Reframing Resurrection:  
Toward a Renewed and Redeemed Creation

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Aaron K. Chidgzey
Abstract

Jesus’ resurrection has long been a central tenet of Christian theology, and the focus of extensive debate and curiosity. Scholars have defended a physical resurrection; interpreted it as metaphor, hallucination, or deception; removed it entirely from the scope of historical inquiry; and have denied it outright. However, belying this scholarship is the propensity to assume that the language of ‘resurrection’ envisages the reanimation of a corporeal and personal body (and then defended, re-interpreted, or denied). Therein lies the problem. This thesis argues that the ancient Jewish and Christian notion of resurrection cannot be restricted within a re-animated body but includes a broad spectrum of eschatological hope, particularly the renewal of relationship with YHWH, the dispensation of justice, and the transformation of creation as a whole. Jesus’ resurrection is the fulfilment of these broader eschatological hopes and cannot be reduced to the return to life of a personal body. Connected to this is the corollary assertion that Jesus’ resurrection is characterised by a unification of elements that bear both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality, echoing the hope for a renewed and transformed reality. As a result of its limited understanding of ‘resurrection,’ scholarship has often emphasized either the continuity or discontinuity at the expense of the other, where this thesis contends that the two must be upheld in a dialectic tension. This reframing of resurrection necessitates a re-evaluation of methodology, proposing a ‘Postfoundationalist Constructive Realism,’ a framework built upon a dialogue with Wolfhart Pannenberg and N.T. Wright. PCR upholds the external event or object, with its inherent meaning, and its subjective interpretation by an interpreter who imbues that event with contextually conditioned meaning, according to the interpreter’s presupposed categories of understanding. Though this thesis is primarily a project within the discipline of systematic theology, it is significantly informed by, and engages with, New Testament scholarship.
Acknowledgments

The completion of this thesis is in large part due to the support of the many helpful, critical, and encouraging people who have surrounded me during this research. It is difficult to find the words to express my gratitude to these people, without whom this thesis would never have gotten off the ground. Writing this thesis has been an extremely formative period for me and I would like to here reflect on those who have helped me.

I would like to thank Murdoch University for giving me the opportunity to engage in this research, for granting me a scholarship and funds to attend two academic conferences. The trust and investment the university has placed in me is gratefully acknowledged. My initial supervisors, Alexander Jensen and Jeremy Hultin, were exceptionally helpful in forming my early ideas, direction, and research questions. My conversations with Alexander were always insightful, particularly regarding epistemological issues, and it was wonderful to catch up with him in Cambridge on my trip to the United Kingdom. Jeremy inspired me to consider the eschatological significance of the language of ‘resurrection’ and provided invaluable help in interrogating the use of this language in New Testament scholarship.

With Alexander and Jeremy’s departures for greener pastures, Rowan Strong and Andrew Webster were of enormous aid in keeping me on track. Rowan stepped in as principal supervisor and was instrumental in ensuring my argument was developing, and Andrew – my Advisory Committee Chair – ensured that all the regulatory requirements were met. I especially want to thank both for guiding me through periods when I was unsure of what I should be doing and where I should be going.

When Robert Myles was employed by Murdoch as New Testament lecturer, he took up the mantle of supervising my research, and this was my immense good fortune. His careful and critical feedback, and many probing questions, helped me to develop my argument in ways that
were sometimes surprising, sometimes unexpected, but always happy and interesting. Robert helped draw out the original contribution of this thesis, pointed me toward fascinating authors and ideas, and always put the Argument as first priority. I am indebted to Robert, not just for his academic rigour and support, but for his encouragement and his friendship.

Furthermore, Michael O’Neil from Vose Seminary was an exceptional support as an external supervisor, whose critical reflections, particularly regarding issues pertaining to systematic theology (and especially regarding Pannenberg, Barth, and historical theology), were fundamental in the shape and direction of this thesis. The theological thought within this thesis would be nowhere near as developed as it is now without Michael’s questioning and feedback. Thanks should also be extended to the broader community at Vose, including colleagues, friends, and librarians, who gave me the opportunity from a very early stage to teach, and who willed me over the finish line.

I had the privilege of meeting with N. T. Wright in St. Andrews, over a lunch I will not easily forget. He expressed considerable interest in my research and we spoke at length about the state of New Testament research in general, and of the resurrection in particular. Pastoral concerns have always permeated Wright’s work, and though I may not agree with him at every point, his writing continues to inspire me and his love for teaching and passion for the Gospel is something I hope to emulate. Furthermore, though I never had the opportunity of meeting Wolfhart Pannenberg, who passed away in the first year of my research, I am deeply indebted to him as his work has been instrumental in the development of my own thinking.

I must also thank the wonderful people of Carey Baptist Church and old friends from Mount Pleasant Baptist Church who have journeyed with my wife and I through this research. The support we have received from our friends, pastors, and mentors has been invaluable. The life
of a research student can at times be lonely, so having close friends to break up the monotony and ensuring I do not go mad is something I thank God for regularly.

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Finally, my amazing wife Amy deserves much more than a paragraph in a dedications section at the front of a thesis. She has journeyed with me from the very beginning, through the highs and lows, the late nights, and the mad moments of inspiration that require me to immediately find a pen and a scrap piece of paper. This thesis is just as much hers as it is mine, and what she has done for me is all the proof I need that resurrection life – the life of the new, future eschatological age – has already broken into this world. I am eternally grateful for her help, support, and encouragement, and I love her beyond words can say.

τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ διδόντι ἡμῖν τὸ νῖκος διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.
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Abbreviations

This thesis uses abbreviations only in footnotes and parentheses. The first appearance of the key texts by Pannenberg and Wright will, however, be written in full. Abbreviations are according to the Society of Biblical Literature Handbook of Style, 2nd ed. All scriptural quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless noted otherwise.

Primary Texts by Wolfhart Pannenberg
ATP – Anthropology in Theological Perspective.
BQT – Basic Questions in Theology.
JGM – Jesus – God and Man.
MIG – Metaphysics and the Idea of God.
RAH – Revelation as History.
ST – Systematic Theology.
TPS – Theology and the Philosophy of Science.
WIM – What is Man?

Primary Texts by N.T. Wright
JVG – Jesus and the Victory of God.
PFG – Paul and the Faithfulness of God.
RSG – The Resurrection of the Son of God.

Ancient Texts
Enchir. – Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love (Augustine)
Ref. – Refutation of All Heresies (Hippolytus)
Ag. Ap. – Against Apion (Josephus)
Ant. – Jewish Antiquities (Josephus)
J.W. – Jewish War (Josephus)
Dial. – Dialogue with Trypho (Justin Martyr)

Secondary Literature
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<tr>
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<td>Journal of Theology for Southern Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>LQ</td>
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<td>Neot</td>
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<td>Novum Testamentum</td>
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<td>New Testament Studies</td>
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<td>PPR</td>
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<td>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</td>
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1. Re-Framing Recreation: Introductory Remarks

“It is such a letdown to rise from the dead and have your friends not recognize you.”

1.1. Miracles and Bodies: Interpreting the Resurrection

The above quote from the American pastor Rob Bell humorously illuminates a core characteristic of the risen Jesus as depicted in the New Testament corpus, that though it is the same Jesus who has returned and has appeared before the disciples, he is yet very different and his appearance very unusual. However, Bell’s epigram belies an assumption common to discussion on resurrection, that this ‘resurrection’ entails essentially and principally the reanimation of the personal body of Jesus. Though something is different, very little has actually changed.

Indeed, the idea of resurrection has been an object of fascination, pervading ancient religious customs and contemporary popular culture, from Osiris to Superman, shades to zombies. Nothing is quite the perversion of the natural order like the reversal of death. The claim that Jesus rose from the dead three days after being buried carried no less fascination for the early Jesus movement who ascribed considerable theological significance to the event. Paul, for example, claims in his response to the Corinthians that “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (1 Cor. 15.17). For Paul, the event was pivotal to early Christian faith; the early communities of the Jesus movement interpreted the post-mortem existence of Jesus as something fundamentally theological that, though difficult to describe in a logical or coherent way, signified the dawn of a new eschatological era.

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1 Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 156.
2 Whether the resurrection occurred on the third day (as in Matt. 16.21) or after three days (as in Mark 8.31) is a curious discrepancy in the New Testament corpus, which will be addressed in chapter 6.
As chapter two will demonstrate, the claim that Jesus rose from the dead has been interpreted in a diverse number of ways: from literal readings which envisage the risen Jesus bearing the same flesh and blood that he bore prior to his execution, to metaphorical readings where the resurrection is symbolic of the rise of faith in the disciples, or similar; from a physical event that can be proved through ordinary historical means, to bearing such eschatological character that it eludes historical description. This scholarship has, however, largely assumed that the language of ‘resurrection’ refers to the material reanimation and return to life of a personal, corporeal body, and has consequently divided scholarship between those who argue for a literal event (Jesus’ resurrection was a return to an embodied existence, albeit one with significant adjustments; or if it happened, its inherent eschatological character removes it from the scope of historical accessibility), and those who argue for a metaphorical event (Jesus’ resurrection surely could not have been a literal reanimation of a corpse, and so must have meant something else).

From this, a second corollary observation can be made; that interpretations tend to emphasize either the continuity or discontinuity between the pre-crucifixion Jesus and post-resurrection Jesus, usually at the expense of the other. That is, those theologians who stress a literal,

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3 E.g. Tertullian, Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Stanley J. Grenz, Molly Haws, Norman Geisler. The brief list in this footnote, and the following three footnotes, is certainly not exhaustive but indicates some of the primary advocates for each respective position. Chapter two will address specific texts and arguments in detail. These few immediate lists do not include those who present an immaterial or ‘spiritual’ resurrection, those who focus primarily on the narratological aspect of the Easter stories, those who deny the resurrection outright, or those who maintain that the resurrection appearances were hallucinations. These various other interpretations are addressed in chapter two.


5 E.g. Charles Spurgeon, Wolfhart Pannenberg, N. T. Wright, William Lane Craig, Gary Habermas, Bruce Milne, Michael Licona.

6 E.g. Martin Kähler, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Hans Frei, Edward Schillebeeckx, Willi Marxsen, Jürgen Moltmann, Daniel Migliore.

7 This includes those who argue that the resurrection was a hallucination (such as Lüdemann), a deliberate deception, a lie invented by the disciples (such as Hermann Reimarus), or those who outright deny the resurrection (such as popular critics like Christopher Hitchens). These will be addressed in chapter two, but we can note here that both of these positions retain the assumption that resurrection refers to personal reanimation and are attempts at explaining away such a resurrection.
historical, physical return to life of the same body emphasize the continuity of the risen Jesus, and make only nominal or secondary reference to the transformations of that body or to the eschatological significance of the event; whereas those who stress a metaphorical, supra-historical, or immaterial resurrection emphasize the discontinuity, and either reject or minimize the characteristics that the risen Jesus shares with his pre-crucifixion body.

For example, of those emphasizing continuity, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas were careful to note that only those elements of the body which were helpful for a productive life would be resurrected and not every length of hair or nail which had been trimmed throughout life. The popular Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon insists, “The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is one of the best attested facts on record” and so, with the modern apologists William Lane Craig and Gary Habermas (both of whom employ positivistic historical methodologies to the historical question of Jesus’ resurrection), reduces the resurrection to little more than any ordinary contingent event. Similarly, the feminist theologian Molly Haws maintains that the resurrection was the reanimation of dead tissue and was a gradual, physical event. Of those emphasizing discontinuity, the New Testament scholars Rudolf Bultmann and John Dominic Crossan, rejecting the possibility of a physical return from death, interpret the resurrection as a reference to Jesus’ ongoing presence, alive in a very different way to his pre-crucifixion life. C.J. Cadoux claims that though something certainly happened to Jesus, the resurrection is

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purely ‘spiritual’ and psychological;\textsuperscript{13} and for Karl Rahner Jesus’ resurrection is his glorification, but this is nevertheless inseparable from and unknowable apart from the faith of believers.\textsuperscript{14} Furthermore, I include those theologians who argue that the resurrection was a supra-historical event (that its eschatological character precludes it from historical inquiry) among those who emphasize discontinuity, because in doing so these scholars have entirely removed the resurrection from contingent history, thereby limiting or removing any sense of continuity. Chief among these is Karl Barth, who interprets the resurrection as the eternalization of Jesus which transcends ordinary human existence to the extent that it becomes entirely inaccessible to historical investigation, despite maintaining an interpretation of the resurrection as bodily.\textsuperscript{15}

The assumption behind these interpretations is that the imagery of ‘resurrection’ primarily envisages the personal reanimation of Jesus’s body, interpreted literally or metaphorically, with an emphasis on either the continuity or discontinuity of the risen body with the pre-crucifixion body. Yet, curiously, the biblical depictions of resurrection are often less concerned with the body or bodies and more concerned with the associated theological implications, and when the risen Jesus is described, the description is frustratingly ambiguous. Matthew’s Easter narrative (28.1-20) is imbued with apocalyptic elements, including the dawning of the first day of the week (v.1), an earthquake (v.2), and an angel appearing like lightning and wearing pure white clothing (v.3), and with the reference to the disciples worshipping Jesus upon a mountain, though some doubt, (vv.16-17). This narrative suggests that whatever happened bore incredible eschatological significance that stretched beyond the person of Jesus. In Luke-Acts, the focus

\textsuperscript{13} C. J. Cadoux, \textit{The Life of Jesus} (Middlesex: Penguin, 1948), 164-67
is upon the glorification and exaltation of Jesus to a new position of authority within a new social order, a new eschatological kingdom (Luke 24.6, 26, 27, 34, 46, 50-53; Acts 2.23-26; 13.29-30). The descriptions become even more ambiguous in John’s Gospel, with allusions to the Genesis creation accounts (19.41; 20.1, 15, 19, 22), Jesus not being recognized (20.14; 21.4), suddenly appearing within a locked room (20.19), and bearing the wounds of the crucifixion (20.20, 27). The risen Jesus is not even present in Mark’s Easter narrative (16.1-8)!

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul seems unable to find a suitable analogy to describe what happened at the resurrection, using a variety of illustrations from nature (v.35-54) and using the term, σῶμα πνευματικόν (‘spiritual body’) (v.44). Of course, these texts do exhibit some concern with Jesus’ body, but this is framed by the principal eschatological concerns which transcend Jesus’ personal body. There is far more at stake than the transformation of Jesus; it is the inauguration of a new reality, where divine justice is dispensed, a new, pneumatologically-conditioned relationship with God is available, and the cosmos itself is renewed and transformed. The ambiguity of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and its ascribed eschatological significance, suggests that this event eludes description, transcending ordinary categories and frameworks while remaining fully rooted within the contingency of time and space.

A closer examination reveals that Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted through the lens of the ancient Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection of the dead, which was, more often than not, concerned with the broader hopes and expectations for the eschaton. These hopes are echoed in the theological implications attached to the resurrection of Jesus – the renewal of relationship, the dispensation of justice, and the transformation and redemption of creation as a whole. If we are to take the application of the Jewish notion of resurrection to the

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16 It has been suggested, particularly by Bultmann, that the transfiguration (Mark 9.2-13) was a misplaced resurrection narrative, which explains why Jesus is not present in ch.16. This is discussed further in §6.4.
post-mortem existence of Jesus seriously, we must incorporate these broader eschatological motifs, motifs which extend well beyond personal reanimation. This thesis contends that resurrection is much bigger than bodies. Resurrection transcends any notion of ‘body’ and makes such language inadequate.

1.2. Resurrecting the Resurrection: The Argument of this Thesis

The central argument of this thesis is that, first, the underlying notion of the language ‘resurrection’ cannot be reduced to only, or primarily, the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body, but that Jesus’ post-mortem existence is, first and foremost, the fulfilment of the eschatological hopes for the dispensation of divine justice, the renewal and transformation of creation, and the exaltation of the righteous; and that as such, second, the resurrection constitutes the unification of present, empirical reality with the future eschatological reality.

The original contribution of this thesis is the argument that general scholarship has assumed that the imagery of ‘resurrection’ refers to personal reanimation (and has either defended this, re-interpreted this as metaphor, a psychological phenomenon, or an immaterial event, or denied this altogether) and that this is a fundamental misinterpretation of the notion of resurrection of the dead. To be clear, ‘reanimation’ here refers to the return to life of a material and personal body, whether or not that body has undergone some form of transformation. Furthermore, the degree to which the unification of present, empirical reality with the future eschatological reality is upheld in this thesis’ proposal is a secondary original contribution. That the resurrection bears eschatological significance, relates to eschatological hopes, and consists of a curious and ambiguous transformation of Jesus is not a new idea. However, as will be demonstrated in chapter two, scholarship often tends to emphasize either the continuity of the risen Jesus and deemphasize the discontinuity, or emphasize the discontinuity and deemphasize the continuity, whereas this thesis maintains that both must be upheld without compromise in
an uneasy and dialectic tension. Such a tension can only be maintained if we abandon the assumption that resurrection means reanimation. We must, as it were, *resurrect* the original meaning of ‘resurrection’ to reframe (and perhaps redefine) this notion to adequately acknowledge and incorporate the broad spectrum of eschatological hope that was fulfilled in Jesus’ post-mortem existence. Simply put: I will argue there has been too much focus on the resurrection of Jesus as a personal reanimation and this thesis offers a corrective.

A re-evaluation of the notion and definition of resurrection necessitates a re-evaluation of the historical and theological methodologies employed to assess the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. Methodological concerns thereby occupy two chapters of this thesis. Chapter three addresses the epistemological difficulties of discussing an event that transcends ordinary epistemological frameworks, arguing that the foundationalism that pervades much discussion pertaining to the resurrection is inadequate. Chapter four considers how this epistemology then translates to historical method, arguing that the meaning of resurrection is found in the interaction between external ‘objective’ event and internal ‘subjective’ interpretation. The deficiency of general scholarship to see in Jesus’ post-mortem existence an eschatological event *that occurred to Jesus that nevertheless extended well beyond Jesus’ body*, an event which simultaneously and dialectically upholds contrary elements (both continuity and discontinuity), is largely due to inadequate methodology, particularly a foundationalist epistemology or an empiricist historical method wherein anthropological or communal contextuality is not afforded necessary attention. For this reason, a revised methodology is proposed in chapter three, a ‘Postfoundationalist Constructive Realism’ (henceforth PCR), a
re-evaluation of N.T. Wright’s version of ‘critical realism’ in light of Wolfhart Pannenberg’s epistemology.

The framework of PCR and how it relates specifically to the examination of Jesus’ resurrection and its utilization in this thesis is explored in chapters three and four and especially §4.4. However, a provisional definition is helpful at this point – though this definition is neither programmatic nor a prescribed formula, for a core concern of this epistemic framework is a rejection of methodologies which claim universal application. PCR upholds the dichotomy of object and subject in a mutually conditioning reciprocity, avoiding epistemic foundations without collapsing into coherentism. Within this, the constructive and bilateral nature of knowledge is maintained; that is, the subjective interpreter imparts meaning upon the external event or object while the event bears within itself its own intelligible inherent meaning. Knowledge is neither the ‘objective’ reception nor the ‘subjective’ interpretation, but resides precisely in the interaction between the two. Such a framework enables the balancing of antipodal statements of reality in a dialectic and mutually-conditioning tension, which supports the argument that Jesus’ resurrection is characterised by the dialectic unification of continuity and discontinuity.

It is important to note here that the aim of this thesis is not to address the question of the historicity of the resurrection in terms of whether it ‘actually happened’ but rather to focus on the theological and historical meaning of the proclamation. It is also important to clarify the discipline within which this thesis resides. This is primarily a contribution to the field of Systematic Theology (and not a comprehensive theological system in and of itself), discussing the philosophical and theological nature of knowledge, history, and the significance of what

17 As especially expounded in his The New Testament and the People of God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 29-144.
18 As discussed throughout many of his publications, especially his earlier publications such as Revelation as History, Theology and the Philosophy of Science, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, Jesus – God and Man, and Basic Questions in Theology.
the resurrection means. However, its interests often overlap with New Testament scholarship, particularly regarding questions of epistemology, historical method, and meaning, and especially as this has implications for the study of Jesus’ resurrection. The Christian faith is a historical phenomenon and so Systematic Theology benefits from rigorous historical critical interventions, even if this occasionally takes one outside of the usual confines of Systematics as it is traditionally defined by the use of canonical sources.

Before moving on to introducing Wolfhart Pannenberg and N.T. Wright and their relevance for this research, some definitions of common terminology are in order. Several words and phrases are used regularly throughout this thesis, words which might have different meanings or connotations for different authors, and so their use in this thesis must be clarified. The first is ‘history,’ used to refer to the interaction between the objective, external event, and its subjective, internal interpretation and communication. It is referring neither to the brute facts of ‘what happened’ nor simply to the communication of those events via written texts, but the interaction between both. This understanding of ‘history’ recognizes that an external event has meaning in and of itself, but that meaning is imported into that event by those who witness, remember, and communicate that event according to their particular perspective, prior interpretative frameworks, communal context, and worldviews. By speaking of an event as ‘historical’ the external reality of that event is affirmed while maintaining that knowledge of that event is subjectively-conditioned. When specifically referring to the external event, the language of contingency or ‘contingent history’ is used to refer to an event among other events within external reality, or as something which ‘occurs within time and space’ to stress the sheer facticity of that event. Hence, when speaking of the ‘historical Jesus,’ a phrase which carries diverse and often contrary meanings and connotations within both systematic theology and New Testament scholarship, this thesis does not attempt to divorce the ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ from the ‘Christ of Faith.’ Rather, it is maintained that what is important for contemporary thought
is neither ‘getting behind’ the New Testament texts or dissecting the texts for ‘authentic’
history, nor focussing solely on the New Testament texts which present the life and fate of
Jesus in a theologically significant light – usually in salvific, messianic, or eschatological
terms. When referring to the ‘Historical Jesus,’ this thesis refers to the interaction between the
‘what happened’ and how that was interpreted and communicated, recognizing that the two are
inseparable.\footnote{My personal understanding of Scripture should here also be noted. Though I would consider my approach to
Scripture to be, in a broad sense, an Evangelical one – that is, I have a high view of Scripture and ascribe to
Scripture a significant priority and authority in doctrinal concerns – I do not subscribe to the doctrine of inerrancy
and consider Scripture to be fundamentally human, reflecting human concerns and human attempts to understand
the divine. Hence I place a considerable emphasis upon anthropological concerns, the historical and communal
contexts of the respective authors and their contributions to Scripture.}
Furthermore, when referring specifically to the discipline of history, this will
explicitly be noted. These various notions of history will be discussed further in chapters three
and four.

The words ‘theology’ and ‘theological’ are used in a number of ways in this thesis, the meaning
of which is usually dictated by its context. However, ‘theology’ generally refers to anything
pertaining to the knowledge, nature, and activity of the God of Christian revelation.\footnote{This is not to say that ‘theology’ is the exclusive domain of the Christian tradition, acknowledging that all
religious traditions have their unique theologies and understandings of divinity, of the world, and of humanity.
However, this thesis is concerned principally and specifically with Christian theology, and so ‘theology’ in this
thesis refers to the Christian conception of God.} Hence,
when speaking of ‘resurrection theology,’ for example, this thesis refers to the way in which
the interpretation of the proclamation that Jesus rose from the dead relates to the broader
understanding of the Christian God. The word ‘theological’ is the corresponding adjective to
this understanding of theology, and so, for example, when using the phrase ‘theological
significance,’ this thesis is considering how a particular idea carries significance for the broader
understanding of God, that is, when a notion carries \textit{considerable} theological significance it
has a \textit{considerable} impact upon broader theological conceptions. What that significance is (or
impact or implications) is then clarified. When speaking specifically of an academic discipline,
that particular discipline will be noted as such. For example, this thesis uses ‘Systematic
Theology’ or ‘New Testament studies’ when referring to their respective disciplines, and ‘scholarship’ refers to the research, arguments, and debates within those disciplines.

Finally, phrases particular to the present argument include the distinction between ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity,’ references to Jesus’ ‘post-mortem existence,’ the phrase ‘ancient Jewish eschatology,’ and ‘the resurrection of the dead.’ ‘Continuity’ and ‘discontinuity,’ with its cognates ‘continuous’ and ‘discontinuous,’ are used in reference to the nature of the risen Jesus. This dichotomy distinguishes between those elements which are similar to ordinary experienced, or empirical, reality and to the pre-crucifixion Jesus (continuous), and those elements which are wholly and significantly different following, and resulting, from the event to which was applied the eschatological category of resurrection (discontinuous). For example, the claim that Jesus’ resurrection was physical and occurred within time and space is to emphasize the continuity of the resurrection with ordinary reality; whereas the claim that Jesus’ resurrection was immaterial or exceeds historical inquiry is to emphasize its discontinuity. References to Jesus’ ‘post-mortem existence’ are used to highlight the prior theological frameworks that were placed upon, and through which formed the interpretive lens for, what occurred to Jesus after his death. That is to say, Jesus’ post-mortem existence refers to the external event, the ‘what happened’; whereas the theological and eschatologically-charged language of resurrection refers to the contextually and communally conditioned interpretation of that event. For the present purposes of this thesis, reflecting the definition of history above, the interaction between the event itself and its interpretation is what is of primary importance, but it is important to clarify how this distinction is discussed.

The phrase ‘ancient Jewish eschatology’ acknowledges that modern Jewish theology has a distinct and unique eschatology, but in this present thesis this phrase refers to the dominant eschatological categories in the first-century that informed the New Testament writings. This includes the eschatology contained within some of the canonical texts in the Hebrew Bible, as
well as the developing eschatological conceptions of Second Temple and extra-biblical Jewish literature, with the latest texts analysed in this thesis dating to the second century BCE. Furthermore, this thesis is not restricted specifically to ‘apocalyptic’ literature (a genre that will be addressed in chapter five). This terminology will be explained further in the course of this thesis. A distinction is also made between the broader notion of ‘resurrection of the dead’ and Jesus’ post-mortem existence which was described as resurrection. The ‘resurrection of the dead’ was the theological category that developed within ancient Jewish eschatology which was inseparably connected to the broader hopes for the eschaton, and was the category adopted and adapted by the early Jesus movement to describe what they believed occurred to Jesus’ post-mortem existence, that is his resurrection, and which developed in light of their experience of the risen Jesus. When speaking of the broader range of ideas within Jewish eschatological expectations ‘resurrection of the dead’ shall be used, whereas the simple ‘resurrection’ is used to describe the application of this broader Jewish notion to Jesus’ post-mortem existence.

When another author’s use and understandings of these various words and terminology is contrary to my own, it will be highlighted and made explicitly clear.

