interior spiritual transformation posited by Vermes, which must include honesty? As O’Collins critiqued, the change-of-heart theory denies what the NT authors repeatedly assert and quite categorically: Christ “died... and was buried,” “was raised and... appeared” (1 Cor. 15:3-5). Just as burial is a pointer to death, so also his appearances are pointers to his resurrection. Vermes turns the disciples into deceivers who used deceptive form of discourse to merely talk about their inner transformation.<sup>34</sup> Finally, he does not account for Paul’s conversion experience that strongly supports the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection given his earlier hostility towards the Christian movement.<sup>35</sup>

### **1.3 DALE ALLISON**

We now turn to Dale C. Allison who rightly drew together the requirements of one’s prior worldview and one’s estimation of the pre-Easter Jesus in forming a judgment about the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection. Allison defended the burial by Joseph of Arimathea, concluded that the empty tomb story is more likely to be historical than legendry, and tentatively affirmed

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<sup>33</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 475. Vermes in pages 40-41 seems to accept the “empty tomb” but not the appearances.

<sup>34</sup> O’Collins, *Believing in the Resurrection: The meaning and Promise of the Risen Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 20-1.

<sup>35</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 477.

the literal resurrection of Jesus.<sup>36</sup> But his conclusion on “The Disciples and Bereavement” (364-375) nullifies his initial position on the tentative literal resurrection of Jesus. He interprets the post resurrection appearances of Jesus more likely as experiences of bereavement, not taking into account their differences as O’Collins notes.<sup>37</sup> Allison sums up his thesis thus:

Shortly after his death, the followers of Jesus saw him again, sensed his invisible presence, overcame their guilt by finding sense in his tragic end, idealized and internalized their teacher, and remembered his words and deeds. Given that similar circumstances often attend the bereaved in general, it may be clear, to some extent, Christian theology and experience were summoned forth and shaped by the pre-Easter Jesus and belief in his postmortem vindication, but also by the psychological processes that trailed his disciples’ loss.<sup>38</sup>

This statement subtly contrasts the previous tentative affirmation of historicity of literal resurrection. The thesis that Christian theology and experience were summoned forth and shaped by the pre-Easter Jesus, belief in his postmortem vindication, and the psychological processes that trailed his disciples’ loss, is a reductionist and subjectivist thesis that does not affirm resurrection. There is no objectivity in the appearances and visions in the disciples’ experience. Neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit plays an active role; the divine does not take the initiative. Rather, it is the disciples that were the principle actors. This is the very contrast of what the accounts reveal: Jesus takes the initiative in appearing to them, reminding and instructing them. The words of O’Collins are relevant here: “This summary reduces all that happened after the death and burial of Jesus to what happened on the side of the bereaved disciples, to their subjective experience, and to their activity. They “saw him again” and “sensed his invisible presence,” rather than the risen Jesus himself taking the initiative to “appear” to them (1 Cor. 15:

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<sup>36</sup> O’Collins, *Believing in the Resurrection*, 12-3. See also Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 214, 344, 350, 352-60.

<sup>37</sup> O’Collins, *Believing in the Resurrection*, 15. See pg. 178-189 for similarities and differences between Easter Appearances and Bereavement Experiences.

<sup>38</sup> Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 375.

5-8).”<sup>39</sup> Allison tentatively agrees with the relevant scriptural evidence: empty tomb, the appearances, and the origins of the disciples’ belief in bodily resurrection, but surprisingly limits himself to mere possibilities instead of presenting a defensible position that can account for the NT evidence. Allison asserts that historians cannot deduce resurrection as the best possible explanation to the agreed evidences.<sup>40</sup> It is true that other explanations can and are offered for the evidence, but resurrection remains the best explanation for the evidence. In putting aside the NT evidence and limiting himself to mere possibilities, Allison reduces the objective experiences of the disciples to merely psychological subjective interpretation that goes against the NT data.

#### 1. 4 BRIAN SCHMISEK

In his book *Resurrection of the Flesh or Resurrection from the Dead: Implications for Theology*, Brian Schmisek approaches the issue of resurrection from three perspectives.<sup>41</sup> In chapter one he gives a thorough historical survey of the Christian understanding of resurrection from the earliest ages to modern times, and how the expressions “resurrection of the flesh” (“*anastasis sarkos*”) or “resurrection of the body” (“*anastasis sōma*”) became part of the Christian creed.<sup>42</sup> In chapter two, our author takes a look at the biblical passages that deal with resurrection. He rightly observes that the NT uses resurrection “of the dead” or “from the dead,” (“*anastasis nekron*”) and not “of the body” or “of the flesh” that were later developed to cope

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<sup>39</sup> O’Collins, *Believing in the Resurrection*, 15-6.

<sup>40</sup> Glenn B. Siniscalchi, “On Comparing the Resurrection Appearances with Apparitions,” *Pacifica* 27, 2 (2014): 196-200. Cf. 196-204. William Lane Craig, “Dale Allison on Jesus’ Empty Tomb, His Post-Mortem Appearances, and the Origin of the Disciples’ Belief in His Resurrection,” *Philosophia Christi* 19, 2 (2008): 293-301; Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 230-360; “The Resurrection of Jesus and Rational Apologetics,” *Philosophia Christi* 10, 2 (2008): 315-338.

<sup>41</sup> Brian Schmisek, *Resurrection of the Flesh or Resurrection from the Dead: Implications for Theology* (Minnesota, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013). First, historical survey of the Christian understanding of resurrection, second, the biblical passages on the resurrection (both testaments), and third, modern ways of looking at the world.

<sup>42</sup> Schmisek, *Resurrection of the Flesh*, 3-48.

with philosophical and anthropological presuppositions of the second and third centuries.<sup>43</sup> Also, Schmisek asserts that the NT does not mention the body or flesh with regard to Jesus' resurrection, and throughout Christian history most theologians read Pauline passages in light of the gospel narratives and Luke's story in Acts and thus arrived at a tangible, fleshly experience of Christ on the road to Damascus.<sup>44</sup> But scholars of today, focusing on Pauline letters alone, understand Paul's statement to indicate that Paul had an interior, subjective, though no less real experience of the risen Lord. For him, portraying Jesus' resurrection in physical terms may lead to the danger of understanding it as resuscitation.<sup>45</sup> In the third and final chapter, Schmisek holds that since our understanding of the world today is radically different from that of the ancients, and philosophical, anthropological and cosmological systems are no longer adequate for some of our theological positions, it is the task of theology to cast Christian faith in the language, terms and culture of our own time.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, in molecular biological terms Schmisek writes: "Simply by using the term 'flesh' we conjure up images of a graphically physical nature. Today, unlike in antiquity, we know that nearly every cell in the human body is generated at least every seven years. With over one hundred trillion cells in a human body, continually degenerate, and regenerating, what precise flesh will be raised."<sup>47</sup> Food causes organic change in us; we are what we eat. The language of "resurrection of the flesh or body" for him confuses the modern mind; it is hard for the modern person to comprehend. Therefore, despite its appropriateness and usage in earlier centuries, and a worthy subject of historical and theological study, it should be avoided since it no longer

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<sup>43</sup> Schmisek, *Resurrection of the Flesh*, 115.

<sup>44</sup> Schmisek, *Resurrection of the Flesh*, 58.

<sup>45</sup> Schmisek, *Resurrection of the Flesh*, 56, 58-59, 67. By "throughout Christian history most theologians" Brian meant the theologians whose positions he had exposed in chapter one from earliest centuries to the beginning of mid twentieth century.

<sup>46</sup> Schmisek, *Resurrection of the flesh*, 93, 115.

<sup>47</sup> Schmisek, *Resurrection of the flesh*, 116.

conveys Christian theology accurately to a modern audience.<sup>48</sup> Alternatively, we should talk about resurrection of the dead only in terms of transformation: resurrection of the self, the consciousness, the mind, or the human person raised to new life, and so respect the NT apostolic language. Finally, he points to other terminologies the NT used to convey Christ's victory over death: redemption (Rom 8:22-23); new birth (1 Pet 1:13); our future life (1 Tim 4:8; 6:19).<sup>49</sup>

Schmisek's presentation of the thoughts of theologians throughout the centuries is quite objective, and he rightly says that the NT does not have the phrase "resurrection of the flesh" or "resurrection of the body", since these were later developments. However, these developments were made in light of what scripture explicitly reveals as we shall see in chapter three; and it may not be plausible to say that when the NT speaks of Jesus' resurrection, mention was not made of "body" and "flesh" as is evident in Luke 24:39; Rom 8:11; Phil 3:21. Further, Paul did not just have an interior, subjective experience of the risen Lord; rather, his experience though visionary was objective and felt in some ways by his companions as the narratives reveal (Acts 9:1-20; 22:1-16; 26:1-20). Additionally, it is true that our knowledge of the world and of ourselves has changed tremendously, and that even our bodies undergo changes steadily as the biological sciences tell us. Nevertheless, one finds it hard to understand how this knowledge or change in our bodies renders bodily resurrection either impossible or incomprehensible for the modern mind. This is especially amazing in an age when the body is so glorified that the spiritual dimension of our being is often neglected. Moreover, the alternatives he offers do not adequately encapsulate the biblical teaching of resurrection. Although the insistence on "body" or "flesh" may be misunderstood as resuscitation, the use of these categories is necessary for doctrinal

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<sup>48</sup> Schmisek, *Resurrection of the flesh*, 47-48, 116.

<sup>49</sup> Schmisek, *Resurrection of the flesh*, 119.

clarity. This is because the abandonment of the “flesh” language may be easily misunderstood to mean “spiritual resurrection”, or place the resurrection at the moment of death.<sup>50</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The theologian’s task is to explain in lucid terms, using our rational faculties, the sound teaching of *sacra scriptura* about bodily resurrection. The Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis* reminds us that though revealed truth surpasses all our explanatory concepts (cf. Eph 3:19), it beckons reason—God’s gift fashioned for the assimilation of the truth—to enter into its light and thereby come to understand in a certain measure what it has believed. Theological science responds to the invitation of truth as it seeks to understand the faith.<sup>51</sup> “Faith,” as Walter Kasper writes, “is not a blind venture, an irrational feeling, not an uncalculated option [...] and certainly not a *sacrificium intellectus* (not the sacrifice of the understanding). Rather, faith can and must give a rational account of itself.”<sup>52</sup> The human person to whom the contents of faith are proposed for assent is a rational and responsible being: hence, his accountability for his belief or unbelief—showing the reasonability and intellectual probity of faith.<sup>53</sup> It is within the context of this reasonability of faith that Peter urges us to explain to all people the reasons for the faith we profess (1 Pet 3:15), as Paul used reason to defend and explain resurrection belief in 1 Cor 15, but not to prove it. Resurrection is a mystery, an article of

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<sup>50</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Translation of the Phrase “Carnis resurrectionem” in the Apostles’ Creed*,” (December 14, 1983), [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19831214\\_carnis-resurrectionem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19831214_carnis-resurrectionem_en.html).

<sup>51</sup> Congregation for The Doctrine of Faith, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis* (May 24, 1990) § 6, at The Holy See, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19900524\\_theologian-vocation\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html)

<sup>52</sup> Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connel (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 67.

<sup>53</sup> Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 69.

faith, accessible to us through revelation. Therefore, as Anthony J. Kelly urges: “a genuine Christian apologetics must not apologize for the particularity of what has been given to faith. Nor must it concede that it is “irrational”– when it is only such to a rationality that cannot allow God to act in the scandalous bodiliness of raising the crucified Jesus from the dead.”<sup>54</sup> There is more to reality than the human mind can grasp. Truth is not limited to that which is empirically verifiable or perfectly accessible to reason. Present notions of our biological constitution do not change this truth. Our modern minds should be formed to accept our epistemological limitations.

The brief look at some reductionist thesis on the resurrection of Jesus and our own future resurrection leaves us with the following conclusions. Scuka and Vermes’ reduction of the resurrection of Jesus to a “rising” in the hearts and lives of the disciples who were spiritually transformed after the crucifixion, does not offer real foundation for Christian hope and faith, even as Scuka rejects any hope of eternal life hereafter. But he challenges us to note the link between creation and salvation, even though he fails to observe the decisively salvific significance of the paschal event. Vermes draws our attention to discrepancies in the gospel accounts, which we must not ignore, while noting that they aren’t substantial enough to render the resurrection unhistorical. Equally, while “resurrection of the body or flesh” language should be maintained in discussing our future resurrection, Schmisek challenges us not to reduce resurrection to mere resuscitation. Although Allison had conceded a high degree of plausibility to the NT evidence, he failed to conclude his well-researched work by affirming resurrection as the most acceptable explanation based on that evidence. Rather, he limited himself to mere speculative possibilities that fail to do justice to the scriptural evidence. It is within the framework of the insufficiency of these hypotheses that we discern the need for a more

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<sup>54</sup> Anthony J. Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect: Transforming Christian Life and Thought* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 41-42.

acceptable explanation for the Easter faith given the evidence. This leads us to consider the historicity and the transformed bodily nature of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in chapter two.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST: GUARANTEE AND PATTERN FOR FUTURE RESURRECTION**

“For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:16-17).

This Pauline kerygmatic statement is of primary importance and it defines the core of the Christian faith, a faith that is rightly described as “Easter faith.” However, in an age where empirical verifiability is the ultimate criterion for truth, considering that “there are elements in the Christian tradition that defy a rigid application of reason and a search for facts that can establish their scientifically controlled truthfulness,”<sup>1</sup> an Easter faith that proclaims the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is more than ever under attack. Since Christian hope is hinged on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and since its denial would empty the Christian faith of its uniqueness and the hope it offers humanity and the entire cosmos, there is need to explicate this belief clearly, relying on the scriptural evidence. Consequently, this chapter attempts to show the bodily resurrection of Jesus as a scriptural teaching, that Christ rose with his own life, as part of God’s saving plan, constituting salvation for him, humanity and the entire cosmos. To achieve this goal, the chapter will focus on four issues: (1) the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (2) the empty tomb and appearances: a case for bodily resurrection, (3) the gospel tradition, and (4) the cosmic significance of this awe-inspiring event.

### **2.1 THE HISTORICITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST**

This section argues for the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the best explanation for what happened to Jesus after his crucifixion and death, given all the New Testament (NT) evidence. The section will proceed sequentially under the following sub-headings: 1) the passion and resurrection predictions; 2) evidence of his death and burial; 3)

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<sup>1</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *The Resurrection of the Messiah: a Narrative Commentary on the Resurrection Accounts in the Four Gospels* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 138.

evidence of resurrection in the earliest apostolic kerygma; and 4) the transformed hearts and lives of the disciples.

### **2.1.1 THE PASSION AND RESURRECTION PREDICTIONS**

Some scholars have in recent times denied the historicity of the passion and resurrection predictions of Jesus. Michael R. Licona identifies three main objections in this regard: 1) the predictions require that Jesus had predictive powers, which are not allowed within historical investigation; 2) the predictions were invented by the early church to attribute predictive powers to Jesus in the process of inventing his claim to divinity; 3) Jesus' disciples failed to anticipate his resurrection which suggests that Jesus did not make the predictions.<sup>2</sup> His treatment on "The Historian and Miracles" answers the first objection, when he gives the opinion that the historian can investigate the historical portion of a miracle claim, without affirming miracle in the fullest theological sense.<sup>3</sup> In this case, from the NT data the historian can ascertain the historicity of the predictions, without necessarily proving that Jesus had such predictive powers. As Licona observes, while the second objection may be plausible on the grounds that it is possible for the disciples to invent such predictions to defend his divinity, the structure of the texts and contexts do not give any indication of an invention, and the conclusion that all the logia in this regard are inventions is quite a leap that relies too much on a priori assumptions. Evidence ought to guide historical research, he says.<sup>4</sup> The most reasonable reply to the third objection is that the idea of a suffering and crucified Messiah is strange to the average Jewish imagination. The Jews conceived of the messiah and his kingdom in earthly terms, a feature evident in the kerygma of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:7-12; Lk. 3:7-9, 16-17), in the disciples' request to sit at his right and

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<sup>2</sup> Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic; Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2010), 295-7.

<sup>3</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 175, 198; cf 133-198.

<sup>4</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 25-6.

left hand (Matt. 20:20-28), and on the day of ascension (Acts 1:6-7). In short, they wanted to make him king by force (John 6:15). This view makes a lot of sense in light of Jesus' extraordinary wisdom and miracles. Licona argues strongly and persuasively for the historicity of the predictions using four main texts.

1) Mark 8:31: "Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." The context (vv. 27-33), Licona notes, is Jesus' rebuke of Peter after Peter had rebuked him for his death and resurrection prediction after Peter's confession of faith. He notes that the embarrassing rebukes of Peter and Jesus in vv. 32-33 seem to suggest historicity as both are said in reference to Jesus' death and resurrection as their only reason. Also, the Semitic elements present and the independent parallels of Matt. 16:21-23 and Lk. 9:22 provide multiple attestation. Additionally, Jesus' use of his favorite self-designation "Son of Man" which is dissimilar to the early Christians' designation of Jesus as "Son of God" points to the originality of the prediction. The criteria of embarrassment, multiple attestation and dissimilarity supports the historicity of Mark 8:31.<sup>5</sup>

2) Mark 9:31: "For he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'the Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again'" (pericope vv. 30-32). There is present the criterion of dissimilarity ("Son of Man"),<sup>6</sup> but also the fact that the disciples did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask. This is not to mean that they did not understand the literal meaning of betrayal, killing and rising (v. 31).

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<sup>5</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 285. Licona seems to have borrowed these criteria from John P. Meier who states five primary criteria for the historicity of sayings attributed to Christ in the canonical gospels: embarrassment, discontinuity or dissimilarity, multiple attestation, coherence or consistency, and rejection and execution. Meier further gives five secondary criteria: traces of Aramaic, Palestinian environment, vividness of narration, tendencies of developing synoptic tradition, and historical presumption [*A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Vol. I: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 168-183.

<sup>6</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 285.

It meant that they could not imagine how such a wonder worker whom they conceived to be the expected Messiah can be killed as Peter's rebuke in Mark 8:32 shows, given the fact that the idea of a single person rising from the dead before the general resurrection was alien to them.

3) The last Supper institution statements also predict his passion and resurrection (Mark 14:22-24; Matt. 26:26-35; Lk. 22:15-23; 1 Cor. 11:23-27): "This is my body which is given for you" (Lk. 22:19), "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). The whole discussion at the Last supper preceding the agony in the garden speaks of his immediate passion, death and resurrection (Matt. 26: 29-35). The Last Supper statements that predict his death and resurrection/vindication are supported by a primitive tradition that predates Paul. Paul and Luke seem to draw from a common tradition independent of Mark. The criteria of multiple attestation, early attestation and dissimilarity are present.<sup>7</sup>

4) Jesus' prayer and discussion with his disciples at the garden prior to the passion (Mark 14:32-41; Matt. 26:36-45; Lk. 22:39-46) reveals Jesus anticipating his impending violent death shown in a real agonizingly embarrassing way. Accounts of martyrdom often reveal the inexplicable joy and courage of the martyrs. But though Jesus was bold in his convictions and prayed to God, there is significant difference in Jesus' display of anguish in the garden that is embarrassing rather than inspiring (e.g., "let this cup pass away from me," "my soul is sorrowful even unto death"). This seems to attest to the historicity of the narratives; for, if the early church invented them, they would have tried to paint things in an encouraging, inspiring way like that of the martyrs (2 Macc. 7; Acts 6:8-7:60). The criterion of dissimilarity and the embarrassing comments of despair are corroborated by the criterion of multiple independent attestations (Heb.

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<sup>7</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 285-6.

2:9; 5:7). Many of these predictions seem to lack possible theologizing by the early church.<sup>8</sup> Conclusively, the evidence for the historicity of the predictions is quite convincing. While they do not give a mathematical proof, they greatly fulfill the criterion of plausibility for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection.<sup>9</sup> Haven taken a look at the predictions, we now fix our gaze on the evidence of death and burial in support of our argument for the historicity of the resurrection.

### 2.1.2 EVIDENCE OF DEATH AND BURIAL

All the canonical gospels (Luke 23:50-55; Matt 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; John 19:38-42), other NT writings (e.g 1 Cor 15:3-4; Rom 6:4) and non-canonical writings attest to the fact that Christ died and was buried. Though death and burial do not necessarily guarantee Jesus' resurrection, the affirmation of the historicity of his death and burial helps strengthen the argument for resurrection in light of death and burial objections by few scholars.<sup>10</sup> Gary R. Habermas cites some non-Christian authors affirming the death of Jesus.<sup>11</sup> For him, the "no death" hypothesis lacks credibility on three grounds: 1) medical studies generally agree that crucifixion causes death as individuals begin to asphyxiate from the pressure on the lungs caused

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<sup>8</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 286-90. As Licona points out the criterion of multiple attestation even within each of the sources is a compelling evidence for historicity. He considers some other themes and passages about the predictions (290-3): after transfiguration (Mark 9:9; Matt. 17:9); vineyard and wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-12; Matt. 21:33-46; Lk. 20:9-19); destruction of the temple (John 2:18-22; Matt. 26:61-62; Mark 14:58; 15:19), all of which allude to his death and resurrection.

<sup>9</sup> See also Hans F. Bayer, *The Predictions of Vindication and Resurrection: The Provenance, Meaning and Correlation of the Synoptic Predictions* (Turbingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986) for a treatment of the predictions.

<sup>10</sup> Even in the last two decades of the twentieth century, some scholars posit that Jesus never really died, but was prematurely buried, got revived in the cool air of the tomb which he exited; as a result the tomb was found empty. He may then have met someone who mistook him to have resurrected. Allison, (2005) 203, disagreeing with the hypothesis cites some proponents of revival theories: M. and T. A. Lloyd Davies, "Resurrection or Resuscitation?" *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London* 25, no. 2 (1991): 167-70; J. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Anastasis: The Resurrection of Jesus as an Historical Event* (Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire, UK: Drinkwater, 1982); Michael A. Persinger, "Science and the Resurrection," *The Skeptic* 9, no. 4 (2002): 76-79.

<sup>11</sup> Gary R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus & Future Hope* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 16. The non-Christian writings include: Tacitus (*Annals* 15:44), Josephus (*Antiquities* 18:3), Mara Bar-Serapion (*Letter, British Museum, Syrial Manuscript*, additional 14,658); Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 43a; cf. 106b); Lucian of Samosata (*The Death of Peregrine* 11-13) e. t. c.

by the intercostal, pectoral, and deltoid muscles; 2) ancient sources reveal that strokes (in this case piercing with lance) to crucifixion victims guarantees their death; and 3) it was impossible for Jesus to revive: “a crucified but still-living Jesus would have been in horrible physical shape: bloodied, bruised, pale, limping, unwashed, and in obvious need of medical assistance.”<sup>12</sup> Who would believe such as risen from the dead, proclaim him as savior and vindicated, and be ready to die for him without being guilty of mortally blatant deception?

With regard to his burial, Craig A. Evans notes that J. D. Crossan suggests that in keeping with Roman practice of denying burial for executed criminals, the body of Jesus most probably may not have been taken down from the cross for proper Jewish burial, but left hanging on the cross or cast into a ditch covered with lime and left exposed to either birds or animals. For Crossan, Jesus wasn't properly buried; and the empty tomb story is a question of apologetic and theology.<sup>13</sup> In refutation of this assumption, Evans gives the following reasons why it is more tenable to believe in the burial.