1.3. Interdisciplinary Dialogue: On Conversing with Pannenberg and Wright

As noted, and will be demonstrated in chapter two, scholarship has sometimes tended to equate the language of ‘resurrection’ as it pertains to Jesus’ post-mortem existence strictly with the reanimation of a personal body and subsequently to stress either the continuity or the discontinuity of Jesus’ risen nature with his pre-crucifixion body at the expense, or minimization, of the other. The present thesis is an attempt to reframe how ‘resurrection’ is understood, arguing that resurrection envisages a reality where the language of ‘body’ is inadequate. Indeed, the language itself that was available to the early witnesses of Jesus’ post-mortem existence was limited and restrictive, and the term ‘body’ was the closest
approximation of what they experienced. Both the continuous and discontinuous must be upheld in dialectic tension, based on an interpretation of the Jewish eschatological category of resurrection of the dead. Herein the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of hope for the end of history is referred, which includes in particular the reaffirmation of created reality and its radical transformation. This is evident in the biblical imagery of the new, unified heavens and earth (Isa. 65.17; 2 Pet. 3.12-13; Rev. 21.1), picturing a renewed and transformed reality that enables unadulterated relationship between God and creation, which will be addressed in chapter five. Much of the methodological proposals of Wolfhart Pannenberg and N. T. Wright are appropriate to the task of upholding this dialectic tension within the resurrection, to be addressed in subsequent chapters. The following is a condensed survey of their interpretations of the resurrection, though major critique is reserved for the following chapters where detailed discussion is provided.

One of Pannenberg’s significant contributions to Jesus research is his methodological proposal of Christology ‘from below,’ detailed in his 1964 publication, *Jesus – God and Man* (discussed in §4.3). According to this approach, we must begin with the historical analysis of the particular human figure, Jesus of Nazareth, without assuming his supposed divinity.21 Pannenberg developed his Christological methodology in his later *Systematic Theology*, locating Christology directly alongside a broader anthropological discussion and proposes a more nuanced Christology that attempts to synthesize the ‘from below’ approach with the recognition that attempts to ‘get behind’ the New Testament texts are impossible.22 Here he maintains the emphasis upon historical research, arguing that the primary source of God’s

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revelation is found in retrospective reflection upon God’s activity within history, the resurrection being the major act of God’s self-revelation. This understanding had already been outlined in his essay, “Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation” in Revelation as History.\textsuperscript{23} In his 1962 essay, “What is Truth?” Pannenberg argued that all truth must remain universal and public.\textsuperscript{24} Hence, Jesus’ resurrection, if it occurred within contingent history, must be able to be analysed like any other event within contingent history. For if it does not belong in universal public history, then it cannot be universal truth and so cannot be considered divine revelation.

Pannenberg connects the resurrection to the apocalyptic context of Second Temple Judaism, and so, in light of this, claims that in Jesus’ resurrection, the \textit{eschaton} was fully present and verified Jesus’ pre-Easter professions of divinity. Coupled with Pannenberg’s metaphysical stance of a future-oriented ontology (discussed in the excursus), the resurrection was both the \textit{confirmation} and \textit{determination} of Jesus’ divinity, retroactively determining Jesus’ relationship with God back into eternity.\textsuperscript{25}

As will be explored in chapters three and four, two elements of Pannenberg’s project are of particular interest to this thesis. The first to be considered are his contributions toward a ‘postfoundationalist’ epistemology, moving beyond foundationalist empiricism and positivism while retaining a belief in the intelligibility of external reality. This postfoundationalism will be re-appropriated and extended, and brought into dialogue with recent epistemological considerations and will form a significant basis for the methodology of this thesis. The second element of interest is Pannenberg’s Christological methodology, which balances a Christology

\textsuperscript{25} Pannenberg, JGM; Pannenberg, ST, vol. 2, 277-396.
‘from below’ with one ‘from above,’ with neither being considered epistemologically foundational and both functioning in a mutually conditioning dynamic. This dynamic extends to his understanding of the role of faith, and the nature of truth and knowledge, and is useful for the task of highlighting and balancing the dialectic tension between the continuous and discontinuous aspects of Jesus’ risen nature.

N. T. Wright published the first volume of his immense series, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, entitled *The New Testament and the People of God* in 1992, which was followed by the second volume, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, in 1996. In these publications, Wright insists that historical inquiry is an essential task for the Christian scholar in order to avoid defaulting to a form of Deism. Critically appropriating Sanders’ work, he argues that locating Jesus within his first century Jewish context is of primary significance.26 Within this historical inquiry, the resurrection, he claims, must remain a viable subject of historical research, maintaining that if it happened within contingent history, it should be accessible via ordinary means of historical inquiry.27

Wright explores the portrayals of resurrection in general, and of Jesus’ resurrection in particular, in considerable detail in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and extra-canonical texts. He concludes from this study that the early Christians understood this event as a bodily, physical event. However, Wright describes the nature of the resurrection as ‘transphysicality,’ that is, ‘transformed physicality.’ This term does not claim to describe Jesus’ body in detail, but “puts a label on the demonstrable fact that the early Christians envisaged a body which was still robustly physical but also significantly different from the present one.”28 The resurrection demonstrates God’s creative activity, inaugurating the new kingdom with Jesus as its king.

28 Wright, *RSG*, 477-78.
Within this new eschatological reality, evil has been dealt with and death – the final weapon of Caesar and of Satan – has been defeated.\(^{29}\)

Three features of Wright’s argument to be addressed and reappropriated are, first, his version of the epistemological position of ‘critical realism,’ which he presents as being located between a naïve realism and a relativistic phenomenalism. That is, knowledge of external reality is indeed possible but is mediated by subjective prejudice formed by a personal worldview. I argue that Wright has not quite achieved such a model, reverting to a veiled empiricism that does not adequately allow for the significant influence of communal categories, but that, in particular, his emphasis upon worldview is important. Second, and related to the first, is his stress upon locating Jesus within Jewish eschatology. For a comprehensive understanding of Jesus’ resurrection it is necessary to understand the ancient Jewish eschatological category of ‘resurrection of the dead’ which was applied to Jesus’ post-mortem existence by early interpreters, albeit with significant development and adjustment. These two features will be assessed in chapters five and six, respectively. Third, Wright’s notion of ‘transphysicality’ is, I believe, one of the more significant attempts at incorporating both the continuous and discontinuous elements of Jesus’ risen nature. While his understanding of resurrection remains entrenched within a personal embodiment – and one that stresses physicality – ‘transphysicality’ begins to move away from this understanding. Wright’s ‘transphysicality’ will be addressed in chapter six.

The appropriateness of comparing these two scholars should also be noted. Pannenberg and Wright have distinctly different disciplinary emphases, with Pannenberg focusing on systematic theology and the rational comprehensibility of theological language, and Wright focusing on history and New Testament interpretation. Furthermore, Wright explicitly spells

out his epistemology, whereas Pannenberg’s is dispersed through his various publications. However, there are similarities in their work, both critiquing strong “empiricist” epistemologies and emphasizing the communally and historically situated individual. I will focus on two particular aspects which they have in common, which relate to the wider intellectual shifts of their contexts: the stress on the particularity of the communally contextualized nature of knowledge, and the recognition of knowledge as dynamic and relational.

Pannenberg and Wright share the concern of moving away from modernist methodologies characterised by the belief in the possibility of objective and value-neutral observation and interpretation, especially positivism and its enduring and pervasive influence upon twentieth century theological methodology. They both reject the possibility of absolute objectivity on the basis that presupposed knowledge invariably influences interpretation, and that observation does not occur within a cognitive vacuum. All observation and experience transpires within a particular context, from a particular perspective, and thus knowledge is unceasingly partial and influenced by one’s community and worldview. This is, of course, an oft-repeated epistemological stance, but deserves reiteration as it forms the backbone in the development of Pannenberg and Wright’s respective epistemologies.

Both stress the particularity of context, and the integration of this aspect within their broader methodology. The context of the interpreter invariably influences observation and interpretation, including the historical situation and the specific language of the interpreter, and the inevitably limited access to knowledge. Pannenberg’s later work has a greater emphasis upon anthropology, and Wright explicitly argues that knowledge is formulated through

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individual and communal worldviews, signalling their desire to accommodate the anthropological and communal elements of epistemology. Regarding the nature of knowledge, they both argue that knowledge is dynamic and relational rather than static, stressing its conversational characteristic, namely as a to-and-fro between various disciplines and between object and observer. Consequentially, all knowledge is partial and provisional, including the knowledge of God, which must remain a public endeavour, as opposed to being isolated as a private, subjective task.

This thesis seeks to extend Pannenberg and Wright’s shared intention of moving away from hard empiricist methodologies when analysing and interpreting the resurrection. Bringing the two into dialogue with recent scholarship enables, I believe, the development of a methodology which allows for the interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection as the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological hopes for the end of contingent history. This moves away from resurrection as merely personal reanimation, and bears the characteristics, in dialectic tension, of both the reaffirmation of creation and its radical transformation, continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality.

1.4. Reframing Resurrection: The Structure of this Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters (including introduction and conclusion) and an excursus. Following the major literature review of chapter two, chapters three and four comprise methodological concerns, with five addressing the broader category of ‘resurrection’ in ancient Jewish eschatology which formed the framework through which Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted, and six turning directly to Jesus’ resurrection.

33 Wright, NTPG, 43, 122-23.
35 In particular, see Pannenberg, ST, vol. 1, 47-55; idem. in Shults, The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology, ix.; Wright, PFG, xvii, 25.
In chapter two, the major literature on the resurrection is discussed, and it is demonstrated that scholarship, from as early as the first century to the present, has assumed that the language of ‘resurrection’ envisages the material reanimation of a personal, corporeal body (and then interpreted either as a literal, physical event, or as metaphor) and that, as a consequence, interpretations have emphasized either the continuous or discontinuous elements of the risen Jesus. The thesis is predominately concerned with discussions of the resurrection since the Enlightenment beginning in the 17th century, as it is particularly here that the divide between interpretations that stress either the continuous or discontinuous become especially clear.

Chapter three addresses epistemological concerns, arguing that, rather than the foundationalism so prevalent among interpretations of the resurrection, PCR provides a more appropriate epistemological framework for discussing an event which transcends ordinary epistemological frameworks and categories and is capable of maintaining a dialectic tension between ordinary temporal existence and the future eschatological reality. Within this framework, reciprocity is encouraged; that is, rather than a single discipline, category, or experience functioning as ultimate arbiter and foundation of knowledge, a coherentist ‘web’ of interacting disciplines, categories, and experiences functions as the locus of knowledge and that knowledge is found precisely in this very interaction. Knowledge results from the bilateral dialogue between the external object or event, which has an inherent meaning in and of itself, and the internal subject, which imparts upon that object or event a meaning conditioned by perspective, worldview, and communally and contextually conditioned categories of understanding. This framework allows and enables Jesus’ post-mortem existence to be understood in terms of the eschatological category of resurrection of the dead, as an event which cannot be restricted within Jesus’ personal body and transcends ordinary human concepts.

Chapter four then considers historical methodology in light of this epistemological framework, and discusses how historical inquiry interacts with theological and anthropological concerns,
with a view to presenting a methodology capable of considering the resurrection as an event which occurred within time and space (thereby upholding its continuous characteristics) while acknowledging that this event transcends ordinary time and space (thereby upholding its discontinuous characteristics). This chapter argues that, on the basis of the irreducibly anthropological nature of history, theological concerns cannot be separated from historical inquiry and so the resurrection remains a viable subject of historical description. However, this description must be rooted in anthropology, noting that the language of resurrection encompasses a vast array of eschatological connotations. A Postfoundationalist Constructive Realist approach to history analyses the interaction between the external event in question and its interpretation, which includes the employment of prior categories of understanding through which that event is understood, and the development of the interpretation of the event as it is remembered in new contexts, as it interacts with different perspectives and interpretations, and as the categories of understanding evolve to accommodate this new event.

In chapter five, the ancient Jewish eschatological category of ‘resurrection’ is analysed, from its earliest usage in the Hebrew Bible through its development in apocalyptic and extra-biblical literature to the few occurrences of this category in the New Testament.\(^{36}\) It is here demonstrated that the notion of ‘resurrection’ rarely envisaged a personal reanimation, that in fact when physical bodies are resurrected this is for the sole purpose of demonstrating God’s covenantal faithfulness or for judgment. Speculation of the eternal destiny of material bodies is certainly present, but resurrection had primarily to do with a broad spectrum of eschatological hopes, including the restoration of relationship, the dispensation of divine justice, and the transformation of the cosmos and creation as a whole. The reality envisaged within this new resurrected, eschatological world is one where creation is both redeemed and

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\(^{36}\) I here use the term ‘category’ somewhat loosely, for there was a diverse array of understandings of resurrection and the term was used in a variety of different ways.
radically transformed; there is both continuity and discontinuity, in that it is the same world and yet significantly different. The imagery of the new heavens and earth, understood as their unification, is a helpful analogy for understanding this new resurrected reality, for though the earth has not been disbanded, thus preserving continuity, it has been united with heaven and thus also establishing discontinuity.

Having analysed the eschatological category of resurrection, chapter six argues that, and discusses how, this category formed the interpretive framework through which Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted. A clue to understanding this interpretive framework is the recurring reference to Jesus being raised on or after the third day “according to the Scriptures.” It is argued that this phrase, which has no specific referent in the Hebrew Bible, is not the fulfilment of one specific eschatological promise but was instead the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of eschatological hope, echoing the understanding of the category of resurrection espoused in chapter five, that is that the language of ‘resurrection’ envisaged an array of eschatological themes that extended well beyond personal reanimation. Reflecting PCR, this chapter analyses the earliest interpretations of the event of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, beginning with the pre-Pauline traditions and the Pauline literature, through the synoptic traditions, to the more developed interpretations of the later traditions, especially in the Gospel of John. It will be argued that Jesus’ resurrection constitutes the fulfilment of the eschatological hopes for the eschaton – not just that it was a part of, or initiated, this fulfilment – and thus cannot be restricted to the reanimation of his personal body, and constitutes the unification of earth (continuity) and heaven (discontinuity).

Finally, before the conclusion, a brief excursus considers the difficulty of claiming that the promises expected at the end of time have been fulfilled within time, and argues that a moderate version of Pannenberg’s future-oriented eschatology is helpful for maintaining and understanding this claim.
Within the first-century Jewish eschatological notion of ‘resurrection,’ which informed and shaped the Christian interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, personal reanimation is an uncommon concept. Rather, the eschatological hope for ‘resurrection’ was inseparably and inherently ensconced within a broader spectrum of hope for the eschaton. This includes the renewal and reaffirmation of ordinary reality, as well as its radical transformation. It is precisely this framework which was applied to Jesus’ post-mortem existence and through which this event was interpreted by the early communities of the Jesus movement. This is reaffirmed, as will be highlighted throughout this thesis, in the New Testament depictions of Jesus’ resurrection: in their heavy reliance upon Jewish eschatological conceptions, the ambiguous portrayals of Jesus’ risen nature, and the increasing certainty that Jesus’ post-mortem existence was, within contingent history, the fulfilment of the hopes for the eschaton.

Scholarship has generally understood the language of ‘resurrection,’ so far as it pertains to the post-mortem existence of Jesus, as primarily envisaging the reanimation of a personal body. Of course, interpretations have not entirely ignored the broader eschatological implications of this event and have not been exclusively concerned with the material body. However, it is the contention of this thesis that these eschatological concerns have been of secondary significance in general academia and have been interpreted in light of how the body is understood. This scholarship has focussed resurrection talk upon the reanimation of a personal body, but that this is an incorrect assumption. The inverse is what is needed, that the language of ‘resurrection’ concerns the much larger eschatological and even cosmological concerns and only then can the nature of the body be properly understood. By assuming that resurrection relates chiefly to the reanimation of a personal body, interpretations of the resurrection have subsequently emphasized either the continuous or discontinuous elements of the resurrection at the expense of the other. This has, unfortunately, resulted in the minimization of the
eschatological significance of the event. It is to this long history of scholarship on the resurrection that we now turn.
2. Tension in Interpretation: of Continuity and Discontinuity

2.1. Introduction

This chapter comprises a literature review of the predominant scholarship regarding Jesus’ resurrection, outlining the general trends and the development of these trends in relation to shifts in methodological approaches to historical Jesus research and systematic theology. In this review I will demonstrate that scholarship has generally assumed that the language of ‘resurrection’ envisages a personal reanimation, and has subsequently failed to uphold the tension between the continuity and discontinuity in Jesus’ resurrection with empirical reality, with scholars emphasizing one or the other, rather than incorporating the broader Jewish eschatological hopes into resurrection belief itself. Importantly, I am not arguing that these scholars have ignored the eschatological implications of the resurrection but that they have focussed so strongly on the body that anything beyond the body is subsequently downplayed or relegated to secondary importance.

Reviewing the major trajectories of interpretations of the claim that Jesus rose from the dead is complicated by the diverse array of positions, especially since the Enlightenment era, reflected in Willi Marxsen’s statement: “There are almost as many opinions about ‘the resurrection of Jesus’ as there are books and essays which have been published on this subject.”1 Determining clear demarcations in modern Jesus research and resurrection theology is difficult, but it is possible to deduce a few rough and generalized categories of division. The first, particularly within New Testament scholarship, are the well-rehearsed ‘quests’ for the historical Jesus – a demarcation of Jesus research that is increasingly recognised as deficient.2

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1 Willi Marxsen, Jesus and Easter: Did God Raise the Historical Jesus from the Dead? Trans. Victor Paul Furnish (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 39.
2 This demarcation has been critiqued by Fernando Bermejo Rubio, who insists that it serves the ideological concerns of the scholar and it would be preferable to discard the ‘Three Quest’ model (“The Fiction of the ‘Three Quests’: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Historiographical Paradigm,” JSHJ 7 (2009), esp. 214). Also, Robert J. Myles, “The Neoliberal Lives of Jesus,” The Bible and Interpretation, May, 2016,
The so-called ‘first-quest’ began with the posthumous work of Reimarus and ended with Schweitzer’s *Quest for the Historical Jesus*; a ‘no quest’ supposedly followed Schweitzer; the ‘new’ or ‘second’ quest was launched in 1953 with Käsemann’s famous “The Problems of the Historical Jesus” lecture; the second then morphed into the ‘third’ quest, so called by Wright. Each quest was marked by various motives and methodologies, epistemologies and historiographies, resulting in various pictures of Jesus and diverse views of his resurrection. Of course, dividing Jesus research into these various quests is limited, as Dale Allison notes, “It obscures more than it illumines,” neglecting the large amount of material produced between Schweitzer and Käsemann, and insisting upon an artificial division between the ‘second’ and ‘third’ quests which does not exist.

Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz highlight six ‘phases’ in discussing the resurrection in historical Jesus research. First, following Reimarus, the resurrection was understood by the likes of Schleiermacher, Hase, Holtzmann, and Klausner to be a deception; Jesus either did not really die or he was reburied, and the empty tomb tradition was a fabrication. Second, focus shifted to the appearances, understood by Strauss, Holsten, and Wrede as subjective visions which inspired the resurrection tradition; the empty tomb was legendary myth. Third, in the early twentieth century, focus was then shifted to form criticism, with many, such as Bultmann, Dodd, and Kramer, insisting that there is no historical explanation for the resurrection; the resurrection is to be understood eschatologically and thus cannot be explained within normal scientific or historical frameworks. Fourth, the 1950s witnessed a resurgence in historical

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4 Dale C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and its Interpreters* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 2-3. Allison includes an extensive bibliography of books on Jesus published between 1907 and 1953 (i.e. the ‘no quest’) (pp.23-25).
reconstructions, such as in the work of Hans van Campenhausen and Grass, with debate surrounding the priority of either the empty tomb or the appearances. Fifth, since the 1960s the role of interpretation has been emphasized by Marxsen, Berger, and Wilckens, insisting that history is unimportant or impossible, for all we have access to are interpretations of an event. Finally, and concurrent with the fifth phase, discussion has revolved around the plausibility of calling the resurrection either an objective or subjective event, with many arguing for either the former, such as Pannenberg, or the latter, such as Lüdemann.5

Within Systematic Theology, another approach is to divide scholarship according to the locus of faith in doctrines of the resurrection. David Fergusson proposed three broad positions: radical, insisting upon a metaphorical interpretation, wherein resurrection is a reference to the rise of faith itself; liberal, similarly metaphorical, asserting the resurrection is myth emerging out of faith; and traditional, viewing the resurrection as an event in Jesus’ life, which gave rise to faith.6 This division centres scholarly positions around the question of whether the resurrection story inspired early Christian faith or whether, rather, it was the early Christian faith which inspired the resurrection story. A similar approach is to divide scholarship according to the purported nature of the resurrection. George Hunsinger divides the debate into three positions: spiritual, historical, or eschatological. Some, such as Schleiermacher and Bultmann, argue for a ‘spiritual’ resurrection, where the resurrection was something that happened to the disciples rather than to Jesus. Others, such as Pannenberg and Wright, argue for a ‘historical’ resurrection, where the resurrection was something that happened to Jesus within contingent history. Finally, still others, such as Barth and Frei, argue for an ‘eschatological’ resurrection, where the resurrection happened to Jesus, but because of the

6 David Fergusson, “Interpreting the Resurrection,” SJT 38, no. 3 (1985), 287-305. Allison presents a similar differentiation between several categories of positions on the resurrection (Allison, Resurrecting Jesus, 201-13).
uniqueness of the event, being *sui generis*, it transcends ordinary reality and is thus inaccessible. This approach is somewhat contrived, for Pannenberg and Wright assert a thoroughly eschatological resurrection, and Barth certainly does not consider the resurrection to be *non-*historical. Hence it is clear that categorizing interpretations of the resurrection is practically impossible without doing harm to the particular positions.

The most helpful approach to reviewing the various interpretations of the resurrection is chronological, highlighting the various methodological developments as they interact with the broader trends in historical Jesus research. This review will roughly follow the several so-called ‘Quests,’ for each quest is characterized by distinctive motivations and methodologies which invariably influence interpretation of the resurrection. As noted above, this demarcation is limited and ideologically problematic, but points to general (though not universal) trends. For the purpose of this thesis, this demarcation is adopted not to indicate definitive eras and the theological baggage connected to such a restrictive typology, but merely to signify the general trends of historical Jesus research in both New Testament and Systematic Theology contexts and how they have impacted the interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection. Though this thesis is primarily a Systematic Theological project, the ‘Three Quest’ model, which resides primarily within the discipline of New Testament scholarship, is the clearest way to observe the interaction between the general trends within scholarship on Jesus and his resurrection.

Prior to the first quest, and the Enlightenment era in general, the resurrection in systematic Christian thought is almost unanimously presented as a literal and physical event that occurred

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8 It would be possible to survey interpretations of Jesus’ resurrection in other traditions, such as, for example, Jewish and Islamic responses to the claim of resurrection, which have themselves developed over the millennia. However, such a survey would exceed the scope of this thesis. I will here limit the discussion to Christian theology. For Jewish and Islamic interpretations of Jesus’ death and resurrection, cf. David Mishkin, *Jewish Scholarship on the Resurrection of Jesus* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017); Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*. Trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2002); Mahmoud M. Ayyoub, “Towards an Islamic Christology, II: The Death of Jesus, Reality or Delusion,” *The Muslim World* 70, no. 2 (1980), 91-121; Gabriel Said Reynolds, “The Muslim Jesus: Dead or Alive?” *Bulletin of SOAS* 72, no. 2 (2009), 237-58.
within ordinary time and space, markedly different to the Enlightenment era first quest, characterised by a radically critical perspective, with the majority of interpretations favouring a mythical, or in some instances an outright deceitful, resurrection. At the turn of the twentieth century, this first historical quest was largely abandoned, and, subsequently, attention turned toward a resurrection beyond the confines of historical inquiry, particularly an existential or ‘supra-historical’ (that is, transcending the ordinary contingency of history) resurrection. The second quest sought to affirm the continuity between the ‘historical’ Jesus and the ‘preached’ Christ, and so interpretations of the resurrection largely focussed on the kerygmatic aspect of the resurrection, that is, the early proclamation and message of the resurrection. Though it is unclear at what point the second quest became the third – or whether such a distinction is actually appropriate – recent scholarship has emphasized the Jewishness of Jesus and of the Gospels, and, as such, also of the resurrection. Most recently, interest in the resurrection has waned, largely reserved, though not completely, for apologetic arguments defending, or polemic critiquing, a historical (in a thoroughly positivistic sense) resurrection. As noted above, such demarcations are artificial and generalized, but developments in trends are evident and these trends ultimately impact interpretations of the resurrection.

The purpose of this review is not to merely outline the developments in resurrection theology, nor simply to highlight the diversity, but to demonstrate the way in which the language of resurrection was assumed to suggest a personal reanimation. It shall also illuminate the most significant division between interpretations, namely the tension between affirming the continuity and discontinuity of Jesus’ resurrection with empirical reality, with most interpretations generally being characterized by an emphasis upon one or the other, and often at the expense – whether intentional or not – of the other. Furthermore, it will become clear that the Jewish eschatological category of ‘resurrection of the dead’ (which will be explored in detail in chapter four) has not been adequately incorporated.
The ancient Jewish eschatological notion of ‘resurrection of the dead’ affirmed empirical reality while asserting its radical transformation, incorporating a broad spectrum of Jewish hope for the eschaton. Hence, it is of immense significance that this notion was applied to and used as the framework through which to interpret Jesus’ post-mortem existence by the early interpreters of this event. I contend that if this is taken seriously and incorporated adequately into an interpretation of the claim that Jesus rose from the dead, it becomes evident that the contemporary interpreter must avoid the assumption that this event only referred to Jesus’ post-mortem reanimation. Rather, this was an event which first and foremost must be placed within a much broader, cosmic context, and only then can the nature of the risen Jesus be understood properly. Furthermore, the interpreter must avoid emphasizing either the continuity or discontinuity of the risen Jesus with empirical reality, but instead uphold the two in dialectical tension.⁹

### 2.2. Pre-Enlightenment: A Fleshly and Physical Resurrection

The majority position regarding the nature of the resurrection prior to the Enlightenment was a literal, physical reading, due largely to a pre-critical hermeneutic. Hence, the continuity of Jesus’ resurrected body with his pre-crucifixion body was emphasized. That the risen body experienced some sort of transformation is usually affirmed, but the extent of this transformation – its difference from the pre-crucifixion body – is bridled, minimized by the limited significance attributed to the notion of resurrection and what the category of ‘resurrection of the dead’ signified in Jewish eschatology.

A thoroughly physical understanding of resurrection, one which affirms strong continuity with empirical reality with very little acknowledgement of the transformation of the risen body, is

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⁹ It should be noted that many of these discussions, particularly the earlier discussions, are largely focussed on the future resurrection of believers. However, they model this future resurrection on the resurrection of Jesus.
widely attested in early Christian thought after the New Testament. In the early to mid-second century, in Clement’s Second Letter to the Corinthians,\(^10\) the author urges, “Let none of you say that this flesh will not be judged or rise again. …For just as you were called in the flesh, you will come in the flesh” (2 Clem. 9.1, 4). Similarly, Justin Martyr expresses this continuity: “We look forward to receiving again our own bodies, though they be dead and buried in the earth” (1 Apol. xviii, 4). For Tertullian, “nothing rises again but what has already been,” albeit a fleshly body incapable of suffering. He does not elaborate on what this would then look like (On Resurrection, 53.9-11, 26; 57.50). Augustine does elaborate, and his attempts at describing the risen body demonstrate just how physical was his conception of the resurrection. The risen body will be composed “of the matter of which it was originally composed,” including hair and nails, though he excludes a lifetime’s accumulation of hair and nail trimmings. The righteous will be resurrected without deformities; undeveloped foetuses or infants who die shortly after childbirth will rise with nothing lacking, and the obese will no longer be obese. This privilege is, however, withheld from the wicked, who will indeed be raised in their deformities, but, Augustine insists, this is an unimportant issue for they are damned nevertheless (Enchir. xxiii, 84-93). Hence, there is some transformation, and is an essentially eschatological event,\(^11\) but it remains a reanimation of a personal body continuous with the present body.\(^12\)

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\(^{10}\) Though, as Paul Parvis observes, this text claims to be neither a letter, nor written by anyone named Clement, nor written to the Corinthians (Paul Parvis, “2 Clement and the Meaning of the Christian Homily,” ExpTim 117, no. 7 (2006), 266).

\(^{11}\) Gerald O’Collins notes that Augustine “only occasionally” mentioned this transformation, but in these rare occasions Augustine claims that the resurrected body is “the very same body,” albeit “one that was no longer constrained by the normal limits of human bodies” (Gerald O’Collins, Saint Augustine on the Resurrection of Christ: Teaching, Rhetoric, and Reception (Oxford: OUP, 2017), 8). The emphasis remains very much on the body. Cf. Tarmo Toom, “Totus Homo: Augustine on the Resurrection,” in Resurrection & Responsibility: Essays on Theology, Scripture, and Ethics in Honor of Thorwald Lorenzen, ed. Keith D. Dyer and David J. Neville (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009), 69.

\(^{12}\) Elsewhere, when discussing the creedal statement, “We believe in the resurrection of the flesh,” Augustine discusses at some length Paul’s argument in 1 Cor. 15, highlighting the way in which the corruptible body will put on incorruptibility (On Faith and the Creed, 5.11-12). However, seemingly unbeknownst to Augustine, in 1 Cor. 15.44, when describing the risen body, Paul does not use σῶμα, but rather σῶμα. For a good historical discussion of the introduction of the language of a fleshly resurrection – despite that word never being used in the NT to describe the risen body either of Jesus or of his followers – cf. Brian Schmisek, Resurrection of the Flesh or Resurrection from the Dead (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 1-48. Unfortunately, though Schmisek
This emphasis upon the continuity of the risen body is maintained in the Scholasticism of the Medieval period. In the eleventh century, Anselm claims that the righteous man “will be restored in the body in which he lives in this life.”\textsuperscript{13} However, there is transformation, though a more appropriate word might be restoration, as the individual human is restored to the body which they would have inhabited had they not sinned. If that person had never sinned, they would have never died, and would not require resurrection.\textsuperscript{14} Following Anselm, Thomas Aquinas argues that it will indeed be the “selfsame body” that will be resurrected, and will be resurrected “identically.”\textsuperscript{15} Reflecting similar concerns to Augustine, Aquinas discusses the problem of hair and nails; as well as blood, whether they will rise the same age as when they died, and if the risen body will be the same size.\textsuperscript{16} This indicates the extent to which the resurrected body was considered physical. Aquinas did maintain that Jesus’ risen body was very different, discussing Jesus’ resurrection alongside his glorification. In his resurrection, he attains immortality (thus distinguishing his resurrection from other accounts of people returning from the dead), and that his body was a “glorified body” that “had something else which made it incorruptible, and this was not the nature of of a heavenly body, as some maintain…but it was glory flowing from a beatified soul.”\textsuperscript{17} Nevertheless, Aquinas’ attention remains fixed on Jesus’ personal body, indeed his very flesh, bones, and blood,\textsuperscript{18} and maintains that “Whatever goes with the nature of a human body, was entirely in the body of Christ when he rose again.”\textsuperscript{19} For both Anselm and Aquinas, despite acknowledging some transformation,

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 315-16.
\textsuperscript{15} Aquinas, The Summa Theologica, III. Suppl., Q. 79, art. 1-2.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., III. Q. 53-54. Christ’s body in the resurrection was “of the same nature, but different in glory” (Q. 54, art. 2).
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., III. Q. 53, art. 1; Q. 54, art. 2.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., III. Q. 54, art. 2.
the resurrected body remains a thoroughly physical re-animated body. This emphasis upon the body is affirmed by Caroline Bynum: “Scholastic writing showed an underlying predilection for metaphors of reassemblage and immutability to describe the resurrected and glorified body.”

The Reformation brought a flurry of new ideas, but the resurrection received little development. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 15 Luther argues that God created humanity as it is and therefore “everyone’s body will remain as it was created,” despite not eating, drinking, or digesting, nor bearing children, keeping house, or governing. The use of the body will not be the same, but it is yet the same physical body. Luther is adamant that when Paul describes the risen body as a ‘spiritual body’ this does not indicate that it no longer has flesh and blood, for then it would not be a true body. That a ‘body’ is fundamentally categorized by its constituting flesh and blood seems to be contradicted by Paul himself in this very chapter where he states that there are many different bodies, including the astronomical bodies of the sun, moon, and stars (1 Cor. 15.40-41). What Luther makes of these is unclear. Ulrich Zwingli shares these sentiments when arguing that Jesus’ risen body “is identical with that which was crucified,” and that it “is impossible to deny that the flesh and blood which was put to death for us ascended up into heaven.” Indeed, if it were not the exact same fleshly body, “the resurrection of Christ was in vain.” This fleshly resurrection is reinforced in the documents that emerged out of the Council of Trent. The Catechism re-affirms the Apostle’s Creed by

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21 Interestingly, in the discussions analysed so far, whether or not resurrected humans will have the capacity to eat or drink does not seem to be an issue of importance. If so many are so concerned with whether or not bodies will bear the same hair, nails, or blood, it surprises me that so few are concerned with whether or not resurrected bodies will consist of organs such as stomachs or hearts.
23 Ulrich Zwingli, “On the Lord’s Supper,” in The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 14: Zwingli and Bullinger, trans. G. W. Bromiley (London: SCM, 1953), 232. Zwingli’s focus in this instance was upon the eucharist, arguing for a memorialism, that because Jesus’ very body was raised and ascended, he surely cannot be present again at the communion table in either a transubstantiation or consubstantiation sense.
adopting the language, *carnis resurrectionem*, that is, resurrection of the flesh. The text does acknowledge that Jesus’ resurrection was more than a rising from the dead, for this is not a unique claim – others, such as Lazarus, had returned from the dead – and that there is in fact substantial change. However, this ‘substantial’ change is simply the same body minus corruption, and the text remains concerned with issues of adornment, such as hair. Quoting Augustine, anything that is beyond the “proper proportion” of the body is removed. 25

As we can observe, the pre-Enlightenment era was characterised by a pre-critical and reductive interpretation of the meaning of resurrection focused on individual and corporeal reanimation, rather than its relation to the Jewish eschatological category of ‘resurrection of the dead,’ which signifies the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of hope for the end of history. The assumption that resurrection refers to a return to the exact same cartesian, atomized body inhibits the theologian from recognizing the elements of Jesus’ resurrection which bear radical discontinuity with his pre-crucifixion body and with empirical reality. We see that commentators prior to the Enlightenment, though noting the eschatological significance of the resurrection, emphasize the continuous nature of the resurrection at the expense of its discontinuity.

2.3. Reimarus to Troeltsch: A Mythical Resurrection

With the dawn of the Enlightenment and the development of critical rationalism, the acceptance of miracles – in which the resurrection was situated – gradually became understood as contrary to reason. Beginning in the eighteenth century with the posthumous publication of Reimarus’ critical polemic against miracles, and lasting until Schweitzer’s criticism of nineteenth-century historical reconstructions of Jesus, this period is characterised by the stripping of the biblical

narratives anything that was interpreted as inventions of the early church, retaining only that which stands up to historical criticism. This criticism invariably excluded any event that stands beyond the realm of normal human experience of contingent history, thereby negating the resurrection, which was understood purely as myth and religious storytelling. For the present discussion, what is illuminating is what is being rejected, namely an event within ordinary history, measured against ordinary historical events. In other words, these interpretations of the resurrection assume that the language of resurrection refers to an individual reanimation continuous with the old, and it is this that is being rejected on the basis that humans ordinarily do not return from the dead, and therefore the resurrection narratives are either intentionally deceitful, mythological, or metaphorical. What is being ignored is the application of the broader Jewish eschatological category of resurrection to Jesus’ post-mortem existence, which cannot be reduced to the mere reanimation of a personal body.

The assumption that resurrection refers to no more than a return to the same atomized body of flesh and blood, and its subsequent rejection is especially evident in the work of David Hume. Hume insisted that the correlation between cause and effect cannot in any way be demonstrated, but rather a cause can come to be expected, based on regular and repeated experience. Hence, human testimony, without contemporary analogy, is inadequate for establishing the occurrence of miracles and because no contemporary analogy of the resurrection of Jesus exists, the claim that Jesus rose from the dead cannot today be understood as fact. He argues,

> When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion.

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Hume’s polemic against miracles (which he defines as “a violation of the laws of nature”\textsuperscript{29}) is methodological, but it is evident from this quote what Hume was rejecting: the return to life of a thoroughly natural body. It is precisely this understanding that is the assumption belying many interpretations of the resurrection. Gotthold Lessing extended this position, arguing that contingent and accidental historical events cannot determine universal truths of reason; there is an irreconcilable gap between historical and rational truth. Lessing referred to this as the “ugly great ditch” and on this basis argued that miracles simply cannot be said to have happened and must be acknowledged as mere reports. Faith cannot rest upon the testimony of other people, but only our own experience.\textsuperscript{30} The requirement of contemporary analogy for the assertion of an event’s historical reliability will be addressed in §3.2, and the “ugly great ditch” in §4.2, two arguments which have come under serious scrutiny in recent scholarship. For now we might observe that in both instances the notion of resurrection is being compared to, or considered in relation to, other ordinary contingent historical events. By doing so, the continuous nature of the resurrection is assumed.

The thought of Hume and Lessing characterized this first quest, which began, posthumously, with the work of Hermann Reimarus. Reimarus attacked the supernaturalism in the Gospels in a text that was later published by Lessing. Insisting that it was possible and necessary to “go behind” the New Testament texts to discover the human Jesus, he claimed that the disciples stole Jesus’ corpse, who replaced Jesus’ political vision with a spiritual salvation. He argued that had Jesus truly taught the disciples about his expected resurrection, they would neither have been as scared at his death nor surprised at his return.\textsuperscript{31} However, it was not Jesus’ return

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 76.


per se which surprised the disciples – the Gospels recount, after all, their witnessing several other corpses returning to life – but it was the sheer immensity of what they believed to have occurred which engendered their shock: not a return to life, but in fact the resurrection of the dead. Following Reimarus’ anti-supernaturalism, Friedrich Schleiermacher similarly doubted the historicity of the resurrection account, questioning why Jesus would only reveal himself to a select handful of followers, and asserted the view that the resurrection was a kerygmatic tool arising out of the disciples’ faith.32

Various other biographies of Jesus emerged within this quest, but especially significant is the work of David Strauss. Continuing the legacy of Hume, Reimarus, Lessing, and Schleiermacher, Strauss carried the a priori conviction that miracle accounts cannot be considered historically factual and insisted that the New Testament accounts be ‘demythologized.’ The supernatural elements in the Gospels were myth, primitive expressions of spiritual ideas. Mythical language expressed what the primitive community could not fully comprehend, and contemporary scholarship requires the determination and removal of these mythical expressions to ascertain what really happened. Maintaining that no historical evidence exists for the resurrection, he insisted that it was a projection of an intense memory into the living presence of the disciples. To be more precise then, there is no evidence, according to Strauss, of the reanimation of a physical body. Hence, Strauss assumes the same understanding of resurrection as other scholars in this era, one which stresses its continuity with empirical reality. That is, the resurrection that is being rejected is the thoroughly material return to life of Jesus’ physical body. Where Reimarus claims that the resurrection was an intentional deception, Strauss argues that the disciples, as a result of intense emotion, imagined Jesus revived, and the resurrection accounts were an interpretation of these imaginings, which were

unexplainable in their primitive context. Strauss’ application of myth later developed into form criticism, and would in particular influence Bultmann. However, I contend, contrary to Strauss, that the early Christians believed that they did know what had happened, at least to a certain extent, and so applied the eschatological category of resurrection, which provided meaning to this event within a Jewish eschatological framework (which will be explored in depth in chapter four).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the historical Jesus had been, by and large, stripped of all ‘primitive’ notions of miracles and divinity. However, some others retained the belief in a physical resurrection. The Reformed preacher Charles Spurgeon responded to those who reject a physical body:

> If ye were Christians as ye profess to be, ye would believe that every mortal man who ever existed shall not only live by the immortality of his soul, but his body shall live again, that the very flesh in which he now walks the earth is as eternal as the soul, and shall exist for ever.

All the more strongly, he claims, “The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is one of the best attested facts on record,” and “we cannot and we dare not doubt that Jesus rose from the dead.” We should bear in mind that the sermons or writings of popular preachers have little influence on academic theology, but Spurgeon’s views highlight the general attitude toward the resurrection in conservative and evangelical circles. He reaffirms the pre-Enlightenment views on resurrection where many others rejected it. However, both arguments presuppose an understanding of resurrection that does not adequately grasp the significance of this Jewish eschatological notion. Resurrection is treated as comparable to other events within history, to be dismissed or affirmed, and its discontinuous characteristics are minimized.

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36 Ibid., 108.
The first ‘quest’ ultimately ended with the criticisms of William Wrede and Albert Schweitzer. The former argued that much of Mark was post-Easter theological reflection imposed upon the history of Jesus and thus not historically reliable, which had a substantial impact upon the first quest’s desire to strip the historical Jesus of theological embellishment, for the Markan framework upon which many of the questers relied was disrupted. This was further, and perhaps fatally, impacted by the latter’s 1906 publication of The Quest of the Historical Jesus, which stressed the Jewish apocalyptic elements of the Gospels and their eschatological portrayal of Jesus. Wright highlights the distinction between Wrede and Schweitzer as two significant ‘highways’ of thought in the later twentieth century – the ‘Wredebahn’ and ‘Schweitzerstrasse.’ The former, a ‘thoroughgoing scepticism,’ presents a non-eschatological portrayal of Jesus as a wise Galilean teacher who was executed, and the latter, a ‘thoroughgoing eschatology,’ presents a Jesus who anticipated and preached the end of history. We might note for now how those in line with Wrede are more likely to interpret the resurrection metaphorically, and those in line with Schweitzer in light of Jewish eschatology. I contend that the Jewish category of resurrection of the dead is far too significant for this event to be described in purely metaphorical language (though it should be mentioned that metaphor does not necessarily deny historicity).

Before moving onto the next era, the period of the supposed (but overstated) ‘no quest,’ attention should be given to Ernst Troeltsch, whose views regarding history and miracles, although appearing after Schweitzer’s critique, are similar to those of the so-called first quest and thus can be considered alongside this work. Troeltsch claimed that Christianity, as a

38 Beilby and Eddy, eds. The Historical Jesus, 19-20.
39 Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, trans. W. Montgomery, J. R. Coates, Susan Cupitt and John Bowden (London: SCM, 2000), 370-71, 478-86. Cf. Beilby and Eddy, eds., The Historical Jesus, 20. Schweitzer insisted that Jesus’ message of love is to be celebrated and that a relationship with Jesus is possible, though not one founded upon historical research.
41 And constitutes another example of the inadequacy of the Three Quest model.
historical phenomenon, should be “investigated…by the universal, verified methods of historical research.”

He argued, similar to Hume, for the homogeneity of history, where despite the unique particularity of historical events, these events remain universally similar and valid. Therefore, the principle of analogy must be employed. In other words, the historical event in question can only be considered probable to have happened if it can be considered probable to happen today.

Regarding the resurrection, he maintains that historical research can provide nothing except the affirmation that the disciples were convinced that Jesus lived. However, resurrections are not experienced today, and so Jesus’ resurrection would disrupt the homogeneity of history. Therefore, the claim that Jesus rose from the dead must be considered historically improbable and can only be explained as the significant personal impact of Jesus upon his disciples.

The predominant position on the resurrection in the Enlightenment era is sharply antithetical to the pre-Enlightenment position. Where the resurrection was initially interpreted as a physical event within time and space, albeit with some transformation, ambiguous as that may be, the major scholarship of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly drawing from Hume’s scepticism, rejected this notion, instead interpreting the resurrection as either metaphor and myth, or deception. However, in both instances, the notion of ‘resurrection’ has not adequately recognized or incorporated the immense eschatological significance of the ‘resurrection of the dead’ within its Jewish apocalyptic context, and subsequently presuppose a mere individual reanimation. Hence, the continuous aspects of the resurrected reality has been stressed, at the expense of the discontinuous. In the twentieth century, this begins to swing to the other extreme, as we will now see.

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2.4. Kähler to Rahner: A Supra-Historical Resurrection

Following Schweitzer, historical Jesus research entered into a new era, one with far less interest in the historical nature of Jesus Christ, to the extent that many have called it the ‘no quest’ era.45 This is an undeserving title, and labelling it as such is a misnomer, for historical studies on Jesus were indeed produced, albeit at a reduced rate.46 Apart from these studies, however, a new theological emphasis developed, where historical research was deemed largely (though not entirely) unnecessary. This trend began with Martin Kähler in 1892 who, prior to Wrede and Schweitzer, began to question the quest for the historical Jesus in his publication The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ. He argued that the quest was essentially unnecessary, for the ‘historical’ Jesus concealed the ‘living’ Christ; it is, in fact, impossible to separate the two. Faith cannot depend upon historical research, and the only Christ academics should be interested in is the one preached through the ages. The proclamation about Jesus by the church should be our starting point, for the vast influence of Jesus supersedes historical research, and it is precisely in the biblical proclamation of Jesus as the Christ that we can encounter Jesus and have faith in him in the present.47 Ultimately, many of the interpretations of the resurrection tended towards nonhistorical perspectives, such that historical questions were regarded as either impossible to answer or altogether unnecessary. A supra-historical perspective emerged, exemplified in Barth, where the eschatological nature of

the resurrection removed it from ordinary historical contingency, which, in the process, emphasized its discontinuous nature at the expense of the continuous.

This ahistorical tendency is characteristic of Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Barth, and Emil Brunner. With Karl Schmidt and Martin Dibelius, Bultmann developed form criticism – especially in his influential 1921 publication, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* – which focusses on the pre-Gospel oral traditions and their formulations. This form criticism enabled him to conclude, reflecting Strauss, that an impenetrable layer of myth separated the historical Jesus from modern historical research.

I do indeed think we can know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist.\(^48\)

The significance of Jesus and his life is the divine act, not the historical phenomenon. The Gospel proclamation (the *kerygma*) is not concerned with historical fact, but with leading the individual to an existential encounter with Christ in the present. For Bultmann, it is this Christ and Lord who is preached, not the historical Jesus.\(^49\)

Regarding the resurrection, Bultmann argues, “The resurrection of Jesus, Pentecost and the *parousia* of Jesus are one and the same event, and those who believe have already eternal life.”\(^50\) Modern humanity no longer perceives the world through the mythological lens of the first century and so must surely understand that the disciples could not have been speaking of a physical and personal reanimation. Rather, it was a metaphor, the subjective experience and elevation of Jesus as Lord in the minds of the disciples. The redemptive and salvific significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection developed later. Jesus did not speak about his death and resurrection as carrying a redemptive nature, but sayings were later attributed to


\(^{49}\) Beilby and Eddy, eds., *The Historical Jesus*, 22; McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 305; Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20\(^{th}\) Century Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992), 95.

\(^{50}\) Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, 33.
Jesus, originating in the early church’s faith. The resurrection is not something that happened and can be isolated in history, but is connected to the resurrection of believers and is thus something that is realized, existentially, in the individual.\textsuperscript{51}

Barth’s theology began, prior to the first world war, as a thoroughly liberal theology.\textsuperscript{52} Appointed to a church in Geneva in 1909, he taught the resurrection as a metaphorical reference to the rise of faith in the disciples, an event that happens within believers where Jesus is recognized as Lord and the believer orients their life to follow him. However, Barth became disillusioned with liberal theology upon seeing many German scholars, including some he venerated, support the war policy of 1914. Consequently, he abandoned liberal theology.\textsuperscript{53} He retained, however, the belief that the resurrection was the \textit{eternalization} of Jesus. The resurrection transcends ordinary human existence, knowledge, and history, operating as the unification of God’s essence and human essence. Jesus is given immortality so that he, and the salvation that was achieved on the cross and confirmed at the resurrection, is available \textit{pro nobis}, that is, for all his followers at all times. Rather than an event similar to any other historical event, the resurrection is the transition of Jesus Christ into the transtemporal realm of the universal Church.\textsuperscript{54}

Furthermore, Barth affirms a bodily resurrection, an event in the life of Jesus and one that involves an empty tomb, on the basis that in the incarnation God’s essence was united with


\textsuperscript{52} That is, connected to the nineteenth and early twentieth century movement coming out of German Enlightenment philosophy that reacted to dogmatic and authoritarian hermeneutics and engaged with modern scientific and philosophical methodologies. This movement follows from Schleiermacher and includes Hegel, Ritschl, von Harnack, and Tillich.


humanity and thus, rejecting any separation between spirit and body or divine and human, the whole Jesus Christ died and was resurrected. In Jesus Christ, divinity was united with humanity, and the resurrection was not something that happened to either one or the other, but happened to the whole Jesus, and therefore involves both the divine and human nature of Jesus, and therefore involves Jesus’ human body. The empty tomb tradition suggests that the resurrection event was not merely a subjective event, but something that happened within time and space. However, Barth asserts the impossibility of subjecting the resurrection to historical scrutiny, for this event, though occurring within contingent history, is unlike any other historical event. In his 1918 commentary on Romans, Barth contends, “In the resurrection the new world of the Holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it.”

Paul, the evangelists, and the other apostles were seeking a decision of faith, not historical inquiry. Faith is never legitimized by historical investigation, nor is it ever a response to an empty tomb; rather, faith is a response to the living Christ. He argues:

As the New Testament sees it the man Jesus who was given up to death is identical with the Lord now living and reigning in the community, and that this Lord again is the One whose universally visible return is for the community the sum of their future and of that of the world. He has overcome death in suffering it. He has risen again from the dead. And it is in this totality that He is “for men.”

Hence, the resurrection was an eschatological event, a sovereign act of God’s free grace, which “reveals Himself as the One He is – the genuine, true and righteous man,” and “crows [Jesus’ ministry] as its disclosure.” It was primarily an event which happened within the anthropological realm, a subjective manifestation of Jesus as the Christ, which nevertheless happened within time and space, but is inaccessible without faith. It would of course be possible to spend a much greater amount of time assessing Barth’s interpretation of the

57 Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 3.2, 214.
58 Ibid., vol. 3.2, 214, 337.
resurrection, but this would exceed the scope this thesis. His view of the resurrection is part of what the thesis is offering a corrective to.

Similarly, Brunner argued that Christian history is entirely different to any other sort of history. The Christ event was “something super-historical, unique, absolutely decisive,” and we should allow our relationship with Jesus to be, first and foremost, the determinative factor for how we establish our relationship with history. To do otherwise would “mean thinking in terms of universal religion, of general revelation.” Faith should not be established upon “anything so unsafe as historical science…for such building is indeed a glaring example of building one’s house upon the sand.” For Brunner, historical knowledge of Jesus – especially including the incarnation and resurrection – cannot lead to faith, rather faith alone can lead to a right historical knowledge of Jesus. Though the apostles regarded Jesus’ resurrection as a contingent historical event, the significance of the resurrection lay primarily with regard to Jesus’ ongoing presence, as the revealed Lord of the new age. It is the inbreaking of God’s eternity into temporality, and thus can be neither understood nor described, incomprehensible to humanity, and thus inaccessible without faith.