First, there is great importance and necessity of burial rites in Judaism (Gen 23:4-19; 50:4-14, 22-26; 1 Sam 31:12-13) even for the wicked and divinely judged, executed criminals, and Israel's enemies slain in battle, to avoid defilement of the land (Num 11:33-34; Deut 21:22-23; Ezek 39:11-16). Lack of burial was considered as punishment for rebellion against God (Deut. 28:25-26; 1 kgs 21:23-24; Jer. 7:33); both Philo (*Apion* 2.29 § 211; cf. 2.26 § 205) and Josephus testify to the obligation of the Israelites to bury every dead, the former accounts for

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<sup>12</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 16; Cf. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 303-318.

<sup>13</sup> Craig A. Evans, “Jewish Burial Traditions and the Resurrection of Jesus,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 3, no. 2 (2005): 233-4. See J. D. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995), 160-88; J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of A Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 391-94; J. D. Crossan and J. L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 230-70. Bishop John Shelby Spong, *Resurrection: Myth or Reality? A Bishop's Search for the Origins of Christianity* (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 225 also share such an opinion. Evans argues against this view of lack of burial.

Jacob's terrible lament over the absence of burial for Joseph (*De Iosepho* 5 §§ 22-23, 26-27).<sup>14</sup> Second, the thousands of Jews crucified and left hanging on crosses outside the walls of Jerusalem, during the siege of 69-70 AD, are indicative of an abnormal practice in Roman Palestine: the cases involve open rebellion and armed conflict, or mob actions and anarchy. Under normal peaceful circumstances, as Philo and Josephus both testify, Roman Decree honors requests by family members to bury their condemned and crucified criminals, with the authorities respecting Jewish burial and religious sensitivities.<sup>15</sup> Third, the evidence suggests that in all probability Jesus' corpse was requested for and granted burial. For, it was a peacetime administration in Palestine; the Jewish religious leaders, more zealous for ceremonial laws would not have hindered it (being also the eve of a special solemnity); Pilate would want to release the body on grounds of innocence and Jewish sensitivity. Fourth, the gospels' portrait of the execution of Jesus (including Joseph's request for the body) is consistent with what is known of crucifixion in the Roman Empire. Fifth, the women's visit to the tomb makes sense in light of Jewish law and custom of mourning at the tomb of a beloved one, but also, "to note the precise location of Jesus' tomb, so that the later gathering of his remains for burial in his family tomb is possible, then we have a story that fits Jewish customs, on the one hand, and stands in tension with resurrection expectations and supporting apologetics, on the other."<sup>16</sup> On these grounds, burial is to be considered historically sound, especially when corroborated by the earliest tradition that predates Paul who uses the word "buried" (1 Cor. 15:4; Rom. 6:4), distinct from unceremonious dumping of a criminal.

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<sup>14</sup> Evans, "Jewish Burial Traditions," 234-38.

<sup>15</sup> Evans, "Jewish Burial Traditions," 239-41.

<sup>16</sup> Evans, "Jewish Burial Traditions," 246, 241-245. Cf. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 353-363 who argued strongly for the plausibility of Joseph's burial of Jesus.

### 2.1.3 EVIDENCE OF RESURRECTION IN THE EARLIEST KERYGMA

In this sub-section, we shall give reasonable evidence for the resurrection in the earliest kerygma of the church. Contrary to Vermes' assumption that belief in the resurrection of Jesus as a central Christian doctrine is largely due to the supreme doctrinal and organizational skills of St. Paul,<sup>17</sup> belief in the resurrection of Jesus and the Pentecost experience of the Spirit empowered the apostles to preach the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, prior to Paul's conversion and proclamation. On the day of Pentecost, Peter in his address emphasized the fact of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:22-36), to which we shall return in defense of bodily resurrection. In Acts, Jesus, as the suffering and risen Messiah (5:42; 8:35; 18:5, 28), is the focus of the apostolic preaching. This portrayal of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the most important aspect of the Christian preaching is believed to be a fulfillment of Old Testament (OT) scriptures (2:22-36; 17:2-3; 18:24, 28; 28:23).<sup>18</sup> Both events are placed squarely in the center of God's saving plan, such that without one the other is rendered useless and ineffectual. Charles H. Cosgrove defines the necessity of Jesus' passion in Luke-Acts as inclusive of the cross and resurrection/ascension, suggested by the grammatical structure (intimate link between both events with the divine imperative) and the appeal to scripture to support the necessity of both events (cf. Lk. 24:6-7, 25-27; Acts 2:23-24).<sup>19</sup>

According to Acts, the chief priest, scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees persecuted the early church because of the resurrection kerygma. Acts 4:1-2 states: "While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is

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<sup>17</sup> Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 151.

<sup>18</sup> Dennis J. Horton, *Death and Resurrection: the Shape and Function of a Literary Motif in the Book of Acts* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009), 20-21.

<sup>19</sup> Horton, *Death and Resurrection*, 19.

resurrection of the dead.” Though it seems that it is not Jesus’ resurrection that is explicitly put forth here as the primary basis of the authorities’ annoyance but the general resurrection, it is manifest that their annoyance is stirred by the apostles basing the general resurrection on Jesus whom, they proclaimed, has been raised from the dead. Acts 4:33 states: “With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.” In 4:8-12, as Dennis J. Horton writes, “Peter appeals to Psalm 118:22, which foresees the Messiah as ‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone’ (v. 11). If the rejection parallels the crucifixion, then the transition from the rejected stone to cornerstone occurs through God’s raising Jesus from the dead.”<sup>20</sup>

Responding to the high priest’s complaint about the disciples disobeying their command not to preach in Jesus’ name (5:27-32), they said: “We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” The message was direct and indicting, and they knew it could cost them their lives; yet they insisted on proclaiming Jesus as risen, and that it is in his name that forgiveness of sins and the gifting of the Holy Spirit is made possible. There is no doubt that the apostles meant resurrection in the literal sense of the word in these passages, since in the face of persecution and death, it would have been easier to explain that they were only speaking in symbolic terms or metaphors. The resurrection and ascension motifs are combined; from heaven in his glorified body in union with the Father he sends forth the Spirit.

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<sup>20</sup> Horton, *Death and Resurrection*, 31.

Thus, “the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus constitute one indissoluble action for human salvation, as Paul implicitly recognized in Rom. 4:25.”<sup>21</sup>

In Acts, therefore, “the characterization of Jesus equally emphasizes his passion and resurrection. Both the narrator and the central characters speak from the same perspective, creating a unified vision of Jesus as the one who encompasses both suffering/death and resurrection/exaltation in accordance with the scriptures.”<sup>22</sup> The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the truth about God from which everything else follows. To be wrong about the resurrection of Jesus and ours is to be wrong about God, the God of the resurrection (1 Cor 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 1:1). It brings out the meaning of the cross (1 Cor 1:18-24), reveals the Trinity and God’s plan of salvation, which includes our filial adoption in Christ.<sup>23</sup> As O’Collins aptly writes:

The cross, of course, is the great sign and characteristics of Christianity. Paul sums up his message as Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:18-24). Nevertheless, he does not claim, “if Christ be not crucified, your faith is futile.” Still less does he say, “if Christ be not crucified, we are even found to be misrepresenting God.” The crucifixion without its sequel in resurrection would not have revealed God, effected our salvation, and brought into existence the church.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the objection could be raised, that since Acts was written some decades after the Pentecost event, it cannot of itself be a “proof” that the belief in the resurrection of Jesus had sunk in before Pentecost, or the author wrote verbatim the apostolic kerygma or expressed the essence of it. Surely, decades elapsed before the events were written down. However, leaning on other NT writings especially the Pauline corpus, one can say with a very high degree of plausibility that the witness of Acts must have captured substantially, even without being verbatim, the preaching of the apostles. This assumption is based on the fact that,

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<sup>21</sup> Raymond Brown, “Resurrection,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hill, 1990), 81:120, p. 1373.

<sup>22</sup> Horton, *Death and Resurrection*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> Gerald O’Collins, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Some Contemporary Issues* (Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1993), 24-25, 26-30.

<sup>24</sup> O’Collins, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 25.

1) Luke was a close and faithful companion of the apostles, especially Paul; he heard him preach and debate with opponents; and 2) the Pauline letters speak of the bodily resurrection of Jesus as a real past event with existential and eschatological significance as we shall see shortly (Rom 1:4; 6:4-11; 8:11; 1 Cor 15; Thess 4:13-18; cf. 1 Pet 1:21, 3:21; cf. Heb 13:20; Rev 1:17-18). Since, the resurrection data of Acts is essentially the same as those of the other NT writings, we can safely conclude that Acts substantially represents early apostolic “resurrection” kerygma. More so, “*anastasis*” from “*anistemi*” meaning “resurrection,” and “*ēgersis*” from “*egeiro*” meaning “to awaken and wake up, to arouse and stir up, to raise and erect”<sup>25</sup> are used for those Jesus or his disciples raised literally from the dead, as in the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:40-42), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14-15), Lazarus (John 11:43-44; 12:1), and Dorcas (Acts 9:40). It is apparent, therefore, that these verbs when used in reference to the “dead Jesus” as being resurrected can only imply the sense of his “restoration to life” from the state of “mortal death” as in Matt 27:53 and Rom 6:9. But, Jesus’ resurrection is different from that of the above-mentioned figures who returned to normal earthly life and later died. Theirs was resuscitation.

#### **2.1.4 THE RADICALLY TRANSFORMED LIVES OF THE DISCIPLES**

Prior to the resurrection, the disciples did not understand their master properly, were selfish, timid, ignorant, slow to learn, and were afraid and deserted him when he needed them most. With the crucifixion, their hopes were dashed. They were of no social standing, the dregs of society, unlearned in the liberal arts, philosophy, literature, dialectics, without any high-

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<sup>25</sup> Outi Lehtipuu, *Debates Over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 27.

sounding rhetoric, and few in number.<sup>26</sup> However, suddenly they were transformed, and preached about Jesus with a boldness even their opponents recognized (Acts: 4:13); they happily and selflessly underwent great persecution and death in preaching the crucified and risen Christ, wrought miracles in the name of Jesus. Licona notes that both Clement and Polycarp, whom scholars generally agree knew the apostles, testified to the persecution and death of the apostles and other Christians on account of their testifying to the resurrection faith that they truly believed.<sup>27</sup> Though their willingness to suffer and die does not necessarily guarantee the truthfulness of their beliefs, it attests to the fact that they truly believed what they claimed. Nevertheless, the truthfulness of the matter is to be fittingly assumed; they are primary witnesses who did not rely on another's witness; there was no room for them to have been deceived by others; they would have been the deceivers if the message had involved any deception. It is difficult to imagine how the preaching of the apostles, and the success of Christianity in terribly hostile situations would have been possible without the resurrection being historical. Their radical life of witnessing therefore, along with the death and resurrection predictions, the evidence of death and burial, and the earliest kerygma of the infant church, are eloquent testimonies to the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event that fully accords with the total life of sacrifice that Jesus lived, the eschatological kingdom he proclaimed, and his claim to divinity. Thus, scholars, and indeed all Christians, can and should affirm the resurrection of the Son of God. But with what body did he rise from the dead? Was his resurrection bodily or purely spiritual? This is the object of our quest in the succeeding section.

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<sup>26</sup> Gerald O'Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 156.

<sup>27</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 366ff. Cf. 1 Clement 5:2-7; 6; Pol. *Phil.* 9:2; Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 24.

## 2.2 EMPTY TOMB AND APPEARANCES: A CASE FOR BODILY RESURRECTION

The bodily nature of the resurrection of Jesus has been challenged by some modern scholars like Gerd Ludemann and Marcus J. Borg who claim that the pre-Pauline creed in 1 Cor 15:3-7 at best gives the implication that the early disciples of Jesus believed in a spiritual resurrection, and therefore, there was no empty tomb, a conclusion based on two premises: 1) that Paul's Damascus experience which was a visionary experience of the risen Lord, is the same in character as the experiences of the earliest percipients (indicated by the use of the same verb *ōphthē* "he was seen"), and 2) Paul who distinguished between physical and spiritual bodies, made no mention of an empty tomb, meaning that the empty tomb was irrelevant to the concept of resurrection held by the church in Jerusalem.<sup>28</sup> For such scholars, Paul and the early Christians did not teach bodily resurrection either of Jesus or of believers.

Scholars generally agree that 1 Cor 15:3-7 records an ancient oral tradition(s) (between 30-35 AD) in the history of primitive Christianity that reports the gospel data: death, burial, resurrection and appearances, and that the tradition(s) in question preceded (for several reasons) Paul who hands over to the Corinthians what he himself had received.<sup>29</sup> It is also suggested that he could have gotten the creedal formula from Damascus immediately after his conversion experience or from Peter and James from whom he inquired about the authenticity of his kerygma (Gal 1:18). Since the resurrection was a prominent subject of inquiry, at the center of Pauline preaching (1 Cor 15:3-4; Gal 1:1, 11-17; 2:1-10), Paul could have received the formula few years after the events from the eye-witness apostles: Peter, James and John. As a highly

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<sup>28</sup> Kirk R. Macgregor, "1 Corinthians 15:3B-6A, 7 and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (June 2006): 225; See the proponents of this view: Gerd Ludemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1994), 33-109; Marcus J. Borg, "The Truth of Easter," in Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 130-35; Michael Goulder, "The Explanatory Power of Conversion-Visions," in Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli, eds., *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000): 96-99.

<sup>29</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 17; Macgregor, "1 Corinthians 15:3-6A, 7," 226

compressed historical account, it meets the requirements of historical reliability; hence, the traditional material was likely obtained from witnesses closest to the original events.<sup>30</sup>

The text reads in part: “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ dies for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3-4). Against the view that Paul had no knowledge of the empty tomb since he did not mention it, and that it was irrelevant to the earliest resurrection kerygma, which had led scholars to question the gospel accounts of the empty tomb, Joseph Fitzmyer writes: “the stereotyped four-part formulation of the tradition cited here [...] which presents the essentials of death, burial, resurrection, and appearance in a well established enumerative mode of expression, but not with all the details [...] it presumes that Christ’s risen body (unmentioned) was no longer where it was laid.”<sup>31</sup> Alan F. Johnson comments reasonably here: “That Christ died a real death and did not merely become unconscious is affirmed by the statement *He was buried* (v. 4) [...] The burial’s direct connection to the resurrection strongly suggests the gospel’s emphasis of the empty tomb.”<sup>32</sup> The resurrection kerygma of Paul as narrated by Luke, who gives accounts of Paul’s conversion experience (Acts 9:3- 20; 22:6-16; 26:12-18) and his missionary work is revealing. The passage reads in part:

When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and for many days he appeared [...] As to his raising him from the dead, no more to

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<sup>30</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 18. As Fitzmyer points out “primary” or “first” should be understood in qualitative sense, that is, the most relevant message of the gospel. The insistence of the gospel being received in tradition does not contradict his claim of having gotten the gospel revealed to him in revelation (Gal. 1:1, 11-12). Gal. 1:1, 11-12 refers to the content of the gospel as a whole while 1 Cor. 15:3 refers to the creedal formula (Joseph Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, the Anchor Yale Bible vol. 32 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 545.

<sup>31</sup> Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 547.

<sup>32</sup> Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, eds., Grant R. Osborne, D. Stuart Briscoe and Hadden Robinson (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 285.

return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, 'I will give you the holy promises made to David.' Therefore he has also said in another psalm, 'You will not let your holy one experience corruption.' For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died, and was laid besides his ancestors, and experienced corruption; but he whom God raised up experienced no corruption (Acts 13:29-31, 34-38).

Paul, as narrated by Luke, goes into details of Jesus' crucifixion, death, burial in a tomb, and his being raised by God. Then he alludes to Pss 16:8-11 to explain the resurrection, saying that the body of Jesus unlike that of his ancestor David did not experience corruption but was raised up. That David's body experienced corruption is to say that he was not raised, as the expression "his tomb is with us to this day" (Acts 2:29) indicates; that Jesus' body did not experience corruption but was raised is an affirmation of the emptiness of the tomb. Thus, it appears implausible to say that Paul was ignorant of the empty tomb tradition simply because he did not mention it. Rather, the "empty tomb" is implicit in his Easter proclamation. His experience of the risen Lord confirms for him what he heard the Christians preached about Christ: the empty tomb and bodily resurrection.<sup>33</sup> Paul speaks of the risen but glorified body of Christ in Phil 3:21. Equally Peter in his speech on Pentecost day speaks of Jesus' resurrection in bodily terms; Paul's testimony is in harmony with Peter's:

But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption [...] Foreseeing this David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, 'He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.' This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses (Acts 2:24-27, 31-32).

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<sup>33</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 691. "The empty tomb and the linen cloths lying there signify in themselves that by God's power Christ's body had escaped the bonds of death and corruption. They prepared the disciples to encounter the Risen Lord" [*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Image Book Doubleday, 1997), § 657].

The term ‘corruption’ or ‘decay’ denotes the decomposition of the body after death; months after burial the Jews were taking the bones of the dead and would bury them in ossuaries.<sup>34</sup> Significantly expressed here is the captivating power of death over mortals: death holds the dead captive; that God ‘freed’ Jesus from death reveals the captivating power of death from which no human being escapes, except Jesus because God raised him back to life in harmony with his predetermined plan and foreknowledge (v. 23).<sup>35</sup> In Jesus, the power of death was destroyed. But how could the power of death that captivates be destroyed, if his body put to death is not prevented from decay by being raised? Commenting on this passage, Eckhard J. Schnabel writes:

In the context of Peter’s sermon, the Messiah, who is God’s Holy One [...] expresses his confidence that God will not allow him to stay in the nether world of the dead, and that his physical body will not be destroyed in the grave. This verse is to Peter’s use of Ps. 16, seen in the fact that it is quoted a second time in v. 31. This quotation implies that when Jesus was seen by his followers after his death, they saw his actual physical body (which implies that his tomb was actually empty). In other words, “what the psalm said is seen to fit what was known about Jesus by actual observation: he came alive after dying, and his body evidently had not decayed.”<sup>36</sup>

As in Paul above, in the passage, Peter explains the relevance of the Psalm to Jesus’ resurrection, explaining what the patriarch David really meant (29b-31) and the significance of his words in application to Jesus (32-33). The Psalm is not ultimately about king David who decomposed after death and his bones transferred to an ossuary as the presence of his tomb indicates, but that it attests to both the reality and necessity of Jesus’ resurrection. The bones of David are still in hades; therefore, the Psalm cannot refer to him.<sup>37</sup> Put differently, “Peter interprets Pss 16:8-11 and Pss 132:11 as prophecies of the resurrection of the Messiah. Since he

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<sup>34</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament vol. 3, Clinton E. Arnold et al eds., (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2012), 144.

<sup>35</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, 143.

<sup>36</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, 144.

<sup>37</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, 145.

was a prophet, David saw in advance that one of his descendants, the Holy One whom God would put on his throne, would experience the miracle of a resurrection [...] from the dead. And this coming ruler would be the Messiah.”<sup>38</sup> Peter, narrating the Christ’s event to Cornelius and his household, attests in detail to the fact that “God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead” (Acts 10:40-41; cf vv. 34-39, 42-43) entrusting them with the mission to preach repentance in his name for the forgiveness of sins. The bodily nature of the resurrection is signified by the action of eating and drinking. In Schnabel’s words: “While Jews (with the exception of the Sadducees) believe in bodily resurrection of the dead, Greeks and Romans did not, requiring more detailed arguments [...] The encounters of witnesses who saw Jesus after his return from the dead involved meals at which they ate and drank with him [...] and underline the physical nature of Jesus’ resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15).”<sup>39</sup>

Continuing his point, Schnabel holds that it is precisely because the disciples saw him, touched him and ate with him, that they could witness to his resurrection (Luke 24:37-41; Matt. 28:17; John 20:20, 25, 29). Hence, the resurrection of Jesus is not a fabricated myth, a symbol or metaphor, or the appearance of a disembodied spirit or ghost. His resurrection was just as real as his death on the cross (Luke 23:33-49) and his burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50-56).<sup>40</sup> In the Lukan narrative, thus, the apostles taught the bodily resurrection of Jesus. And since it was these primary witnesses that Paul consulted many years before his writing 1 Corinthians, Paul certainly may have been told about the events of the empty tomb and bodily

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<sup>38</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, 147. King David is seen as a prophet in a narrow sense.

<sup>39</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, 503. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 330: Historically and lexicographically, resurrection would not have been used if non-bodily resurrection were meant; for, *ègeiro* and *anastasis* were words regularly used to denote something specifically distinguished from non-bodily survival, nor are these words capable of denoting non-bodily survival after death. See also O’Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology*, 155; John 2:22; 12:1, 9, 17; 20:9; Acts 10:41. The same verb is used for Jesus and the resurrection of others like Lazarus.

<sup>40</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, 147.

resurrection by these apostles, implicit in his use of the concepts of “burial,” “raised,” and the fact that resurrection was of primary importance in the tradition he received (1 Cor 15:3).

Contrary to the opinion that the empty tomb stories were just imaginative ways of announcing the church’s faith in the resurrection and entirely derivative from the mainline proclamation of the crucified Jesus’ resurrection and subsequent appearances (1 Cor 15:3-8), O’Collins insists that the careful exegesis of the empty tomb tradition and the appearances tradition shows up such differences that would not allow us to conclude that the empty tomb stories were appearances or imagination. They are independent and have independent origins.<sup>41</sup> On the basis of the evidence in scripture, Wright accepts as solidly historical the empty tomb and the appearances based on the following premises<sup>42</sup>: 1) Second Temple Judaism provided the concept of resurrection, but the striking and consistent Christian mutations within Jewish resurrection belief rule out any possibility that the belief in Jesus’ resurrection spontaneously generated from Judaism. 2) Neither the empty tomb (that creates puzzle), nor the appearances (that may be conceived as visions or hallucinations) taken alone could have led to the resurrection belief. 3) The empty tomb and the appearances taken together provide a powerful reason for belief in resurrection. 4) The meaning of resurrection within Second Temple Judaism makes it impossible to arrive at Jesus’ bodily resurrection without the empty tomb and appearance traditions. 5) The historicity of the events is therefore very highly plausible. 6) The resurrection faith best explains the scriptural accounts. This conclusion is based on the fact that the discovery of the empty tomb in the gospels is not presented as the historicizing attempt to explain belief in the resurrection; the disciples did not believe in the resurrection and then find an

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<sup>41</sup> O’Collins, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 21. Cf. *Believing in the Resurrection*, 80-97. O’Collins convincingly disarms various objections against the facticity of the empty tomb story, and draws out its theological implications.