Kähler, Bultmann, Barth, and Brunner argued that historical research was unimportant, if not inappropriate, for a correct understanding of Jesus and impetus and grounding of faith in him as Christ. Rather, faith is grounded upon the existential experience of Christ as Lord in the present, faith which equips the believer to understand the resurrection. This sentiment was similarly expressed by Charles Dodd, who claimed that the Gospels “do not…set out to gratify a purely historical curiosity about past events, but they do set out to nurture faith upon the testimony to such events.” Likewise, James Robinson’s 1959 publication A New Quest of the

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61 Ibid., 156.
Historical Jesus argued that inadequate information about Jesus exists and thus we cannot establish the historical reality. For Robinson, reflecting the earlier work of philosopher and historian Robin Collingwood,\(^{64}\) the emphasis of historical research must lie in anthropology – as opposed to the natural sciences – and the determination of the intent, commitment, and meaning of the event for the participants of the historical event. In so determining, the historian connects with the historical person. Thus determining the historical ‘facts’ of Jesus’ life is impossible, and trying to do so is unhelpful, unless the historian understands the meaning and intention behind the event and thereby connect, existentially, with Jesus.\(^{65}\)

Paul Tillich, viewing the historical quest of the previous century as a failure, argued in similar fashion to Kähler, that the only available picture of Jesus is the one portrayed by the evangelists, who perceived Jesus as their Christ. Christianity is therefore built upon witness to Jesus’ messianic nature, not historical biography. It is not surprising, therefore, that Tillich views the resurrection, like Bultmann, as an existential event. The resurrection is not something that happened, or that will happen, but is something that happens. It is victory over death of the old, to make room for the “New Creation,” the central Christian message that in Jesus, a new reality has appeared. Resurrection, along with ‘reconciliation’ and ‘reunion,’ is a mark of this New Creation – God’s creative activity in the world – and is not to be understood physically as something that happened to Jesus’ body, but existentially as the realization of Jesus as Christ in the minds of the disciples. For Tillich, “Resurrection is not an event that might happen in some remote future, but it is the power of the New Being to create life out of death,” and “Where there is a New Being, there is resurrection.”\(^{66}\)


However, there were some, such as Cecil Cadoux and Karl Rahner, who held similar positions regarding history, but who viewed the resurrection as an event that happened to Jesus, yet as a purely spiritual event. In contrast to those who insisted that the resurrection was something that happened within the disciples, the resurrection indeed happened to Jesus, as well as to the disciples. Cadoux, for instance, argued that the disciples had visions of the living Jesus, and,

The least difficult explanation of these appearances seems to me to regard them as real manifestations given to his followers by Jesus himself, not by means of the presence of his physical body resuscitated from the empty tomb, but by way of those strange processes sufficiently attested to us by psychical research, but as yet very imperfectly understood.\textsuperscript{67}

The disciples witnessed something \textit{real}, given to them by \textit{Jesus himself}, but was entirely, in some indiscernible sense, psychological. He believed this understanding of the resurrection ensures the understanding that Jesus had defeated death, explains the inconsistencies in the Gospels, relieves us of the inexorably difficult task of explaining or defending the empty tomb, and relieves us of the problem of a physical ascension.\textsuperscript{68}

Holding a similar view was Rahner who, intimately connecting the cross and resurrection, argued that “the resurrection is the manifestation of what happened in the death of Christ,”\textsuperscript{69} the redemption and validation of Jesus’ life which was given up in obedience.\textsuperscript{70} For Rahner, the resurrection is “the event in which God irrevocably adopts the creature as his own reality,”\textsuperscript{71} whereby in Jesus, who represents all of creation, is glorified and transformed. Put differently, rather than being an event within temporal history, Jesus’ resurrection refers to his glorification. If we are to understand ‘historical’ as a reference to that which “belongs to the realm of our normal, empirical world of time and space as a phenomenon which occurs \textit{frequently},” we

\textsuperscript{67} C. J. Cadoux, \textit{The Life of Jesus} (Middlesex: Penguin, 1948), 165.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid.}, 164-67.
\textsuperscript{71} Rahner, \textit{Theological Investigations}, vol. 4, 128-29.
cannot understand Jesus’ resurrection as a ‘historical event’ like any other. However, he affirms that the resurrection is simultaneously the cause of the disciples’ faith, and an event within, or as a result, of their faith. The disciples believed they experienced the risen spirit of Jesus, which inspired their faith, though faith is needed to believe and understand Jesus as risen. Rahner insists:

> If the resurrection of Jesus is the permanent validity of his person and his cause, and if this person and cause together do not mean the survival of just any person and his history, but mean victoriousness of his claim to be the absolute saviour, the faith in his resurrection is an intrinsic element of this resurrection itself.

There is a mutually conditional relationship between faith in, and experience of, Jesus’ resurrection; between subject and object. The risen Lord does not exist within the same world of experience as us, and thus it is impossible to experience him as we do any other thing, and hence for Rahner, Jesus was “risen into the faith of his disciples,” and into our own. It is only by faith that the resurrection can be understood, for it is God’s eschatological victory, but faith is a constitutive element of the resurrection itself. Furthermore, Jesus’ resurrection is the consummation of the incarnation, and thus, “The risen and exalted Lord must be the permanent and ever-access to God,” and the resurrection is the “consummation of the world which gives access to God.” For Rahner, the resurrection is the consummation of Jesus’ life and ministry, the beginning of God’s transformative work in the world. The resurrection event and faith in that event are mutually conditioning, but ultimately grants us access to God.

The stress upon anthropology present in much of the methodology of this era is laudable and will be defended with regard to both epistemology and historiography in chapters three and four respectively, but the insistence that the resurrection be deemed beyond the scope of

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73 Ibid., 267.
74 Ibid., 267-68.
historical research has swung too far toward an emphasis upon the discontinuous elements of the resurrection. Retaining the assumption that resurrection entails the reanimation of a personal body, this is re-interpreted eschatologically and divorced from ordinary temporal reality. Whereas many interpretations prior to the twentieth century emphasized the continuity of Jesus’ resurrection with his pre-crucifixion nature, arguing either for or rejecting its physicality and historicity, resurrection theology shifted in this era to present the resurrection as something entirely separate from historical contingency. By doing so, there is very little about the resurrection that bears continuity with present created reality, with Jesus’ pre-crucifixion body. This, I believe, is a fatal misunderstanding of the Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection of the dead, which emphatically reaffirms creation and history; to avow a supra-historical resurrection thereby disconnects this new reality (as embodied in the risen Jesus) from creation and history. Those in the pre-Enlightenment and the first quest eras overemphasized the continuous nature of the resurrection; while those in the first half of the twentieth century overemphasized the discontinuous. I contend that both must be upheld in dialectical tension.

2.5. Käsemann to Moltmann: A Kerygmatic Resurrection

Rather than accepting the resurrection narratives uncritically, or attempting to ‘get behind’ the narratives themselves to discern demythologized, ‘genuine’ history, or avoiding historical questions altogether, scholarship in the mid-twentieth century is characterised by the argument that it is indeed possible to discern from these texts knowledge of events that occurred within contingent history, despite being framed by theological concerns. However, the majority position in this era repeats the flaws of the preceding era, reducing the resurrection to kerygma. This reductionism took the following form: though a resurrection (understood as Jesus’ re-animated body) might have happened, which inspired its retelling, it is only important to the modern scholar as a kerygmatic tool, or, we might say, a narratological device, and so whether
or not it happened within contingent history is unimportant. This approach once again
overemphasized the discontinuous aspects of the resurrection and failed to incorporate the
hopes for a reaffirmation of empirical reality present in the Jewish eschatological framework
of resurrection of the dead. Put differently, the extent to which Jesus’ resurrection was a part
of, or impacted upon, contingent history is marginal and of secondary importance.

The 1950s saw a resurgence in historical Jesus research following a lecture in 1953 by,
ironically, one of Bultmann’s students, Ernst Käsemann, who argued that ignoring the
historical Jesus would cause modern theology to collapse into Docetism. This ‘New’ or
‘Second’ quest was largely characterized by the attempt – in direct contrast to Reimarus – to
demonstrate the continuity between the ‘Jesus of history’ and the ‘Christ of faith’ (i.e. the man
Jesus of Nazareth within temporal time and space, and the later messianic and theological
interpretations of that man). This sentiment was particularly expressed by Raymond Brown:
“If the purpose of the old quest was to get behind the kerygmatic Christ to the historical Jesus,
the new quest may be characterized as an attempt to show that the kerygmatic portrait is a
faithful representation of the historical Jesus.” Brown notes that the new questers, in an
obvious shift away from Bultmann, largely viewed the kerygma as based upon the Jesus of
contingent history. However, he argued that the sources should not be viewed as detached
repositories of pure fact or biographical reports, but, no longer seeing history as an objective
science (as Troeltsch had claimed), what is called for is not a mere recognition of the bruta
facta of the historical events, but the existential relation between historian and historical
event.78

78 Ibid., 6-7. There are evident connections, as well as distinctions, between Bultmann and his predecessors,
evidenced by Raymond Brown, which demonstrates that the triadic division of the ‘quests’ is artificial. It is better
to think in terms of gradual progression, rather than distinct movements. Bearing this in mind, however, the
division can be somewhat helpful, particularly in tracing these particular movements and methodologies, so long
as the divisions are acknowledged as provisional guides.
Käsemann, with many of the second questers, reaffirmed the thought of the Bultmann school by asserting that the Gospels were primarily theological which ultimately influenced the shaping of the text, expressed in historical form. However, he also argued that the evangelists nevertheless had access to historical information concerning Jesus, and the Gospels should therefore be considered as both kerygma and historical narrative. It is therefore necessary to explore the continuity between what Jesus preached and what was preached about Jesus. On the disparate status of historical Jesus research, Käsemann laments:

Anyone who has followed the debate about the historical Jesus…must have been astonished or even horrified to observe how, as in a volcanic area, the earth was suddenly everywhere spewing forth fire, smoke and differently-sized masses of lava, where, for a generation past, pleasant gardens had been planted on the slopes of ancient craters.79

He argued that the significant problem for historical research into the life of Jesus was “not how to give faith an historical foundation,” but “how to use the critical method to separate the true message from falsifications of it.”80 In other words, the primary concern of Jesus research should be determining the original intended message of the life of Jesus, rather than ascertaining historical facts. He argued that separating the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith creates a false dichotomy. We only have access to the historical Jesus through the narratives and texts about Jesus, all of which were concerned, not with the brute, ‘objective’ facts of Jesus, but with the proclamation that Jesus is Lord. Facts on their own can never lead to faith, and the New Testament authors knew this. Therefore, they didn’t attempt to present Jesus as a purely historical figure. For Käsemann, “The historical Jesus meets us in the New Testament, our only real and original documentation of him, not as he was in himself, not as an isolated individual, but as the Lord of the community which believes in him.”81 Regarding the resurrection, he skirts the question of its historicity, but maintains that the early church recognized Jesus as the risen Lord. Though “primitive Christianity was in any event not

primarily interested in the bruta facta of the past as such,”\textsuperscript{82} the resurrection was understood as the impetus and essence of recognizing Jesus as Lord.\textsuperscript{83}

For Günther Bornkamm, all the information we have about Jesus is embedded within the beliefs of the believing community, but Christian faith is rooted in a particular historical context and thus historical research is indeed necessary for understanding this faith. The Gospel narratives, written on the other side of Jesus’ resurrection, are invariably rooted in the belief that Jesus rose from the dead. Because of this, “The search after the bare facts of history [becomes] difficult and to a large extent futile.”\textsuperscript{84} Historical research should neither be the ground of faith, nor be rejected as unimportant, but should rather be seen as a guide for knowledge and faith in Jesus. The resurrection cannot be understood as a normal event, but Bornkamm seems to imply that it was something that happened within temporal space and time. The disciples experienced the risen Jesus, and the appearances gave rise to their faith – as opposed to the resurrection being a reference to faith itself. Notwithstanding this claim, what is significant for historical research is the message of the narratives of Jesus, not the definitive historical facts. He argues:

\begin{quote}
  The event of Christ’s resurrection from the dead, his life and his eternal reign, are things removed from historical scholarship. History cannot ascertain and establish conclusively the facts about them as it can with other events of the past. The last historical fact available to it is the Easter faith of the first disciples.\textsuperscript{85}
\end{quote}

And it is this faith which is of primary concern for us today. These disciples, moreover, were concerned with proclaiming Jesus not as who he was, but as who he is. The resurrection demonstrated God’s commitment to the world, in that it was the reversal of the verdict given to Jesus by his Jewish opponents and the Roman occupying power. In his end was a new

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{85} Bornkamm, \textit{Jesus of Nazareth}, 180.
beginning, a “final and absolute act of God for the salvation of the world.” Similarily, Berkouwe refuses to choose between a ‘pneumatic’ and a ‘historic’ position, connecting the resurrection with glorification, and asserting that it “is a historical reality which itself becomes the sign, the pledge of our absolute victory over death in the resurrection of the body.”

Hans Frei held a similar position to Käsemann and Bornkamm, arguing that the task of the interpreter is “to observe the story itself – its structure, the shape of its movement, and its crucial transitions,” rather than attempting to ascertain the absolute historical facts. In his seminal text, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, Frei argued that methodologies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were mistreating the Bible by ignoring its central narrative structure. The biblical narrative was being read by conservatives attempting to prove, and liberals and sceptics attempting to disprove, the factuality and historicity of the events. Consequently, its essential narrative form was neglected. The truth and meaning of the Bible does not lie externally in history or in any understanding of ‘myth,’ but internally, within its own narrative. Jesus is neither a mythological symbol, nor a figure to be proved and examined. Indeed, “Whether or not we know much or anything about the ‘historical’ Jesus is probably a well nigh insoluble question.”

For Frei, the resurrection is where Jesus is identified as Christ, and the significance of the resurrection has to do with his continuing presence among his believers. This is the primary message of the resurrection, and any attempt to determine whether the early Christians saw it as literal or metaphorical, or to prove it was a bodily resurrection, or to ascertain historical ‘fact,’ is a distraction, for modernistic and reductionist attempts such as these are of no help to

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our faith. They will distract us from the message of Christ’s living presence. He affirms the historicity of a bodily resurrection, but that it can neither be confined within, nor confirmed by, historical research. Furthermore, he insists upon the importance of the temporality of Christ’s presence, and thus affirms the helpfulness of historical research for Christian theology, but maintains that this cannot be the foundation of faith in Christ’s living presence. Frei argued, “The personal dignity of Jesus Christ as redeemer is known quite apart from the occurrence or nonoccurrence of the resurrection,” and because direct access to the resurrection does not exist, ascertaining the historical factuality of the claim of Jesus’ resurrection is unnecessary. Käsemann, Bornkamm, and Frei provide valuable contributions toward latter twentieth century Jesus research, namely highlighting the role of narrative. Yet reducing the resurrection to no more than narrative, stripping it of its historical nature – its elements that bear continuity with empirical reality – divorces the resurrection from one of the central tenets of its eschatological framework: the reaffirmation of creation and the redemption of history itself.

Edward Schillebeeckx argues:

Historical study of Jesus is extremely important, it gives a concrete content to faith; but it can never be a verification of the faith. A historically reconstructed picture of Jesus can never do more than allow for or keep a place for the Christian interpretation; it cannot from its own standpoint make this obligatory.

Historical research and its findings cannot function as foundation for faith, but it is certainly not a negative task. Schillebeeckx in fact states, “A Christianity or kerygma minus the historical Jesus of Nazareth is ultimately vacuous – not Christianity at all.” However, the resurrection eludes historical research, functioning as Jesus’ glorification. The empty tomb tradition did not lead to the belief in the resurrection, rather God exalted Jesus to the heavenly places after his

90 Frei, The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative, 316.
93 Ibid., 76.
death. Some of the early Christians reflected upon Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection within an apocalyptic context, leading them to the conclusion that Jesus lived on in God, and hence the resurrection referred to this exaltation. Through this ‘resurrection’ and exaltation, God has ushered in the “eschatological times” by accomplishing his “definitive saving action” in Jesus, who God has now identified himself with and who now is himself the rule of God.\footnote{Ibid., 543. Cf. 73-76, 524-543.}

Similarly connecting the resurrection with Jesus’ exaltation and glorification was Joachim Jeremias. He argues that “there is nothing comparable to the resurrection of Jesus anywhere in Jewish literature,” and that nowhere is resurrection, or a resurrection to glory, an anticipated event \textit{within history}. Rather, resurrection “always and without exception means the dawn of God’s new creation.” The disciples, therefore, interpreted the appearances of the risen Jesus eschatologically, believing they were witnessing the dawn of a new age. Indeed, they were witnessing the \textit{eschaton}. Jeremias claims that this understanding explains the raising of many others in Matthew 27, and the earthquakes of Mark 13.8. The resurrection was not an event in the course of contingent history, but a reference to Jesus’ entry into glory.\footnote{Joachim Jeremias, \textit{New Testament Theology}, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1971), 308-10.} The stress upon the resurrection as heralding a new eschatological age is indeed true, yet to deny it a place within history is a step too far for, as will be seen in chapter five, the resurrection of the dead signalled not simply the beginning of a new age, but the redemption of the old. Schillebeeckx and Jeremias have accentuated the former and ignored the latter, have emphasized the discontinuous at the expense of the continuous.

It should be noted here that the reason many of these scholars avoid the language of ‘body’ and present the resurrection as some sort of disembodied glorification is because they are responding to the critical hermeneutics of previous eras. Their understanding of Jesus’ resurrection is, like those in the ‘No Quest’ era, largely a response to the critical scrutinization
of the historical Jesus, refusing to subject the resurrection claim to the same historical inquiry that demanded the strict application of the principle of analogy. The assumption hence remains that that the main emphasis of ‘resurrection’ envisages little more than the reanimation of a personal body, despite it being re-interpreted in a metaphorical fashion.

Another of the post-Bultmann ‘New’ questers was Willi Marxsen, who sceptically suggested that attempts to reach the historical Jesus have failed and will continue to fail. With Käsemann, he insists upon the continuity between the historical Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of faith. However, we can know very little about the historical Jesus because all that is available to us are interpretations of him. It is, in fact, impossible to access the historical Jesus because it is impossible to bypass these interpretations. This does not mean that these events are not historical, but the historian can never go further than the person telling the story about Jesus. Marxsen, with Frei and Schillebeeckx, contend that the resurrection eludes historical research because it was a miracle. Claiming that there were no eyewitnesses to the resurrection, the resurrection tradition arose as “an inference derived from personal faith.” More specifically, the miracle was not the resurrection of Jesus, but the birth and finding of faith. This miracle of faith was expressed in the declaration that Jesus was risen. Hence, the claim of the resurrection was not understood as an event that happened to Jesus, but was the disciples’ faith in the continuing cause of Jesus after his death, now taken up by the disciples. I argue in chapter four that though it is very true that it is impossible to bypass interpretations of events, this does not make this any less historical. Furthermore, as with others before him, the negation of the historical with regard to the resurrection is to ignore the continuous aspects of the resurrected reality.

The systematic theologian Jürgen Moltmann engaged with many of the same questions regarding the historical Jesus of Nazareth. With Pannenberg, Moltmann was involved in the theological movement, the ‘Theology of Hope,’ where eschatological perspectives were intertwined into their entire theological project, rather than being relegated to the end of a systematic theology. Moltmann fits comfortably in this movement, as seen particularly in his book, *Theology of Hope*, in which he argues:

> Eschatology means the doctrine of the Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it. From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. … A proper theology would therefore have to be constructed in the light of its future goal. Eschatology should not be its end, but its beginning. 98

Specifically, the Christian hope is “resurrection hope,” for in Jesus’ resurrection the future of creation is revealed, especially in contrast with the cross; rather than death, God now offers life. This hope thereby enables and equips faith in the present, not as escapism, but as a commission: “Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it,” and attempt to bring about change. 99

Although he viewed the resurrection as an event that happened within temporal history, and argued that the disciples were recipients of appearances of the risen Jesus and that the tomb was in fact empty, he did not want to put the resurrection under the scrutiny of historical research. The proper way to approach the resurrection is not via any modern scientific methodology, but to connect it to the future eschatological hope. The resurrection happened within *eschatological* history and is thus neither accessible nor demonstrable by historical investigation. For Moltmann, Jesus’ death upon the cross was a human action, whereas the resurrection was God’s action. Furthermore, “The cross of Christ stands in the time of this present world of violence and sin – the risen Christ lives in the time of the coming world of the

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new creation in justice and righteousness.”

The resurrection is the promise of new creation, the foundation of faith in Christ, and a “theological symbol for faith in the victory of God’s righteousness and justice at the end of history.” He argues:

> In his death on the cross Christ has vicariously anticipated the final judgment of God for all the Godless and the unjust, so that as a result his raising from this death manifests to everyone the righteousness and justice of God which puts everything to rights and makes the unjust just. His own raising from the dead was not a raising for judgment, such as Daniel 12 envisages for all the dead; it was a raising into the glory of God and eternal life.

For Moltmann, the resurrection is connected to the inseparability of God’s justice and the glorification of Jesus as Lord. It therefore is not a matter of ‘fact,’ something to be proved, but means participating in the anticipated eschatological power of God, awaiting for and hoping in the elimination of death at the *eschaton*. Knowing that God raised Christ from the dead, we can trust that this promise is certain.

The differences between this renewed, second ‘quest’ and its preceding ‘no’ quest era are curiously mixed. With regard to Jesus research, scholars following Käsemann re-affirmed the need for the historical research that their forebears minimized, and yet, with regard to the resurrection itself, there is very little change. The eschatological nature of the resurrection is fortuitously retained, though so is the emphasis upon its discontinuous nature to the extent that it is inappropriate to consider it an event within contingent history, despite nominal assertions that it might well have happened within ordinary time and space. What is of primary importance is the kerygmatic message of the resurrection, which may have been based on contingent events, but is now accessible to the modern historian and theologian as narrative and interpreted metaphorically, thus stripping it of any significant impact it might have had upon history and

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reality itself. These movements continue to fail to grasp the importance of balancing both the continuity and discontinuity of the resurrection with ordinary reality.

2.6. Vermes to Habermas: A Jewish Apocalyptic Resurrection

The gradual transition from the second to third quest is extremely arbitrary, and whether such a distinction is even necessary is unlikely. However, within the last forty years or so, historical Jesus research has increasingly emphasized the Jewish historical context of the early church, and a distinct new trend emerged that focused on first century Judaism. The origins of this trend are often credited to either Geza Vermes’ 1973 *Jesus the Jew*, Ben Meyer’s 1979 *The Aims of Jesus*, E. P. Sanders’ 1985 *Jesus and Judaism*, or the launch of the Jesus Seminar, also in 1985. However, it was likely a gradual evolution. N. T. Wright coined the term, ‘Third Quest,’ in an early article, and although it has been met with some recent resistance, the term remains in common parlance, and generally refers to an increased interest in the so-called “Jewish context” of the first-century world of the historical Jesus. Characteristic of this third quest is a political and subversive Jesus, a revolutionary who challenged societal norms, and the resurrection is largely understood as either his vindication or the continuation of his political and religious movement by his followers. Despite this, however, Jesus’ resurrection

104 Allison comments, “Sometimes history does suggest that we divide it in a particular way,” but at other times “the lines we pencil over history for our own practical ends, lines that beguile because they are convenient, are also delusive” (Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 15. Cf. Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical Jesus Research* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 52).

105 The sheer volume of material within this era makes it impossible to analyse every author within this era. This thesis analyses the most significant engagements specifically with the resurrection. Cf. Beilby and Eddy, eds., *The Historical Jesus*, 28-30; James G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Scholarly Projects for a New American Century* (London: Routledge, 2008), 145-72, who attributes the resurgence in interest in the Jewish context of Jesus to Israel’s geopolitical context of 1967, especially the increase in Israeli territory following the Six Day War.


108 Robert Myles has critiqued this characteristic emphasis upon subversion in his article “The Fetish for a Subversive Jesus,” where he argues that the promulgation of these ‘subversive’ Jesuses reflect the ideological, neoliberal capitalist agendas of their respective authors, wherein Jesus is counter-cultural enough without being too ‘radical.’ This subversive Jesus remains a comfortable Jesus, gesturing toward subversive ideals without seriously challenging the elite (Robert J. Myles, “The Fetish for a Subversive Jesus,” *JSHJ* 14, no. 1 (2016), 52-70).
has not adequately been interpreted in the light of the broader Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection of the dead, the language of resurrection being reduced to a physical and personal reanimation. Note again that this is not to say that these scholars have ignored the eschatological, but that they have been so primarily focussed on the body that the Jewish eschatological expectations have been read only in light of what is believed to have happened to Jesus’ personal body and existence.\(^\text{109}\)

This interest in the Jewish context is especially evident in the work of Geza Vermes and E. P. Sanders, particularly *Jesus the Jew* and *Jesus and Judaism*, respectively. Vermes argues against a physical resurrection, insisting that the evidence is “confused and fragile.” Since no one would have been expecting a resurrection, there was no purpose in the disciples faking a resurrection, hence the ‘resurrection’ was a later tradition, and Jesus’ predictions of resurrection were prophecy after the event.\(^\text{110}\) For Sanders, Jesus was a prophetic figure who envisaged an eschatological restoration of the Jewish people. The resurrection was the culmination of Jesus’ work which launched, and was the foundation of, the Christian movement; but he admits, “I have no special explanation or rationalization of the resurrection experiences of the disciples.”\(^\text{111}\) The resurrection was a story that attempted to portray an event that the authors did not understand, and thus will remain a mystery. All that can be said with certainty is that the disciples believed they experienced a risen Jesus.\(^\text{112}\) However, Vermes and Sanders have both mistaken the notion of resurrection, again assuming that such a reference

\(^{109}\) Janet Soskice argues that though the resurrection was very much an eschatological event, connecting it the image of the New Jerusalem, “What is at stake is the resurrection of the body” (Janet Martin Soskice, “Resurrection and the New Jerusalem,” in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, ed. Stephen T. Davis et al. (New York: OUP, 1997), 58 (emphasis mine)). Carey Newman views the resurrection as the inauguration and prolepsis of God’s eschatological glory, and as the event which generated a new community, the church. However, his focus is nonetheless upon Jesus’ post-mortem personal existence, arguing that the resurrection is the demonstration of Jesus’ divinity, which I feel limits the full scope of eschatological hope inherent within this event (Carey C. Newman, “Resurrection as Glory: Divine Presence and Christian Origins,” in *The Resurrection*, ed. Stephen T. Davis et al., 77-88).


\(^{112}\) E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 280.
referred to a mere personal reanimation continuous with the old. When unable to find compelling evidence of a physical, historical resurrection, Vermes concludes that it must simply be later tradition, insisting that the only historically certain fact is that the disciples believed they experienced a risen Jesus. Sanders has limited the resurrection to the person of Jesus. In both cases, the eschatological significance of the category of ‘resurrection of the dead,’ which incorporates the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope, has been reduced.

A major movement in this era of Jesus research was the public-oriented ‘Jesus Seminar’ group, headed by Robert Funk and launched in 1985. This group consisted of over one hundred scholars who voted on the authenticity and historicity of Jesus’ sayings and deeds, including notable scholars John Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg, and Burton Mack. Their findings are somewhat infamous for their sensationalism and rejection of many sayings and deeds traditionally attributed to Jesus, recorded in their publications, *The Five Gospels* and *The Acts of Jesus.* In *The Five Gospels,* all accounts of the resurrection and any sayings of Jesus post-resurrection are declared invented narratives added to the texts at much later dates.\(^{113}\) The Jesus Seminar received criticism – with Wright being one major detractor – and its influence has significantly diminished in recent decades.\(^{114}\)

However, some of its prominent members remain widely-cited New Testament voices, such as John Dominic Crossan. For Crossan, Jesus was a revolutionary, a poor peasant who sought to challenge the power structures and break down social conventions. Adopting a rigorous source criticism, Crossan argues for a hypothetical ‘Cross Gospel,’ an early stratum of the Gospel of

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Peter, which informed Mark and then the other Gospel narratives. However, none of the Gospels accepted the resurrection account of the Cross Gospel, which combined the resurrection, visions, and ascension. The burial, and consequently the empty tomb, was fiction invented by Mark, as was Joseph of Arimathea. Crossan is more concerned with the meaning of the resurrection and our response to it than determining the historicity of the supposed event, but insists that the resurrection represents Jesus’ ongoing presence and rejects a literal and physical return from the dead.115

Crossan notes that apart from many historical sources depicting crucifixions, archaeological evidence for this form of execution is minimal. Those who were crucified were either left as carrion, or given a shallow or communal grave, in both cases usually becoming food for scavengers. Burial was a privilege of the wealthy and influential, the sort of people who were not crucified. The tale of burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was a redacted and evolved tradition, reflecting early Christian hope. Regarding the eventual location of Jesus’ body, “By Easter Sunday morning, those who cared did not know where it was, and those who knew did not care.”116 The early Jesus movement knew very little about Jesus’ crucifixion, death or burial, and the Passion narratives developed over many years to explain the continued experience of Jesus’ presence and the eschatological arrival of the new kingdom of God; physical resurrection from the dead was unnecessary, for faith existed prior to Jesus’ death. Furthermore, these resurrection accounts, particularly those including named persons, are primarily linked with power relationships within the early Christian communities, to give certain people – such as Peter – authority within the infant church. The death, burial, and

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116 Crossan, Jesus: A Revolutionary, 158.
resurrection of Jesus are not “history remembered,” but “prophecy historicized,” a retrospective re-reading of the Hebrew Scriptures. However, it should be noted that resurrection was only one way of expressing Christian faith, and the appearances are only one way of expressing Christian experience, and thus these descriptions, especially Paul’s understanding of resurrection, should not be taken as normative for all early Christians.\footnote{Ibid., 124-92. Cf. Licona, \textit{The Resurrection of Jesus}, 519-32.}

The methodology of both the Seminar in general and Crossan have been heavily scrutinized. Crossan’s Cross Gospel hypothesis has not received a significant following and the non-canonical Gospel of Peter is generally considered a later second century text. Its short resurrection narrative will be discussed in chapter five, which seems to draw heavily from, and expand upon, Mark’s narrative. The search for an ‘authentic’ history is largely criticized, and an emergent alternative – ‘social memory theory’ – will be addressed in §4.3 and incorporated into the methodology of this thesis. The Seminar’s insistence that only this ‘authentic’ history is important is short-sighted. The development of early Christian tradition and theology as it interacts with the memory of Jesus and prior theological categories should not be downplayed. Furthermore, Crossan has overly stressed the discontinuous elements of Jesus’ resurrection, that is, his continued existence and presence in the lives of the disciples, arguing that the reanimation of a personal, corporal body is unnecessary.

Similarly for Marcus Borg Jesus was something of a revolutionary, albeit seeking a religious ‘spiritual’ revolution, by challenging the Jerusalem Temple elite to renew Judaism. Jesus was a sage, but Borg insisted that “every story and word of Jesus has been shaped by the eyes and hands of the early church.”\footnote{Marcus J. Borg, \textit{Jesus: A New Vision} (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 9.} In other words, it is impossible to access the ‘historical’ Jesus apart from the kerygmatic proclamation of Jesus as the Christ. Contemporary historical studies have resulted in divergent portrayals of Jesus, which reinforces, on the one hand, the belief that
very little can in fact be known about Jesus, and on the other hand, that it is possible to construct whatever portrayal the historian desires. However, it is possible to ascertain historical knowledge about Jesus, indeed as much as any other ancient historical figure. Despite the fact that the Gospels are not “straightforward historical documents” and that the biblical portrait of Jesus was formed by the early church, we can be relatively certain about who Jesus was and what he would have taught. When it comes to the resurrection, however, we simply cannot know what actually happened or if something happened to Jesus’ body. Again the question has to do with a re-animated body. However, we can know that it was not believed to be a mere resuscitation, and thus it means transformation rather than return to a previous state of existence. The disciples experienced Jesus as a living reality in an entirely new way, who was said to have been “raised to God’s right hand.” Borg is certainly correct in asserting that resurrection meant far more than resuscitation, and acknowledges its transformative implications; but he entirely disregards any element which may bear continuity with ordinary reality. For Borg, Jesus’ resurrection meant his transformation into a new reality which is completely discontinuous with his pre-crucifixion body.

Another significant voice in the Jesus Seminar was Burton Mack, who, similar to Borg, argued that Jesus was a sage seeking societal renewal. Mack insists that the New Testament portrayal be ignored when seeking the historical Jesus, for Mark purportedly wrote his Gospel after the first Jewish-Roman war, which ultimately skewed any historical portrayal of Jesus. Rather, Q source was the earliest written record of the Jewish movement, which recorded the advance of a community who, over time, attributed more and more sayings to Jesus. A grand mythology thus developed surrounding the teacher Jesus. No account of Jesus’ death and resurrection were included in Q, but the Gospels developed this idea around a martyr mythology and upon the

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120 This, I believe, is an overstatement. A good argument could be made that though Q does not explicitly discuss Jesus’ resurrection, it could possibly presuppose it. I will return to this in chapter five.
belief that whatever happened to Jesus happened “for us,” as reflected in Greek hero mythology. Jesus’ death was seen as a martyrdom for the Christian cause, and the resurrection developed as a result of recognizing God’s involvement, despite the negative and unclean connotations of the idea of resurrection of the body in both Greek mythology and Jewish theology. Mack argues, “It was that need to imagine God’s involvement in an otherwise implausible martyrdom for a very problematic cause that resulted in the odd and grotesque notion of God raising Jesus from the dead.” 

Resurrection was initially unnecessary for the early Christians, for whom the sayings Gospel – Q – was enough to sustain faith. They did not need a divine or resurrected Jesus to recognise him as a wise teacher and sage, and to live according to his teachings. However, Q was eventually lost to antiquity, replaced by the popular Gospels. As with the others in the Jesus Seminar, Mack mistakenly searches for a Jesus separate from the early tradition that built around him; where Crossan highlights the Gospel of Peter, Mack makes almost exclusive use of Q and re-constructs it to outright dismiss the resurrection. The resurrection he dismisses, however, is one of personal reanimation.

Others, such as James Dunn and Luke Timothy Johnson, proffered a metaphorical interpretation of the resurrection, not dissimilar to those of the first quest era. This is not to say that they have ignored historical questions, have not engaged in historical research, and have necessarily denied the resurrection. On the contrary, many, having engaged with the historical issues of the resurrection, insist that the only way to adequately talk about the resurrection is to do so metaphorically. Yet the assumption that the language of resurrection envisages personal reanimation remains. Unlike many before him, Dunn insists that historical research must not stop at Jesus’ death, believing that Christianity would simply not exist without the resurrection of Jesus. He affirms that the early Christians spoke of a bodily resurrection, rather

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than any variety of ‘spiritual’ resurrection, and that this was at the heart of Christian faith and “the fulcrum point on which all faith and hope turned.” However, the resurrection was accompanied by the glorification and exaltation of Jesus, and the resurrected body is not a body of flesh and blood, despite being continuous with, and analogous to, the pre-Passion body. Essentially, Jesus’ resurrected body was something entirely other, animated not by corporeal physicality, but by the Spirit. All other explanations, such as hallucinations or deceit, fail to account for all the historical data. Despite this, the resurrection goes beyond historical description, for the historical data is limited, and must therefore be understood as metaphor, symbolising God’s transformative work.

Similarly, Luke Timothy Johnson engages with the historical data but concludes that the resurrection eludes historical reconstruction. Christian faith cannot be based upon historical portrayals of Jesus, but rather upon the ongoing presence and power of Jesus. He claims:

If the resurrection means…the passage of the human Jesus into the power of God, then by definition it is not “historical” as regards Jesus, in the sense of a “human event in time and space.” By definition, the resurrection elevates Jesus beyond the merely human; he is no longer defined by time and space – although available to human beings in time and space! The Christian claim concerning the resurrection in the strong sense is simply not “historical.”

The resurrection comprised neither hallucinations, nor mere resuscitation, but was an “experience of [Jesus’] powerful presence.” He did not appear in passing to a few before disappearing, but was truly alive and appeared, in his full self, to his disciples. For Johnson, “the resurrection experience which gave birth to the Christian movement was the experience

125 Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 136. Johnson later argues that the resurrection is the perspective from which the evangelists composed their Gospel narratives, and therefore produces extremely biased accounts of Jesus. It was not simply the shaping of the stories, but the very selection of the stories, that was heavily influenced by the belief in Jesus’ resurrection and his ongoing presence. Therefore, it is impossible to get behind the New Testament texts, for this resurrection perspective cannot be bypassed (Luke Timothy Johnson, “Learning the Human Jesus: Historical Criticism and Literary Criticism” in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 164-65).
of the continuing presence of a personal, transcendent, and transforming power within the community.”

It is impossible to ascertain what this meant for Jesus’ physical body or in what form he appeared, but whatever happened was something utterly new, with Jesus sharing God’s life. The significance of the resurrection lies in the commissioning and empowerment of the early Christian community. The religious experience of the living and powerful Jesus – as Lord – engendered action and was subsequently the cause of the Christian movement. This is seen in the empowerment of the disciples and apostles, especially connected with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (John 20.21-23; Luke 24.47-49; Acts 2.1-33; Rom. 8.11; Gal. 3.3-5; 1 Thess. 1.5; Joel 2.28-32).

Thus far there is a vast array of differing interpretations of the resurrection in the second half of the twentieth century, yet I contend that none have fully grasped the significance of the Jewish category of resurrection of the dead, and methodologies which retain an insistence upon deciphering a historical Jesus divorced from communal and theological reflection and development are inadequate for the task. Mack, Dunn, and Johnson demonstrate the full spectrum of diverse opinions – Mack prioritizing Q material, thereby disregarding the resurrection entirely; Dunn proposing an immaterial resurrected reality; Johnson maintaining that resurrection as beyond normal history. Each have again assumed that resurrection entails a re-animated personal, corporeal body and stressed either the continuity or discontinuity of the resurrection with ordinary reality at the expense of the other.

Where Mack, Dunn, and Johnson interpret the resurrection as bearing theological significance, though avoiding or denying a resurrection within contingent history, some claimed the resurrection was purely psychological. The appearances of the risen Jesus were merely

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127 Ibid. 113-17; Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, 133-44.
hallucinations, and these hallucinations inspired the resurrection tradition. For example, Michael Goulder insists that Peter experienced hallucinations out of guilt, who then communicated this to the other disciples, who subsequently experienced some sort of corporate hallucination. Paul had intense emotional stress and doubts about Judaism, which culminated in a hallucination of the risen Jesus on the road to persecute the church in Damascus. During the time between Jesus’ death and the writing of the Gospels, the story became increasingly legendary, and many aspects – particularly the empty tomb – were embellishments. Mark has little to no developed tradition of the resurrection, compared to the later John. Goulder contends that the original view was that Jesus’ resurrection was immaterial and spiritual. This position is evidently very similar to Strauss, and Goulder has similarly presupposed an interpretation of resurrection as personal physical reanimation. Furthermore, later developments in the resurrection tradition are not necessarily unhistorical and, as with those seeking an ‘authentic’ historical Jesus, have ignored the interaction of communal memory of an event with prior theological categories, thereby downplaying the significance of the development of the Jewish category of resurrection in light of Jesus’ post-mortem existence.

Another who argues against the historicity of the resurrection is Gerd Lüdemann, who insists that it is impossible to know anything at all, historically, about the tomb and fate of Jesus’ body. He questions the ascension, believing it impossible for Jesus to have ascended physically into heaven, and having then excluded a physical ascension, he claims that it is nonsense to think that a decaying corpse – “which is already cold and without blood in its brain” – could once again be alive. Therefore, the resurrection can no longer be understood as a literal event,

128 E.g. Rom. 8.15; Gal. 5.1; Phil. 3.5.
in a “bloody way” – even though the crucifixion can – and the tomb was not empty, but full; modern science has made it impossible to regard the resurrection as a literal, historical event. Similar to Goulder, Lüdemann insists that Peter hallucinated out of guilt and sorrow, envisioning a risen Jesus to ease his anguish. Being a part of the lower intellectual culture, the disciples shared hallucinations of a risen Jesus when Peter told them of his, which then led to further mass hallucinations. Furthermore, the resurrection adds nothing substantial to faith, for the words and deeds of Jesus prior to his death were enough to inspire faith in the disciples and early apostles. Rather, resurrection referred to the disciples’ belief that Jesus had been exalted and united with God.\footnote{Ibid., 40-45; Gerd Lüdemann, \textit{The Resurrection of Jesus}, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1994), 180-83; Gerd Lüdemann, \textit{What Really Happened to Jesus: A Historiographical Approach to the Resurrection}, trans. John Bowden (Louisville: WJK, 1995), 130-35; Licona, \textit{The Resurrection of Jesus}, 495-505.} Lüdemann’s mistake is the same oft-repeated presupposition shared by many of those preceding him, that resurrection meant a mere physical and historical personal reanimation of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. It is hence no surprise that he struggled with this idea of resurrection and he correctly notes that it would be ridiculous to posit a physical, fleshly ascension. However, this is a misinterpretation of resurrection, as is its reduction to Jesus’ exaltation, which is, admittedly, an essential and central part of resurrection, but is not the sole purpose of resurrection. In rejecting a resurrection characterised by continuity with ordinary reality, Lüdemann presents resurrection as an entirely discontinuous event. Neither extreme respects the Jewish eschatological hope for the simultaneous reaffirmation of creation and its radical transformation; both continuity and discontinuity must be balanced in dialectic tension.

In the latter period of the twentieth century, there were many who maintained a literal and physical interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection. Here, a personal reanimation is defended. For example, the Baptist theologian Stanley Grenz argues for the historical nature of the resurrection by arguing for the validity of both the empty tomb and the appearances. For the
former, he insists that it is extremely unlikely that (a) the tomb would be mistaken, for it is unlikely that so many would make the same mistake, (b) the disciples stole the body, for they were later willing to die for their belief in the resurrection, and (c) Jewish authorities stole the body, for it would have been easy for them to later squelch the Christian movement by producing the body, which they did not. He also argues that the ‘swoon’ theory – that Jesus was removed from the cross before he died – has been refuted many times and that it is extremely unlikely that Jesus could have survived crucifixion. For the latter, he suggests they may be considered events that occurred within contingent history because so many claimed to have witnessed Jesus alive, and that it is unlikely that the appearances were either (a) fabrications, for many of the witnesses are named, or (b) hallucinations, for hallucinations do not occur in situations described in the New Testament, especially mass hallucinations. The resurrection, connected to Jesus’ earlier claims, functions as confirmation and the grounding of his divinity, giving hope to the early disciples and to us, and through the resurrection, God is establishing his kingdom on earth.132

William Lane Craig, a popular philosopher and theologian, has been a prominent and vocal apologist and supporter of a literal and physical understanding of the resurrection. Arguing that rejecting the resurrection based on an a priori conviction that miracles do not happen – citing Lüdemann in particular – is a logical fallacy, Craig employs several rigid tests commonly used by historians to determine the best explanation for the historical data. These tests include ‘explanatory scope,’ testing the hypothesis according to its ability to explain as much of the data as possible; ‘explanatory power,’ testing the hypothesis according to its ability to explain the data as effectively as possible; ‘plausibility,’ testing the hypothesis according to the likelihood of the event happening within its particular context; ‘not ad hoc or contrived,’ testing

the hypothesis according to the number of additional hypotheses required; and ‘outstripping
rival theories,’ testing the hypothesis according to the likelihood of alternative hypotheses. He
insists that an understanding of the resurrection as a physical re-animated body fulfils each of
these tests, namely that it explains the empty tomb, the appearances, and the birth of
Christianity, it explains why the body was gone, and why multiple experiences of the
resurrected Jesus were reported, that it is plausible within its religiously charged context, that
only one other hypothesis is required – that God exists133 – and that all other alternative
theories, such as hallucinations, deliberate deception, etc. fail to fulfil these tests. He claims,
“The most reasonable historical explanation for the facts of the empty tomb, the resurrection
appearances, and the origin of the Christian Way would therefore seem to be that Jesus rose
from the dead.”134

Similar to Craig, and adopting almost identical arguments, is Gary Habermas. Habermas
singularly focuses on the historical question of Jesus’ resurrection,135 arguing that naturalistic
theories fail to explain away the resurrection: “The historical Resurrection becomes the best
explanation for the facts, especially because the alternative theories have failed. Therefore, it
may be concluded that the Resurrection is a probable historical fact.”136 Despite this,
naturalistic hypotheses have experienced a revival recently after being criticised for most of
the twentieth century. Here he cites Lüdemann, Goulder, and Marxsen. However, none of these
naturalistic theories have been successful, and their continued dismantling only serves to
strengthen the historical argument. He further rejects the notion that the resurrection was a later

133 This single hypothesis obviously poses serious and significant challenges and difficulties in itself, but Craig’s
central point is that there is only one additional hypothesis required. Cf. Allison, Resurrecting Jesus, 337-44,
where this issue is dealt with in some detail.
134 William Lane Craig, Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus
Resurrection: Fact or Figment?, 32-37.
135 His titular website is dedicated to resources concerning the resurrection: www.garyhabermas.com.
136 Gary Habermas in Miethe, Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate, ed. Terry L. Miethe (New
development, claiming that it is possible to trace early belief in resurrection back to the disciples, and insists that the best understanding of Jesus’ resurrected body is that it was indeed bodily, but a radically changed body.\(^{137}\)

These defences of a physical and historical resurrection have some credibility as well as some significant methodological problems (methodology will be discussed in chapters three and four), but the more serious theological issue with their arguments is their minimizing the truly miraculous in the resurrection, clinically dissecting it apart from its communal and theological context. They each assume that the language of ‘resurrection’ refers to little more than the reanimation of a personal body, rather than comprehensively understanding resurrection within its broader Jewish eschatological context. Those who take the resurrection as metaphor or who have denied it outright have done so because they have rejected the possibility of the reanimation of a personal body; this assumed meaning has conditioned their criticism. Vermes rejects a physical resurrection on the basis of limited evidence; Crossan argues that victims of crucifixion were left for carrion or buried in a shallow communal grave and so no one would have known or cared for the whereabouts of Jesus’ body; though Borg’s risen Jesus is of an entirely discontinuous existence, it is still primarily focussed on the reanimation of Jesus’ personal body, transformed or otherwise; Dunn’s resurrection is similar, in that it was Jesus’ body that was glorified, but animated by the Spirit; Mack highlights the unclean connotations of a reanimated corpse; Lüdemann questions the validity of the ascension on account of the impossibility of a physical ascension and rejects the notion that a decaying corpse could come alive again. Hence, they have sometimes over-emphasized the continuous nature of the resurrection at the expense of the discontinuous.

2.7. Twenty-First Century: Resurrection at All?

As historical Jesus scholarship has gradually evolved, interpretations of the resurrection seem to have dwindled, old arguments becoming repetitious and stale, debates becoming somewhat lethargic, and interest seemingly lessening. As will be seen particularly in chapter four, the search for a history divorced from theological embellishment and the influence of the early church has been heavily criticized. Its accompanying methodological criteria, reflecting a positivistic historiography, has fallen out of favour, while an alternative emphasis upon communal reflection and social memory has emerged. This social memory theory will be discussed further in chapter four, but it should be noted that many of the social memory theorists, such as Chris Keith and Anthony le Donne, have said little about the resurrection. Much of the discussion regarding the resurrection has been reserved for the debates between sceptics and apologists, though most of the arguments are not particularly new, and in the area of systematic theology nothing especially new or ground-breaking has been said. Despite this, some contributions have been made which are worth discussion.

One of the more significant popular sceptical voices in recent polemic against the Christian faith is that of Christopher Hitchens, who is highly critical of the claim of a historical resurrection. However, as with many of the other sceptics analysed so far, he has merely succeeded in critiquing a caricature, a resurrection that is strictly physical and entirely continuous with the pre-crucifixion body. Doubting the validity of the NT as an appropriate source of evidence for the resurrection, Hitchens repeats the untenably positivistic adage, “Exceptional claims demand exceptional evidence.” Precisely what constitutes ‘exceptional’ is unclear and probably impossible to determine; it is a methodological scapegoat for those

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138 Though Hitchens is not a credentialed NT scholar, his arguments are worth brief attention as representative of the sceptical anti-Christian polemic prevalent in popular discourse.

139 Christopher Hitchens, God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything (London: Atlantic, 2007), 43.
with an *a priori* prejudice against whatever it is that is in question, in this instance a resurrection. This evidence, he insists, does not exist for the resurrection. Instead, referencing the raising of Lazarus and Jairus’ daughter, he argues that resurrections were essentially commonplace. Furthermore, the resurrection stands on ethically dubious grounds, that though one might consider a voluntary death on behalf of others an honourable act, a resurrection is not really dying, thereby making Jesus’ sacrifice “tricky and meretricious.”

Being intentionally inflammatory, he then reassures his readers that “we are finally entitled to say that we have a right, if not an obligation, to respect ourselves enough to disbelieve the whole thing.” The resurrection that Hitchens is critiquing is one that was no more than a personal reanimation and has not considered the immense eschatological significance that the early Jesus movement applied to the resurrection.

On the other hand, many apologists have equally assumed such an interpretation, and have sought to defend this position, reflecting the arguments of Craig and Habermas in particular. Norman Geisler goes so far as to say that the risen Jesus returned “in the same material body of flesh and bones that had been crucified,” and insists that the resurrection “has overwhelming historical reliability.” The ‘overwhelming’ proof of Jesus’ return from the dead is the appearance tradition, that according to the Apostle Paul and the Gospels, he appeared to over five hundred people, was seen and touched, and even ate food with his disciples. Therefore, he maintains, the evidence “conclusively shows that only resurrection can explain all the facts.” Geisler’s argument is naïve, but his most serious fallacy is the

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140 Ibid., 42-43.
141 Ibid., 43.
142 Norman L. Geisler, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook of Christian Evidence*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 128. Furthermore, “Jesus’ resurrection was physical, not spiritual,” and Paul’s use of the term ‘spiritual body’ in 1 Cor. 15.44 means a “spirit-dominated physical body” (p.129). This ambiguous statement is convoluted and is going beyond what Paul was arguing, but I will return to this in chapter five. Geisler seems to be attempting to argue against a purely immaterial resurrection and in the process has ignored the element of discontinuity, the miraculous and transformative, inherent in the notion of resurrection.
143 Ibid., 129.
144 Ibid.
assumption that resurrection refers to such an indisputably material event, citing instances in the Gospels of continuity while ignoring examples of radical transformation (which will be addressed in chapter six). The nature of Jesus’ resurrection, for Geisler, is a personal re-animated body that bears continuity with his pre-crucifixion body, bearing even the same human flesh. He concedes that there are differences, citing Jesus’ sudden appearing and disappearing, and his ascension; but rather than stressing the significance of Jesus’ resurrection he merely minimizes the other accounts of returning from death, stressing that these people – Lazarus and Jairus’ daughter, for example – died again at a later stage. While the distinction between these accounts and Jesus’ resurrection is an important observation, he has minimized the significant eschatological implications of the application of the category of resurrection of the dead, which meant far more than Geisler allows, to the person of Jesus. Geisler has stressed the continuity of resurrection and has completely disregarded the discontinuous elements.

Bruce Milne, in his theological endeavour, similarly engages in the apologetic task of asserting the historicity of the resurrection, arguing that the empty tomb, appearances, and the transformation of the disciples, as evidence, simply refuses to go away: “The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is as irrefutable as…the bricks and mortar of the nearest church building.” Such hyperbole is not uncommon in apologetic arguments, but Milne seems to place the entire Christian faith and indeed the existence of God on the historicity of a physical and personal resurrection that seemingly bears no distinction to any other historical event. Milne does indeed note the Jewish theological background, but quotes Isaiah 26.19, Ezekiel 37.1-14, and Daniel 12.2 only to prove the possibility of resurrections, simply assuming that resurrection refers to a personal reanimation, despite stressing how different Jesus’ resurrection was from the Jewish notion, namely that resurrections were expected at the end of history and

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145 Ibid., 259.
147 Ibid., 182.
was to be a corporate – not individual – event.\textsuperscript{148} He fails to acknowledge the much broader eschatological significance of the resurrection, and that those passages cited – as demonstrated in chapter five – are largely metaphorical descriptions of the eschatological hopes for redemption, judgment, and transformation. He notes that Jesus’ resurrection was not “concerned with mere restoration of physical life,”\textsuperscript{149} but then does not expand on this, or on the enormous theological implications of such an assertion. Milne has succeeded only in joining the long line of advocates for a merely continuous resurrection, downplaying the elements of transformation and upheaval inherent in the notion of resurrection of the dead.

Michael Licona argues likewise, presenting what he calls a ‘new historiographical approach,’ which is little more than a reframing of a positivistic method, including the reaffirmation of many of the criteria of authenticity, in light of recent postmodern thought. Though he affirms the influence of an individual’s ‘horizon’ upon their historical investigation, and commendably affirms his own desire for a historical resurrection, nevertheless he succumbs to a modernist empiricism.\textsuperscript{150} He admits that not everyone will interpret the ‘facts’ as he does, but nevertheless presents the evidence, arguing for their authenticity and reliability, in such a way as to imply that any reasonable person would surely agree with him. Furthermore, in what is rather surprising considering the present trends in historical Jesus research, he has only marginally examined the notion of resurrection in Jewish literature, for if he did so I am convinced he would be far less optimistic of the possibility of ascertaining the brute historicity of this event. Licona also worked with Habermas on the 2004 publication \textit{The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus}, where they argue for a thoroughly physical resurrection, that the Synoptics “portray a

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 183-84.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 184.
\textsuperscript{150} Michael R. Licona, \textit{The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach} (Downers Grove: IVP, 2010), 107-32. Precisely what constitutes his methodology as ‘new’ is difficult to determine.
bodily resurrection of Jesus in the plainest of terms,“¹⁵¹ a body of flesh and bones, that could be touched, and that could eat. This is clearly an exaggeration, for there is much in the Synoptics – let alone John – which would suggest that nothing is described in “the plainest of terms.” Yes, there are instances in the Synoptics which would imply a physicality (Matt. 28.9, 13; Luke 24.37-43), but there is much to suggest otherwise, such as his not being recognized (Matt. 28.17; Luke 24.41) and his ability to appear and disappear (Luke 24.31). Furthermore, contrary to Licona and Habermas, the empty tomb does not necessarily imply a physical resurrection. After all, if this was the purpose of the inclusion of the empty tomb tradition in Mark, it is surprising that Jesus is absent; if Mark was arguing for a bodily resurrection, why is there no body? They defer to Jesus’ newly imbued immortality as explanation for the differences in his body, differences which “may explain a degree of uncertainty.”¹⁵² This seems rather simplistic and doesn’t adequately explain the differences. A continuous re-animated body has again been overemphasized with the discontinuity receiving only a marginal mention.