<sup>42</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 686-87.

empty tomb to justify that belief; rather, it is on finding the empty tomb that they were told the amazing news that “he is risen.” It is the resurrection that explains the empty tomb.<sup>43</sup>

1 Cor 15:5-8, which deals with the appearances read: “he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. And lastly as one untimely born, he appeared also to me.”<sup>44</sup> Some scholars have insisted that because Paul used the same Greek verb *ōphthē* (“he was seen” or “he appeared” GENT) for both his visionary experience of the risen Lord and that of the earlier disciples mentioned, the character of the appearances for both is the same, meaning the earlier percipients only had visions of him, with the accusation that the evangelists embellished the stories to promote bodily resurrection,<sup>45</sup> probably as a polemic against docetism. However, such a conclusion cannot be substantiated from the text in question. As Macgregor clearly enunciates,

The linguistic evidence renders apparent that its formulators regarded the resurrection of Jesus as a grave-emptying event. The chronological sequence of Jesus’ burial and resurrection in the second and third lines of the creed reveals that the body in the tomb was physically raised: ‘and that he was buried and that he was raised (*ègēgertai*) on the third day.’ Quite significantly, the verb *ègeirō* (lexical form of *ègēgertai*) means “to cause to stand up from a lying or reclining position with the implication of some degree of previous incapacity.” Since dead bodies were buried in a prone position, the verb must be referring to the raising of a formerly prone corpse to the standing position of a live body. This concept of resurrection cannot refer to the immortality of the spirit, which can neither lie down nor stand up, but must refer to the resurrection of a physical body out of a tomb.<sup>46</sup>

Additionally, Macgregor rightly argues that the verb *horaō* (lexical form of *ōphthē*) in v. 5, 6 does not itself specify the character of what was seen. Since the previous two lines affirm that it is the same physical body of Jesus who is seen emerging from the grave, it is clear that the

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<sup>43</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 628.

<sup>44</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 317.

<sup>45</sup> Macgregor, “1 Corinthians 15:3-6A, 7,” 230.

<sup>46</sup> Macgregor, “1 Corinthians 15:3-6A, 7,” 230-31. Cf. Luow and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon* 1.216.

earlier percipients in vv. 5-7 saw the physical body of Christ. Moreover, the construction in v. 8 “And lastly as one untimely born, he appeared also to me” seems to put Paul’s experience in a different category, suggested by the time lapse. But certainly Paul was not attempting to convey that the manner of his experience of Jesus is qualitatively identical to the experience of others mentioned in the creed, but that he was also privileged with a vision of the Lord. The experiences are different,<sup>47</sup> as the gospel tradition to which we will soon turn reveals.

Paul’s statement, “The last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit [*pneuma*]” (1 Cor 15:45) can be used to argue against the bodily nature of Jesus’ resurrection. But Richard B. Gaffin tells us that “*pneuma*” here is a specific reference to the Holy Spirit, indicated by the attributive qualifier “life-giving.” God gives life to mortals through the Spirit (Rom 8:11; John 6:63; 1 Pet 3:18). That Christ became life-giving Spirit is not to be understood ontologically, and therefore, obliterate the personal distinction between Christ and the Spirit; rather, the oneness implies a conjunction between Christ and the Spirit. The incarnate Christ experiences a spiritual qualification and transformation so thorough, an endowment with the Spirit so complete that it results in such a close unity that makes Christ like the Holy Spirit, a Spirit that makes alive. An economic or functional identity is in question here.<sup>48</sup> So, it is not an argument to support “spiritual resurrection,” but to emphasize his new and unlimited life and activity in the Spirit.

### **2.3 THE GOSPEL TRADITION ON THE EMPTY TOMB AND THE APPEARANCES**

The Acts narrative of Paul’s experience of the risen Jesus reveals that Paul’s experience was of a different form from that of the early disciples (Acts 9:3-20; 22:6-16; 26:12-18). While

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<sup>47</sup> Macgregor, “*1 Corinthians 15:3-6A, 7*,” 231-32; Larry W. Hurtado, “Jesus’ Resurrection in Early Christian Texts: An Engagement With N.T. Wright,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 3, no. 2 (2005): 201; Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 397-98.

<sup>48</sup> Richard B. Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 86-7.

Paul speaks of seeing the Lord in 1 Cor 9:1, the Lukan narrative speaks of “light” and “voice” and “blindness.” But both the Pauline and Lukan text reveal an objective external vision or reality<sup>49</sup>: seeing the light, hearing the voice and dialoguing with him, and in 1 Cor 9:1 seeing him. But when Paul spoke of the resurrection of Jesus in Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:30-39), Luke accounts that he spoke clearly of it in bodily, grave-emptying fashion as Peter did on Pentecost day as we saw above. Matthew’s gospel spoke of the women taking hold of his feet (Matt 28:9); Luke’s gospel accounts that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus could not recognize him until when “he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:30-31). How is it that they could not recognize him on the way? It seems that their inability to recognize him was a divine imposition, as the passive, “but their eyes were kept from recognizing him” indicates, corroborated with the passive “then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him” (vv. 16, 31).<sup>50</sup> The gospel further states that they doubted as he appeared to them all and so the sequence of touching, eating and drinking are repeated, with the declaration that he is not a ghost but of flesh and bones (24:36-43):

They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet. See that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “have you anything to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

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<sup>49</sup> Brian Schmisek as we hinted in chapter one understands it to mean an interior, subjective, but no less real experience of the risen Lord [Resurrection of the Flesh or Resurrection from the Dead: Implications for Theology (Minnesota, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 59].

<sup>50</sup> For other interpretative options see John Nolland who attributes this lack of recognition to a satanic blinding that has link to the state of mind of the disciples [John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 35C, eds., David A. Hubbard Glenn W. Barker, John D.W. Watts, & Ralph P. Martin (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1982), 1201. But Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: vol. 2: 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, eds., Moises Silva (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), 1909-1910, favors the notion of divine imposition “since the passive construction places responsibility outside the disciples and Satan is entirely absent from the resurrection account.”

Why the disbelieving and wondering? Even in Matt. 28:17-18 some of them doubted. Rejecting the interpretations that understand Matthew as providing hint of an immaterial appearance or vision of Jesus in heaven outside of time and space, Licona suggests another interpretation (due to Matthew's earlier report of the empty tomb, being raised, and the women holding unto his feet), which can also apply to the doubt in Luke's Gospel.<sup>51</sup> Matthew uses *èdistasan* to communicate doubt here and in Matt. 14:30-31. In Matt. 14:30-31, it is used to communicate Peter's doubt arising from fear of the waves, even though he believed Jesus and was following him on the waters. This is not Thomas' doubt of outright rejection, but an incomplete or challenged faith that includes both belief and doubts present in the use of *èdistasas* and *àpistía*. In Luke their disbelieving arises out of "joy and astonishment" at a naturally astonishing event.<sup>52</sup> In life's dramatic situations, people become "unbelieving from joy and amazement" at unexpected happenings. Joy and sorrow is often expressed in such ways as we often hear people express their amazement. The resurrection of Jesus is a supreme instance of this kind of events. In John's gospel, the Lord asked Thomas to put his fingers and hands into his hands and side (John 20:27) and later ate with them at the sea of Tiberias (John 21:10-14). The Lord's invitation to Thomas to touch him implies that he does have a body that can be touched. Thomas desired to see Jesus' wounds so as to be able to identify him, and to be certain that it is Jesus who had risen, though not necessarily to prove bodily resurrection.<sup>53</sup> This new embodiment creates a healthy tension and ambivalence beautifully captured in Wright's words: "The real problem itself [...] [is] the idea of a body which is both physical (in the sense that the tomb was

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<sup>51</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 359.

<sup>52</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 361.

<sup>53</sup> Outi Leitipuu, *Debates Over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 43, 46.

empty after it had gone) and transphysical (in the sense that it can appear and disappear, is not always immediately recognized, and so on). This kind of embodiment, which involved neither the abandonment of the old body in the tomb, nor the mere resuscitation of a corpse, is the difficulty.”<sup>54</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas offers some useful explanations. Christ’s body could vanished because it is the property of a glorified body that is spiritual; that is, subject to the will of the Spirit (1 Cor 15:44), but also by the power of his Godhead. It depends on the divine disposition whether he should be seen or not, but not because it had dissolved into some invisible elements.<sup>55</sup>

Christ

received the glory of clarity in the resurrection... *but the semblance is changed, when ceasing to be mortal, it becomes immortal; so that it acquired the glory of countenance, without losing the substance of the countenance.* Yet he did not come to those disciples in glorified appearance; but as it lay in his power for his body to be seen or not, so it was within his power to present to the eyes of the beholders His form either glorified or not glorified, or partly glorified and partly not, or in any fashion of whatever.<sup>56</sup>

This explains the various forms he appeared to the disciples and Paul, and their inability to recognize him sometimes as in the Emmaus experience where their not recognizing him is implicitly attributed to a divine imposition. The angelic doctor further says that though he had no need of food, it lies in his power to eat. So he ate before them to assure them of his real bodily presence, which rose glorified for three reasons<sup>57</sup>: 1) because his resurrection is the exemplar and cause for ours’ (1 Cor 15:43); 2) because he merits the glory of his resurrection by the lowliness

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<sup>54</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 654-55. The parentheses are not mine.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 54, a. 1, in *Summa Theologica: Complete English Editions in Five Volumes*, vol. 4, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1981), 2308.

<sup>56</sup> *ST.* III, q. 54, a. 1, trans. English Dominican Province, 2308. Cf. CCC, §§ 645-46 for the condition of Christ’s risen humanity.

<sup>57</sup> *ST.* III, q. 54, a. 2, trans. English Dominican Province, 2308-9. I agree with Thomas that on account of the divinity, Christ’ soul had the glory of divinity, but it was concealed to adapt to our human condition. On the mount of transfiguration, Christ revealed his hidden glory to his disciples probably to prepare them for the scandal of the cross. As for the body/soul distinction, I defer comments to the next chapter.

of his passion; and 3) because Christ's soul was glorified from the instant of his conception but did not pass on to the body during his earthly life by the divine disposition.<sup>58</sup> But with the resurrection the soul's glory passes on to the body. Thus, he displayed the brightness of his hidden glory to them on the mount of transfiguration, with the apostles gazing without their sight being affected (Matt 17:1-8); Paul's eyes were blinded by the brightness that emanated from the glorified body of Christ at Damascus, revealing his spiritual blindness, both in accord with divine will. Paul's companions did not see the glorified body of Jesus (Acts 9:7). But all the believers present at the ascension saw him taken up to heaven until a cloud took him out of their sight (Acts 1:9-11).<sup>59</sup>

The upshot of all this is that, in spite of the discrepancies present in the various gospel accounts, the best possible explanation for what happened to Jesus after his death is a glorified bodily resurrection, even as some of the discrepancies can be resolved. For example, there is no real contradiction between John's gospel speaking of Peter and the beloved disciple running to the tomb (John 20:2ff) and Luke's gospel mentioning Peter alone (Luke 24:12). Luke may have decided to mention Peter alone on account of Peter's pre-eminence among the twelve, just as different journalists reporting the visit of the bishop to a parish along with his chancellor and secretary may report differently. Elucidating this view, Wright tells us of Josephus writing about his own participation in the various actions that started the Jewish-Roman war in AD 66. The same story he tells in his *Jewish War* and the *Life* do not always correspond in details. Yet no one doubts the authenticity of the story. The same is true of the gospel accounts written by different persons with different perspectives. The discrepancies should not be taken to mean that nothing happened. The contrary is suggested by these discrepancies. For if nothing happened and

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<sup>58</sup> *ST.* III, q. 54, a. 2, trans. English Dominican Province, 2308-9.

<sup>59</sup> The reason for the inability of Paul's companions to see Jesus is not given in the narrative. It may be God's design.

then the stories were invented after some decades, probably there would have been only one straight narrative.<sup>60</sup> The similarities in these mysterious but historical stories far outweigh the differences. Glenn B. Siniscalchi concurringly writes:

Different theological emphasis might correspond to different figures and /or past events. Although it may be the case that no details in these narratives can be harmonized, this does not mean, *tout court*, that they are contradictory. As Kasper stated convincingly: ‘these irreconcilable divergences ...agree on one thing: Jesus appeared to certain disciples after his death; he proved himself living and was proclaimed to have risen from the dead. That is the center, the core, where all the traditions meet.’<sup>61</sup>

We conclude this section with Wright’s telling surprises of the narratives<sup>62</sup>: 1) the strange absence of biblical citations or embroidery in the stories, unlike the other parts of the gospels, is astonishing. This silence is remarkable when we consider that from Paul to Tertullian, from the earliest days of that tradition, the resurrection is seen as fulfillment of scripture (1 Cor 15:3-4; Acts 2, 13; 2 Cor 4, 5). 2) There is strange absence of personal hopes in the stories; rather, the percipients were entrusted with the task of preaching the Good News. 3) There is a strange portrait of Jesus in his appearances in simply embodied form without any hint of brightness. If, as some scholars say, the stories were written when the church expressed and re-expressed its faith in light of OT scriptures, Jesus would have been depicted as a heavenly being, shining in the fashion of OT resurrection passages (Dan 12:1-3). 4) Given that women’s testimonies were not accepted in the tradition, men would have been the ones to discover the empty tomb and see Jesus first.

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<sup>60</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 648-49.

<sup>61</sup> Glenn B. Siniscalchi, “On Comparing the Resurrection Appearances with Apparitions,” *Pacifica* 27, no. 2 (2014): 188. Nancy Murphy beautifully writes that “The church, in canonizing a collection of documents with genuinely inconsistent accounts of the resurrected body, is telling us something very important about resurrection, namely, that the language of the present aeon is incapable of describing a resurrection body. No ordinary description is possible” [Nancy Murphy, “The Resurrection Body and Personal Identity: Possibilities and Limits of Eschatological Knowledge,” *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, eds., Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 204.

<sup>62</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 599-604.

To summarize, the gospel tradition aptly captures the fact that Jesus was bodily resurrected, expressed himself in tangible forms, and in these appearances he did not appear to them in very dazzlingly bright form as one would expect after the fashion of OT resurrection prophecies, perhaps to impress deeply upon their imagination the bodiliness of his resurrected life. Nevertheless, the accounts also reveal that the risen Jesus was not just a revived corpse, but one whose risen body was radically transfigured, no longer limited by space and time, as evident in his sudden appearances and disappearances.

#### **2.4 THE COSMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS**

Garry R. Habermas points out two irreconcilable contrasting paradigms of explanation in our world: on the one hand, the atheistic naturalistic explanation which, excluding God and the supernatural, attributes everything to chance, in which case, either Jesus' resurrection never occurred, or it is a "freak event" of nature, a random occurrence; and on the other hand, the theistic supernatural paradigm that sees the world as theistic, characterized by order, design and purpose, in which case, the resurrection is part of the divine plan of salvation for humanity and the cosmos.<sup>63</sup> Arguing convincingly for the superiority and credibility of the supernaturalistic paradigm, he emphasizes the fact that the resurrection is the penetration of the divine power into our world; it reveals God in his attributes: infinite wisdom, power, love, justice, foreknowledge, omniscience, and salvific plan.<sup>64</sup> If creation as the psalmist says, proclaims the glory of God, much more does the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection reveals that the God who created the universe and the laws in it is not limited by these laws, which neither need to exist, nor need to remain the way they are. These laws depend entirely on God who is absolutely free to suspend

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<sup>63</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 63ff.

<sup>64</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 78-79.

their operation for salvific goals.<sup>65</sup> The resurrection of Jesus which is the first installment of all that is to come at the end (1 Cor 15:20-23), makes a compelling statement about the goodness of matter, not abandoned but redeemed by God who created it good. Thus contrary to *contemptus mundi* as N.T. Wright writes:

The Messiah here is the truly human being, the fulfillment of God's purpose in creation, now set in authority over the rest of the created order. There is no need to escape from the created order; the Messiah is its lord. Nor is there any need to escape from earth to heaven; instead the Messiah will come from heaven to earth, to rescue his people not by snatching them away from earth but by transforming their bodies.<sup>66</sup>

Our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit will share in the glory of God for all eternity (1 Cor 6:13-20). As O'Collins puts it, "So far from the resurrection leaving behind Christ's crucified body, it made that material body the proper and perfect vehicle of the Spirit, and indeed mediated God's creative power in bringing the world towards the final unification of matter and spirit."<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, not only will our bodies partake of heavenly glory, but the universe itself subject to decay on account of human iniquity will be redeemed from this bondage to decay: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom 8:19-23). The Genesis account tells us that human sin brought about chaos, disharmony, and hostility.<sup>68</sup> But Jesus' resurrection "is the beginning of the new age. The resurrection is the new creation, the future-in-the-present. The whole future consummation of God's purpose in redemption is wrapped up in the resurrection of

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<sup>65</sup> O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 265-66.

<sup>66</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 231.

<sup>67</sup> O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 267.

<sup>68</sup> CCC, § 400. Cf. Gen. 3:17-19.

Christ.”<sup>69</sup> In this light therefore, “the first Easter began the work of finally bringing our universe home to its ultimate destiny. God did not discard Jesus’ earthly corpse but mysteriously raised and transfigured it, so as to reveal what lies ahead for human beings and their world. In short, that empty tomb in Jerusalem is God’s radical sign that redemption is not an escape to a better world but a wonderful transformation of this world.”<sup>70</sup>

This is what the scriptures describe as the new heaven and the new earth, Jerusalem coming down out of God from heaven, wherein the dwelling place of God will be with human beings in perfect and definitive bliss (Rev 21:1-7; 2 Pet 3:13). This transformation of the cosmos that is beyond human initiative, but solely God’s work, will be a fulfillment of the Messianic harmony between humans and the world, indeed all creatures (Isa 11:6-9; Ezek 47:1-12). By the blood of the cross God has reconciled all things to himself, things in heaven and on earth (Col 1:20; cf. Rom 5:9-11; 2 Cor 5:18-20). This reconciliation of all things in Christ, won for us on the cross, becomes operative with the resurrection. Surely, “he was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25). O’Collins portrays this cosmic reconciling effect of the resurrection thus: ““Reconciling all things” (Col 1:20), “gathering up all things” (Eph 1:10), or “making all things new” (Rev 1:5) puts the resurrection in a cosmic context. The resurrection of Christ had not happened without, and certainly not against, creation. It had brought a new world in which not only human beings but also all living creatures share.”<sup>71</sup> The prophet Isaiah predicts an eschatological banquet of God for all peoples, in an immortal and impassible existence (Isa 25:6-10) that finds a parallel in Jesus’ kerygma (Matt 8:11), in anticipation of which Jesus institutes the Eucharistic meal prior to his saving death and

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<sup>69</sup> Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 285.

<sup>70</sup> O’Collins, *Believing in the Resurrection*, 250-1.

<sup>71</sup> O’Collins, *Believing in the Resurrection*, 119.

resurrection (Matt 26:26-30). Thus, “in the Post resurrection situation of the inaugurated new creation, Christians meet at the Eucharist for a sacred eating and drinking that ‘proclaims the death of the [risen] Lord until he comes’”<sup>72</sup> (1 Cor 11:26). In this sacred banquet, wherein we receive the living flesh and blood of the resurrected Christ, we receive a pledge of the future glory. Consequently, with the resurrection, the eschatological heavenly banquet is initiated.

## CONCLUSION

We have argued in this chapter for the historicity of the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth with the available evidence: passion and resurrection predictions, evidence of death and burial, empty tomb and resurrection appearances, the earliest Christian kerygma, the transformed lives of the disciples, Pauline teaching on the resurrection, and the gospel tradition. It is a uniquely singular event that left the early disciples dumbfounded. This is precisely because the dead do not rise, and resurrection for the Jews is understood as an eschatological event that will take place at the *eschaton*. While stupefying all forms of logical reasoning, the resurrection confirms Jesus’ identity and mission. The life, works and teachings of Jesus are perfectly in line with the kind of person God would vindicate through resurrection. In this sense, Jesus’ resurrection firstly means vindication, salvation and victory for Jesus, as God saved him from the power of death that holds sway over mortals. The early disciples saw this as a clear fulfillment of the prophecies of old.

Through his bodily resurrection, Jesus becomes the life-giving Spirit for humans and the entire cosmos. While still going through the natural process of death and decomposition, believers can embrace death with less fear and more optimism, because in the resurrection of the

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<sup>72</sup> O’Collins, *Believing in the Resurrection*, 120.

crucified victim of Calvary, their own eschatological resurrection and transformation is mysteriously actualized and guaranteed. Believers and their works, together with their universe have been liberated from the shadow of death, from the gloom of uncertainty, nothingness and annihilation. The resurrection of Jesus in his glorified flesh meant the restoration of creation, with special implication for the resurrection of human beings in a gloriously transformed flesh, which is the focus of the next chapter.

### CHAPTER THREE: OUR FUTURE GENERAL RESURRECTION

“The flesh is the hinge of salvation” (Tertullian *De res.* 8, 2:PL 2, 852). We believe in God who is creator of flesh; we believe in the Word made flesh in order to redeem the flesh; we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, the fulfillment of both the creation and the redemption of the flesh.<sup>1</sup>

In the previous chapter, we posited that Jesus who died in the flesh also rose in the flesh into a radically transformed glorious existence. The flesh he took on in the incarnation was not laid down in the resurrection; rather, this flesh “repaired, renewed, and glorified in resurrection, is there in the risen Christ.”<sup>2</sup> This chapter focuses on the general resurrection of believers at the *eschaton*. Contrary to the opinion that the general resurrection will be a spiritual, immaterial event, the chapter argues for a bodily or fleshly resurrection, or in more comprehensive terms, a resurrection that will involve the whole person: body and soul. The dead in Christ shall rise with their bodies, and those bodies will be radically transformed and glorified for all eternity, after the pattern of Christ. For the God who created the flesh, in becoming incarnate in human flesh and resurrecting in that same flesh, has indissolubly united himself with human flesh, so as to redeem it, and the whole material universe. Just as we already receive the life-giving Spirit of God in the flesh, the flesh is where salvation will ultimately take place, not outside of it or apart from it.

As we begin this chapter on the general resurrection, it will be relevant to clarify our usage of the concepts of “body” and “flesh” or “resurrection of the body” and “resurrection of the flesh.” According to the *Expository Dictionary of the Bible*, used both literally and metaphorically, the Hebrew *bāsār*, and the Greek *sarx* are translated “flesh” in a variety of contexts and with several distinctive senses. In the dominant literal sense *bāsār* refers to “human flesh,” that is, “physical body, body tissue” as in Gen 2:21; Exo 4:6-7; Lev 13:2ff; 2 Kgs 4: 32-

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<sup>1</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Image Book Doubleday, 1997), § 1015.

<sup>2</sup> Michael William, “Touch Me and Believe: Spiritual Resurrection Redefined,” *Pro Rege* 24, no. 3 (1996), 15.

34; 5:10; Ezek 11:3; Jer 19:9; and *sarx* in one of its literal senses has specific references to the “human body” as flesh (Luke 24:39; Eph 5:29; Heb 9:13; 1 Pet 3:21; 1 Cor 15:39; Rev 19:18, 21), or the human “body” in contrast with the spirit (2 Cor 7:1, 5; 12:7) or the body of Christ designated as his “flesh” (John 6:51-2; Eph 2:15; Col 1:22; Heb 10:20).<sup>3</sup> The “body” is defined by William White, Jr. as “the entire physical structure of a human being, with its temporal, spatial, and tactual aspects.”<sup>4</sup> According to him, though there is no precise equivalent to body as distinguished from soul or spirit in the OT, the body is often referred to by the common Hebrew word for “flesh, meat” *bāsār* (Ezek 10:12), which can be contrasted with *nephesh* (Is 10:18). The NT word for “body” is *sōma*. General references to the physical human body include: Matt 5:29-30; 6:22; 26:12; Luke 11:34; Rom 1:24; 4:19; 1 Cor 5:3; 9: 27; James 2:26. It also indicates “the whole person, or being” (Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 6:13ff.; Eph 5:28; Heb 10:22), and human corpse, as in John 19:31; Matt 27:52, 58ff.; Acts 9:40; 1 Cor 15: 35. As Donald R Potts observed, although *sārξ* (flesh) carries a more holistic connotation, both *sōma* (body) and *sarx* (flesh) can refer to the external aspect of human beings.<sup>5</sup> In this light, Xavier Leon-Dufour writes: “as in most languages, body often indicates the same reality as flesh. Thus the life of Jesus should be manifest in our body, as well as in our flesh (2 Cor 4:10ff). A Semite has the same regard for the body as for the flesh since both signify the whole man.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen D. Renn (ed.), “Flesh,” in *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts* (Peabody, Mass. : Hendrickson, 2005), 391-93. Other meanings, both literal and metaphorical are given in the text above. NB: the author of the article “Flesh” is not indicated

<sup>4</sup> William White, Jr, “Body,” in *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 1, A-C*, eds., Merrill C. Tenney and Moises Silva, (China: Zondervan, 2009), 657.