Another scholar who rejects the resurrection as an event that happened to Jesus is Pieter Craffert. Viewing the methodologies of much of the earlier quests as positivistic and modernistic, he proposes a social-scientific, post-modern approach to historical research, which he labels as ‘cultural bundubashing.’¹⁵³ He defines cultural bundubashing

as an interpretive and interdisciplinary approach to historiography, [deviating from alternative approaches] in being explicitly culturally sensitive. This applies to the social type analysis as well as to those elements which are described as either supernatural events or mythical creations. …This [approach] takes its clues from the way in which anthropologists (specifically historical anthropologists) would go about understanding historical figures in foreign cultures.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Ibid., 158.
¹⁵³ ‘Bundubashing,’ he explains, is a South African term for off-road driving, which he employs in this instance to refer to finding an alternative route to the two major ‘highways’ of historical Jesus research seen in Wrede and Schweitzer, which N. T. Wright calls the ‘Wredebahn’ and the ‘Schweitzerstrasse,’ respectively (Pieter F. Craffert, “Mapping Current South African Jesus Research: The Schweitzerstrasse, the Wredebahn and Cultural Bundubashing,” Religion & Theology 10, no. 3 (2003), 339-41.)
This cultural bundubashing views language as essentially cultural and is thereby limited in its descriptive scope. The interpreter must therefore incorporate meanings imported by the particular cultural context in question. This is a reaction to modernistic tendencies to apply modernist criteria to the Gospel narratives. The Gospels include many events which modern readers find extraordinary that were considered acceptable to first century readers, such as the miracles of Jesus. The evangelists “did not find it necessary to explain to their readers that there is a difference between the actual historical person and the kind of figure that they are describing.”

When applying this methodology to the resurrection, Craffert can conclude that the resurrection was understood as a literal event, but one that was framed within the present cultural categories of the time. That is, resurrection was a fundamentally cultural event, one that could be taken literally then, but not necessarily today. Furthermore, resurrection was only one of many afterlife possibilities. Visions and apparitions were common in the Mediterranean world and were regarded then as literal and real, and thus described as such. However, we must be careful not to read modern metaphysical notions of reality into these historical narratives. For a contemporary audience we need not assume the resurrection was a literal bodily event, but this does not prevent us from interpreting the resurrection, within a first century Jewish context, as such, as a cultural phenomenon. The early disciples, in a moment of ecstasy, likely shared a collective hallucination. Craffert has, however, misunderstood what resurrection meant in ancient Jewish eschatology, and has simply assumed that it means an individual re-animated body, just one of the many afterlife options. I agree with his insistence upon placing the

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157 Ibid., 419.
historical event within the contextual categories of understanding, rather than applying modern categories upon a historical event, but Craffert has largely interpreted the resurrection within the wrong context, that is, a Hellenistic one. We will see in chapter five (§5.2) that Hellenistic ideas of the afterlife were influential upon certain pockets of Jewish theology, and there is a great deal of diversity, but that the category of ‘resurrection of the dead’ through which Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted is Jewish eschatology and bore considerable significance within this context. Resurrection cannot be reduced to a mere personal reanimation, comparable to any one of many afterlife options, but that within its ancient Jewish eschatological context, signalled the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of hope for the end of history, including both the reaffirmation of creation and its radical transformation, a dialectic tension between continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality. Daniel Migliore gets somewhat closer:

As attested in Scripture, the resurrection of Christ is an event that cannot be captured within the limits of a purely historical or a purely private perspective. “Resurrection” in the biblical sense of the word belongs to late Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic hope. It points to the event in which, despite the suffering and persecution of God’s people, the final fulfillment of God’s covenant promises has begun. God’s raising of the crucified Jesus to new life is God’s concrete confirmation of the promise that evil will finally be defeated and justice will reign throughout God’s creation.159

Unfortunately he says little more than this, and doesn’t seem to explicitly connect resurrection with the fulfilment of these promises, rather that this event signals their imminent fulfilment. My argument is that resurrection is this fulfilment, the entirety of eschatological hope for the end of history is bound up within this category of resurrection of the dead. Hence, when the early Christians applied this to Jesus’ post-mortem existence, they are declaring something much larger than Jesus coming alive again. Michael Bird gets even closer in his assertion that “God does for Jesus in the middle of history precisely what many Jews thought he would do for all Israel at the end of history,”160 but limits his understanding of resurrection to “a metaphor

for Israel’s political restoration.”¹⁶¹ This is certainly part of it, but the Jewish hope for the end of history went well beyond politics and incorporated the transformation of the entire cosmos. A significant movement in historical Jesus research in recent years, and which clearly distinguishes this era from the ‘third’ quest, is the emphasis upon social and communal memory, a response to the methodology of dissecting the NT texts to ascertain ‘authentic’ history, and that the recording of history is heavily dependent upon memory and the communal retelling and reflection on this event, which in turn is heavily influenced by the specific situation of the one doing the recording.¹⁶² Hence, it is impossible to wrench the history of Jesus and the early church away from its theology, or the historical Jesus of Nazareth from the preached Christ of faith. Memory becomes intertwined with ideology and the categories of understanding of the time. This will be further addressed in chapter four, but we should note that this movement has said little about the resurrection, with the exception of Dale Allison, whose book Resurrecting Jesus includes an extensive section discussing the various interpretations of resurrection and the biblical material. His discussion is refreshingly restrained, free from the hyperbole that so often accompanies texts on the resurrection and exhibits careful discussion of the diversity of opinions without coming to a definitive answer. Ultimately he concludes that though there may be good historical support for the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus, the presence of alternative hypotheses denies the possibility of absolute historical certitude. For those who deny the existence of a God who intervenes within time, it is easier to believe, as outlandish as it might seem, that aliens re-animated Jesus’ corpse.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 126.
¹⁶² Advocates for social memory include Dale Allison, Chris Keith, Anthony Le Donne, and Rafael Rodríguez, whose work will be addressed in §4.3.
¹⁶³ Allison, Resurrecting Jesus, 331-340.
Allison considers several first-hand accounts of hallucinations, including some that he himself has experienced – which he assures were extremely life like – including instances within recent history that have involved physical touch, as well as mass hallucinations.\(^{164}\) Though he refuses to come to a conclusion regarding whether or not the resurrection occurred within contingent history, and despite claiming that arguments for an empty tomb are slightly more probable than alternatives, he seems to support the so-called ‘hallucination hypothesis,’ namely, that the disciples, perhaps out of extreme stress, hallucinated the risen Jesus. However, he concedes that if we accept the hallucination hypothesis, “we are still left with the question why a hallucination led a first-century Jew to confess that Jesus had been ‘raised from the dead.’”\(^{165}\)

This, I believe, is a very pertinent question.

Allison’s restrained considerations, his reluctance to either fully accept or deny the possibility of a literal and physical resurrection, and his straightforward admission of personal bias,\(^{166}\) is admirable. However, I am not convinced that hallucination is an adequate explanation for the application of the eschatological notion of resurrection of the dead to Jesus’ post-mortem existence. Though opinions regarding the afterlife were diverse in first century Jewish theology, the notion of resurrection rarely spoke of the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body but was almost always connected to the broader expectations for the end of history. On this basis, I maintain that a vision or theophany – neither of which are uncommon in Jewish tradition – would not compel the author to adopt the eschatologically-charged language of ‘resurrection of the dead.’

We must acknowledge that there are different ways of classifying visions, which Allison has done, and some kinds of visions might well have inspired eschatological speculation. Indeed,

\(^{164}\) Ibid., 275-97.

\(^{165}\) Ibid., 243.

\(^{166}\) Which is not uncommon – Licona, for example, admits his own prejudices – but this tactic of being upfront about personal bias is, I find, often little more than an attempt at being perceived as objective.
if one were to have a vision of a rejuvenated Jesus, particularly as a result of extreme emotional stress, this would have a marked effect upon one’s psyche. As this encounter is told and re-told (and is perhaps embellished over time) and others start having similar experiences, it would not be surprising if the belief that Jesus had come back to life would spread and become entrenched within the community of those who had been personally affected by Jesus. However, I am not convinced that this would have been enough to generate the resurrection beliefs that are present in the New Testament corpus. Visions, as noted, were not an uncommon phenomenon, and present within the New Testament itself are accounts of people returning from the dead, but Jesus’ post-mortem existence was described in significantly different fashions and with significantly greater eschatological connotations. Only something especially profound and extraordinary could convince the early Jesus movement to not only reappropriate, but develop and transform, this Jewish eschatological category.

Allison elsewhere discusses the Jewish roots of the resurrection of the dead, but only goes so far as to locate Jesus’ resurrection within the hope for the general resurrection, and with that the expectation of the events of the end of history. However, I contend that the notion of resurrection was connected to the broader eschatological hopes in such an inseparable way that the category of resurrection came to refer, in a metonymic sense, to a broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope. There is a subtle, but vitally important, distinction here: resurrection does not simply refer to the return to life of human beings which would then usher in the end of history, but that it refers, in actuality, to the end – fulfilment and culmination – of history itself and all that is associated with it, including the transformation of the cosmos, the dispensation of justice, and the establishment of a divine kingdom.

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The mistaken assumption that resurrection envisages primarily a personal reanimation is present also in recent feminist scholarship, particularly in gender and sexual ethics, and studies in power structures. Many feminist theologians have tended to avoid miracles, either because of a rejection of a literalist interpretation of the Bible which demands the submission of women, or due to a naturalistic scientific worldview.\(^{168}\) When the resurrection is addressed, such as by Heather Reichgott, a re-animated body is presupposed. Arguing against the ‘natural law’ understanding of sexuality (i.e., that human sexuality remains within the domain of heterosexuality on the basis that male and female genitals function complementarily and that the woman is biologically equipped to birth and feed children), Reichgott insists that resurrection inverts ordinary natural processes: “In the resurrection God takes a natural process and subverts it completely. As people of the resurrection, Christian women may be confident that God has completely subverted the ‘natural’ rules of gender once and for all.”\(^{169}\) This interpretation gestures toward a transformation that extends beyond Jesus’ body, but it is still primarily concerned with the \textit{body}.\(^{170}\) As is the understanding of the theologian Kathryn Tanner, who claims that the resurrection was the “natural consequence of the incarnation,”\(^{171}\) and that Jesus’ divinity is manifest “in the whole of his flesh resurrected – as the eternal life of his full, finished humanity, complete with all its wounds.”\(^{172}\) This physicality is graphically reaffirmed by Molly Haws, who argues that the body of the risen Jesus gradually transforms during the time between his prohibition of Mary holding onto him (John 20.17) and instructing


\(^{172}\) Kathryn Tanner, \textit{Christ the King} (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 301. Furthermore, it is the same body that is resurrected: “It is the crucified body that is glorified” (Tanner, \textit{Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity}, 118).
Thomas to touch the wound in his side (John 20.27). This transformation included the “restoration of circulation to tissue that had been deprived of it” and the “reanimation of dead tissue,” a process which “would have to be an experience more painful than anything most of us are able to comprehend.”

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the major literature on the resurrection. Evidently, this is an expansive field, but certain shifts in general historical Jesus research have influenced the various interpretations of the resurrection. This is particularly seen in the shifts between significant eras. Prior to the Enlightenment, the resurrection was interpreted as a thoroughly literal and physical resurrection, concerned with issues of physicality and the flesh, such as clipped nails and cut hair, but accompanying the emergence of the critical methodologies of the Enlightenment was a radical criticism and scepticism in interpretations of the resurrection. Miracles were largely dismissed and the resurrection was no more than mythological language and metaphor, as scholars sought to strip the New Testament of its theological embellishment to ascertain ‘what happened’ within temporal time and space. With Wrede and Schweitzer, this was largely abandoned, to be followed by an era labelled by some as the ‘No Quest’ era (which we saw was a misnomer). Within this period, the focus shifted away from historical research to a stress upon viewing the resurrection as ‘supra-historical,’ transcending ordinary history and evading historical inquiry. The existential nature of the resurrection was emphasized; what matters most is not what happened then, but the experience of the living Jesus now. Following Käsemann’s critique of Bultmann’s reticence toward history, the ‘Second Quest’ was birthed, emphasizing a continuity between the preached message of Christ and the historical person Jesus. The stress was upon a kerygmatic interpretation of the resurrection, which was ultimately

viewed as a metaphor (and not quite escaping the clutches of the supra-historical tendencies preceding this period). It is not quite clear at what point this quest became the third, or even whether such a distinction is necessary, but Jesus research gradually became increasingly interested in the Jewish context of Jesus and the early church. The early Christian movement was interpreted in terms of political revolution, and, read in the literary context of Jewish apocalyptic, the resurrection was seen as vindication of Jesus’ political efforts and as metaphor for the continuation of his work and presence. Within the last decade or so, interest in the resurrection has waned, seeming to have run out of steam. The debate rages between evangelistic atheists and apologists, though both continuing the arguments of previous generations.

This review has demonstrated that through all this time, the assumption has remained that the primary focus of the language of ‘resurrection’ refers to personal reanimation, and though the eschatological significance of this event is considered, it takes on a secondary, and indeed neglected, role. Rather than the body being read in light of the eschatological implications of the claim that Jesus was resurrected, these implications are generally read only in light of, or to support, the conclusions regarding the risen body. I will argue, particularly in chapter five, that this is a misunderstanding of the ancient Jewish eschatological notion of ‘resurrection of the dead,’ which so often views the nature of the risen body – when the issue is actually even addressed – as a peripheral concern. The real concern was of a much broader eschatological event. Hence, scholarship has failed to adequately uphold both the continuous and discontinuous elements of Jesus’ resurrection, which I contend must be held in dialectical tension, reflecting the Jewish hope for both the renewal and transformation of creation, and which explains the ambiguous descriptions of the risen Jesus in the New Testament. In the following two chapters, I will utilize the arguments of Pannenberg and Wright to present PCR,
which is a re-appropriation of Wright’s critical realism in light of the postfoundationalism of Pannenberg and other recent epistemologists.
3. Tension in Knowledge: of Objectivity and Subjectivity

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter traced the general trends in resurrection scholarship, arguing that interpretations have assumed that the language of ‘resurrection’ envisages the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body, and have subsequently failed to uphold both the continuous and discontinuous elements of Jesus’ resurrection. This chapter argues that a reason for the failure of much of this scholarship to incorporate both elements, and thus for a more complete historical and theological conception of the resurrection, is due to a presupposed ‘foundationalism’ which inhibits the adequate incorporation of the contextual categories of understanding, in this case the Jewish eschatological category of resurrection (which will be explored in chapter five). Section one argues that this presupposed foundationalism is deficient for the task of interpreting the resurrection. Instead, the epistemological framework of ‘postfoundationalism’ is preferred, which seeks to balance the positive contributions of foundationalism and ‘coherentism’. This is drawn largely from Pannenberg’s epistemology, in dialogue with recent epistemologists, such as Shults and van Huyssteen. This framework is built largely on the notion of mutually conditioning reciprocity. That is, various disciplines or experiences do not function as an epistemic foundation, but balance in a dynamic, dialectic tension. This framework is defended against two other alternatives to foundationalism, namely, coherentism and ‘theo-foundationalism,’ which is explored in section two.

From Pannenberg I draw the epistemological notion of postfoundationalism; from Wright I draw the hermeneutical model of critical realism, a mediating position between positivism and phenomenalism. This notion of critical realism was adopted by Wright and is an attempt to balance the belief in an external objective reality with the internal subjective interpretation of that reality. However, it is argued in section three that Wright’s version of critical realism often
reverts to a foundationalist empiricism. His critical realism is not critical enough, in that it does not allow for the ‘critical’ counterpoint to a naïve realism to be fully integrated into his methodology. In particular, though he stresses the role of worldviews in experiencing and interpreting reality, he fails to acknowledge the full extent to which the communal context of the author impacts how an event is interpreted and communicated. However, it is then argued that an adjusted version of critical realism is a more useful model as it aligns to the proposed postfoundationalism. This approach incorporates the contributions of recent developments within the school of critical realism – particularly the critique of a universal methodology.

Hence this chapter proposes PCR (Postfoundationalist Constructive Realism), which upholds the tension between the external and internal, the object and subject, the individual and community, in reciprocity. This PCR engages also with recent social memory theories, as they have become increasingly important in historical Jesus research, and which view history as the preservation of memory, memory which evolves in new contexts and is shaped by the subjective prejudices, desires, and prior frameworks of the one remembering. PCR is better suited to interpreting the resurrection as bearing both continuity and discontinuity in dialectic tension because it acknowledges both the external event and the historically and communally conditioned categories through which it was understood.

3.2. The Problem: The Prevalence of Foundationalist Empiricism

In the previous chapter, a historical survey of the general trends of interpretation of the resurrection revealed that these interpretations understand resurrection as the reanimation of a personal body and tended to emphasize either the continuous or discontinuous aspects of Jesus’ risen nature at the expense of the other. This first section argues that this is due to a presupposed foundationalist methodology and the hard empiricism that emerged as a result obscured the significance of the social construction of the Jewish category of ‘resurrection of the dead.’
Consequently, the language of resurrection was assumed to be a reference to personal reanimation, whether this was then interpreted literally, metaphorically, as myth, or as supra-history, rather than seeing within this category a reference to the broader eschatological hopes. In each case, a foundationalist methodology is presupposed. This is problematic, however, as foundationalism is itself problematic. Accompanied by an analysis of Pannenberg’s critique of modernist epistemology and Wright’s theoretical rejection of objective historiography – with both demonstrating a particular concern for moving away from positivism – a critique of foundationalism is developed in this section. As we will observe, this epistemological framework has several deficiencies, and the interpretations of the resurrection that have relied upon such a framework require reworking.

The first part of this section addresses the framework of foundationalism, and argues that its main deficiency is an inherent and insoluble infinite regress. Moreover, I show how much resurrection scholarship has presupposed such a framework. Following this, I make note of Pannenberg and Wright’s respective arguments against hard empirical methodologies to establish their reasoning for developing alternative epistemological frameworks. An interpretation of the resurrection that upholds both its continuous and discontinuous elements as a reflection of the Jewish eschatological category of resurrection of the dead requires a rethinking of these epistemological underpinnings, especially with regard to escaping the trappings of a hard foundationalist empiricism.

**Foundationalism and the Resurrection**

Epistemic foundationalism is a framework in which a belief is justified by the justification of the belief upon which it relies. Knowledge is essentially linear, with each known ‘fact’ built upon another. For example, I know that by putting a carton of milk in a refrigerator, that milk will remain cold and drinkable, and I know this because refrigerators are built in such a way
so as to retain a constant cold temperature, and I know this because \( c \) when I open the refrigerator door and put my hand inside the fridge, my hand becomes cold and \( d \) I have previously left milk inside a refrigerator before and it has in fact remained cold. This trivial example serves to demonstrate the chain of justification: \( a \) is true because of \( b \) which in turn is true because of \( c \) and \( d \). This chain is then grounded by ‘basic beliefs,’ non-inferential beliefs which are not justifiable by any other beliefs. This classical foundationalism is characterised by the belief in the possibility of absolute objectivity and universality, for basic beliefs are indisputable and universal, not informed by communal context, and a chain of beliefs built upon such a basic belief is thereby sheltered from personal prejudice.\(^1\) This is the basis for both empiricism and rationalism, the former founding knowledge upon sense experience and the latter upon reason. Foundationalism – stretching back to Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* – has formed the predominant epistemological framework for modernist movements, until the emergence of coherentist or nonfoundationalist frameworks in the second half of the twentieth century, which will be discussed in the following section.\(^2\)

The pre-eminent problem with foundationalism is the determination of what constitutes a basic belief. According to foundationalism, a belief is justified by the justification of the belief upon which it relies, which is justified by the belief upon which it relies, and so on *ad infinitum*. This is the problem of infinite regress, that is, for someone to hold a justified belief about anything, that person is required, within their finite minds, to understand, maintain, and be aware of this infinite chain of beliefs. This is obviously absurd. The notion of non-inferential basic beliefs is the foundationalist solution to this regress.\(^3\) A basic belief is a belief which requires no justification upon which subsequent justified beliefs might be built. Yet what constitutes this

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basic belief is unshakably ambiguous and arbitrary, as argued in particular by Peter Klein. These beliefs which are not inferred from other beliefs and are supposedly universal are ultimately no more than subjective speculation.\(^4\) The inevitable and unavoidable impact of communal contextuality and personal prejudice upon the formulation of knowledge has played no role in a hard foundationalist’s epistemological framework, and minimal impact in a soft foundationalism, such as Wright’s. Foundationalism is incapable of establishing coherent rules for determining what counts as self-evident, non-inferential, universal beliefs.\(^5\)

The failure of the interpretations of the resurrection, since the Enlightenment, to acknowledge and uphold both the continuity and discontinuity of Jesus’ risen nature with empirical reality is due in part to a presupposed foundationalist epistemology. Characteristic of the first ‘quest for the historical Jesus’ is an appeal to analogy; history is homogenous, therefore anything that is not analogous to contemporary experience must be deemed impossible, and therefore, because we have no experience of resurrections occurring today, we cannot know whether or not they occurred before. The basic, presumed universal, belief that history is homogenous justifies the belief in the need for analogy, which in turn justifies the belief that resurrections in general are impossible, justifying the belief that Jesus’ resurrection did not happen. By demanding a contemporary analogy, proponents of this view, such as Hume, Strauss, and Troeltsch, have stressed the continuity of the resurrection with ordinary reality and have left no space for the discontinuous. Those responding to this general view, who argue instead for the historicity and physicality of the resurrection, such as Spurgeon, Habermas, Craig, Grenz, Licona, Geisler, and Milne, adopt a hard empiricist historical method, mustering as much evidence as possible (albeit predominately circumstantial) on the belief that when considered


\(^5\) Shults, \textit{The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology}, 31-38.
objectively and free from personal bias even the most sceptical of doubters will be convinced. Much polemic has been produced against this response, present for example in the works of Reimarus and Hitchens, believing that the weight of evidence will instead be interpreted in such a way that the most hopeful believer will renounce their faith. Others, such as Crossan, Wrede, Käsemann, and Dunn maintain a similar historiography, though interpreting it as metaphor or myth. The problem with each of these positions is that they each presuppose empiricism (itself a foundationalist model, empiricism is the theory that knowledge is based on sense experience, on data that is measurable, repeatable, and testable)\(^6\) and the belief in universal objectivity, and have compared the resurrection to other ordinary events, testing it according to the ordinary methods of testing ordinary objects, and have, subsequently, stripped the resurrection of any trace of the extraordinary, the discontinuous.

Contrarily, those whose interpretation of the resurrection places it in the category of ‘supra-historical,’ such as Bultmann, Barth, Rahner, and Moltmann, maintain that by its eschatological nature the resurrection transcends ordinary experience and so cannot be empirically judged or tested and is, therefore, entirely inaccessible and relegated to the realm of faith. Again, empirical sense experience is foundational, but they declare the resurrection to be so discontinuous that it cannot be experienced, at least not according to the senses, and leave no room for the continuous. In other words, if we cannot say anything *empirical* about the resurrection on account of it transcending normal experience, then it cannot be treated as an event within ordinary contingency. Related to this is the argument that necessary truths cannot be founded upon contingent historical events, reflecting Lessing’s ‘ugly great ditch,’ as seen in Kähler, Bornkamm, Schillebeeckx, and Johnson. According to this position, knowledge of the past is partial and provisional, the antithesis to what theological knowledge should be. Hence,

\(^6\) Of course, not all foundationalists are empiricists, but the core problem of empiricism lies precisely in its foundationalism.
an eschatological event such as Jesus’ resurrection invariably eludes empirical historical reconstruction and so the important issue is not the question of the historicity and nature of the resurrection but rather its kerygmatic message. These scholars are asserting the need for a foundation upon which to base a ‘historical’ resurrection and when unable to find one in historical enquiry conclude that the kerygmatic, rather than its historical, nature is what is important. In diminishing its importance as an event that occurred within contingent history, the continuity of the resurrection within ordinary history has subsequently similarly been diminished.

Before moving on, it should be noted that this thesis is not an outright rejection of foundationalism, but simply highlighting its weaknesses. Obviously, there are stronger and weaker forms of foundationalism. Ultimately, all versions have some weaknesses that are difficult to overcome, such as those discussed in this section. On the other hand, though the problems of foundationalism are significant, there are significant problems with its counterpart, coherentism (to which we will return below, but is the notion that a belief is justified only by how well it coheres with other beliefs). As will be seen in §3.2, I will advocate a version of post-foundationalism that seeks to incorporate the strengths of both frameworks, as well as the strengths of both poles of the recent epistemological debate of internalist or externalist justification, in a careful dialectic. Neither Pannenberg nor Wright fit neatly within either the hard foundationalist or coherentist camp, though despite his critical realist proposal, Wright could possibly be described as a soft foundationalist on account of his reversion to a form of empiricism. However, in light of recent discussion, their methodologies are underdeveloped, which will be demonstrated in the following sections.
Pannenberg and Logical Positivism

Methodology was a particular concern for Pannenberg, especially his critique of the underlying foundationalist assumptions of much post-Enlightenment thought. His later publications presuppose his earlier work, largely preoccupied with the relation between theology and philosophy, and especially in demonstrating the compatibility of theological discourse with all knowledge, insisting that the “Christian faith manifestly cannot withdraw from every kind of cooperation with rational thought.” Hence, Pannenberg engages with a diverse range of disciplines, particularly the philosophy of science. In his 1973 publication *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, he expressed a concern with what he believed had become the default epistemological presupposition of the natural sciences, logical positivism, and included an extended polemic against this position, in which a central argument was the impossibility of ‘objective’ or value-neutral observation. Here Pannenberg’s intention to move away from epistemic foundationalism becomes evident.

Pannenberg viewed positivism’s emphasis upon empirical observation and its intention to demonstrate metaphysical propositions as meaningless as insurmountably problematic. He took issue with the reliance upon anything that resembled “a matter of convention,” which includes concepts and language that is preconceived knowledge. Furthermore, he suggests

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8 Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Faith and Reason,” in *BQT*, vol. 2, 46. Pannenberg is here responding to the modernist stress upon reason that viewed, in sceptical thinkers such as Hume and proponents of the Death of God Theology, religious faith as ultimately irrational. David Ray Griffin was similarly concerned with the relation between theology and other disciplines considered more ‘scientific’ and thus considered more intellectual. With the dawning of a postmodern age, however, and with it a lack of confidence in materialism, a postmodern theology may become acceptable. He argues that such a theology would be a naturalistic theism, which is not too dissimilar to Pannenberg’s theology of history, which we will analyse in the following chapter (David Ray Griffin, “Introduction,” in *God & Religion in the Postmodern World*, ed. David Ray Griffin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 2-3.

9 Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*.