<sup>5</sup> Donald R. Potts, “Body,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, eds., David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B Eerdmans, 2000), 194. See also Xavier Leon-Dufour, “Body,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, updated 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed., Xavier Leon-Dufour, trans. W. Jared Wicks (London: Burns and Oates, 2004), 54.

<sup>6</sup> Leon-Dufour, “Body,” 54. This is a clear instance where Paul used “flesh” in place of the “body.” Cf. Romans 8:9-13; Gal 5:16-19.

With this literal meaning of “flesh” and “body,” we commence an explanation of the use of the terms with reference to resurrection of the dead. When we speak of the “resurrection of the body” we mean resurrection of our bodies constituted of flesh or flesh, blood and bones. In this sense, Paul referred to the physical body of Christ as “his body of flesh” in Col 1:22. Thus, when Paul says, “this perishable body must put on imperishability” or “this mortal body must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:53-54), the referent is “our present body of flesh” signified by the qualities of perishability and mortality. Since it is this body of flesh that will put on immortality and imperishability at the resurrection, it implies that our resurrection bodies will be bodies of flesh, even though Paul did not mention the word “flesh.” Because it is the body of flesh that will be raised up, we speak of the “resurrection of the flesh” to indicate that it is not a body made of some other material apart from human flesh. Thus did Luke report the risen Jesus as saying, “touch me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see me have” (Luke 24:39; cf. Job 19:26; CCC, 1017). It is in this sense of the resurrection body as a body of flesh that we use the expressions “flesh” and “body” or “resurrection of the body” and “resurrection of the flesh” synonymously.<sup>7</sup> That is, “flesh” is used to indicate the nature of the resurrected body. With scripture as our primary source and guide, the schema for the chapter proceeds thus: 1) common objections to bodily resurrection, 2) the Old Testament (OT) notion of afterlife with particular reference to resurrection, 3) Jesus’ teaching on the general resurrection, Pauline teaching on our future resurrection, and 4) argument from the power of God and the goodness of the body: the nature of the transformation.

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<sup>7</sup> In this light, while the synoptic Jesus speaks of the Eucharist as his “body” (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19), the Johannine Jesus speaks of “flesh” (John 6:51-56; cf. 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7).

### 3.1 SOME COMMON OBJECTIONS TO OUR GENERAL BODILY RESURRECTION

Outi Lehtipuu states three basic arguments that are launched against the resurrection of the body.<sup>8</sup> First, it is impossible, because a completely decayed body cannot rise; dispersed flesh cannot be reconstituted. The idea of chain of consumption is often invoked. Second, it is undesirable: no one would want a rotten body back. The weak, corruptible body of concupiscence drags down the incorruptible soul. The soul is like God and God will raise that which is like him. Third, it is incredible: if there is resurrection of the body, it is either complete or partial. But both complete and partial resurrection of the body is illogical. The saying “they will be like angels” is posed against any corporeality, since angels have no flesh or sex. The pagan Celsus and Caecilius write against bodily resurrection using the following arguments: resurrection offends reason and logic, it contradicts God’s power and dignity, the flesh is impermanent and inferior; hence the incarnation is a blasphemy.<sup>9</sup> Celsus writes: “As for the flesh, which is full of things it is not even nice to mention, God would neither desire nor be able to make it everlasting contrary to reason” or “what sort of human soul would have any further desire for a body that has rotted.”<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Dag Øistein Endsjø, based on certain Pauline citations: “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven” (1 Cor 15:50), “...you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ” (Col 2:11), and “no flesh shall glory before God” (1 Cor 1:29), argues that Paul, always having a negative notion of the flesh that he affiliates with sin (Rom 7:18, 25; 8:8), rejected the resurrection of the flesh,

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<sup>8</sup> Outi Lehtipuu, *Debates Over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 119-124. See also Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection 2-7*; Tertullian, *On the Resurrection 56-63*; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Resurrection 137b-144a*. These objections (impossibility, undesirability, and incredibility) will be responded to in the final section of this chapter.

<sup>9</sup> Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community and Self-Definition* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 99-108.

<sup>10</sup> *Against Celsus*, 5.14 quoted in Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body*, 2.

that flesh/body will not be part of our resurrected selves.<sup>11</sup> Further, Paul questioned the carnal nature of Jesus, who was incarnated only “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3), although he was “descended from David according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3). In a docetic tone, Endsjø writes:

Jesus was mortal prior to his death and resurrection. The body of Jesus prior to his death and resurrection was apparently not immaterial either. Having being “born of a woman” and sent by God “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” Jesus seems to have died with a physical body—if not of flesh and bones with something very much like it. It is, on the one hand, absolutely certain that the “glorious body” of the *resurrected* Christ did not consist of flesh, since his body is the model for the fleshless resurrection body we all can receive.<sup>12</sup>

In the thinking of Endsjø, Paul’s notion of the incarnation was that Jesus did not really take on human flesh with its limitations, since he had a body only apparently, in which case we cannot talk of a bodily resurrection. This stems from the notion of the body as evil, and it sets the tone for the author’s conclusions. Endsjø writes:

To Paul, flesh is by definition always corruptible. The Ancient Greek idea that flesh also could be incorruptible and immortal represented to Paul a contradiction in terms. Flesh, for Paul was characterized by its physical “infirmity” or “feebleness.” As “What is corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and what is mortal shall have put on immortality,” the flesh of the body will in the end be either obliterated or so radically transformed that it would no longer constitute flesh.<sup>13</sup>

This obviously does not take into account that when Paul often talks of “flesh” or “flesh and blood” in sinful or corruptible terms, he does not really mean the physical body, but the frailty of our being or human nature in a “state of sin and weakness” (Matt 16:17; Rom 7:5; 8:3ff.; Gal 5:13; 1 John 2:16; 2 Pet 2:10;), in which case *sarkikos* (“fleshly”) means “carnally” denoting a sinful life style (Rom 7:14; 1 Cor 3:1ff.; 1 Pet 2:11). Further, Endsjø’s asserts that the

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<sup>11</sup> Dag Øistein Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs and the Success of Christianity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 141.

<sup>12</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 144.

<sup>13</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 142. He believes his supposed Paul’s “fleshless resurrection body” agrees with contemporary Jewish belief, and that Paul as a Pharisee could not have believed bodily resurrection (145-46).

Greeks (Corinthians) believed in the fleshly resurrection and immortalization of privileged heroes, who were divinized. Hence, they believed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus since his corpse had not corrupted. However, they rejected the future general resurrection, precisely because, according to Greek belief, the gods are unable to recreate any part of the body that had been annihilated, decomposed or burnt, or eaten up by other beasts or humans.<sup>14</sup> This rejection is based on the understanding that physical resurrection belief meant absolute physical continuity between one's mortal and immortalized body; resurrection involves the whole mortal body. So, the notion of general resurrection of annihilated or decomposed bodies is considered absurd.<sup>15</sup> Finally, Endsjø' thinks that the Christian belief in the general resurrection of the flesh is a response to the physical hope and expectations of traditional Greek religion, and accounts for the rise of Christianity in the Greek world, since the Christian gospel answers their longing for physical immortality.<sup>16</sup>

It is pertinent to point out that Paul did not understand Christ to "appear" to be clothed in human flesh, but that he really took on human flesh, and its limitations, save sin; nor did he see the flesh as something evil and unacceptable to God, but that which belongs to God and should be offered to God (Rom 6:12-19; 12:1-2; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:13-20). Frank J. Matera's notes that the meaning of the expression, "in the likeness of sinful flesh" is elusive, since on the one hand,

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<sup>14</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 153-155.

<sup>15</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 154-55. Peter Lampe sees the rejection as coming from a dichotomous anthropology that disdains the body. The Corinthian enthusiasts thought that in baptism their soul or spirit, was endowed profoundly with God's Spirit, immortalized and saved, as they experienced the outward manifestation of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14). The body and behavior was of little importance to them; they could eat anything they like (cf. 1 Cor. 8) or have sex with anyone (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1ff; 6:12ff) which do not affect their souls that will finally ascend to the Lord, with no place for a future bodily resurrection ("Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body," *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, eds., Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 104). Both views may be collectively responsible for their rejection of the general resurrection; Cf. 2 Tim. 2:16-19.

<sup>16</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 189-217. It seems to me that other reasons like the uniqueness of the Christian message, the heroic lives of charity and zeal of the early Christians, and the frequent miracles and exorcisms they performed were more responsible for the sporadic spread of the Christian faith, while not rejecting whatever attraction general bodily resurrection may have added.

the noun *homoïoma* (“likeness”) can imply “similarity but not full identity” as it does in Rom 1:23; 5:14; 6:5 or “full identity” as it does in Phil 1:7. On the other hand, *sarkos hamartias* (“sinful flesh”) can either be taken in an ethical sense to suggest that Christ became human to the point of sinning, or in a cosmic sense to mean that Christ entered into the cosmic situation of sin and death afflicting humanity.<sup>17</sup> With regard to the first, Matera supports the interpretation of “full identity”, that is, Christ actually took human flesh as Rom 1:3; Gal 4:4; Col 2:9; 1 Tim 3:16; cf. 1 Pet 4:1; 1 John 4:2 suggest. With regard to “sinful flesh” the interpretation in a cosmic sense is more consistent with Pauline teaching since he affirms Christ’s sinlessness (2 Cor 5:21). Christ, while not sinning, entered the realm of sinful flesh—a realm determined by the cosmic forces of sin and death, a fully human being, in order to destroy sin in the flesh.<sup>18</sup> Thus, it can be very plausibly affirmed that Christ was born in the flesh, lived in the flesh, died in the flesh, and was resurrected in the flesh. With this in mind, let us examine the scriptural texts on the theme of our general resurrection from both testaments. We begin with a look at Jewish resurrection beliefs in the OT.

### **3.2 AFTERLIFE BELIEFS IN JUDAISM: SPECIFIC FOCUS ON RESURRECTION**

Jewish scriptures and non-canonical writings reveal different notions of life beyond the grave among the Jews.<sup>19</sup> One notion was the lack of any idea of afterlife; death was believed to be the end of all struggles, not even contained in God’s promise of salvation. Along with this, there was belief in a gloomy, diminished, semiconscious, and joyless subsistence in a land of darkness and forgetfulness (*sheol* or *hades*) into which they entered through the grave among the

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<sup>17</sup> Frank J. Matera, *Romans*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 192.

<sup>18</sup> Matera, *Romans*, 192.

<sup>19</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 122ff.; Geza Vermes, *The Resurrection* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 5-7, 30-35.

Jews (Lev 20:6, 27; 1 Sam 28:8-19; Isa 8:19; Sir 14:16-17). It is not called life since it implies separation from Yahweh and the cult (Isa 38:10-20; Ps 6:5; 88:5, 10-12; Jonah 2:4).<sup>20</sup> Besides, belief in glorious immortality of the soul was present in Judaism (Wis 2:1-24; 3:1-4; 2 Macc 15:12-16). The idea that the soul alone may escape death appears to find expression in Ps 48:15. Archeological materials demonstrate that the body/soul distinction was common to both Palestinian and diaspora Jews; the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is entrenched in quite early Judaism with varying undertones: death followed immediately by immortality (4 Macc 16:13; 17:12, 19 mentions the patriarchs as not really dead but living unto God), and the immortal, ageless soul created from God himself, to be resurrected at the end.<sup>21</sup> In sum, “The idea that the belief in the immortality of the soul was intimately tied with Judaism was also connected to actual belief on the afterlife held among the Jews. The belief in the immortality of the soul was in no way unknown to Judaism and may have been just as common among Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman eras as the belief in any form of resurrection.”<sup>22</sup>

Resurrection beliefs in Judaism appear late in the canonical scripture, on account of which some scholars have posited that it was borrowed from the Zoroastrians by Israel from its time in Exile.<sup>23</sup> However, Claudia Setzer asserts that Edwin Yamauchi notes that the idea of resurrection came relatively late in Zoroastrian texts and is very dissimilar to Israel’s idea of

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<sup>20</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Belief*, 122-123. Cf. Vermes, *The Resurrection*, 5-7; Hans Clement Caesarius Cavallin, *Life After Death: Paul’s Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Corinthians 15. Part 1: An Enquiry into the Jewish Background* (PhD diss., Uppsala University: Gleerup Lund, 1974), 23.

<sup>21</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 131-32. Cf. PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 38. Perkins notes that both immortality of the soul and resurrection were given roughly equal attention in tombstone formulae in first century AD from the diaspora and from Palestine.

<sup>22</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 131.

<sup>23</sup> Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body*, 10. Setzer referenced Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians* (London: Routledge, 1979).

resurrection, and therefore could not have been borrowed by Israel from Zoroastrianism.<sup>24</sup> This has been said, let us briefly examine some OT passages such as Ezek 37, Isa 26:19, Dan 12:2-3, and 2 Macc 7 that shed light on the theme of resurrection.

The famous passage in Ezek 37:1-14 speaks of God's Spirit giving flesh and life to the dry bones in the valley. These dry bones represent the people of Israel who were agonizing in exile; resurrection imagery or metaphor is used to underscore their hopeless situation and the divine national restoration. That the imagery is used to describe Israel's deliverance from misery and pain speaks of the presence of resurrection beliefs in Israel. For, as Claudia Setzer comments, "metaphors cannot communicate if they have nothing to do with the way people think and live. These images in Ezekiel and Isaiah likely are metaphorical, and not literal, but would be meaningless in a context where afterlife is seen as absurdity."<sup>25</sup> So, it is very plausible to think that the metaphor is rooted in resurrection beliefs.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of resurrection in bodily categories. Isa 26:19 states: "Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead." The passage has been variously interpreted. While Hans C. C. Cavallin notes that "many scholars hold that the original Hebrew meaning of the verse involves resurrection of the dead, in spite of all the problems of understanding both the Hebrew text and the context [...] it cannot be denied that the LXX version of Isa 26:19 does speak about the resurrection of the dead."<sup>26</sup> M. E. Dahl finds it ambiguous, insisting that there is no absolute certainty that it is an explicit prophecy or the

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<sup>24</sup> Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body*, 3, 10; quoting Edwin Yamauchi, "Life, Death, and Afterlife in the Ancient Near East," in *Life in the Face of Death*, ed., Richard Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 21-50.

<sup>25</sup> Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body*, 8. If the metaphor preceded bodily resurrection belief, "we do not know when Israel translated the use of resurrection as a metaphor for national restoration into the hope of resurrection of the body," 10.

<sup>26</sup> Cavallin, *Life After Death*, 106.

earliest example of such a thing.<sup>27</sup> The wordings and the two succeeding verses indicate a universal future eschatological event: the mention of corpses to be risen, and dwellers in the dust support bodily resurrection. Besides, Isa 25:6-10 describes the future immortal and impassible life of God's people in terms of physical survival. Therefore, Isaiah favors bodily resurrection.

Scholars generally agree that the passage of Dan 12: 2-3: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever," is a clear reference to resurrection, but disagree on whether or not it will be bodily.<sup>28</sup> For Biblical scholar Adela Yarbron Collins, the original phrase in v. 2 is best translated not as "those who sleep in the dust of the earth" but "those who sleep in the land of dust", a traditional reference to *sheol*, the land of the dead, in which case the body is left out as only souls are in *sheol*.<sup>29</sup> More so, for Collins, they "shall shine like the brightness of the firmament" and "like the stars forever and ever" means astral immortality, not bodily immortality in the ordinary sense,<sup>30</sup> which Segal, in agreement, maintains "can only mean to the Jews that they will become angels, something that did not exclude astral immortality. For stars had been identified as angelic creatures from earliest times."<sup>31</sup>

The fundamental difficulty with these lines of thinking is: why would human beings be made to abandon the nature in which they were indeed created good by God as the Genesis accounts reveal (Gen 1)? Moreover, from a Christian perspective, the incarnation of the Logos,

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<sup>27</sup> Murdoch E. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body: A Study of 1 Corinthians 15* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 21, quoted in Setzer, 124.

<sup>28</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 124.

<sup>29</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Belief*, 124; Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Empty Tomb in the Gospel According to Mark," in *Hermes and Athena: Biblical Exegesis and Philosophical Theology*, eds., Eleonore Stump and Thomas P. Flint (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 113.

<sup>30</sup> Collins Adela Yarbro, "The Empty Tomb in the Gospel," 113 quoted in Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Belief*, 124.

<sup>31</sup> Alan F. Segal, *Life After Death: A History of Life After Death in the Religions of the West* (New York & London: Doubleday, 2004), 265 quoted in Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Belief*, 124.

and Paul's insistence that the body belongs to the Lord and should be offered to God reinforce the sense of the body's goodness (John 1:14; Rom 6:12-19; 12:1-2; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:13-20). While there may be beliefs of astral immortality or stars understood as angelic creatures in the ancient Near East, it seems that these expressions in Dan 12:2-3 imply that clothed with the glory of God, the resurrected dead shall shine like the stars and the sun, or partake of the immortality and brightness of the angels without losing their human nature composed of body and soul. More so, whichever way Dan 12:2 is translated, it does not really exclude bodiliness, but implies it. Thus, as Cavallin contends, by the words dust, land or earth (*dr'wn*), which refers to corpses in decay in Isa 66:24, bodily resurrection is implied, which is not resuscitation, but transformation into a glorious existence at the final time of distress, when Michael appears at the end of time.<sup>32</sup>

Of all the OT scripture, 2 Macc 7, with the story of the martyrdom of the mother and her seven sons, is most explicit in its assertion of bodily resurrection. Resurrection functions as vindication of justice for the righteous in the martyrs' stories. God will restore the dismembered bodily parts of the martyrs at the resurrection from the dead. To the executioners the second brother said: "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the king of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws" (v. 9). The third brother courageously brought out his tongue and stretched forth his hands, saying to the executioners: "I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again" (v. 11; cf. 14, 23, 29). Their hope was full of immortality, in a bodily-resurrected life of definitive happiness, whereas the king and his cohorts will have no

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<sup>32</sup> Cavallin, *Life After Death*, 27. J.B. Doukhan contends that the description of resurrection in terms of bodily activity "sleeping and waking" suggests physical resurrection (cf. Jer 51:39, 57; Job 14:12). Translating the Hebrew in v. 2 literally as "earth of the dust," he finds a striking parallel in Gen 3:19 which describes God's act of creation from the land (earth), while Dan 12:2 describes God's act of re-creation from the ground or earth as well. The unique syntactic and linguistic parallels between the two texts suggest physical death and physical resurrection. The "many" refers to the totality of mankind ["From Dust to Stars: The Vision of Resurrection in Dan 12:1-3 and its Resonance in the Book of Daniel," in *Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue*, ed., Geert Van Oyen and Tom Shepherd (Leuven-Paris; Walpole, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2012), 92, 89-96].

resurrection to life, that is, eternal communion with God (v. 13-14), but will be justly punished by God (vv. 35-36; cf. 4 Macc 8-18). So too, the noble military death of Razis is combined with belief in bodily resurrection (2 Macc 14:41-46, esp. vv. 45-46).<sup>33</sup> Bodily resurrection in 2 Macc was about God's justice, as Crossan writes:

It is in those final texts from 2 Maccabees [...] that we see, clearly and unambiguously, that bodily resurrection is not about the survival of us but about the justice of God. Immortality of soul will not do, for that comes to all alike. But the martyrs have been publicly degraded and brutalized, *bodily* tortured and murdered for fidelity to God. Somehow, somewhere, sometime, therefore, that same God must arrange a public, visible, and bodily vindication (God must overcome someday). It would not do simply to speak of punishment for the persecutors. There must also be *bodily* restoration for the persecuted.<sup>34</sup>

For the Jews, God's eschatological salvation is not about heaven replacing a permanently destroyed earth, but an eschatologically transformed new heavens and new earth (Isa 66:22-23; cf. 25:6-10), to which bodily resurrection in a glorified, immortal existence perfectly conforms. While conceding the fact that not all Jews accepted the idea of bodily resurrection or even afterlife existence generally, Crossan, from the foregoing, asserts that when the Christian Jews spoke of Jesus' resurrection, they and their hearers understood it to mean that resurrection is not bodily resuscitation, not post-mortem apparition, and not heavenly exaltation, but general bodily resurrection begun in Christ's bodily resurrection, as Paul illustrates in 1 Cor 15:12-23.<sup>35</sup> This belief need not be borrowed from other cultures. It may have gradually become part and parcel

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<sup>33</sup> John Dominic Crossan, "The Resurrection of Jesus in its Jewish Context," *Neotestamentica* 37, no. 1 (2003): 41-2.

<sup>34</sup> Crossan, "The Resurrection of Jesus," 42.

<sup>35</sup> Crossan, "The Resurrection of Jesus," 42, 46-48. In N.T. Wright, "Jesus' Resurrection and Christian Origins," *Gregorianum* 83, no. 4 (2002), 619, resurrection for the Jews was more generally understood to mean, "being giving back one's body or perhaps God creating a new similar body, some time after death. It is in fact, life *after* 'life after death'; because where you find a belief in resurrection you also find, unsurprisingly, a belief in some kind of intermediate state in between death and resurrection." He insists that both immortality of the soul and resurrection is taught in Wis 3:1-8. Other instances of resurrection belief include 2 Macc 6:18-31; 12:43-46.

of Jewish belief system in their experiences and encounter with the divine, a very important point considering the stages of God's revelation in history. Conclusively and succinctly put,

The idea of resurrection is implicit in both the Hebrew Bible notion of God as the creator of life, and as the ultimate victor over death, as well as the unified nature of the human being as a body enlivened by breath. No idea is ever borrowed as an undifferentiated whole. Even if an idea is foreign in origin, to become popular, it must speak to historical exigencies and resonate with the internal developments and deeper convictions of a people.<sup>36</sup>

In a nutshell, different notions of life after death co-existed among the Jews from the early centuries of Judaism. There was belief in the oblivion of the underworld, a shadowy existence in sheol or hades, conscious immortality of the soul, and resurrection of the body. Not everyone in Israel believed in a particular form of afterlife at any time. For example, at the time of Christ, while the Sadducees rejected belief in the resurrection of the dead, the Pharisees believed it. But what did Christ as a Jew taught about the resurrection of the dead according to the gospels?

### **3.3 JESUS' TEACHING ON OUR FUTURE RESURRECTION**

Resurrection teaching features in Jesus' public ministry. In line with Isaiah's eschatological banquet (Isa 25:6-10), Jesus situates the coming of the kingdom within the context of a banquet: "I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 8:11-12; cf. Luke 13:28-30). There is some physicality portrayed in the acts of "eating" and "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (cf. Matt 5:29-30; 18:8-9; Mark 9:43-47 speaking of eternal life in the most graphic and concrete terms). The scene of the last judgment seems to indicate that all will be

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<sup>36</sup> Setzer, *Life After Death*, 10.

raised from the dead (Matt 25:31-46).<sup>37</sup> Of course, these passages, which are implicit references to resurrection, do not hint at a glorified existence; other passages complement the aspect of angelic brightness that will characterize the resurrected righteous ones (Matt 13:43). Teaching the crowds on the Eucharist in John 6, Jesus repeatedly emphasized the fact that he will give eternal life to those who accept his teaching and partake of his body and blood; he will raise them to life on the last day (6: 39-40, 44, 47, 51, 53-58). Eternal life is indissolubly linked with resurrection; nourished by the Eucharist, believers will have eternal life in their mortal bodies, raised immortal from the grave.<sup>38</sup>

The encounter between Jesus and the Sadducees on the question of the resurrection of the dead (Matt 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40) provides explicit information on Jesus' teaching on our future resurrection. Some commentators from early centuries have interpreted the phrase "they are like angels" to mean that in Jesus' thinking the resurrection will be a spiritual, bodiless one, since angels are purely spiritual beings, as we saw in Vermes in the introductory chapter. But the context appears to suggest bodily resurrection. Contrary to the opinion that belief in bodily resurrection was marginal in Judaism at the time of Christ and that the Pharisees believed in a spiritual resurrection,<sup>39</sup> the question posed by the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection "In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?" (Mark 12:23) reveals a popular assumption that the marital relationship was continued in the world to come, as John Nolland rightly observed.<sup>40</sup> That is, bodily resurrection was in the minds of the Sadducees since marital relationships, which have to do with our sexuality, entail physical bodies.

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<sup>37</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 155. He cites G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986), 174-75 who notes the corporeality inherent in Jesus' language.

<sup>38</sup> CCC, § 994.

<sup>39</sup> Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 143-45.

<sup>40</sup> John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 35C, eds., David A. Hubbard Glenn W. Barker, John D.W. Watts, & Ralph P. Martin (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1982), 965.

Nevertheless, this is also precisely where the Sadducees went wrong, as reflected in Jesus' rebuke: "Is not this the reason why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God?" (Mark 2:24). They were right in-as-much-as they understood resurrection as bodily; but they were mistaken in-as-much-as they imagined bodily resurrection to be something akin to resuscitation, to continue with the limitations (e.g., death) of the present life that needs marriage and fecundity to preserve one's lineage. Commenting on Luke's account in this light, Nolland has written: "The logic of resurrection is taken by Luke to imply not only an escape from the arms of death at the point of resurrection but also a permanent invulnerability to death thereafter."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, to borrow the words of Jesus, they neither know the power of God, since they think it impossible for God to raise the corrupted corpses from their graves; nor do they know the scripture, which speak of God endowing the resurrected body with the gift of immortality, incorruptibility, brightness, celestial dignity and impassibility (Dan 12:1-3; Isa 25:6-10; 26:19). Conspicuously, therefore, this is the perspective in which "they are like angels" is to be understood, as the Lukan Jesus says: "but those who are considered worthy of a place in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35-36). The statement does not exclude embodiment but affirms what is already invoked in the Jewish sacred scriptures, namely, glorious bodily survival. Worthy of note also is the reference to God as the God of the patriarchs and therefore, the God not of the dead but of the living, evoking the covenantal fidelity of God. R.T France captures this hope-igniting conviction beautifully:

It indicates God's covenantal unbroken relationship with his chosen ones, not broken by death, therefore, not truly dead but alive with him beyond the grave.

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<sup>41</sup> Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 965.

“But for those who give more weight to “the power of God” (v. 29) it provides an assurance that life after death was just not an innovative theology of the intertestamental period, but finds its root in the essential nature of the living, covenant-making God himself.<sup>42</sup>

The gospel of John profoundly links eternal life with resurrection: “Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes” (John 5:21). The giving of “life,” used interchangeably with “eternal life,” follows the resurrection of the dead, and it is the Father who raises the dead. Shortly afterwards, Jesus speaks of his voice as the instrument through which the dead will be raised from their graves to life:

Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live [...] Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:25-29).

In verses 24 & 25, those who presently hear his voice already enter into life; they have passed from spiritual death to spiritual life since the one whose voice raises the dead is here, and he gives them life. The words “anyone” in v. 24 and “those who will hear” in v. 25 seem to indicate the here and now of eschatological life full of the Spirit’s influence. Vv. 28 & 29 launch us into the “hour”, that is, the eschatological future that belongs to the resurrection of the dead, when the physically dead will be raised from their tombs. George R. Beasley-Murray draws our attention to the double astonishment “Do not be astonished at this” for the Son, given life by the Father, has been empowered to give life now (vv. 26-27), but more amazingly, in the future. For

the spiritually dead who “hear” the voice of the Son of God in the days of their flesh and are raised by him to life will hear that voice again, calling them to enter upon the fullness of resurrection life for the kingdom of glory. Similarly those who are deaf to the voice of the Son of God in life must in the end respond to that voice,

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<sup>42</sup> R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, eds., Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, & Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007), 840.

and rise to hear the word of condemnation pronounced upon them. The resurrection of the last day reveals the decision that each made in life.<sup>43</sup>

Jesus therefore, teaches a two-fold resurrection: a spiritual existential resurrection, the reality of which is internally experienced now, and a bodily eschatological future resurrection, the reality of which is externally (bodily) experienced as a grave-emptying event at the Parousia.

### **3.4 PAULINE TEACHING ON THE GENERAL RESURRECTION**

Paul sometimes uses the concept of “resurrection” to depict our new life in Christ through baptism (Rom 6:4-11, Col 2:12; 3:1-4). In baptism, believers die with Christ, are buried with him and rise with him (Rom 6:4-11). Hence, some scholars like Robert F. Scuka interpret Pauline understanding of resurrection only as a present existential reality of new life in Christ.<sup>44</sup> Yes, as Richard Gaffin affirms, believers experience the “already” of resurrection life, a non-bodily, invisible, secret, and internal resurrection made possible by the gift of the Spirit, participating existentially and transformatively in Christ’s death and resurrection, being raised from moral and spiritual death to life in the Spirit.<sup>45</sup> Yet, Pauline letters, as we shall see below, speak of the “not yet” of the resurrection; our future resurrection and inheritance in heaven is made explicit. Believers will be raised in their mortal bodies to share definitively the life of God’s glory. In this section, we will first look at our resurrection as a consequence of Christ’s resurrection; then at the metaphor of the seed and the spiritual body.

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<sup>43</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 36, eds., David A. Hubbard Glenn W. Barker, John D.W. Watts, & Ralph P. Martin (Dallas: Word Books, 1982), 77.

<sup>44</sup> Robert F. Scuka, “Resurrection: Critical Reflections on a Doctrine in Search of a Meaning,” *Modern Theology* 6 (1989), 88.

<sup>45</sup> Richard B. Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 58-61.

### 3.4.1 OUR RESURRECTION: CONSEQUENCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Pauline soteriology establishes an intrinsic link between the resurrection of Jesus and our own resurrection. The resurrection of the dead and the forgiveness of sins are hinged on the resurrection of Christ: “if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain, and your faith has been in vain [...] If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor 15:13-14, 18). We would even be misrepresenting God in saying that he raised Christ and will raise us from the dead if he did not raise him from the dead (v. 15). The import of this link between Christ’s resurrection and ours becomes clearer from verse 20-23: “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so will all be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”

The metaphor of the “first fruits” is significant. Drawing from the scripture (Ex 23:19; Lev 23:10; Num 15:20ff.; 18:8, 30; Deut 18:4; 26:1ff; Neh 10:35-37; Ezek 44:30), Richard B. Gaffin, reminds us that the first fruits are not sacrifices for their own sake, but are representatives of the total harvest, the entire flock, a part of the whole: they express the notion of organic connection and unity, the inseparability of the initial quantity offered from the whole, and it is this intrinsic link between the initial part and the whole that gives these sacrifices their significance.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, he argues that Christ’s resurrection, which is the representative beginning of the resurrection of believers, is viewed as the first fruits of the resurrection harvest. His resurrection has the bodily resurrection “of those who sleep” as its necessary consequence.

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<sup>46</sup> Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, 34.

Thus, though there is a temporal distinction between Christ’s resurrection and ours (2 Cor 4:14; 1 Thess 4:14), the two resurrections are more like two episodes of the same event than of two events.<sup>47</sup> A synonym with Christ as “first fruits of those who have died” (1 Cor 15:20) is Christ as “firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18) with its parallel in Col 1:15: “firstborn of all creation”: the connections show resurrection analogous to birth, though there are differences. While “first fruits of those who have died” and “firstborn from the dead” indicate Christ as the first to rise from the realm of the dead into eschatological glory, “firstborn of all creation,” which neither connotes the idea of an express identity or status apart from creation, nor the first to be created, indicates the uniqueness, special status and dignity of Christ, making him the recipient of a special favor, as evident in Ex 4:22; Ps 88: 27, where God called Israel “my firstborn son” with regard to Israel’s unique place in the one universal salvific plan of God. This conforms to Christ’s creative activity and exaltation over all: uniqueness, supremacy, headship, and pre-eminence both in redemption and creation (1 Cor 15:24-28), over the dead (Col 1:18), tied to the head of the body (Eph 1:22f.; 4:15f; 5:23).<sup>48</sup>

Consequently, though Col 1:18 and 1 Cor 15:20 contain the same basic thought of the union which exists between Christ and believers in the resurrection experience, the former expresses more definitely the uniqueness, preeminence and the lordship of Christ in this solidaristic resurrection relationship.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, this idea of our solidarity with Christ in the

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<sup>47</sup> Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, 34-5.

<sup>48</sup> Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, 37-39.

<sup>49</sup> Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, 37-9. Similarly has Günter Thomas emphasized the “first fruit” (“*aparchē*” Rom 8:11, 23) and the “first installment” (“*arrabōn*” 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13-14) both of which shares three images: a) the first fruits are the same ‘stuff’ as the whole harvest, and the first installment is the same currency as the full payment; b) what is coming is in some sense “more of the same” decisively and far-reachingly add qualitative difference—the final glorification of our whole bodily existence; c) both are actual events in the present in anticipation of an outstanding future. The Holy Spirit will complete, refine, transform and perfect what it begins in our life [Günter Thomas, “Resurrection to New Life: Pneumatological Implications of the Eschatological Transition,” *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, eds., Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 267-68].

resurrection is manifest in the Adam/Christ contrast that Paul makes in 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-49, a contrast that is brought to utmost vividness in Rom 5:12-19. 2 Cor 5:14 make this point clearer: “one has died for all; therefore all have died.” The “all” here includes those yet to be conceived and born, who are yet to inherit Adam’s sinful condition. They have already collectively died to sin in the death of Christ for all; all are included in the crucified body of Christ. But how could all have died in Christ, prior to their conception and baptismal incorporation into Christ? This is the case because Christ mysteriously embodied sinful humanity in himself from his incarnation, baptism, crucifixion and resurrection. In his death, all sinners collectively died with him: in his resurrection all collectively rose with him. In our baptism, each one individually enters into the mystery of his death and resurrection, as Rom 6:1-11 teaches. As a result, as Gaffin puts it: “The resurrection of Jesus is just as thoroughly messianic and adamic as are his suffering and death. His resurrection is as equally representative and vicarious as his death. Believers no longer live to themselves but to the Christ, “who for their sake died and was raised (2 Cor 5:15)”<sup>50</sup> (cf. Rom 4:25). Meanwhile, the Spirit indwells our mortal bodies as a token of our future definitive possession and transformation, as “first fruits of the Spirit” (Rom 8:23; cf. v. 15). To sum up, the above underscores the fact of our future resurrection, as part of the whole, already given in the resurrection of Jesus; it is a certainty for Paul, as it is for other NT writers.

### **3.4.2 THE METAPHOR OF THE SEED AND THE SPIRITUAL BODY**

Commenting on the metaphor of the seed for the resurrected body (1 Cor 15:35-41), the expressions of “it is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body” (v. 44), and “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (v. 50), some scholars conclude that Paul taught a

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<sup>50</sup> Gaffin, *The Centrality of the Resurrection*, 66.

spiritual, immaterial resurrection, and that the resurrection body will have nothing to do with our present corruptible bodies.<sup>51</sup> But, this seems an incorrect understanding of the text in question. Responding to the question of how, and with what body the dead is raised (v. 35), Paul writes: “Fools! What you sow does not come back to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow that body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body (vv. 36-38).” Arguing for a completely new body created from nothing, A. J. M. Wedderburn comments on this passage:

Indeed one could as easily infer from Paul’s argument from the process of nature and from the dissimilarity and discontinuity between the natural body and the resurrected ‘body’ in 1 Cor. 15:36-44 that the former body remained sown in the ground, as it were, with the resurrection body as something completely new, a new creation, created out of nothing as in the original creation of all things. So great is the stress upon the newness and the differences of the resurrection existence, as we have seen, that this might seem to a logical corollary.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, Wedderburn sees the “flesh/body” language as misleading and not in line with Pauline teaching. He argues that if Paul had meant flesh at all, it would not have admitted of the earthly characteristics of weakness and mortality. For the sake of clarity, he says, “flesh/blood” terminology should not be used. Wedderburn finally repudiates “resurrection” language as potentially misleading, and suggests we should speak of “life” or “the presence of the spirit.”<sup>53</sup> Wedderburn’s view that if Paul meant flesh, the flesh would admit of no earthly characteristics of weakness and mortality is totally in harmony with Paul’s glorious resurrection body. But Wedderburn’s “new creation from nothing” and repudiation of “resurrection language” seem to amount to a complete denial of resurrection.

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<sup>51</sup> A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999); Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 141-58.

<sup>52</sup> Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, 87. Cf. William, “Touch Me and Believe,” 22. He argues that, “While the seed is utterly transformed in the process of growing to mature plant, the full grown plant is organically one with the seed.”

<sup>53</sup> Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, 118-120, 151-52. However, proponents of bodily resurrection are challenged by Wedderburn not to reduce resurrection to resuscitation.

However, in the text, Paul shows the continuity and discontinuity between the body of death and the resurrection body: though the plant is not the same thing as the seed, it is derived from it by the Creator's power. Michael Licona, agreeing with this view, writes:

That which you sow is not *made alive* [here is our word *zōopoieitai* from Rom. 8:11] unless it dies. The seed that is dead and sown is made alive once again. In the same way, there is continuity between the believer's present body (the seed) and the resurrection body. What dies and goes down in burial comes up in resurrection, having being made alive and transformed. This is confirmed by Paul's use of *Toūto* in 1 Corinthians 15:53-54: *Tò phthartòn Toūto* ("this perishable"); *Tò thnētòn Tòuto* ("this mortal").<sup>54</sup>

The metaphor reveals that the resurrection body is derived from the mortal body; for, no plant comes into being, except from the seed that is planted. Hence, it is not creation from nothing, but re-creation from that which already exists but is then radically transformed. Hence, Paul says: "For *this* perishable body must put on imperishability, and *this* mortal body must put on immortality" (vv. 53 emphasis mine). Ultimately this means, in Licona's words, that:

A transformation of the corpse will occur, and it will be clothed with immortality and imperishability [...] There can be no doubt that what is sown in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 is our present body. There can be no doubt that the third person singular "it" that is sown is what is raised. There is neither an elimination of a body nor an exchange of one for the new. Rather, it is the mortal being transformed into immortality.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, in spite of the radical change that will take place in our bodies, it is the same body that will be raised, just as it is from the seed that is grown that a new plant emerges, not from nothing.

Furthermore, "*sōma psychikón*" in verses 44-46 is translated as "physical body" in some translations like the RSV and the NRSV, which led some scholars to interpret the verses concerned to mean "a physical or fleshly body" versus "a spiritual, immaterial fleshless body" of

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<sup>54</sup> Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 405-06.

<sup>55</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 406.

the resurrection.<sup>56</sup> But some other scholars have pointed out that it ought to be translated as “psychical (soulish) body” or “natural body.”<sup>57</sup> Comparing this passage with other passages where the same contrast is made between “*psychikón*” and “*pneumatikon*” shows that Paul never had an immaterial body in mind, nor was he making an antithesis between the “physical body” and the “spiritual body.” Licona observes that *psychikon* does not possess the meaning of “physical” or “material” in the scripture and other ancient writings,<sup>58</sup> and “*psyche*” from which “*psychikon*” is derived is translated as “soul.”<sup>59</sup> In 1 Cor 2:14-15, Paul states: “Those who are *unspiritual* (*psychikos*)<sup>60</sup> do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are spiritual (*pneumatikos*) discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one’s else’s scrutiny” (emphasis mine). Interestingly the RSV, NRSV and NIV all translate the same “*psychikon*” as unspiritual here. Kirk R. Macgregor, while commenting on this passage where Paul discloses the meaning of *psychikon* and *pneumatikon*, writes:

A *psychikos anthrōpos* (‘soul-ish human’) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him or her... but the spiritual human (*pneumatikos*) discerns all things. Here we find that *psychikos* and *pneumatikos* represent opposite dominating principles toward which a person can be fundamentally oriented—either the person’s own *psyche* (“soul”) or the *pneuma* (“Spirit”) of God. Clearly *psychikos anthrōpos* does not signify a “physical human,” but rather a human primarily inclined towards the selfish desires of his or her own soul. Likewise, *pneumatikos* does not refer to an immaterial human, but rather a human primarily inclined towards the desires of the Holy Spirit. It logically follows that a *sōma psychikón* (“soul-ish body”) is a body instinctively steered by the will of the soul, while the *sōma pneumatikon* (“spiritual body”) is the same

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<sup>56</sup> Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, 66; Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 144.

<sup>57</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 406-15; Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 349-353

<sup>58</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 407.

<sup>59</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 349.

<sup>60</sup> “Unspiritual” as the translation for “*psychikos*” carries the sense of “sensual” as in Douay-Rheims version, or “soulish” or “natural”, that is, not influenced or controlled by the Spirit of God.

body of flesh as the *sōma psychikon* but instinctively steered by the will of the Holy Spirit.<sup>61</sup>

Paul is not contrasting physical humans with ethereal humans. Both *sōma psychikon* and *sōma pneumatikon* are materially embodied human beings with two contrasting mentalities or ways of life. *Sōma psychikon* designates a body subject to worldly desires; *sōma pneumatikon* does not refer to immaterial bodies, but designates a body perfectly under the control of the Holy Spirit. Paul's insistence on the need to keep the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, from sexual immorality because it belongs to the Lord and will be raised up reinforces this conviction. "The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know your bodies are members of Christ? [...] For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:13-14, 20). The whole context shows that it is this body, God's temple, which will be raised from the dead, not to be discarded. In the same line, Karl Rahner writes

In the last analysis, therefore, we can merely say in Saint Paul's language of paradise: it will be a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44), that is, a true bodily nature, which however, is pure expression of the spirit becoming one with the *pneuma* of God and its bodily existence, and is no longer its restricting and abasing element and its emptiness. It will be a bodily nature, which does not cancel against the freedom from the earthly here-and-now gained with death, but will, on the contrary, bring it out in its pure form.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Kirk R. Macgregor, "1 Corinthians 15:3B-6A, 7 and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (2006): 233. See William Lane Craig, *Assessing The New Testament Evidence for The Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1989), 126; "Resurrection and the Real Jesus," in *Real Jesus*, 172-73; Wright, 409; Michael William, 22. Other contexts in Pauline letters for the contrast between *psychikon* and *pneumatikon* include: 1 Cor 3:1ff.; 14:37; Gal 6:1; James 3:15; Jude 19 (in the sense of spiritual maturity versus spiritually immature and worldliness); 1 Cor 10:3-4 (in the sense of spiritual food and drink, that is, material food provided by God).

<sup>62</sup> Karl Rahner, "The Resurrection of the Body," in *Theological Investigations 2: Man in the Church* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), 214. Rahner later gave less attention to the body in the resurrection and even allows for "total perfection of man in body and soul immediately after death" interpretations (Bernard P. Prusak, "Bodily Resurrection in Catholic Perspectives," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000): 84-87; Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* 17.16-23)

Going further, the expression, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:50) is interpreted to mean that the resurrected body will have nothing to do with the material body. Thus, it is suggested that Paul’s spiritual body contrasts with the Lukan “flesh and bones” of Jesus’ resurrection body (Luke 24:39).<sup>63</sup> Ironically, here “flesh and blood” carries the sense of mortality or weakness and corruption, rather than physicality. It is in the sense of the human person in the state of sinfulness, mortality and corruption that the expression is used here and in other passages (Sir 14:18; 17:31; Matt 16:17; Gal. 1:16; Eph 6:12; Heb 2:14).<sup>64</sup> In Rom 8:1-17, Paul contrasts the mindset of the flesh that is hostile to God, unable to submit to God’s laws and results in death (vv. 6-8) with the mindset of the Spirit resulting in life and peace (vv. 6, 8-10) by putting to death the deeds of the body (v. 13). The body is said to be dead due to sin (v. 10) but will be given life by the Spirit. V. 11 states: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.” He indicates that the Spirit already indwells them in their mortal being, and that Spirit will vivify the same bodies. Without mentioning the concept of “resurrection,” it is hinted at, as James D.G. Dunn writes: “So here, even when he focuses on the ‘mortal body’ Paul’s point is precisely that the life-giving work of the Spirit will finally embrace that too: salvation will be completed not by escape from the body but by redemption of the body (v. 23) [...] of this Christ’s own resurrection from the dead has provided both the pattern and the assurance.”<sup>65</sup> Along with all of creation, our bodies will be redeemed from the bondage to corruption and decay at the Parousia (vv. 21-23).

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<sup>63</sup> Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, 87.

<sup>64</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 417-18. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Commentary Bible 38b (Dallas: Word, 2002), 11 who interprets it as immaterial resurrection.

<sup>65</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38a (Dallas: Word, 1988), 445, quoted in Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 401-02.

Colin J. Kruse points out that 2 Cor. 4:16-5:10 parallels Rom. 8:18-24 and argues for bodily resurrection.<sup>66</sup> In both passages, Paul talks about the sufferings of the present age in comparison to the glory that is to be revealed, the groaning of the children of God, and the desire to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling. He uses the term “*skēnos*” (“tent”) to denote the human body (in this transient phase) as in the LXX (Wis 9:15), stating that when destroyed in death, we will “have a building from God, an eternal house, not built by human hands,” akin to what Jesus says of the temple of his body to be destroyed and raised up on the third day (Mark 14:58; John 2:21). The expressions “building” and “eternal house” are used to express the permanence of the resurrection body in contrast to the present transient body. The parallel groaning in Rom 8:18-24 indicates that the “redemption of the body” in Rom 8:11, 23 parallels the “clothing with heavenly dwelling” of 2 Cor 5:1-4, a clear indication of the resurrection of the body. Paul declared his desire not to be unclothed (the nakedness of a disembodied spirit), but “to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (v. 4). He does not seek escape into a permanent disembodied state on account of present trials, but wants to be clothed permanently with a heavenly body, a new and better embodiment, in which the present body is not discarded but taken into and transformed in the immortal, as the expression “so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” reveals. This is in consonance with the transformed resurrection bodies in Rom 8:11, 23; 1 Cor 15:52-54; and Phil 3:21.