10 Ibid., 55.
observation “takes place not within a framework of theoretically neutral observations, but
normally as part of a process,”¹¹ and not in a cognitive vacuum. Accordingly, there is no such
ingthing as unadulterated reception, and observation alone cannot solely justify beliefs.
Consequently, any proposition which might exceed the usual criteria of empirical observation,
such as metaphysical and theological statements, should not be disallowed; “there is no longer
any conclusive reason for excluding the concept of God in advance from the range of
permissible utterances.”¹²

A similar argument is found in his early Christological work, Jesus – God and Man, where he
disputes positivist arguments against the possibility of Jesus’ resurrection on the basis of the a
priori belief that resurrections do not happen, and thus we cannot say they ever have. Against
the argument that the need for analogy precludes the possibility of events which may seem
miraculous in their apparent violation of the laws of nature, he argues that the natural sciences
cannot make definite judgments about the possibility or impossibility of an individual event,
regardless of the probability of that event, because our knowledge of the natural world is only
ever partial.¹³ Pannenberg’s understanding of history and of the resurrection will be explored
in subsequent chapters, but it is helpful at this point to highlight his observation that knowledge
is indeed perpetually partial, in that we simply do not know all that there is to know about
nature, and therefore it is hubris to predetermine what can or cannot be said to be ‘natural’
based on an a priori understanding of reality. This partiality of knowledge is an essential
element of Pannenberg’s epistemology, demonstrating his reticence to accept the
foundationalist belief in universal or absolute basic beliefs. This epistemic humility will be
reappropriated in the development of PCR in the following sections of this chapter.

¹¹ Ibid., 56.
¹² Ibid., 55.
¹³ Pannenberg, JGM, 95.
This places Pannenberg within the general movement away from strong empirical models of epistemology, various formulations of a rejection of scientism and objectivism (and its underlying foundationalism), a diverse conglomeration often categorized as postmodernism. Writing from a Marxist perspective that is ambivalent about the merits of so-called ‘postmodernism,’ Terry Eagleton suggests that, as a movement, it is characterized by a suspicion “of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation.” Millard Erickson lists the central tenets of modernism as naturalism, humanism, the scientific method, reductionism, progress, nature as dynamic and growing, certainty of knowledge, determinism, individualism, and anti-authoritarianism, contrasted with the central tenets of postmodernism in its hardest form: rejection of objective knowledge, uncertainty of knowledge, impossibility of all-inclusive systems of explanation, the inherent goodness of knowledge is challenged, progress is rejected, the emphasis on the individual has shifted to the community, and the scientific method as the principal method of inquiry is challenged.

Pannenberg has not engaged explicitly with postmodern ideas or authors, but he is nonetheless concerned with similar or equivalent questions. We will see, throughout this chapter and the next, that Pannenberg engages with each of those issues highlighted by Eagleton and Erickson. He was, however, particularly concerned with the scientism which may bar any or all theological discussion.

The Catholic theologian, Hans Küng, similarly argued against models of empiricism which negate the possibility of metaphysical statements, that positivism was plagued by unresolvable

16 Shults takes Pannenberg to task on this issue in *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology*, 248–49.
17 This is especially true when one takes into consideration the ambiguity and lack of specific definition of what constitutes something as postmodern. If the contours of postmodernism are so vague, it becomes very difficult to pinpoint precisely which authors to insist Pannenberg engage with.
internal conflicts and that the homogeneity of scientific language had been shown to be an illusion.\textsuperscript{18} He later argued such a strict empiricism was incapable of determining meaning and therefore positivism’s claim that metaphysics is meaningless is inherently self-contradictory. Reductionistic epistemologies which stress objectivity and verification are wholly inadequate.\textsuperscript{19} David Ray Griffin and David Bohm have observed that this reductionistic scientific worldview had already been challenged from within, by the scientific community itself, especially in the field of quantum physics. Against the mechanistic Newtonian worldview, quantum physicists are increasingly finding that molecules, on the quantum level, do not act so deterministically or predictively, and there is a much greater mutual connection between mind and body. The previously supposed dualisms and causality, and the modernist belief in a knowable order to the universe have been challenged significantly by those rejecting hard foundationalist methodologies.\textsuperscript{20} This will be examined further below when discussing the developments of the epistemological model of critical realism, but for now I note the way in which recent developments in the physical sciences have challenged the long held suppositions of a mechanistic universe built upon a foundationalist belief in universal laws.\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{21} The physicist John Polkinghorne, for example, notes that quarks and gluons are essentially unobservable despite forming the basis of our understanding of reality. A hard foundationalist empiricism, especially an internalist version (as will be seen in §3.2), is limited in its ability to describe these phenomena (John Polkinghorne, \textit{Scientists as Theologians: A Comparison of the Writings of Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke and John Polkinghorne} (London: SPCK, 1996), 11-14). Heikki Patomäki highlights the developments within the theory of gravity, that it is no longer understood as a universal force between two objects, but having to do with spacetime itself, and the interaction between subatomic particles is governed by hypothetical and unobservable ‘gravitons’ (Heikki Patomäki, “After Critical Realism?” \textit{Journal of Critical Realism} 9, no. 1 (2010), 67-68). We might further consider the dualistic nature of light as both particle and wave as another challenge to a hard foundationalist scientism.
Individual experience and observation, Pannenberg argues, “can never mediate absolute, unconditional certainty.” He writes:

The conditionality of all subjective certainty is part of the finitude of human experience. To claim unconditional, independent certainty is forcibly to make oneself, the believing I, the locus of absolute truth. Any occurrence of this phenomenon, among Christians or others, is justifiably regarded as irrational fanaticism. It allows only of psychological, not rational, exploration.\(^{22}\)

Here he puts it rather bluntly: anyone who claims absolute objectivity is guilty of ‘irrational fanaticism.’ Strong empirical methodologies, such as positivism, are irreconcilably restrictive, for they cannot acknowledge the anthropocentric nature of knowledge, that all knowledge is embedded with subjective value and interpretation; universal, objective knowledge is impossible. A hard foundationalism relies on the possibility of universal and self-evident truths, and thus, in arguing against the possibility of universalism, Pannenberg distances himself from foundationalism. His solution to foundationalism is, I believe, a significant tool for interpreting the resurrection within its communal context and upholding its continuous and discontinuous characteristics in dialectic tension. Before moving to this, we will address the concerns that Wright has with the objectivism he alleges is present in historical Jesus scholarship.

**Wright and the Impossibility of Objective History**

Wright’s epistemology is largely spelled out in his *The New Testament and the People of God* but his basic epistemic position remains largely unchanged, advocating for the earlier developed critical realism in his recent work.\(^{23}\) He argues for the necessity of developing and outlining epistemology in methodology prior to approaching the question of the historical Jesus and the origins of Christianity, on the basis of the well-rehearsed acknowledgement that historians are not immune to the pervasive influence of personal bias which disrupts and

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\(^{23}\) See, e.g. Wright, *PFG*, xvii.
distorts absolute objectivity. Approaching Jesus and early Christianity invariably involves literature, history, and theology, all of which he insists are inseparable and share this essential ‘problem’ of knowledge, namely the objectivity/subjectivity dichotomy. This division, he argues, “must be abandoned as useless.”

This objectivity/subjectivity dichotomy is reflected in what he sees as the two major epistemological positions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – positivism and phenomenalism. He explains:

The positivist believes that there are some things at least about which we can have definite knowledge. There are some things that are simply ‘objectively’ true, that is, some things about which we can have, and actually do have, solid and unquestionable knowledge. These are things which can be tested ‘empirically’, that is, by observing, measuring, etc. within the physical world.

Anything that cannot be tested in this way cannot be considered reasonable. Positivism, he argues, has enjoyed enduring influence since the Enlightenment and arguably remains prevalent in the discipline of New Testament studies today. The belief that it is possible to “simply look objectively at things that are there” and “know things ‘straight,’” he labels as “naïve realism.” He contrasts positivism with phenomenalism which focuses primarily on individual sense-data and relies upon subjective and individual experience, thereby approaching historical research with a “history-as-writing-about-events” mentality, rather than the “history-as-events” mentality of positivism. The former stresses the possibility of objectivity and the latter the impossibility of escaping subjectivity.

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25 Ibid., NTPG, 31.
26 Ibid., 44. He states elsewhere, in one of his more popular-level books, that “it is the Western culture of the last two hundred years which has tried to separate out ‘facts’ from ‘values’, ‘events’ from ‘interpretations,’” and that this “is the myth of ‘objectivity’, the idea of a ‘neutral’ observer who is a mere fly on the wall.” Furthermore, “The fact is (!) that you can’t write about anything from a ‘neutral’ point of view. There is no such thing. Every telling of every event involves selection; and when you select you interpret” (N. T. Wright, Who Was Jesus? (London: SPCK, 1992), 44-46). The force of his argument against objectivity is weakened somewhat by his strong insistence that the claim that objectivity is impossible is itself an objective ‘fact.’
27 Wright, NTPG., 32-33.
28 Ibid., 33.
29 Ibid., 34.
Wright’s epistemological interest is in finding a third mediating position between positivism and phenomenalism, and so he adopts ‘critical realism,’ which will be assessed in the following section. However, his arguments against positivism and phenomenalism are, as will be observed, sometimes ambiguous and sparse. Granted, Wright is writing primarily as a biblical scholar and not a philosopher, but these deficiencies with his methodology are important given how some of the more controversial claims he makes in subsequent volumes, particularly with regards to the resurrection, rest upon the assertions made in his first volume.

It is actually unclear why Wright considers positivism naïve, mounting only a minor argument against positivism, simply referencing various philosophers and sociologists rather than engaging with their arguments, and making the broad claim that “this view has been largely abandoned by philosophers.” However, his rejection of positivism is due to his broader rejection of what we might call ‘optimistic objectivism’, and this rejection requires qualification. Similarly, his argument against phenomenalism is minimal, simply providing the vague statement, “The well-known problems with this view have not stopped it from having enormous influence.” What these problems are and what in particular this has influenced is unclear. It should be noted that phenomenalism does not necessarily fall into the category of coherentism or nonfoundationalism, and so Wright’s methodology is not necessarily an attempt to move away from foundationalism. However, he does indicate a move away from a strong rationalistic empiricism, and his solution for the positivism/phenomenalism dichotomy – critical realism – is worth exploring given its potential to the building of an alternative epistemology for interrogating the resurrection capable of balancing the continuous and the

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30 Including Nicola Abbagnano, Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Ian Barbour, and Michael Polanyi.
31 Wright, *NTPG*, 33.
discontinuous elements of the resurrection and interpreting it as event that escapes the limitations of a personal reanimation.

This initial section of this chapter on epistemology has argued that the majority of resurrection scholarship has relied upon a foundationalism which has expressed itself in various ways. As an epistemic framework, foundationalism has received significant criticism in the past half century or so, especially the problem of the infinite regress and its proposed solution of basic beliefs. Foundationalism maintains a belief in universal and absolute foundations, divorced from their communal contexts, upon which knowledge can be built. Pannenberg and Wright have both critiqued this form of objectivism, especially the model of positivism, though Wright’s critiques are light and less comprehensive than Pannenberg’s. I contend that the most significant problem with a foundationalist methodology for interpreting the resurrection is twofold: its failure to acknowledge the inevitable influence of communal context upon experience and the interpretation and communication of that experience, and its failure to uphold both the continuous and discontinuous elements of Jesus’ resurrection. Having examined Pannenberg and Wright’s respective reasons for rethinking epistemological frameworks, the next section assesses and re-appropriates their solution to the need of moving beyond a foundationalist reading of the resurrection. It should also be highlighted here, as demonstrated in the following section, that though Wright has attempted to move away from foundationalism, he ultimately reverts to a softer version.

3.3. The Solution: Postfoundationalism and Reciprocity

Foundationalism, with its inherent belief in the possibility of attaining objective and universal foundational truths, is terminally problematic, and so the interpretations of the resurrection which presuppose this epistemic framework require reconsideration. Two possible alternatives have been proposed, which will be assessed in the first part of this section. The first, proposed
by scholars such as Rorty and Grenz, is coherentism, which asserts that beliefs are justified by how well they cohere with other prior beliefs. The second, proposed by Reformed thinkers such as Barth and Plantinga, is what has been labelled theo-foundationalism, which suggests that the basic, universal belief, upon which all other beliefs can be founded, is the belief in God. The first part of this section analyses these proposals to demonstrate that neither are satisfactory epistemological frameworks, in general and for the task of interpreting the resurrection. An alternative framework will then be proposed, a reappropriation of the postfoundationalism presented in particular by Shults and van Huyssteent, with consideration of Pannenberg’s contributions toward this framework. I argue that postfoundationalism upholds the epistemic tensions of the objective and subjective, internal and external, individual and communal, and universal and particular in a much more satisfying way than these alternatives, and will thus be more suited to an interpretation of the resurrection which adequately considers the communal Jewish eschatological category of resurrection and balances its continuous and discontinuous elements. Central to this is the notion of reciprocity, especially in the balancing of multiple tensions without allowing one particular type of knowledge or experience to function in a foundationalist sense. This will be given attention before addressing a recent epistemological debate, that of internalist and externalist justification, where it will be argued that the majority of resurrection interpretations are not only foundationalist but also internalist, and that postfoundationalism, has more in common with externalism, for the problems with internalism are probably, like foundationalism, coherentism, and theo-foundationalism, insoluble. Postfoundationalism, I contend, is the most helpful epistemic framework for adequately understanding the resurrection.

**Two Possible Solutions: Coherentism and Theo-Foundationalism**

As criticisms of foundationalism increased, and its claim to universal basic beliefs was challenged, alternative frameworks were introduced, which recognized the contextuality and
fallibility of truth claims. The first alternative to be addressed here is that of coherentism, which has also been known as non- or antifoundationalism. Largely a negative movement, a critical reaction to foundationalism, coherentism insists that a belief is justified only by how well it coheres with other beliefs, rejecting unjustifiable basic beliefs. Rather than a linear chain of beliefs, the coherentist envisions a ‘web’ of beliefs, within which beliefs are considered credible if they fit within this web. Fumerton’s image of a puzzle is helpful. Consider a person who attempts to complete a jigsaw puzzle despite the picture of the puzzle being lost. That person fits the pieces together based on how well the shapes and colours work together, eventually managing to put each piece into place and revealing a picture of a beautiful landscape. Without the picture, it is impossible to know whether that was the intended solution, but it is highly probable that it was indeed the solution because each piece fits together to create a coherent whole. If someone were to ask why a particular piece was placed where it was, the response might simply be, ‘because it fits,’ and could hardly be criticized for saying so.

Coherentism sees within the foundationalist notion of basic beliefs a dualism between the human subject and the external object of that human’s perception. Truth claims are valid only as far as they accurately represent this external reality. Coherentism rejects this dualism, arguing that subject and object are inseparable. Knowledge thus intertwines with the subjectivity of the human knower, impacted by bias and prejudice, perspective and worldviews, prior beliefs and context. This is evident in Richard Rorty’s argument that “people change their beliefs in such a way as to achieve coherence with their other beliefs, to bring their beliefs and desires into some sort of equilibrium – and…that is about all there is to be said about the

34 Fumerton, Epistemology, 43; Shults, The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology, 31-38; O’Brien, An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge, 77-86.
quest for knowledge.” For Rorty, as with Pannenberg, language is not a medium that merely reflects external reality, describing this reality in universal and absolute terms, an understanding of language which presupposes the subject/object dualism. Rather, language constitutes knowledge in a much more intensive way; when this dualism is rejected, language constitutes reality itself. Michel Foucault similarly claimed that knowledge is produced according to societal power structures. Foundationalism could assert the universality of basic beliefs by maintaining the distinction between subject and object, and the possibility of the unadulterated reception of the latter by the former. In contrast, coherentism rejects this distinction, claiming that knowledge is inescapably intertwined with subjective presupposed beliefs, thereby rejecting the possibility of universal and absolute basic beliefs.

Perhaps the best example of coherentism in theological methodology is that of Stanley Grenz. Rather than foundationalism, which sought “a set of incontestable beliefs or unassailable first principles on the basis of which the pursuit of knowledge can proceed” and which came to be dominant within theology, Grenz argues for a nonfoundationalism which insists that theology is local and specific, the “conversation of a particular group in a particular moment of their ongoing existence in the world.”


Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77 (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 133. Slott contends, “Since the object of knowledge (i.e., reality) cannot be separated from the subject, what we call the “truth” is relative to the specific ways in which the subject constitutes reality. Reality does not exist, so to speak, on its own, but only as a human construction. The content of this construction and the manner in which human beings constitute reality is based on the specific interests and perspectives of human beings” (Slott, “An Alternative to Critical Postmodernist Antifoundationalism,” 303).

Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context (Louisville: WJK, 2001), 23.

He argues, “The traditional evangelical commitment to objectivism and rational propositionalism has worked against an adequate understanding of the relationship between theology and culture even among those, such as Erickson, who have called for contextualization as a part of the theological process. One of the significant results of this failure has been the relatively uncritical acceptance of modernist assumptions by most evangelical theologians.” (Grenz and Franke, Beyond Foundationalism, 15).

Ibid., 25.
‘fits’ with other beliefs without contradiction, interconnected to form an “integrated whole”
carrying “explanatory power.” Beliefs are supported, not by other beliefs in a foundationalist
sense, but by their connection to these other beliefs which form a network or mosaic. Hence,
“Constructive theology is the attempt to present a unified, coherent declaration of the Christian
belief-mosaic within a particular, contemporary context.”

Rorty could be described as a strong nonfoundationalist, for he argues that there are no rules
that determine how or why beliefs change, and Grenz as a weak nonfoundationalist, for he
insists that there are, in fact, rules that govern how beliefs are integrated or changed, namely
that they do not contradict other beliefs and that they retain explanatory power. However, there
are significant problems with this particular alternative to foundationalism. Coherentism has
been criticized for committing the self-exempting fallacy, that is, advocates of coherentism
have argued as a universal, objective fact that universal, objective facts are impossible.46 There
is some warrant for this objection, but I am not entirely convinced, for coherentism and anti-
or nonfoundationalism are not precise, defined epistemological positions, functioning largely
as responses to and criticisms of foundationalism. Dan O’Brien highlights two problems with
coherentism that are more challenging. The first is that it loses contact with the world since
justification concerns only relations between beliefs, internal to our belief systems. There is no
way to judge whether reality is described correctly. The second is that coherentism allows for
alternative, contradictory belief systems. Communities in different contexts will produce
different descriptions of reality, despite being internally consistent. Again, there is no way to

43 Stanley J. Grenz, “Jesus as the Imago Dei: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linear Linearity of
Theology,” JETS 47, no. 4 (2004), 627.
44 Rorty, “Worlds or Words Apart?” 369.
45 Grenz never particularly makes a case for nonfoundationalism, rather against foundationalism, and some have
thus labelled him a soft-foundationalist (e.g. Jason S. Sexton, The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz
(London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 35-36). However, a coherentist view of knowledge is a particular characteristic of
nonfoundationalism, and thus I choose to label Grenz a nonfoundationalist, albeit a weak nonfoundationalist.
46 Cf. Shults, The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology, 31-38, 140; Matthew Thomas Johnson, “Towards the
Development of Objective, Universal Criteria of Cultural Evaluation: The Challenges Posed by Anti-
judge which description is the most accurate.\textsuperscript{47} I agree with Slott that although “it is correct to say that human beings have no nonlinguistic access to reality, it is equally true that we have no nonperceptual access to reality, either.”\textsuperscript{48} That is, language, or other preconceived constructs, have significant impact upon how we interpret reality, but how we interpret reality is significantly impacted by how we experience it. As will be argued below, knowledge is a dynamic tension between the objective external reality and the subjective internal procedure of interpretation.

Another alternative to foundationalism is theo-foundationalism, which places God as the foundation, the basic belief upon which all other knowledge is built. This is particularly evident in Reformed epistemology, such as Barth and Plantinga. Barth’s central concern – seen especially in the first section of his \textit{Church Dogmatics} – is to ensure that knowledge of God was not grounded on any fallible, insecure human foundation, stressing the otherness of God and the need for him to reveal himself to humanity. Faith precedes formulaic understandings of God:

If we say that dogmatics presupposes faith, or the determination of human action by hearing and as obedience to the being of the Church, we say that at every step and with every statement it presupposes the free grace of God which may at any time be given or refused as the object and meaning of this human action. It always rests with God and not with us whether our hearing is real hearing and our obedience real obedience, whether our dogmatics is blessed and sanctified as knowledge of the true content of Christian utterance or whether it is idle speculation.\textsuperscript{49}

For Barth, God cannot be imagined or determined by human intelligence. Theological knowledge is “always and definitely initiated by God who makes himself known in his

\textsuperscript{47} O’Brien, \textit{An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge}, 80-82. Fumerton argues that it is not immediately clear why beliefs need to be coherent, by using an analogy of 1000 people entering the lottery and claiming that it justifiable to believe of each participant that they will lose, but it is also justifiable to believe that not everyone will lose (Fumerton, \textit{Epistemology}, 45). I would argue that it is \textit{not} justifiable to believe of each participant that they will lose, but rather that each participant will \textit{probably} lose. This is not inconsistent to the second belief, and so I do not find his objection to coherentism compelling.


\textsuperscript{49} Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics}, vol. 1.1, 18.
revelation,” and its “foundation is secured in and by the very object of theology himself.” Alvin Plantinga argues similarly, claiming that belief in God is a properly basic belief, adopting John Calvin’s notion of *sensus divinitatis*, that perception of the existence of God arises within the self inconspicuously and seemingly without warning. In his seminal *Warranted Christian Belief*, he argues:

It isn’t just that the believer in God is within her epistemic rights in accepting theistic belief in the basic way. That is indeed so; more than that, however, this belief can have warrant for the person in question, warrant that is often sufficient for knowledge. The *sensus divinitatis* is a belief-producing faculty (or power, or mechanism) that under the right conditions produced belief that isn’t evidentially based on other beliefs. On this model, our cognitive faculties have been designed and created by God. …The purpose of the *sensus divinitatis* is to enable us to have true beliefs about God; when it functions properly, it ordinarily does produce true beliefs about God. These beliefs therefore meet the conditions for warrant; if the beliefs produced are strong enough, then they constitute knowledge.

The source of the inspiration of Christian belief is the Holy Spirit, and thus this belief “can have warrant even if there aren’t any good arguments for it from premises that get their warrant from other sources. If all this is so, then if Christian belief is in fact true, it is or can be properly basic.” In other words, belief in God is, for Plantinga, self-justifying and can thus function as an epistemic foundation for theological knowledge.

Kevin Diller has recently defended this Reformed theo-foundationality, arguing that Pannenberg misinterpreted Barth. For Pannenberg, the disassociation of anything remotely human in the grounding of theological knowledge is insolubly subjectivist and fideistic. It is a retreat into a faith that requires no external justification. However, Diller argues that this is only so if faith is “an arbitrary human choice,” rather than God’s gracious self-revelation in

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Jesus Christ, of which there is no sturdier or sure foundation. 53 Theology is neither a classical foundationalism nor a nonfoundationalism nor a postfoundationalism. Rather, it is a theo-foundationalism, that is, theology is grounded in the self-justifying self-revelation of God himself, and theological knowledge is built upon this foundation.

The stress in theo-foundationalism is upon the divine initiative of God. Faith is a human response to God’s self-revelation; the nature of God prohibits the attainment of theological knowledge by any human endeavour. However, the central issue that I have with this epistemological framework lies in its limitation of the human cognitive faculties. Yes, knowledge of God is God’s initiative, but this knowledge remains irreducibly human knowledge. In the response to God’s self-revelation, there is always an interpretation, and different people will respond to God’s revelation in different ways. Something may cause us to make a decision of faith but that decision is never made outside of ourselves. The goal of theo-foundationalism of having a foundation purely and solely in God – seen most lucidly in Diller’s statement, “The Christian idea of God does not constitute a self-justifying foundation; God himself is the one and only self-justifying foundation for the knowledge of God,” 54 – is an impossible goal, for this knowledge of God invariably involves human response and engagement. This might not be acceptable to Diller (or, for that matter, any other theo-foundationalist) but, with Pannenberg and Wright (as discussed in §3.2), I am convinced that we cannot have any sort of pure knowledge of anything, including God (cf. 1 Cor. 13.12). Knowledge is not knowledge if the human cognitive faculty is bypassed in any way. God’s self-revelation requires engagement by the human mind and that invariably involves interpretation. For this reason, any knowledge – even knowledge of God – remains perpetually human.

54 Diller, “Does Contemporary Theology Require a Postfoundationalist Way of Knowing?” 289.
The postfoundationalism that will be defended in the following sub-section allows for this tension between the divine initiative and human response, neither of which is foundational.

There is a perpetual dialectic tension between the divine and human, as seen in Pannenberg’s early statement:

> I have asserted that the essence of faith must come to harm precisely if in the long run rational conviction about its basis fails to appear. Faith then is easily perverted into blind credulity toward the authority-claim of the preached message; into superstition, owing to its seeming wrought work of faith. Therefore, it is precisely for the sake of the purity of faith that the importance of rational knowledge of its basis has to be emphasized. Naturally, this is not a matter of grounding faith in man instead of in God. That faith must be understood as something effected by God himself is not to be doubted.55

This is also seen, more recently, in André van Oudtshoorn’s argument:

> Faith, by definition, precludes epistemological certainty: while it confesses certain truths as final truths, those truths are always open to be doubted in the light of the way things are (ontology). The way faith operates in the biblical text thus reaches beyond the confines of faith itself to engage with what ‘is’ in such a way that this reality may contradict faith’s claims and interpretation of it. In this way a theological understanding of faith overcomes the triumphalism and relativism of both foundationalism and fideism without giving up on either the interpretive or realist dimensions of knowledge.56

The relationship between faith and reason in these two quotes demonstrates a mutually-conditioning reciprocity that is central to postfoundationalism, upholding and celebrating the tensions between disciplines or types of knowledge or experience, rather than insisting upon one functioning as foundational for the others to build upon. Indeed we can uphold the divine initiative, but this should be held in epistemic and dialectic tension with human cognition; one might occur first, but this does not make it an epistemic foundation. It is to this postfoundationalism that we now turn.

*Healing the Divide: A Postfoundationalist Framework*

Neither coherentism nor theo-foundationalism are satisfactory alternatives to foundationalism. Regarding the resurrection, foundationalism, with its emphasis upon universal and absolute basic beliefs, removes the resurrection from its Jewish eschatological context and restricts the

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resurrection to being understood either as, or in relation to, other ordinary historical events. Its counterpart, coherentism, is incapable of interpreting the resurrection as anything apart from the social categories which frame its interpretation, and restrict it from being understood as a historical event that challenges these preconceived social categories. Neither extreme allows the interpreter to uphold, in dialectic tension, both the continuous and discontinuous elements of Jesus’ resurrection. A mediating position is available, that of postfoundationalism, especially as proposed by F. LeRon Shults, which attempts to integrate the strengths of both the foundationalist and coherentist frameworks, and which I will here present as a suitable option. An engagement with the epistemic contributions of Pannenberg is fruitful toward defending this position, whose thought has ultimately shaped many of the epistemological debates in theological circles in recent years.