That Paul meant bodily resurrection is also evident from his understanding of what happens in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. The expression “fallen asleep” (1 Thess 4:13, 14, 15) implies not a “sleep of the soul,” a time of unconscious post-mortem existence prior to the resurrection (soul or mind would have been used), but the “sleep of

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<sup>66</sup> Colin J. Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (TNTC) Vol. 8, eds., Echar J. Schnabel and Nicholas Perrin (Nottingham, England: IVP Intervarsity Press; Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Intervarsity press, 2015), 154-157.

the body” or “a way of contrasting a state of temporary inactivity, not necessarily unconsciousness, with a subsequent one of renewed activity.”<sup>67</sup> Paul does not support a “soul sleep,” since for him, to be absent from the body is to be with the Lord, and he earnestly longed to be with the Lord, in his spiritual and immortal soul (2 Cor 5:6-10; Phil 1:21-24; 2 Cor 12:2-3), without using the word “soul” or “spirit.” Obviously the apostle was not talking about his being in the mind of God after death.<sup>68</sup> Since Paul thinks one will be *with the Lord* immediately after death in one’s spiritual soul, he would not be talking of a bodiless resurrection at the *eschaton*. This is so since the soul already enjoys blissful union with God after death prior to the *eschaton*. That is, implicit in Paul’s understanding, there exists a distinction between body and soul, the latter surviving physical death and capable of the beatific vision of God immediately after death. For Paul then, a valid understanding of resurrection would include the body.<sup>69</sup>

In closing this section on Pauline teaching on the resurrection, I would like to draw few insights from St. Thomas Aquinas and the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the survival after death and the intermediate state, in relation to bodily resurrection. For Aquinas, though the human soul, the substantial form of the body can survive death, the soul is not the human person but only an incomplete remnant that lacks most of the capabilities human persons normally have. Thus the inner logic of the concept of the immortal soul, as the substantial form of the body, demands the resurrection of the body; herein lays the philosophical plausibility of bodily

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<sup>67</sup> Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son*, 216.

<sup>68</sup> Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 425-436. Licona gives a reasonable treatment of it.

<sup>69</sup> This is not the same as Platonic dualism wherein the soul is pre-existent and the body is considered evil, the prison of the soul and incapable of immortality. Relying on scripture (Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Rom 8:39; Rev 6:9; cf. Wis 3:1-4; 2 Macc 15:11-16; Ex 3:6, 16; Matt 22:29-32; Matt 10:28; James 2:26; 1 Pet 3:18-20), the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches the composite nature of the human person, the distinction between the body and the soul though profoundly united, their separation in death, and their definitive glorious reunion at the resurrection (CCC, §§ 990, 992, 1016).

resurrection.<sup>70</sup> Our identity as human persons consists in our being created body and soul in the image and likeness of God. For the divine counsel: “Let us make human beings in our own image and likeness” (Gen 1: 26-28), is not preceded by the creation of the human body, which would suggest that only the soul images God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

The human body shares in the dignity of “the image of God”: it is a human body precisely because it is animated by a spiritual soul and it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit... The unity of the soul and the body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the form of the body: i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made up of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature.<sup>71</sup>

That the union of spirit and matter forms a single nature in humans, suggests that identity consists in the very constitution of our being: body and soul. Hence, Aquinas insists that, “It is necessary that numerically the same person rise again; and this indeed happens when the numerically same soul is united to the numerically same body. For otherwise, there would be no resurrection properly speaking, if the same person were not reformed. Hence to claim that the one who will rise is not numerically the same is heretical, since it is contrary to the truth of scripture, who proclaims the resurrection.”<sup>72</sup> This is precisely the point Paul makes with his use of the third person singular “it” for both what is sown and what is raised, and the demonstrative pronoun “this” for the perishable and mortal body which must put on imperishability and

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<sup>70</sup> Joseph Quitterer, “Hylomorphism and the Constitution View,” in *Personal Identity and Resurrection. How Do we Survive Our Death?* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 189. The witnesses of the early martyrs, and the early church Fathers’ writings reveal strong belief in the immortality of the soul [Terence Nicholas, *Death and Afterlife: A Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2010), 55ff, 113ff.]

<sup>71</sup> CCC, §§ 364, 365.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Supplement*, 79, a. 1, *respondeo*. John Morris corroborates this point when he writes that just as the risen Christ was identified through his wounds, indicating bodiliness, our present bodies which played a significant part in our redemption will be the source of identification with the real us, the us who were active in the world, and whose lives bear both responsibility and significance. [“I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body and Life Everlasting,” *The Furrow* 43, no. 1 (1992) 28. The author of 2 Clement, 9:1-5 likewise writes: “And none of you should say that this flesh is neither judged nor raised. Think about! In what state were you saved? In what state did you regain your sight? Was it not while you were in this flesh? And so we must guide the flesh, so also you will come in the flesh. If Jesus Christ the Lord who saved us—was first a spirit and then became flesh, and in this way called us, so also we will receive the reward in this flesh.” See also Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5:14-1.

immortality (1 Cor 15:42-44, 53-54; cf Phil 3:21). Put differently, numerical identity is what Paul hints at with the use of “it” and “this” in his resurrection teaching.

### **3.5 ARGUMENT FROM THE POWER OF GOD AND THE GOODNESS OF THE BODY: THE NATURE OF THE TRANSFORMATION AT THE RESURRECTION**

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, one of the arguments against bodily resurrection is the impossibility consideration: it is impossible to resurrect body particles that have decomposed, annihilated, or burnt or eaten up by other humans or animals (problem of chain consumption). The fundamental questions we need to ask here are: Does God wills this present body to be raised? How do we know whether or not God wills it? The first question can be answered in the affirmative: God wills it. Both the goodness of God who created the body good *ab initio* (Gen 1-2), his taking on our flesh and destroying death and sin in that flesh and rising in that flesh, and God’s indwelling us now through the Spirit and the Eucharist, all seem to indicate God’s desire to save the whole human person–body and soul. To the second question, we must respond that we know God’s will to be so because sacred scripture teaches the salvation of the body as we have seen above, for reason of which we are commanded and counseled to keep our bodies pure and present them to the Lord as living sacrifices.<sup>73</sup> If God wills it, so shall it be since it is “in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Stephen Davis urges us to remember that belief in bodily resurrection is based on God’s existence, his omnipotence, all knowing, all loving, transcendence, immanence and omniscience (Gen. 1:1-2; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 33:6-9).<sup>74</sup> God holds and sustains all things in being (Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). God’s will is the glue of the world. Psalm 139 speaks profoundly of God’s omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. It is a scientific truth that matter is indestructible, but changeable from one state

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<sup>73</sup> This actually answers the objection of undesirability of the body of flesh.

<sup>74</sup> Stephen Davis, “Resurrection, Personal Identity, and the Will of God,” in *Personal Identity and Resurrection*, eds., George Gasser (Austria: Ashgate, 2010), 20.

to another. Our dismembered bodily constituents are not hidden from the omniscient eyes of God, the God who knew our inmost being before we were formed.

Within this context of God's omnipotence and omniscience, Irenaeus (120-202), a prominent church Father on the resurrection, and bishop of Lyons wrote against the rejection of the resurrection of the flesh because of its present sinful and weak nature as contempt for God's power. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of St. John the apostle.<sup>75</sup> Thus, Irenaeus was an important link between the apostolic church and later times. He writes:

They show contempt for the power of God [...] when they dwell on the weakness of the flesh and ignore the strength of Him who raises the flesh from the dead (cf. Heb 11:19). If God did not give life to the mortal and raise up the corruptible to incorruptibility (cf. 1 Cor 15:53), He would no longer be mighty [...] the flesh will be found capable of receiving and containing the power of God, since at the beginning it received the art of God, so that one part of it became the eye for seeing, another the ear for hearing, another the hand for touching and working [...] consequently, the flesh is not excluded from the wisdom and power of God. His life-giving power is "made perfect in weakness" (cf. 2 Cor 12:9), in other words, in the flesh.<sup>76</sup>

For Irenaeus, because God is almighty, He is able to give life and incorruptibility to our mortal and corruptible bodies. Since flesh is not excluded from God's wisdom and power presently, and since the divine communicates and acts through our weak members, flesh will participate in the ultimate destiny of human beings by the supreme power of God. But when the flesh receives the Spirit in resurrection, all weakness and limitation is taken away. In this light he writes:

The weakness of the flesh will be swallowed up by the strength of the Spirit, and because of the communion of Spirit [and flesh], such a person will no longer be carnal but spiritual [...] once swallowed up the weakness of the flesh reveals the

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<sup>75</sup> Alexander Roberts D. D and W. H Rambaut A. B, trans., Introduction to *The Writings of Irenaeus*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1867), xviii. Cf. Hans Urs Von Balthasar (ed.), introduction to *The Scandal of the Incarnation: Irenaeus Against the Heresies*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1990), 7.

<sup>76</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, 3.2-3. Gabriel Fackre, "I believe in the Resurrection of the Body," *Interpretation-A Journal of Bible and Theology* 46, no. 1 (Jan, 1992): 44 speaks for embodiment: "For Christians, tangibility is a portent of ultimate things to come: no vaporous soul aloft forever in spiritual skies; no passage of a droplet self into an eternal sea; no everlasting memory in the mind of God; no wistful solace based on our influence on generations to come. Rather, God gives it a body [...] (1 Cor 15:38)."

power of the Spirit, and the Spirit, in absorbing its weakness, takes possession of the flesh as His own inheritance. It is from these two that the living man is made. He is living because of the participation of the Spirit; he is man because of the substance of flesh.<sup>77</sup>

The flesh submitting itself to the Spirit in resurrection puts on the qualities of the Spirit. From being mortal, corruptible, inclined to sin, perishable, dishonorable, passible and powerless, it becomes immortal, incorruptible, absolutely inclined to holiness, imperishable, glorious, impassible and powerful (cf. 1 Cor 15:42-44, 52-54). Hence, it is called a “spiritual body.” The same thoughts are vividly and abundantly captured in St. Augustine’s treatment of the resurrection of the saints. Though totally subjected to the Spirit, the spiritual flesh is still flesh.<sup>78</sup> This is the transformation Paul intends in Phil 3:21 and 1 Cor 15:42-44, 51-54. O’Collins speaks of this change or transformation of our bodies in terms of personalization and spiritualization of matter. Resurrection will entail the definitive entrance of matter into the sphere of the Spirit. O’Collins elaborates on this point when he writes:

The spiritualizing and personalizing of matter take place incessantly through eating and drinking. By being taken into a human body, matter becomes vitally associated with the functions of a spiritual being [...] the resurrection of the dead will mean the full and final personalization and spiritualization of matter, not its abolition. Through the Holy Spirit the human spirit will dominate matter, in the sense that the body will clearly express and serve the glorified spirit of human beings.<sup>79</sup>

Along this line of thought, he gives four functions of the earthly body, and makes a fourfold contrast between the earthly and risen body. As human beings we are: 1) bodily

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<sup>77</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, 9.2. See also Candida R. Moss, “Heavenly Healing: Eschatological Cleansing and the Resurrection of the Dead in the Early Church,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 79, no. 4 (2011): 991-1017. Moss informs us that the Fathers of the early church argues that the bodies of the resurrected will be free of all defects, disabilities and disproportions; for perfection in all ramifications is the characteristic of resurrected life. Just as Jesus healed the sick and raised people from the dead during his public ministry, so will he perfectly and definitively transform the bodies of believers at the resurrection.

<sup>78</sup> Augustine, “Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Charity,” in *St. Augustine on Christian Belief*, Boniface Ramsey (ed.) (Hyde Park, New York, New City Press, 2012), 23.84-91; *Sermon* 362.18.21; *City of God*, 22.21 (CCSL 48.481); *Contra Duas Epistolas Plagionorum* 1.10.17 (CSEL 60.439).

<sup>79</sup> Gerald O’Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 255.

constituted and inserted into the world that becomes part of us, and we are part of the world in which we participate imperfectly in God from whom the universe originates; 2) our bodiliness creates the possibility of being communicators with God, others and the universe, yet the body restricts and limits communication especially in death; 3) our bodies ensure our continuity and our being recognized as the same persons in spite of constant and massive bodily changes, which points to the fact that personal identity and continuity are somehow bound up with bodily identity and continuity; and 4) at all stages of our human existence we do experience our bodiliness as the place and means of grace, happiness, sin and misery.<sup>80</sup>

In contrast to the fourfold functions of the human body, our risen selves will be refined in a fourfold manner: 1) Just as Jesus in his risen body takes part in the life of the universe in a limitless manner, so matter and specifically our bodies will be brought into a most intense participation in the life of the universe and in God's life. 2) In the resurrection, our capacity for communication and relationship will be maximized, just as Christ now relates to the Father, human beings and all creation in a manner that sheds the constraints of his historical existence, as exemplified in his Eucharistic presence. 3) "Our particular embodied histories will be raised from death through the resurrection." That is to say, "that human, bodily history that makes up the story of each person will be brought to a new life. In a mysterious, transformed fashion their risen existence will express what they as embodied persons were and became in their earthly life."<sup>81</sup> The total individual bodily history of the dead ones, which is much more "him/her" than the physical body, will be brought to new life, and guarantees personal continuity, preserving for all eternity their gender, family experiences, and other personal characteristics, just as Jesus rose

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<sup>80</sup> O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 256-8.

<sup>81</sup> O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 258-59.

with his whole life, possessing fully his whole human story. 4) Our bodies will be places where we will experience the full freedom and happiness of God's children, the beatific vision.<sup>82</sup>

So, the transformation in resurrection life does not mean that we will become angels or stars and cease being bodies of flesh and blood. Rather, resurrection, which is not resuscitation, denotes a complete transformation of the human body in his or her psychosomatic totality (1Cor. 15:35-55).<sup>83</sup> Resurrection life will involve the transformation of memories such that memories of past experiences would not re-create undesirably the sufferings and distresses of earthly life.<sup>84</sup> The resurrected just ones will remember their former lives, but never suffer in the least manner from such remembrance, which will only create a disposition of the most profound thanksgiving for the divine benevolence. In Keith Ward's words:

Memory will be so transformed that suffering is set within a wider conviction of learning and development, and even earthly joy is relativized by a deeper consciousness of the presence of God. Yet it is important to personal survival that the memories remain, however transformed, so that people who enter into eternal bliss will always know themselves to be the same people who suffered, enjoyed, sinned and repented, learned and developed, on the long journey towards God.<sup>85</sup>

As Habermas notes, resurrection life, which is "heavenly life," is characterized by perfect peace and rest from labors bestowed by the Good Shepherd (Matt. 11:28-29; John 10:1-16, 27-29; Heb. 4; Rev. 7:15-17; 14:13); a state of perfect security and protection, wherein God is a mighty fortress for his people, their refuge and haven of protection and serenity (Ps. 91:1-4;

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<sup>82</sup> O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, 259-61.

<sup>83</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, "Resurrection" in *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, ed. Achtemeier, Paul J. et al. with Society of Biblical Literature (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1996), 926. Lampe, 105, 108-9, too holds that resurrection embraces the whole human existence; it is not "spiritual immortality" or "ascending souls", not an immaterial ethereal body made of some sort of concentrated light or energy, or composed of miniature particles of matter as the stoics described the *pneuma*.

<sup>84</sup> Nancy Murphy, "The Resurrection Body and Personal Identity: Possibilities and Limits of Eschatological Knowledge," *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed., Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 214. Scripture indicates that our memories will be intact in the afterlife (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-10).

<sup>85</sup> Keith Ward, *Religion and Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 307.

Matt. 23:37-39; Rev. 21:1-3); a place of incomprehensible beauty, the beauty of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 2:7; 21-22); a place/state of joyful fellowship in the communion of saints, and of most intimate fellowship and participation in divine life—the climax of human deification (Isa. 25:6-10; Matt. 8:11-12; 26:29; John 14:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:4; Rev. 19:7-9; 22:4).<sup>86</sup> The assurance of this has been given in the resurrection of Christ, the “first fruits” of the resurrection harvest. Nevertheless, we can’t know perfectly how this bodily transformation will take place. God alone knows fully. Thus, one must say with St. Paul, “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9-10). Though the resurrection is a primarily future event, its power is already made known in this present life, even in the midst of suffering and death as we partake of the life in the Spirit.

## CONCLUSION

From our findings on the theme of our future resurrection in this chapter we come to some fundamental convictions. First, both the OT and the NT tell us that there will be a general resurrection at the *eschaton*. While some passages speak about the resurrection of the just alone, others include the resurrection of the unjust as well, but to shame and damnation. Second, bodily resurrection was among the afterlife beliefs of the Jews; it was present in the teaching of Jesus Christ where resurrection is linked to eternal life; and bodily resurrection was present in the teaching of Paul. Third, bodily resurrection is not resuscitation but a radical transformation of the human person in her psychosomatic totality. That is, this mortal body of flesh and blood, when raised to eternal life will undergo a radical transformation known to God alone, while remaining a body of flesh and blood. It was this understanding that gave rise to the “resurrection of the

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<sup>86</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 161-162.

flesh” or “resurrection of the body” language in official church creeds and in the writings of early church Fathers like Irenaeus and Tertullian. Fourth, resurrection as a mystery surpassing human logic is possible only because of divine omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and infinite loving kindness. Our bodies will experience resurrection only because God desires the salvation of this body of flesh animated by a rational soul.

## CHAPTER FOUR: IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN LIVING

“The resurrection effect saturates the whole reality of the Church, its scriptures, sacraments, community, mission and historical institution. It permeates every aspect of its mission with the sense that a new creation, no longer divided in the conflictual forms of strangers and enemies, is in the making [...]. The resurrection effect resonates throughout the whole of theology. It carries over into every systematic theme and permeates the system in its entirety.”<sup>1</sup>

With these words of Anthony J. Kelly, we come to the final chapter of this project: the implications of the bodily resurrection of Jesus and our future bodily resurrection for theology and Christian living. In chapter one, we analyzed briefly some reductionists’ theses on the resurrection and concluded that their conclusions are quite inadequate for explaining the biblical data on the resurrection. Thus, in chapter two we argued for the historicity and bodily nature of Jesus’ resurrection, with its cosmic significance, while chapter three argued for the reality and fleshly nature of the general resurrection as evidenced in scripture. As Kelly notes above, the resurrection affects every aspect of the Church: its scriptures, its sacraments, its mission, its institution, Christian morality, and the entire theological system. The bodily resurrection of Jesus is fittingly the paradigm of explanation in theological thinking. This is the point of James D.G. Dunn when he writes,

The resurrection of Jesus [...] did not permit itself to be explained in terms of current or previous analogies. On the contrary, the interpretation that God had raised Jesus from the dead became itself paradigmatic, that which defines rather than that which is defined. In interpreting what they saw as ‘the resurrection of Jesus’, the first disciples were affirming that what had happened to Jesus afforded an insight into reality which was determinative for how reality itself should be seen.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony J. Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect: Transforming Christian Life and Thought* (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 71, 153.

<sup>2</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, vol I, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 877-78. See also Gerald O’Collins, *Believing in the Resurrection: The meaning and Promise of the Risen Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 154-56; cf 169-70, and Brian V. Johnstone, “Transformation Ethics: The Moral Implications of the Resurrection,” in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, eds., Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall and Gerald O’Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 343. Both authors decry the fact that Christian theology has not given enough attention to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its significance, especially in the areas of sacramental and moral theology.

Since it is Jesus' resurrection that defines creation and redemption, life and death, indeed all of reality, it is imperative that the resurrection effect resonates through the entire Christian theology. Christian theology should be resurrection diffused, and Christian living should be an experience of the resurrection power, just as both theology and Christian living is Christocentric. Thus, this final chapter focuses on the implications that the bodily resurrection of Jesus and our future bodily resurrection have on theology and Christian living. In giving resurrection its primary place in theological investigation as the original datum of faith, we shall proceed in two parts: first, the implications for Christian theology, and second, the implications for Christian living. Under the implications for Christian theology, light will be shed on the significance of bodily resurrection on the goodness of human flesh that Jesus took up in the incarnation, and the entire material universe, the object of God's redemptive love. The light that bodily resurrection sheds on the meaning of Christian suffering and death will also be emphasized; for the resurrection of Jesus is the resurrection of the victim who suffered and died in the flesh. Under the implications for Christian living, the socio-political, ecological, and moral significance of bodily resurrection will be our focus. What are the socio-political and ecological implications of the resurrection of the body on Christian conduct that flow from the light shed on the goodness and redeemableness of the flesh and the material universe? How does hope for bodily resurrection affect the way we use our bodies, which are the temples of the Holy Spirit? Finally, how can this imperative of resurrection faith be attained amidst the frailty of human nature?

## **4.1 IMPLICATIONS OF BODILY RESURRECTION ON CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

In this section, our focus will be first on the relationship between the incarnation and bodily resurrection; how the latter illumines the former, and the goodness and redeemableness of both human flesh taking up in the incarnation and the entire cosmos. The subsequent focus will consider the meaning that Jesus' resurrection gives to Christian suffering and death. Here, the salvific dimension that the resurrection of Jesus sheds on Christian suffering will be explored.

### **4.1.1 INCARNATION AND BODILY RESURRECTION**

We might begin by asking: What light does Jesus' bodily resurrection shed on the incarnation? In order to do justice to this question, a brief statement on the incarnation is relevant. The Johannine text, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a Father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), draws our attention to the incomprehensible reality of the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. Michael Williams has written brilliantly on the full implication of resurrection on the incarnation theology. Reflecting on the Johannine text above, he writes: "In Jesus' body, his physical, this-worldly body, his flesh, God is seen and his glory is manifest to man. To see the glory of God (the presence of God in the world), to see God's restoration of man and creation, one must look upon the flesh of Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> Expatiating on this and in light of John 1:18: "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart that has made him known," he tells us that in the physical, bodily life of Christ, who created the world and, in becoming incarnate, takes on all the limitations of space and time save sin, the glory of God is shown forth and brought near through his sublime teaching, altogether holy existence, miracles, passion,

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Williams, "Touch Me and Believe: Spiritual Resurrection Redefined," *Pro Rege* 24, no. 3 (1996): 13.

death and resurrection. In Jesus' flesh, the invisible God is made known and personally available to his people.<sup>4</sup> He observes that in the incarnate Jesus, God pitched his tent among humans to fulfill his covenantal promise to his people to be their God and they his people, to dwell among them, in order to restore, and regenerate, to renew that primal fellowship of human beings with God and creation. In the incarnate Jesus who is *vere Deus et vere Homo*, the marriage between heaven and earth is definitively consummated; heaven is shown forth to be the power source of the redeemed life while the locale and point of that life is earthly life to its fullness. Our redemption was historically worked out on earth. Thus, Christianity is a historical religion; the foundations of its faith are historical, not speculative.<sup>5</sup>

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ reinforces the significance of the incarnation of God in human flesh. It vividly and cogently proclaims that Christ actually took our flesh with all its weakness and limitations, save sin, suffered and was clinically dead in the flesh in which he was truly buried (Rom 1:3; 6:4; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 5:7-10; 1 Pet 4:1). If the resurrection is bodily, then the incarnation and his death in the flesh are necessarily real. For it would make no sense to say that the body of the resurrection was entirely new if he was never truly incarnated in the flesh. If he never had a true human body on earth, there would be no need for him to have one at the resurrection. So Jesus' resurrection in the flesh speaks against the docetic claim that Jesus only appears to be human with flesh and blood without truly being fully human, or that he only appears to die without truly dying. Thus, the resurrection of Jesus in the body affirms the doctrine of the incarnation, which is at the very core of the Christian faith. It echoes the conviction that the marriage between God and humanity in the flesh is not a temporary affair, but

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<sup>4</sup> Williams, "Touch Me and Believe," 15.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, "Touch Me and Believe," 15, 17. Even though we cannot experience those events ourselves, we see the traces that those events leave behind, and in faith we experience the power of the resurrection. For Christian faith "is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). Christian faith is in unseen realities, not on the visible.

an everlasting bond that manifests God's everlasting covenantal faithfulness. Christ's fleshly resurrection is a consummation of the mystery of the incarnation, its definitive and irrevocable expression. It is a permanent seal on the incarnation. His rising in the flesh manifests him as our true supreme model since it attests to his sufferings and trials in the flesh. If he were not truly incarnated in the flesh, he could not have been our perfect example. The image to which we are to be conformed must be of the same stock with us, passing through the same challenges of life (Heb 2:14-18). It is only an incarnate God that can definitively reveal God to us.

Christ's incarnation reveals that in God's eyes, human flesh is good and redeemable. Nevertheless, this goodness and redeemableness of our flesh finds its fullest manifestation in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, wherein his flesh was not discarded but transfigured and glorified. Jesus' bodily resurrection is a statement on the goodness of the flesh. In his resurrection, Christ speaks of his not being ashamed to be identified with human beings in the weakness of the flesh; that he created it good, loves it and will redeem it. Because of his identification with us in the flesh he was not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters, having one heavenly Father (Heb 2:11-18). The togetherness of God and human nature in the hypostatic union continues forever through the resurrection. In his transfigured body he ministered to his disciples after the resurrection, in a relationship altogether transformed. According to Kelly, in his transformed bodily being, Christ breathes his Spirit to vivify his members (John 20:21-23); in his risen flesh the primordial generative mystery of the Father (John 1:3-4) is revealed in the vine's life and the branches' life (15:1-10). Though glorified in the flesh, he still bears the marks of his wounds of the cross, thus representing his compassionate involvement with humanity in its suffering and with the whole groaning reality of creation (cf. Rom 8:18-25).<sup>6</sup> Consequently, "a new field of

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<sup>6</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 37.

incarnate relationship is disclosed in the phenomenon of the resurrection, so that Christ rising from the dead does not mean disincarnation, but a new form of incarnation. The former sphere of fleshly divisions is now relocated, as it were, in a new form of incarnate existence (Eph 2:14-22).<sup>7</sup> Physical existence is transformed, a bodily mutation has occurred. Jesus' sacramental giving is embodied (John 6:51), through which we are conformed to him, assimilating his flesh and blood for life and communion (John 6:55).<sup>8</sup> If resurrection meant salvation for Christ in his entire humanity—body and soul—it means that the whole human person is the object of God's redeeming love. In our flesh that is already the temple of the Holy Spirit, we shall see the glory of God. In the resurrection, flesh is perfected and taken up into God's radiating *doxa*. Therefore, as Kelly points out, "rather than de-physicalizing, dis-incarnating or spiritualizing the body and the material world, the phenomenon of the resurrection of Christ points in another direction, namely to a transformed physicality."<sup>9</sup> That is to say, it points to a physicality that is at once real and transcends the scope of present limited materiality.

Furthermore, Jesus' bodily resurrection is of enormous significance for the entire cosmos as it reveals the totality of Christ's victory over death. Human beings, and in some way the whole of creation, are taken up into God. In Kelly's words, "the bodily resurrection of Christ not only signifies God's victory over sin and death, but also declares the nature of that victory. *It is total, comprehensive; so comprehensive that it claims that history is moving toward nothing less than a fully restored and glorified universe.*"<sup>10</sup> This total and comprehensive dimension of salvation must be paid attention to in our theological reflections and way of life. Spiritual resurrection would tend to reduce the scope of God's redemptive love, and seems to give the

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<sup>7</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 38.

<sup>8</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 38.

<sup>9</sup> Kelly, *The Resurrection Effect*, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Williams, "Touch Me and Believe," 19. Emphasis mine.

impression that the creation of the material universe is a mistake or without ultimate purpose. As Günter Thomas asserts, the empty tomb (bodily resurrection) affirms the breadth and depth of the transforming and redeeming community with God's creation. The resurrection also mean that creaturely time and God's eternal time are no longer completely separated; the resurrection and ascension imply the taking up of human created time into God, since the resurrected logos remains the incarnate logos. The appearances reveal that time is not destroyed but re-created. In Christ's resurrection the entire creation is redeemed and renewed, taking up into God's life.<sup>11</sup>

But if the bodily resurrection of Jesus means redemption for the material universe, the entire creation and creaturely time, it suggests at once God's meaning and purpose in creation and redemption, the divine plan of salvation for the groaning creation (Rom 8:18ff), and the purposefulness of history. This is what the scripture shows in relating the events of God's dealing with humanity. In this light, Michael Williams tells us: "the distinctive thing about the biblical emphasis upon events is the belief that history has a redemptive goal. The key to history as it is understood in Scripture is the promise of God. Because God has promised the goal of history, we can speak of history as real and meaningful. The matrix of divine promise and fulfillment, and mankind's response to the divine initiative, constitute the very nature of history."<sup>12</sup> The resurrection brings this understanding of history to limelight. With the Christ event, the drama of God and his chosen people attains a unique purposeful significance. For,

Biblical faith is always oriented toward the future. Israel's hope of the kingdom of God was always an eschatological hope, a hope for the future. The promise that comes to fulfillment in Christ's resurrection is first sounded in the garden. The experience of the coming Redeemer is proclaimed in the mother-promise of

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<sup>11</sup> Günter Thomas, "Resurrection to New Life: Pneumatological Implications of the Eschatological Transformation," in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, eds., Peters Ted, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 263-64.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Williams, "Touch Me and Believe," 18.

Genesis 3:15. The rest of the redemptive history is an unfolding, an historical exposition, of that promise.<sup>13</sup>

The redemption promised in Genesis is fulfilled with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Throughout history God was progressively leading his people to this eschatological goal. Through the resurrection, Judeo-Christian faith has shown that God's dealings with his people, from creation down to the Christ event, was salvifically oriented, not happening by chance. "Thus Scripture is not a series of isolated divine acts, but an integrally unified narrative. Because God's plan of salvation is fulfilled in Christ, Christ is the leading player, the protagonist, of the biblical drama of redemption. As Christ's saving work is the central theme of the bible, and his resurrection is the sign of fulfillment of that work, so his resurrection is the anticipation of the goal of redemptive history."<sup>14</sup> With his resurrection, humanity and the universe are assured of an eschatological goal; the divine purpose of creation becomes clearer: the consummation and reconciliation of all things in Christ. In Pauline thinking, though God's provident care for humans is unique, the whole of creation finds redemption and final liberation in Christ (Rom 8:21ff; Col 1:15-20). "In Col 1:15-20", as Edwards puts it "the cosmic Christ is celebrated as both the source of creation and its goal: all things have been created in Christ and all things are reconciled in him [...] the risen Christ is the one in whom all things are created and in whom all things hold together. The Colossians hymn goes further, asserting that in Christ and Christ's cross God has reconciled all things to God's self. Everything in creation is created in Christ, sustained in him, and reconciled in him."<sup>15</sup> The bodily resurrection of Christ has given hope to our universe and us. The Creator of the world rather than abandoning the world definitively unites everything to himself. The goodness of matter and the universe is echoed in this fact that

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<sup>13</sup> Williams, "Touch Me and Believe," 18.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, "Touch Me and Believe," 18.

<sup>15</sup> Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith: The Change of Heart that Leads to a New Living on Earth* (MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 56.

we shall experience everlasting happiness in a transformed universe in our transfigured bodies, a view which the idea of the new heavens and the new earth sheds light on. Janet Martin Soskice writes concerning this: “The Book of Revelation looks forward to that kingdom on earth indeed to a time when the division of heaven and earth is to disappear. It is worth noting that in Revelation the New Jerusalem contains no temple, ‘since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb themselves were the temple’ (Rev 21:22) [...] the conquest of death and bodily resurrection are important to God’s promise of a new creation.”<sup>16</sup>

In sum, Jesus’ bodily resurrection shows that flesh and the entire material cosmos are good and redeemed by God, the Creator. In Christ’s resurrection, a new pneumatic age has begun definitively, and believers led by the Spirit already participate in this new age (2 Cor 5:17). Their existence is heavenly, waiting for its eschatological bodily manifestation. Christian theology should endeavor to highlight the nexus between the incarnation and the bodily resurrection of Jesus, showing its significance on human beings and their material world, the objects of divine love and redemption. On account of the incarnation and resurrection, Christian theology is firmly committed to the body, matter, and our cosmos.

#### **4.1.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN SUFFERING AND DEATH**

It is undeniable that suffering and death always cause pain and remain our enemies. However, as John Paul II elaborates, Christ, who conquers sin by his obedience unto death and overcomes death by his resurrection, throws through his salvific work a new light upon every suffering: the dimension of salvation.<sup>17</sup> The Holy Pontiff states:

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<sup>16</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, “Resurrection and the New Jerusalem,” in *The Resurrection, An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, eds., Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 55-6.

<sup>17</sup> Pope John Paul II, Apostolic letter, On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering *Salvifici Doloris* (11 February, 1984) §§14, 15.

Precisely by means of his cross he must strike at the roots of evil, planted in the history of man and in human souls. Precisely by means of his cross he must accomplish the work of salvation. This work, in the plan of eternal love, has a redemptive character [...] Christ goes towards his own suffering, aware of its saving power; he goes forward in obedience to the Father, but primarily he is united to the Father in this love with which he has loved the world and man in the world [...] It can be said that this is ‘substitutive’ suffering; but above all it is ‘redemptive’.<sup>18</sup>

The crucial point of emphasis here is the fact that the resurrection of Jesus is the resurrection of one who was extremely victimized in the flesh. In his passion and death he experienced in his entire being, body and soul, the pinnacle of human suffering and wickedness. Agonizing in his soul he said, “I am deeply grieved, even to death” (Matt 26:38); excruciatingly gasping for breath on the cross he cried out as one abandoned even by God: “My God My God, why have you forsaken Me” (Matt 27:46). Aware of the salvific import of his suffering and death, Jesus, with perfect love, endured all rejection, condemnation, and tortures unto death in his mortal flesh. His resurrection, which firstly meant salvation and vindication for him, is closely linked to the cross. The resurrection throws light on the cross, revealing its salvific and redemptive meaning. The resurrection revealed his suffering and death as the suffering servant’s atoning sacrifice for the world’s sin (Isa 52-53; I John 2:1-2; cf. Heb 7-10); the decisive nature of the paschal events in the salvific plan of God for the salvation of the world is profoundly manifested. Without the resurrection, this soteriological dimension of his suffering and death would not have been understood. But as John Paul II explains, just as every person shares in Christ’s redemption, each one can and is called to share through suffering in the redemptive suffering of Christ. We are able to share in Christ’s suffering because he has opened his redemptive suffering to us, and has become, in a certain sense, a sharer in all human sufferings.

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<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* § 16, 17. Cf. Isa 52-53; John 1:29.

Discovering the redemptive character of Christ's suffering we discover in our own suffering a new content and new meaning by the light of faith, seeing ourselves as co-crucified with him.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, Jesus's bodily resurrection shows that just as Christ's passion and death in the flesh has a saving value for all of creation, the sufferings of believers, when united with the infinite merits of Christ's life, suffering, death and resurrection, contribute to their edification and union with God. Congruent with scripture, the Pontiff explains that through suffering, the Christian is invited to moral greatness and spiritual maturity, becomes more mature to enter the kingdom and attain to perpetual glory. Suffering is made the firmest basis of the definitive good, the good of eternal salvation.<sup>20</sup> This is the teaching of Paul when he writes: "And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom 5:3-5). Suffering is the path through which the Spirit leads us into spiritual maturity in Christ, empowering the believer from within through his consoling presence.

Furthermore, the resurrection of the Son of man reveals that the sufferings of the saints in their mortal bodies when united with Christ's can be efficaciously offered for the spiritual good of the church and of the whole world. Their sufferings have redemptive value. The resurrection power that sealed Jesus's sufferings and death flows through the passion of the saints to his members, in which case the Creator gratuitously enables the creature to participate in the salvation of souls, though always in a dependent and subordinate way. This redemptive character of our own sufferings is shown forth in the words of Paul: "I am now rejoicing in my sufferings

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<sup>19</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* § 19, 20. Cf. Gal 1:4; 2:19-20; 6:14; 1 Cor 6:20; 2 Cor 4:8-11, 14. "By his suffering on the cross, Christ reached the very roots of evil, of sin and death. He conquered the author of sin, Satan, and his permanent rebellion against the Creator" (*Salvifici Doloris* § 26).

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* §§ 21, 22, 26. Cf. Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17-18; 2 Cor 4:17-18; 2 Thess 1:4-5; 1 Pet 4:13. In Phil 3:8-11 Paul speaks of his desire to share in the sufferings of Christ so as to be a sharer in his glory.

for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col 1:24). As the Pontiff says, the sufferings of Christ created an infinite and inexhaustible good of the world's redemption, to which no one can add anything. But at the same time, in the mystery of his mystical body, the Church, he has opened his own redemptive suffering to all human suffering such that as long as one is a sharer in Christ's suffering, one in his own way completes the suffering through which the redemption of the world is accomplished in love. In other words, the Redemption completely accomplished through Christ's loving sacrifice is constantly being accomplished;<sup>21</sup> for, "Christ opened himself from the beginning to every human suffering and constantly does so. Yes, it seems to be part of the very essence of Christ's redemptive suffering that this suffering requires to be unceasingly completed."<sup>22</sup> The Church, which completes the redemptive work of Christ by ceaselessly drawing on the infinite merits of the redemption and introducing them into the life of humanity, in her co-crucifixion and rising with Christ, is the space through which human sufferings complete the sufferings of Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Just as the wounds of Jesus heal humanity, so also by our wounds in union with the wounds of Christ, others and we can attain to salvation. Through the resurrection, the sufferings of Christians become efficaciously sacrificial, all because Christ incorporates us in his death and resurrection. Concerning this, Caroline Walker Bynum informs us that, "Medieval understandings of redemption assumed Christ redeemed us not just because he substitutes for us or arouse our empathy but also because we are in Christ on the cross. He represents us because he incorporates us, lifting our distress and our guilt unto God. And because he incorporates us,

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<sup>21</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* § 24.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* § 24.

<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris* § 24.

we can incorporate each other.”<sup>24</sup> For example, the sufferings of the stigmatics like Francis of Assisi and Padre Pio, sufferings mysteriously imposed on them so that they can unite with Jesus in suffering for their brothers and sisters, concretely bring to manifestation the redemptive light the bodily resurrection of Jesus sheds on Christian suffering. This indeed is a great mystery. Suffering itself, which is evil, is transformed by the power of grace to a means of sanctification of the people of God. Christian theology and catechesis, therefore, should bring to bear the significance of suffering in Christ; in light of the cross and resurrection, Christian suffering could become sacrificial and redemptive. The Lord urges us to carry our crosses daily and follow him if we must be saved (Matt 10:37-39; Luke 14:26-27). The more believers are imbued with this understanding of Christian suffering, the more will they readily endure their trials and persecutions to the end as inchoate stigmatics.

To the question: How does resurrection faith help us deal with the fear of death that stems from pain and loss of mental functions, loss of relationship with loved ones, fear of being alone, apprehension over the unknown, horror of non-existence, and fear of judgment? Habermas convincingly points out the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the solution.<sup>25</sup> Though death remains our enemy and a consequence of sin, in Christ’s death and resurrection, our own bodily resurrection and eternal defeat of death is guaranteed and the life beyond death is revealed to us, not an oblivious, unconscious or subconscious existence, but real life with God. This counterbalances the fear of extinction fostered by visions of funerals, caskets and decomposition of the body, which we survive.<sup>26</sup> In view of this, he urges us to counter the fear of death by three ways. First, we should internalize the conviction of eternal life. Second, we should shift our

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<sup>24</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Power in the Blood: Sacrifice, Satisfaction, and Substitution in Late Medieval Soteriology*, in *The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer*, eds., Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 194.

<sup>25</sup> Garry R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus & Future Hope* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 174; cf. Heb 2:14.

<sup>26</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 177-78. Cf. 1 Cor 6:14; 15:53-57; 2 Cor 4:14; 5:1-8; Phil 1:21-24; 1 John 3:2.

thought patterns to God's heavenly perspective. Eternity must be brought to bear on every aspect of our daily lives, seeking God's kingdom and his righteousness first and above all things. Third, we should replace potential debilitating fears with edifying thoughts of eternity. It is not death and caskets that represent the ultimate reality,<sup>27</sup> but God's everlasting covenantal fidelity brought to light in Jesus' resurrection. Against the fear of judgment Habermas proposes that believers should constantly remind themselves that they will stand before a just, merciful and loving God who desires the salvation of the sinner (Luke 15; 2 Cor 5:8-10). They should be assured that if they have earnestly followed him, there is no condemnation for them (Rom 8:1-2).<sup>28</sup> Christian theology and liturgy, especially the funeral rites, have always shown this radiating significance that the resurrection of Jesus sheds on death. It is in light of this that we can say with Paul: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:54-57). It is in view of this victory over death revealed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, which guarantees our own victory through resurrection, that Christians strive to imitate Jesus in righteous living as expressed in the major sub-section below.

#### **4.2 IMPLICATIONS OF BODILY RESURRECTION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING**

In chapter three, we hinted at our identification with Christ in his death and resurrection, and our new existence in the Spirit. "Because we are convinced that one has died for all, therefore all have died" or "for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ" (1 Cor 15:22; cf. Rom 5:12-19; cf. 6:3-11). Christians, baptized *eis christon* become "another Christ"

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<sup>27</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 179-81. Cf. Matt 5:3-12; 6:31; Phil 3:18-21; Col 3:2.

<sup>28</sup> Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*, 177-78. Cf. John 3:16-18, 36; 5:24-29; Matt 25:3-46.

and incorporated into Christ in baptism, now belong to Christ in their entire being: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:27; cf. 1 Cor 12:13, 27; 1 Cor 6:15). This is the indicative of salvation, of resurrection life, that is, what God has already done for the Christian via the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This “indicative of salvation is an existential reality, not an ideal towards which believers are striving,”<sup>29</sup> and it is the foundation for the imperative. The upshot of this belonging to Christ is a call for an intentional submission of one’s whole being and will to the Lordship of Christ to whom they now belong as shown in the words: “And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them” (2 Cor 5:15) or more aptly, “For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and of the living” (Rom 14:9).

It is thus apparent that “Jesus’ resurrection established his lordship over all humanity. Believers, as citizens of the kingdom over which Christ reigns, answer not to men or to their ‘inner conscience,’ but instead to the Lord of all.”<sup>30</sup> Their identification with the resurrected Lord, which constitutes the indicative of resurrection life, has implications that affect their entire life, producing in them a harvest of good works (Eph 2:10). As indicated below, this identification with the resurrection of Jesus necessitates a Christocentric existence, imbued with moral uprightness. Within this context, we shall discuss the implications of bodily resurrection

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<sup>29</sup> Frank J. Matera, *Romans Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament*, eds., Mikeal C. Parsons and Charles H. Talbert (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010), 162.

<sup>30</sup> Anthony C. Thornhill, “The Resurrection of Jesus and Spiritual (Trans) Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 5, no. 2 (2012): 250.

on Christian living under the following subheadings: 1) social, political and ecological implications, and 2) the moral use of our bodies.

#### **4.2.1 SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

In contrast to the view that hope for eternal life beyond this life fosters an attitude of escapism or neglect of one's responsibility of working assiduously to transform this world, Ernst M. Conradie is of the opinion that such a hope may lead to a more profound affirmation for the significance of this earth, this life and this particular body and thus empower, paradoxically, commitment to the present life. The reason is that this commitment is a moral obligation for subjects of God's eschatological kingdom, a criterion for eternal life.<sup>31</sup> There is no doubt that a proper understanding of eternal life and resurrection as embracing the whole person, body and soul, and the material universe, and the practice of Christian charity as a *sine qua non* for entry into God's kingdom, has led many Christians to sacrifice their life and comfort for the wellbeing of others. True hope for eternal life necessarily inspires commitment to this life, to the wellbeing of others. In light of this, true resurrection hope inspires a preferential option for the poor, and cares for our common home—the earth. This is because hope for everlasting life with God requires us to care for the needy and less privileged of the society (Matt 25:31-46), and preserve the means of livelihood for the people of future generations we are called to love.

With regard to the care for the poor, Jon Sobrino reminds us to think of the nature of the one who was raised from the dead: “in the Christian tradition the fate of human beings is understood in the light of the fate of Jesus. What we need to be clear about is that Jesus did not end his life ‘in the fullness of days’ but as a ‘victim’, and that his resurrection did not consist in

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<sup>31</sup> Conradie, “Resurrection, Finitude,” 296. Cf. Rom 13. In fact, he writes that life without hope is more likely to foster lack of responsibility to present life and easily give in to triumphalism, hedonism, and consumerism (ibid.).

giving life back to a corpse but in giving justice back to a victim. The central affirmation is then that ‘the risen one is the crucified one’, which is what John’s Jesus also insisted on, by appearing as risen displaying his wounds.”<sup>32</sup> Sobrino points out that Acts presents the raising of Jesus as a response of God to the unjust and criminal actions of human beings who killed him for proclaiming the kingdom to the poor and defending them, denouncing and unmasking the oppressors. Thus, he insists that resurrection is firstly and foremost doing justice to a victim, referring not simply to a death, but to a cross, not simply to power but to justice.<sup>33</sup> The whole Good Friday drama reveals that Jesus was a victim who suffered at the hands of sinners who unjustly condemned and crucified him because of their own selfish and wicked motives. Yet in dying, he returned hatred with love beyond comprehension when he prayed that they be forgiven (Luke 23:34). His total and loving resignation unto death and his subsequent resurrection and ascension unmask the evil of the perpetrators. His resurrection and vindication by God reveals the justice of God in a most astonishing way. It guarantees that God will ultimately vindicate all who suffer injustice and rejection, especially when they suffer for the sake of his name, not allowing anger and hatred to overcome them, but overcoming evil with good (Rom 12:14-21).

Therefore, Sobrino tells us that the resurrection of Jesus the crucified victim releases hope for the victims: the great masses of the poor and oppressed and those assassinated for denouncing injustice and actively seeking justice. The preferential option of God for the victims shines out with absolute clarity from the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>34</sup> Already, in 2 Macc 7, the martyrdom of the mother and her seven sons pointed to hope in God’s vindication of the just, who were deprived of their lives at the prime of life for the sake of his laws. They anticipated the

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<sup>32</sup> Jon Sobrino, “The Resurrection of One Crucified: Hope and a Way of Living,” in *The Resurrection of the Dead*, Concilium, eds., Andrés Torres Queiruga, Luiz Carlos Susin and Jon Sobrino, trans. Paul Burns (London: SCM Press, 2006), 101.

<sup>33</sup> Sobrino, “The Resurrection of the Crucified One,” 102. Cf. Acts 2:23-24; 3:13-15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:39.

<sup>34</sup> Sobrino, “The Resurrection of the Crucified One,” 103.

resurrection of their mutilated bodies at the *eschaton*. The resurrection of the Son of God fulfills that hope of vindication, though yet to be eschatologically consummated in his members. For both those who suffer and those who fight for justice, Sobrino reminds us that the resurrection of Christ crucified should challenge us with the way we approach the death and life of others, what we do to give the victims hope; it should challenge us with the justice and love needed to take the crucified down from the cross. Living as risen beings implies taking victims down from the cross and giving them new life.<sup>35</sup> “Every act of faith in resurrection has to have a corresponding act of justice, of service, of solidarity, of overcoming selfishness and the risk and fear it involves.”<sup>36</sup> It means that just as the Father justifies the Son through raising him from the dead bodily, Christians, especially church leaders, through their unflinching commitment to the poor emboldened by the hope of the resurrection must strive to enable the poor and oppressed experience the justice of God. They should remember always that persecution and death are not the final words, but God’s consoling words on the judgment day: “come you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world [...] just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matt 25:34, 40). The church, as eschatological community, must have a preferential option for the poor.

Given the above, the practice of the corporal works of mercy cannot be overemphasized, since they form the criteria for eternal life with God (Matt 25:31-46), nor can the involvement of Christians in socio-political movements sincerely aimed at promoting justice, peace, equality and freedom be legitimately ignored. In this regard, the work of liberation theology for the past decades is highly commendable and Pope Francis’ call to care for, and work with the poor is

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<sup>35</sup> Sobrino, “The Resurrection of the Crucified One,” 105-6.

<sup>36</sup> Sobrino, “The Resurrection of the Crucified One,” 107.

crucially noteworthy. This means that catechesis, preaching and theology, especially moral theology, should bring to light the intrinsic link between resurrection hope and the preferential option for the poor and dejected of society. Hope for our future resurrection and the resurrection of Jesus the victim urges us to be actively concerned for the poor. For, “love for the risen Jesus generates responsibility, and this becomes absolute commitment to others, the victims and potential victims whom one encounters in the world. Christian morality therefore can never yield to forgetfulness and resignation to the fate of victims: it generates a love beyond the range of death, which moves the Christian to try to change the conditions which destroy the victim, so that others may not be similarly destroyed.”<sup>37</sup> All actions of violence, policies, legislations and structures that dehumanize, subjugate, enslave and brutalize people are to be vehemently opposed by Christians who are called to be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (Matt 5:13,14). Robert Morgan fittingly writes: “a strong reason for keeping flesh on the agenda of Christian eschatology is to keep alive the horror of physical mutilation in a culture saturated by images and the reality of violence. The value of the human body and the consequent evil of physical brutality, the absolute exclusion of torture that has been scandalously betrayed in Christian history, can be underlined by the image of a resurrection of the flesh.”<sup>38</sup> The resurrection of the flesh calls for a proper care for our bodies created good by God. We must take good care of our bodies and those of others; even in carrying out ascetic works or mortification, we should try not to go to some extremes, but practice mortification in such a way as to keep our bodies healthy, taking into account our duties, circumstances and states of life. Care for the body also implies that we do not indulge in drug abuse, addiction to alcohol, child labor, laboring without adequate rest and exercise, and mutilation of bodies.

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<sup>37</sup> Johnstone, “Transformation Ethics,” 346.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Morgan, “Flesh is Precious: The Significance of Luke 24:36-43,” in *Resurrection: Essays in Honor of Leslie Houlden*, eds., Stephen Barton and Graham Stanton (London: SPCK, 1994), 17.

Furthermore, at present, survival is a problem because we do not possess life in fullness. Hence, Christ comes to give us the fullness of life (John 10:10), communicating his own life to us, to be fully realized at the *Parousia*. “Resurrection is encounter with full life, in a process of creation that leads to its own undoing. Resurrection shows that the solution to survival does not lie in simply living on but requires transformation.”<sup>39</sup> At the resurrection we shall receive the fullness of life definitively and transformatively when “he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away” (Rev 21:4). Already we participate in this fullness of life as we await its eschatological manifestation. Thus, we are a “people of life” summoned to its fullness, and called to promote life unconditionally.

This vocation for life further demands that we promote and care for all that helps sustain human life. Within this context the care for our common home, the earth, becomes an imperative. How can we promote life if we give in ceaselessly to wanton deforestation, the extermination of certain species of life, endemic pollution of the air, the water and the entire ecosystem? Should we continue the destruction of nature, can we leave a sustainable environment for the future generations and thus help protect and nourish their lives? Denis Edwards reminds us that Jesus’ resurrection reveals that God’s compassion is directed to all creatures and Christ, who spoke of his Father’s care for the birds and lilies of the field (Matt 6:28; 10:19; Luke 12:6, 27), uses stories and images from the natural world to communicate the deepest things of God, and reveals the inward affinity between the natural order and the spiritual order. Creation itself is seen as both the gift of God and the place of divine presence.<sup>40</sup> The implication of the above is

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<sup>39</sup> Marcio Fabri Dos Anjos, “Resurrection as Process of a New Life,” in *The Resurrection of the Dead*, Concilium, eds., Andrés Torres Queiruga, Luiz Carlos Susin and Jon Sobrino, trans. Paul Burns (London: SCM Press, 2006), 95.

<sup>40</sup> Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*, 49-51.

the ecological conversion to which Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si* has passionately called us, a conversion that should begin from within.<sup>41</sup> It means that we are called to support and sustain all species of life and elements for the common good and future generations. When we do this, we are becoming responsible stewards of creation, rather than exploiters of God's gratuitous gifts. There is no doubt that such ecological conversion pleases God and is itself an act of thanksgiving, even though the eschatological transformation is expressly God's extraordinary act, which exceed the total grasp of the human intellect. As Edwards points out, our history, the history of the cosmos which we construct, our efforts of creativity and love, our efforts to build a just world and ecological integrity will not be lost, but will definitively be taken up and radically transformed in Christ, the Alpha and Omega.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the awareness that our efforts towards ecological conversion is not in vain but pleases God, inspires us to responsible stewardship of creation. Beyond these socio-political and ecological implications, hope for bodily resurrection demands that we use our bodies for the glory of God. The use of our bodies, which flows from our identification with the resurrected Christ, becomes our next focus.

#### **4.2.2 IMPLICATIONS ON THE MORAL USE OF THE BODY**

The moral implication with regard to the use of the body that flows from the believer's identification with Jesus, submission to his Lordship, and hope for a bodily-resurrected immortal existence is not far fetched. One must no longer live a hedonistic life but be sober-minded and stop sinning (1 Cor 15:32-34; cf. 15:58). In the entire Pauline corpus, the imperative always flows from the indicative. Paul often draws in explicit terms the moral implications (the

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<sup>41</sup> Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter On Care for Our Common Home *Laudato Si* §§ 216-221.

<sup>42</sup> Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*, 91.

imperative of redemption) from the indicative (the already given of salvation).<sup>43</sup> He tells the Colossians: “Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry)” (Col 3:5) because they have died and risen with Christ, and will be revealed with him at the *eschaton* (vv. 3-4). Paul specifically condemns immoral use of their bodies, which now belong to the Lord,

The body is not meant for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” But anyone united to the Lord becomes one Spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor 6:13-20).

The body belongs not to the individual but to the Lord, on account of the believer’s identification with the Lord Jesus in his resurrection. The believer is to make a conscious offering of his or her body as a living sacrifice to the Lord, holy and acceptable to the Lord, which of course is the believer’s spiritual worship (Rom 12:1-2). It is the dwelling place of the infinitely holy God, the living tabernacle of the divinity, more precious to God than the man-made tabernacles in our sanctuaries. To indulge the body in any unholy practice in this regard is to make it an instrument of wickedness or unrighteousness against which Paul warns (Rom 6:11-23). His own words are: “therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness” (vv. 12-13). Believers with

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Paul J. Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15: Connecting Faith and Morality in the Context of Greco-Roman Mythology*, eds., Jorg Frey et al (Germany, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 227.

the hope of resurrection must consider themselves to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11), and not let sin exercise dominion in their mortal bodies to make their members instruments of unrighteousness, the result of which is death (v. 19). Instead, they are to use their members as instruments of righteousness, which leads to eternal life (v. 22). The resurrected Lord is to reign in their thoughts, words, actions and omissions. For, “to allow sin to reign is to reject the reign of the one who has justified them, and thus become enslaved to that which they have already died through their identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus.”<sup>44</sup> Especially deplorable with regard to our sexuality are forced prostitution, rape, the sexual assault of children, adultery and every other forms of sexual immorality outside the chaste conjugal marital relationship between a man and a woman. Through such immoral acts, our bodies as God’s temples are desecrated or polluted, made instruments of unrighteousness.

As Thornhill remarks, since Christ’s redemption incorporates the body, it is not to be treated in a disgraceful manner as if it does not matter (only a temporal thing to be discarded); the body is of eternal significance since it will participate in the glorious redemption.<sup>45</sup> Already the Holy Spirit who empowers believers in this task of holiness, and with whom they must cooperate, dwells in them as in a temple in their mortal bodies; at the *eschaton* the Spirit will raise them up to life again (Rom 8:11-13). Other vices are to be got rid off: anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language from one’s lips, and telling lies (Col 3:8-9). Positively, they are to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, love, encourage each other with God’s words, and do all in the Lord’s name (Col 3:12-17). This is the imperative of resurrection life and it “points to a new behavior that is possible because believers live in the

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<sup>44</sup> Anthony C. Thornhill, “The Resurrection of Jesus and Spiritual (Trans) Formation,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 5, no. 2 (2012): 246-47.

<sup>45</sup> Thornhill, “The Resurrection of Jesus and Spiritual (Trans) Formation,” 250-51.

realm of a new humanity that God has created in Christ.”<sup>46</sup> Since the risen Christ is the principle and norm, center and goal of moral thinking, judging, and behavior, believers are to imitate him in all things, seeking to know the mind of Christ in the daily circumstances of life. In this way, they consecrate themselves to the Lord, who for their sake consecrated himself (John 17:19).

However, this imperative of bodily resurrection is not easy to attain on account of the constant contrast that exists between the desires of the spirit and the desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16ff.), the love of the world (1 John 2:15-17), and the snares, attacks and temptations of the devil (Eph 6:11-12, 16). It was not easy for Jesus himself; he was grieved and agitated as he was about to enter into his passion, and said to the disciples “I am deeply grieved even unto death” (Matt 26:37, 38). But because Jesus was totally in communion with God in prayer, he was able to fulfill the will of his Father in all things, even unto death, surrendering his human will totally to the divine (Matt 26:42). During his public ministry, he frequented the synagogues to pray with his people and celebrated the great feasts of Judaism, spent whole nights in prayer or rose very early in the morning to pray in the cold mountains (Luke 6:12), initiated his public ministry with forty days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-2; Mark 1:12-13). The implication is that Christians hoping for the resurrection to eternal life of glory, and not to eternal life of shame (Dan 12:2-3; John 5:28-29), must be deeply committed to the spiritual life of prayer and mortification. Jesus spoke of the need to pray unceasingly (Matt 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13), urging us to be awake in prayerful reflection, without which we cannot overcome the forces of evil waging war against our salvation (Matt 26:40-41; Mark 13:32-36; cf. Eph 6:10-18).

Christians must be people of prayer and mortification adapted to each one’s vocation, duties, and states of life, lest they hope in vain for heavenly bliss. The words of Paul are relevant

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<sup>46</sup> Matera, *Romans*, 162.

for us today: “but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified” (1 Cor 9:27). This mortification of the senses is important to attain to godliness, as it helps the individual to “abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11). More so, believers are to constantly meditate on the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17; cf. Pss 1), frequent the sacraments of reconciliation and Holy Eucharist, and every liturgical celebration for their spiritual growth. Robert Taft tells us, “the purpose of Christian spirituality is simply to live the life of Christ [...] This life is initiated, fed, and renewed in word and sacrament—in short, in Bible and liturgy [...] It is in the liturgy that Christ as the Church’s head, acting through the Spirit in the Church’s ministry, draws us into his saving paschal mystery.”<sup>47</sup> Through the sacrament of reconciliation, we are constantly cleansed and purified from sin, and reconciled with God and with his Mystical Body. In the Eucharist we are fed and nourished with the body and blood of the risen Christ that gives life eternal, and we grow in our communion with him and with one another.

Christian theology, preaching, and catechesis, therefore, should emphasize this necessity of the spiritual life. Imbued with this necessity, believers can firmly trust in the saving presence and power of God in the sacraments and liturgy as saving moments *hic et nunc*. They should approach the throne of grace with confidence (Heb 4:16), with an “active, conscious and fruitful participation”<sup>48</sup> that includes: preparation before the celebrations, the celebrations proper and the post-liturgical living out of the mystery celebrated, becoming ‘another Christ’ for one another. This participation in the liturgy is important, because the “Easter texts, transmitted through the community, become a living word when ‘re-presented’ through preaching, liturgical

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Taft, “What Does Liturgy Do? Toward a Soteriology of Liturgical Celebration: Some Theses,” 210.

<sup>48</sup> Vatican Council II, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December, 1963) § 14, in *Vatican Council II (Vol. 1): The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (North Port, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 2004).

‘performance’ and personal prayer [...] Written by believers and intended to encourage and maintain faith, they fully exist through what we experience in the preaching and sacramental life of the Church.”<sup>49</sup> Just as the early disciples experienced the personal presence of Christ and the power of the Spirit in the liturgy, the sacraments and personal prayers, believers of today are called to participate eagerly, consciously and actively in all these in order to encounter the risen Jesus and grow in faith, hope and love.

The upshot of all that we have said in this chapter is that resurrection faith defines our theological thinking in all ramifications, and the way we live out our Christian vocation to be “another Christ.” Christian life and Christian theology is called forth into being by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our understanding of human beings and their history, the universe and its history, of human beings and their histories, God’s covenantal dealing with Israel, and the meaning of suffering and death are all reshaped by the resurrection of Christ. This new understanding of reality in its totality at the same time has utter significance on the way believers live in the world: their responsibility to the poor and suffering, care for the earth, socio-political involvement, their spiritual lives, and the way they use their bodies, gifts and talents. The indicative of their resurrection experience necessarily calls for the imperative of a Christ-centered way of life, all of which is eschatologically oriented.

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<sup>49</sup> Gerald O’Collins, *Easter Faith: Believing in the Risen Jesus* (London: Darton, Longman Todd LTD, 2003), 57-8.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

“Simply put, if resurrection is spiritual (in the sense of not-bodily), then the world to come is likewise immaterial, nonphysical, disembodied, and insubstantial. However, if Christ is risen bodily, the natural correlate is a physical, this-worldly eschatological future. If Christ is risen bodily, and his resurrection is a first-fruit or down payment of a general future resurrection of the dead, then the general resurrection is bodily.”<sup>1</sup>

With these words, Michael Williams has aptly summarized for us the thrust of the exposition we have made in this thesis. The nature of the resurrected self should correspond to the nature of the environment of that resurrected self. Since the scriptural description of the eschatological environment is this-worldly or physical, bodily resurrection becomes the most reasonable correlate. This informed our twofold proposition in this thesis: namely, the reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, which is the foundation for the Christian hope and proclamation, and the general future bodily resurrection of human beings at the Parousia.

Chapter one discussed the reductionist theses of Robert F. Scuka, Geza Vermes, Dale C. Allison, and Brian Schmisek. Our primary conclusion was that these theses do not adequately account for the NT data on the resurrection of Jesus and ours’. Scuka and Vermes’ reduction of the resurrection of Jesus to a “rising” in the hearts and lives of the disciples was dismissed because it pays no attention to the historicity of the event evident in the gospel narratives and the Pauline corpus. Though, Vermes draws our attention to discrepancies in the gospel accounts, which we must not ignore, and Scuka challenges us to note the link between creation and salvation, they fail to offer real foundation for Christian hope and faith especially in the latter’s rejection of any hope of life beyond the grave, and obscuring of the decisive salvific significance of the paschal event. In contrast to Schmisek’s suggestion we posited that the “resurrection of the body or flesh” language should be maintained in discussing our future resurrection for the sake

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Williams, “Touch Me and Believe: Spiritual Resurrection Redefined,” *Pro Rege* 24, no. 3 (1996): 21.

of doctrinal clarity. Finally, Allison relied on mere possibilities and did not affirm resurrection as the most acceptable explanation based on the biblical evidence.

Chapter two discussed the historicity and nature of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. From different perspectives such as the passion and resurrection predictions, evidence of death and burial, evidence of resurrection in the earliest kerygma, and the radically transformed lives of the disciples, we came to the conclusion that given the NT data the resurrection of Jesus was something that happened to Jesus of Nazareth himself after his death and burial, and that his resurrection and appearances to the chosen ones was both the cause of the origin and spread of the Jesus movement. Finally, the bodily nature of his resurrection was affirmed from the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline letters. But it was a gloriously transformed flesh incapable of any of its former limitations; thus, we speak of change and permanence at work simultaneously. The Gospel accounts do not contradict the Pauline corpus, but both complement each other to give us a more comprehensive understanding of this unique miracle.

Flowing from the above was the elucidation of the resurrection of the dead at the *Parousia* in chapter three. Is there any hope of resurrection for human beings long dead and decayed? Taking as our point of departure the Tertullian expression: “The flesh is the hinge of salvation,”<sup>2</sup> the chapter revealed the biblical conviction that bodily resurrection, which is not resuscitation but glorified bodily existence, was one of the dominant afterlife beliefs among the Jewish people, even at the time of Christ, though not all the citations mention the body. Similarly, Jesus himself in his teaching taught the general resurrection in bodily terms, in grave emptying fashion, both of the just and the unjust. More so, Paul who believed that our future resurrection is already guaranteed in the resurrection of Christ taught that our resurrection, like

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<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *On the Resurrection*, 8.

Christ's, will involve the body, though perfectly and gloriously transformed: "The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have born the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor 15:47-49). These particular lowly bodies of ours are the very ones to be raised to life, imperishable and incorruptible, raised in glory and strength.

The final chapter draws out the implications of our findings in the preceding chapters on theology and Christian living. Fundamentally, since the Christian faith, its theology and discipleship was brought to birth and spread because of the resurrection event, the resurrection theme ought to permeate every aspect of Christian theology and the Christians' way of life. The bodily resurrection of Jesus illuminates and seals the reality of the incarnation, demonstrating the goodness and redeemableness of human flesh and the universe, which has an eschatological goal realized in the Easter event. Further, it gives new meaning to Christian suffering and death; Christian suffering becomes salvific and redemptive when borne in union with Christ and in submission to God. In socio-political and ecological terms, the bodily resurrection of Jesus and ours summons us to a preferential option for the poor and ecological conversion; and, through identification with, and submission to the risen Jesus, resurrection faith challenges us to keep our bodies chaste as God's holy temples awaiting final glorification. But the practice of prayer, mortification and frequent active and conscious participation in liturgical celebrations and a worthy reception of the sacraments are necessary to attain this imperative of salvation.

The fundamental conviction for such conclusions is the belief that an infinitely loving and omnipotent God exists, created the universe, and is resolved to save human beings and their world, which from the Creator's perspective has an eschatological goal, consummated in Christ.

With this telling assumption, though the thesis does not prove the resurrection of Jesus or ours in empirical categories, it does reveal that if the scriptures are reliable and inspired, these conclusions based on the scriptures are most legitimate. For the believer therefore, there should be no real scientific difficulty in the claim that God raised Jesus from the dead and that all the dead will be raised. Hence, resurrection is possible because God is omnipotent and omniscient; it is desirable because God created the body good and desires its salvation, as shown in the incarnation; and it is credible because it is reasonable within the framework of biblical teleology. However, for the atheist or naturalist who dismisses miracles, it is impossible and there is no need to investigate miracle claims. But as Wolfhart Pannenberg explains, “If somebody considers it with David Hume [...] to be a general rule, suffering no exception, that the dead remain dead, then of course one cannot accept the Christian assertion that Jesus was raised. But then this is not a historical judgment but an ideological belief.”<sup>3</sup> Such mere ideological belief cannot replace proper historical investigation and judgment. Though we cannot get back to the historical event itself, we are justified in believing it, since it leaves behind visible signs of its occurrence, namely, the beginning and spread of the Christian faith in such hostile situations. This is basically the point of St. Augustine in his “On Faith in the Unseen” where he argues against those who despise the Christian faith because of the empirical non-verifiability of its articles, yet based on trustworthy testimonies give credence to other traditions, histories and places that they could not empirically verify.<sup>4</sup>

However, in affirming the historicity and bodily nature of Jesus’ resurrection, we do not ignore the difficulties that the biblical texts present, namely, the difficulty of recognition on the

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, III.: IVP Academic; Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2010), 142.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, “On Faith in the Unseen,” 1.2-7.10 in *St. Augustine on Christian Belief*, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Michael G. Campbell (Hyde Park, New York, New City Press, 2012), 183-94.

part of the disciples, the discrepancies evident in the gospel accounts, some of which cannot be resolved, and the various forms in which the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples. While these difficulties have led some authors to reject the historicity of Jesus' resurrection as an event that happened to him and the bodily nature of his resurrection, they do also point to the awesomeness and transcendence of the event. They remind us that the eschatological life to come is not one that our present limited and weakened faculties can fully grasp; that what God has prepared for us is unimaginable (1 John 3:1-3). Therefore, though Jesus' resurrection and ours is revealed to us in scripture, it remains a mystery. We cannot pretend to describe them perfectly, for that is impossible; but in light of scripture we can reasonably arrive at the conclusions made in this essay. Relying on the biblical data and the intertextuality of scripture, though a mystery, bodily resurrection is not unreasonable; on the contrary, it accords with biblical teleology and the comprehensive scope of the redeeming love of God who loves all that he creates.

Though every aspect of the question of resurrection is not fully covered, this thesis does provide a clear summary of what the Christian sacred writings teach on the subject. The careful reader can discern in it a reassurance of the ultimate hope of the Christian faith—that death and decomposition is not the end of the story of human beings and their world, but a resurrection unto glory and a transformed physicality. With it the believer can hope against all hope, fight the good fight of the faith, finish the race and receive the crown of glory (1 Tim 6:12ff). Can there be zealous Christianity without faith in the resurrection? For many believers, the answer is no. For without resurrection there simply is no Christianity. Without the bodily resurrection of Jesus, there is no basis for Christian proclamation and no hope in God. There would have been no New Testament. In Pauline thinking, resurrection faith is so central to the gospel of our Lord Jesus

Christ; believing in it is a *sine qua non* for eternal life (Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 15:3-7). God would not be called the God of the living, but of the dead (Matt 22:32); Jesus would not have been said to be living forever, but forever dead (Rev 1:8), and thus incapable of saving (Heb 7:25). There would have been no justification (Rom 4:25), no regeneration and no renewing or transformation (John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Rom 12:2). Any denial of the bodily nature of resurrection of Jesus and ours is a reduction of the scope of redemption, a denial of the fact that our universe is created good and redeemable. Also as we have seen above, both the indicative and imperative dimensions of the resurrection faith are equally important. Without the indicative the imperative lacks foundation; without the imperative the indicative would amount to a lawless existence. Thus, the Christian Church illuminated by the Scriptures can point out the ways of moral uprightness to her sons and daughters as the blessed apostles did.

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