In a detailed engagement with Pannenberg’s epistemology, Shults, in *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology*, utilizes Pannenberg to propose a theological methodology that moves beyond foundationalism without falling into a coherentism, and can balance four conceptual pairs: new experience and prior belief, objective truth and plurality of knowledge, neutral individuality and historical and contextual community, and universal explanation and understanding of the particular. Neither foundationalism nor coherentism is capable of balancing these couplets, instead privileging one half over the other, thereby missing their dynamic relational unity. 57 He proposes a postfoundationalist task of theology:

To engage in interdisciplinary dialogue within our postmodern culture while both maintaining a commitment to intersubjective, transcommunal theological argumentation for the truth of Christian faith, and recognizing the provisionality of our historically embedded understandings and culturally conditioned explanations of the Christian tradition and religious experience. 58

58 Ibid., 18.
Shults’ postfoundationalism is an attempt to find a middle ground between these two antipodal positions. He argues for four couplets of an ideal postfoundationalism:\textsuperscript{59}

1. Interpreted experience engenders and nourishes all beliefs, and a network of beliefs informs the interpretation of experience.

2. The objective unity of truth is a necessary condition for the intelligible search for knowledge, and the subjective multiplicity of knowledge indicates the fallibility of truth claims.

3. Rational judgment is an activity of socially situated individuals, and the cultural community indeterminately mediates the criteria of rationality.

4. Explanation aims for universal, transcontextual understanding, and understanding derives from particular contextualized explanations.

Where foundationalism searches for knowledge based on self-evident or \textit{a priori} propositions, and nonfoundationalism on coherence within a particular context or ‘web,’ postfoundationalism “aims to develop a plausible model of theological rationality that charts a course…between the Scylla of foundationalist dogmatism and the Charybdis of nonfoundationalist relativism.”\textsuperscript{60} This is not simply to find a mediating position, but to accommodate and integrate the positive concerns of both, without falling into either extreme.\textsuperscript{61} Challenging the role of epistemic foundations need not lead to an outright rejection of foundationalism, but rather a reframing of the debate, which Shults’ postfoundationalism begins to achieve.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 43.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 26. Cf. Mostert, \textit{God and the Future}, 59. Furthermore, foundationalism emphasizes “experience as the basis of belief, the unity of truth, reason…and the universality of explanation,” and nonfoundationalism emphasizes “the web of beliefs as conditioning experience, the plurality of knowledge, the rationality of the community, and the particularity of knowledge,” (Shults, \textit{The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology}, 42).

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 42, 79.

Pannenberg confirmed Shults’ estimation that Pannenberg has a great deal in common with this postfoundationalist framework, stating that Shults “is correct in placing me neither in the foundationalist camp nor among certain forms of nonfoundationalism that surrender the rational quest for truth,” and that he is “sympathetic with the position he describes as postfoundationalist.” In particular, Shults highlights four ways Pannenberg contributes towards the four couplets of an ideal postfoundationalism. Importantly, these four points demonstrate how Pannenberg attempts to hold multiple tensions in unison and it is precisely this which separates his epistemology from foundationalist tendencies while still retaining a form of realism.

First, regarding the relationship between interpreted experience and a network of beliefs, Pannenberg argues that theological statements are not self-evident (basic) and do not follow from self-evident beliefs. Rather, beliefs are justified, to an extent, if they cohere with other beliefs. However, we must not be quick to label him a coherentist, for, though he occasionally uses language similar to that of coherentism, he insists upon criteria for justification that are external to the set of presupposed beliefs.

Second, regarding the relationship between objective truth and the plurality of knowledge, Pannenberg argues for the provisionality of knowledge and the need for theological statements

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63 Shults, The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology, 20.
64 Pannenberg in Shults, The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology, ix. Since this publication, Pannenberg is rarely interpreted otherwise, most agreeing with Shults’ assessment, including Grenz, Christiana Mostert, John McClean, Iain Taylor, Timothy Bradshaw, John R. Franke, and Jason Sexton, many of whom explicitly reference Shults. Cf. Moster, God and the Future, 59.
65 Pannenberg, ST, 1, 56.
67 Shults, The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology, 112-121.
to be framed as hypotheses. However, Pannenber allows for the possibility of the *ideal* of objectivity, especially in his commitment to ‘intelligibility’: “How can theology make the primacy of God and his revelation in Jesus Christ intelligible, and validate its truth claim, in an age when all talk about God is reduced to subjectivity?”^68 He maintains that there can be only one truth,^69 while also affirming that our knowledge is perpetually “subjectively conditioned.”^70

Third, regarding the relationship between the individual and the community, Pannenber acknowledges that both influence interpretation, affirming the recognition of the subjectively conditioned nature of knowledge. He argues, “While the identity of individuals is not to be conceived as the product of a subject that already exists with its own identity, neither is it to be understood as a simple internalization of social appraisals and expectations.”^71 In other words, the individual is neither a simple appropriation of societal norms and expectations, nor a being whose identity is formed apart from community. Shults here laments Pannenberg’s reticence in addressing the “effect of participation within a community on the standards of rationality held by the individual,”^72 and he is probably correct in this assessment for this is something Pannenberg deals with only minimally.^73 I will suggest below that a *constructive* understanding of knowledge can function, in part, as a supplement to this.

Fourth, regarding the relationship between contextualised explanation and universal understanding, Pannenberg again holds the two in tension, affirming the importance of both

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^68 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1, 128.
^69 Seen especially in his essay, “What is Truth?” There is a universal truth, but this truth develops within history and is recognized partially and provisionally.
^70 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1, 52.
^72 Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology*, 137.
^73 Though Pannenberg begins to note the significant connection between the individual and the community, he seems to retain the modernist assumption of the universal autonomy of the individual. It should be observed that this is a relatively recent idea, that prior to the Enlightenment the notion of the ‘individual,’ free and equal citizens of society, was very uncommon. Cf. Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (London: Penguin, 2014).
while privileging neither. The two are the categories, respectively, of the ‘part’ and the ‘whole.’ This is an example of Pannenberg’s interdisciplinary methodology, for none of the individual and separate parts constitute anything more than merely that, a part, the meaning of which is made clear as it finds its place in the broader ensemble, which in turn depends on the individual parts for its meaning. For Pannenberg, these parts include reason, history, and tradition, among others, which find their meaning within the anticipated whole: God’s eschatological future, proleptically, albeit provisionally, revealed in the history of Jesus. Related to this is the notion of *sub ratione Dei*, which will be discussed below, but by this notion, Pannenberg argues that all things come together in relation to God.

Pannenberg argues in the foreword to Shults’ work:

There is no a priori warrant of truth if one only bases one’s argument on the proper foundation, be it sense perception or principles of reason. Even theological arguments cannot be convincingly derived from some pure source of revealed truth. It has first to be established by argument what can be considered as God’s revelation. Even in the case of Scripture there is no a priori guarantee, since Scripture is also human and historical, though Christians hear the Word of God from it. Theological reconstruction itself remains tentative like the hypothetic reasoning in other disciplines.

This quote functions as a good summary of Pannenberg’s epistemology and theological methodology, for he here reinforces the historical and provisional nature of knowledge, the need for interdisciplinary dialogue, the subjective influence of the individual, and renounces self-evident truths.

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74 This will be expanded upon in the excursus. Cf. Pannenberg, “On Historical and Theological Hermeneutic,” in *BQT*, vol. 1, 137-181; “Theology and the Categories ‘Part’ and ‘Whole,’” in *MIG*, 130-152; Pannenberg, *JGM*, 406.


77 This includes renunciation of the foundational character of Scripture, which he explores in his early 1962 essay, “The Crisis of the Scripture Principle,” in which he argued that in the attempt to understand Scripture, the reader is “led back to the question of the events they report about, and of the meaning that belongs to them,” which is not self-evident from the text alone (Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The Crisis of the Scripture Principle,” in *BQT*, vol. 1, 12).

Another significant proponent of postfoundationalism in theological methodology is J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, who argues that the two most significant strengths of postfoundationalism lie in its understanding of contextuality and of experience. Van Huyssteen claims that postfoundationalism

fully acknowledges contextuality, the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience, and the way that tradition shapes the epistemically non-perspectival values that inform our reflection about God and what some of us believe to be God’s presence in this world. At the same time, however, a postfoundationalist notion of rationality in theological reflection claims to point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group, or culture towards a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation.78

Context and tradition shape how experience is interpreted, but it is possible to breach contextual confines. Rationality, he continues, is always “evaluated against the standards of a community of inquiry,” standards which “are never independent of our specific social and cultural contexts.”79 In similar vein to Wright, he argues that the distinction between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ is no longer helpful.80 Furthermore, these communities are not isolated from one another; intersubjective, cross-disciplinary and transcommunal dialogue – borrowing Shults’ terms – is thus vital.81

Dan Stiver, searching for an explicitly postmodern theological methodology, argues that it is possible to reach beyond personal experience and context.82 He argues that human beings are essentially hermeneutical beings, that the paradigm for interpreting texts, hermeneutics, is the paradigm for interpreting all knowledge. Though one’s own ‘horizon’ – presupposed

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78 van Huyssteen, Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology, 4.
80 Ibid., 29.
81 Ibid., 32.
82 As does Sung Kyu Park, who argues, “Postfoundational rationality is based on our own experience, but is capable of reaching beyond. It starts with an individual and extends to community. It acknowledges personal commitments; identifies the shared resources of rationality in different reasoning strategies; and reaches beyond the boundaries of our own epistemic communities in cross-disciplinary conversation,” (Sung Kyu Park, “A Postfoundationalist Research Paradigm of Practical Theology,” HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies 66, no. 2 (2010), 2.)
knowledge and prejudices – can impede understanding, it is entirely indispensable for a comprehensive understanding. Therefore, “Every act of understanding then is one of a fusion of one’s own horizon with that of another.”

He calls this the ‘incarnational’ aspect of interpretation, the dynamic fusion of horizons:

We are not trapped in our horizons; rather, they are capable of being expanded and fused with others. A fusion does not mean at all, however, an equal synthesis between the two. In order to understand enough even to reject another view, our horizon must have fused. Fusion, therefore, does not necessarily mean agreement.

It is impossible to achieve absolute consensus, but this transcommunal dialogue is a necessary corrective to the inevitable situatedness of theology. This context should be recognized as a strength, but “we have an obligation to dialogue with theologies written from other perspectives,” which “can only be strengthened by the attempt to do justice to other perspectives.”

We can take from this the simultaneous recognition of the inescapable historical and communal contextuality of the interpreter, and the possibility of reaching beyond this contextuality.

For Van Huyssteen, the second strength of postfoundationalism is that one type of experience is not elevated at the expense of another. He observes that “we relate to our world epistemically only through the mediation of interpreted experience,” and that this invariably means knowledge of reality is limited. Religious experience is no different, in that it claims to be an experience of reality and is, therefore, interpretation. It is, however, a different sort of experience; it is emphatically non-empirical and stands distinct from the natural sciences. The strength of postfoundationalism, however, avoids establishing dualisms that would pit the ‘natural’ against the ‘supernatural’ and require one to function as ultimate arbiter.

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84 Ibid., 179.
85 Ibid., 181.
86 van Huyssteen, Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology, 20.
88 van Huyssteen, Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology, 28.
extend this to the various social sciences, recognizing that history, for example, functions beyond the confines of an empirically testable scientific methodology.

Postfoundationalism as an epistemological framework balances the contrasting emphases of foundationalism and coherentism, expressed most clearly in the four couplets of Shults’ ideal postfoundationalism. The postfoundationalism that inhabits Pannenberg’s methodology and was then reappropriated and developed by Shults and van Huyssteen is helpful for the task of interpreting the resurrection as bearing both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality – reflecting the Jewish eschatological hope for the reaffirmation of creation as well as its radical transformation. On the one hand, postfoundationalism does not yield to the foundationalist emphases upon universal basic beliefs, divorced from communal context, and empirical justification, divorced from subjective interpretation. Postfoundationalism does not, on the other hand, yield to the coherentist emphases upon contextually constituted social categories and the interaction with preconceived beliefs, divorced from observation and experience of external reality. Instead, postfoundationalism takes seriously the belief in an intelligible external reality without ignoring the inevitable impact of personal presuppositions and prejudices, and communal categories of knowledge (including language itself). There is a reciprocity between object and subject, the external and internal, and before presenting a postfoundationalist model in dialogue with Wright’s critical realism, the following will further detail this mutuality, as this is important for moving beyond foundationalist beliefs.

**Reciprocity: Postfoundationalism and Dialectic Tension**

A key principle in Pannenberg’s epistemology for upholding the contrasting epistemic facets of interpreted experience and a network of prior beliefs, the objective unity of truth and the subjective multiplicity of knowledge, individual rational judgment and communally mediated criteria of rationality, and universal understanding and contextualised explanation, is that of
sub ratione Dei, which for Pannenberg is the insistence that all things should be understood and explained “under the aspect of the relation to God” (sub ratione Dei).\textsuperscript{89} For Pannenberg’s methodology, there is no individual key concept, or basic belief, such as history or reason, but rather that all things come together in relation to the whole. It is this perspective which prevents the dialectic tensions inherent within postfoundationalism, especially the relation between the individual and the community, and the object and subject, from collapsing in on itself.

Pannenberg appeals to Thomas Aquinas’ notion of sub ratione Dei in most of his major works. Reiterating his argument that theology should incorporate all reality in its inquiry, Pannenberg argues in \textit{Theology and the Philosophy of Science} that all aspects of theology – such as history, philosophy, and anthropology – should be studied “in particular relation to the reality of God.”\textsuperscript{90} In his later \textit{Metaphysics and the Idea of God}, he argued similarly, stating that everything within theology “can become a theme for the theologian only ‘in relation to God,’ as Thomas Aquinas put it: sub ratione Dei,“\textsuperscript{91} and then in his magnum opus \textit{Systematic Theology}:

Christian doctrine includes many things which, as created reality, are distinct from God. Thomas stressed that these things enter into theological discussion only inasmuch as they are related to God (sub ratione Dei…). To this extent God is the unifying point of reference for all the objects and themes of theology, and in this sense he is its absolute subject.\textsuperscript{92}

God is the all-determining reality and as such is related to all things. In demonstrating the truth about God, theology must therefore incorporate all human knowledge; “The investigation of God as the all-determining reality involves all reality.”\textsuperscript{93} Hence, Grenz and Franke interpreted his methodology as coherentist.\textsuperscript{94} Pannenberg seeks the integration of all truth; the question of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89} Shults, \textit{The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology}, 83.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Pannenberg, \textit{TPS}, 296.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Pannenberg, \textit{MIG}, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Pannenberg, \textit{ST}, 1, 5.
\item \textsuperscript{94} Grenz and Franke, \textit{Beyond Foundationalism}, 44. Cf. “For Pannenberg, the goal of theology is to demonstrate the unity of truth in God, that is, to bring all human knowledge together in our affirmation of God. Or stated in another way, theology seeks to show how the postulate of God illumines all human knowledge” (Grenz and Franke, \textit{Beyond Foundationalism}, 44).
\end{itemize}
God must be brought into dialogue with all other areas of knowledge, and all other areas of knowledge must be understood in relation to one another, and in relation to the unifying locus of truth, God. Some presupposed belief in the authority of Scripture, or of church tradition, or of personal, subjective experience is not enough to assert the truthfulness of Christianity, though these are inescapable and necessary components within this broader, coherent theology. The point here is that no particular element should be elevated above the other, or function in a foundationalist manner, but that they cohere and come together sub ratione Dei.

Put differently, God is the centre of a coherent theological web, not as foundation, but as its point of focus.

We saw above that postfoundationalism revels in dialectic tension between various types of knowledge and experience. In the following, we will consider how this is expressed with regard to the dialogue between theology and the natural sciences, for this reveals how a reciprocity might be expressed with regard to the questions of history (to be explored in chapter three) and the relationship between subject and object, and personal experience and contextually mediated categories of understanding.

Pannenberg’s insistence that all things cohere in mutual agreement under their relation to the whole and to God necessitates the interaction of theology with all areas of human knowledge. Theology cannot remain a private or individual enterprise but should remain public and accountable to these other disciplines. In his 1963 essay, “Insight and Faith,” grappling with

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95 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, vol. 1, 52.
96 In his analysis of Pannenberg’s influence upon Stanley Grenz, Jason Sexton notes that Pannenberg’s vision “consists of a search for the integration of all truth whatever, bringing together the particular and the universal into a coherent whole, leaving theology open to the contributions of other disciplines” (Sexton, The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 35). It is important to note, however, that though he argues that truth must cohere, Pannenberg should not be labelled a coherentist, or at least not a strong coherentist. Coherence is an essential category, but is not an exclusive category. For him to be categorised within coherentism, he would have to view coherence as an exclusive or sufficient arbiter of truth, something closer to the nonfoundationalism of Richard Rorty. This is why it is better suited to label Pannenberg a postfoundationalist.
97 Pannenberg, ST, 1, 21-22.
98 See Mostert, God and the Future, 58; Grenz and Franke, Beyond Foundationalism, 43. Ted Peters comments, “Pannenberg wants to liberate our faith in God from the ghetto of subjectivity. To do so, he places our knowledge
the relationship between faith and reason, Pannenberg argues against the conviction that “rational insight into the ground and content of faith is not only denied us as a matter of fact, but is even injurious to the essence of faith,” instead insisting that faith requires “rational conviction about its basis.” Without this, faith is perverted and transformed into superstition. Indeed, he claims that “it is precisely for the sake of the purity of faith that the importance of rational knowledge of its basis has to be emphasized.” He maintains that faith divorced from rational knowledge becomes a ‘work’ in and of itself. It should be noted that though his language of rational conviction and of the ground and basis of faith may sound foundationalist, he is not arguing for rational knowledge to function as the basis of faith, but rather that faith should not be separated from rational conviction. Pannenberg’s postfoundationalism is expressed in an interdisciplinarity, drawing theology into dialogue with all other disciplines in a mutually conditioning sense. Neither faith nor science functions as epistemic foundation but they interact reciprocally. This reciprocity is an important feature of postfoundationalism that will be utilized in my PCR framework, discussed in the following section.

This mutual conditionality and reciprocity is a core feature of postfoundationalism that is demonstrated in its engagement with the science-theology debate. The relationship between


100 Ibid.
102 In fact, Pannenberg argues that theology be given the status of ‘science,’ seen particularly in chapter five of Theology and the Philosophy of Science, entitled “Theology and the Science of God.” As the ‘science of God,’ theology examines the validity of the thesis of faith, making statements about reality in the form of hypotheses, that remain susceptible to the same degree of verification as other theoretical statements. However, these statements remain provisional, awaiting verification in the future. It is important to recognize, however, that the German Wissenschaft is not directly equivalent to the English understanding of natural sciences as a distinct and isolated discipline, but has more to do with a general scholarly enquiry (Pannenberg, TPS, 296; idem., An Introduction to Systematic Theology, 7. Cf. Iain Taylor, Pannenberg on the Triune God (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 3; John McClean, From the Future: Getting to Grips with Pannenberg’s Thought (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2013), 11). This has been criticized by Daniel R. Alvarez, “A Critique of Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Scientific Theology,” Theology and Science 11, no. 3 (2013), 224-50.
these two disciplines has been an area of contention for some time, both vying for the role of ultimate arbiter of the knowledge of reality.\textsuperscript{103} This contention is due to foundationalist presuppositions, and when one is forced to choose one particular type of experience or perspective as foundation of our understanding of reality, unnecessary dualisms appear. Postfoundationalism refuses to allow one to become foundational, rather opting for a methodology that incorporates all types of experience as mutually conditioning. A postfoundationalist theological method allows science and theology to function cooperatively, with both disciplines offering alternative – but not competing or conflicting – interpretations of our experience of reality, and van Huyssteen praises Pannenberg for incorporating precisely this into his methodology.\textsuperscript{104} Pannenberg not only calls the theologian to listen to the scientist, but the scientist to listen to the theologian: “There could be no genuine dialogue between scientists and theologians if only the theologians were expected to listen to the scientists, while these would have no reason to be concerned for what theology might have to say on the requirements of an interpretation of nature as God’s creation.”\textsuperscript{105} In Philip Hefner’s appraisal of Pannenberg’s understanding of science – described by Pannenberg as a “lucid and brilliant presentation”\textsuperscript{106} – this mutually conditioning dynamic of incorporating multiple disciplines is highlighted; theology contributes to our understanding of natural phenomena, and science contributes to our understanding of theology.\textsuperscript{107}

I have here outlined the way in which postfoundationalism, as an attempt to balance the dichotomous elements of knowledge, drawing the strengths of foundationalism and coherentism together, has at its core a mutually conditioning reciprocity. That is, rather than

\textsuperscript{103} For helpful introductions to the science-theology debates, see Robert John Russell, \textit{Cosmology: From Alpha to Omega} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); McGrath, \textit{Inventing the Universe}.

\textsuperscript{104} van Huyssteen, \textit{Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology}, 15, 54.


\textsuperscript{107} Philip Hefner, “The Role of Science in Pannenberg’s Theological Thinking,” \textit{Zygon} 24, no. 2 (1989), 135-50.
allowing one experience or belief to function as an epistemic foundation for other experiences or beliefs and without divorcing oneself from external reality, these experiences and beliefs function in reciprocal coherence, a continuous dynamic tension between the objective and subjective, external and internal, personal and communal, universal and contextual, experience of reality and prior belief. Pannenberg stabilizes this tension by introducing the notion of sub ratione Dei, that all these differing parts come together into a divine whole, expressed in the relationship between faith and reason, and science and theology, neither aspect taking priority. I contend that such a framework is a much more satisfying solution to the problem of the requirement for an epistemic foundation than coherentism or theo-foundationism. We will see that a postfoundationalist interpretation of the resurrection satisfies both conditions of locating the resurrection within its Jewish eschatological context and balancing the dialectic tension between continuity and discontinuity. There is one final epistemic issue to address, to do with the justification of beliefs, which will reinforce this reciprocity and be incorporated into PCR in §3.3.

**On True Belief: Internalist and Externalist Justification**

A recent debate in the field of epistemology has to do with the justification of ‘true beliefs.’ Foundationalism and coherentism are frameworks to describe how one might justify the formulation of beliefs in relation to other prior beliefs (for the foundationalist, beliefs are justified according to the justification of the beliefs upon which it is founded; for the coherentist, beliefs are justified according to how well that belief fits, or coheres, within the broader web of preconceived beliefs). However, this does not necessarily reflect the objective truth of reality. The question, then, is how one might justify one’s beliefs according to reality. In the following, I briefly summarise the debate between the epistemic positions of internalism and externalism. I maintain that most scholarship on the resurrection is not only foundationalist, but also internalist, and that postfoundationalism has more in common with a reliabilist version
of externalism, for which I am an advocate, and provide some ways in which this externalism can contribute toward a more comprehensive postfoundationalist framework, specifically with the task of interpreting the resurrection in mind.

Internalists emphasize the subjective, the experience and reception of external stimuli, or the factors that are internal to the agent, whereas externalists emphasize the objective, the reliability of our thinking process, factors external to the mind which may not be accessible.108

Put differently, an internalist experiences external reality and formulates a belief about reality based on this experience and its relation to other prior beliefs (whether in a foundationalist or coherentist sense), but an externalist might claim that this is not necessarily true of reality. For example, if I were to wake up in the early hours of the morning and see that no light is coming in through my bedroom windows, I might conclude that it is still dark outside and not yet time to get out of bed. However, unbeknownst to me, someone has boarded up the windows while I slept, and I did not notice. It is indeed night outside, and so my belief is true, but my justification is faulty; it is dark primarily because the windows are boarded up, and it would still be dark even if the sun had already risen. We might consider this an example of a Gettier problem, a type of problem presented by Edmund Gettier in his 1963 article, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”109 Another example is that of a person looking at a clock to see that the time is 12.20, unaware that the clock is broken and permanently stuck on the time 12.20, but just lucky enough to be looking at the clock when it is, in reality, 12.20. This person’s belief that it is 12.20 is a true belief, but it is not justified knowledge. Essentially, the debate can be reduced to the central issue of avoiding luck in the formulation of knowledge about reality.110

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According to the internalist, epistemic justifiers are within the subject, the subject’s perspective or are directly accessible. A belief is then justified by virtue of the subject believing it, in accordance with the other justified beliefs. The requirement for justification is that beliefs are acquired by direct and deliberate choice.\textsuperscript{111} According to internalism, I would be justified in my belief that it is not yet time to get out of bed because of my observation that there is no light coming in through my windows, which accords with my other beliefs that windows would normally allow light to come through if there was light, that I am not dreaming but am awake, and that my observation skills are functioning accurately. William Alston observes that according to internalism, “Whether my belief is justified is a function of how things appear in my perspective rather than of how they are in actual fact.”\textsuperscript{112} Where internalism fails is with regard to the factors which alter my perception that I am unaware of. Internalism is incapable of incorporating these unknown factors, highlighted by the Gettier problems, such as that of the windows being boarded up and the clock being broken. Alston, Plantinga, and Alvin Goldman argue that no version of internalism has been proposed that satisfies these problems, and that these beliefs, true though they may be, cannot be considered justified knowledge because they were true by accident.\textsuperscript{113} Other problems with internalism include the problem of forgotten evidence – evidence for justified beliefs can be forgotten – and the problem of concurrent retrieval – all necessary justifiers and stored beliefs may not be able to be retrieved and reflected upon concurrently, thereby making a belief unjustified.\textsuperscript{114} It should be noted that internalism is not universally rejected, and, as with foundationalism, I am not here outright rejecting it but instead highlighting its weaknesses.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 198.
\textsuperscript{114} Goldman, “Internalism Exposed,” 280-82.
To solve the problem of justification, following Gettier’s article, externalism was proposed, the most common version of which is reliabilism. According to this position, a belief can be considered justified if it results from a reliable method. In other words, a belief is justified because the belief-forming process usually results in true beliefs.\textsuperscript{115} A key difference between internalism and externalism is the acknowledgement that knowledge is partial and provisional; where the former justifies beliefs by appealing to direct observation of external reality, the latter justifies beliefs by appealing to a reliable process, recognizing that there might be inaccessible factors which might alter my belief.\textsuperscript{116} The internalist relies on direct access to reality and prior beliefs, and the externalist relies on a reliable cognitive process of forming beliefs. For Porter and Pitts, the strength of externalism is its introduction of a mechanism for being critical: the notion of defeaters, something which undermines or contradicts a belief. Justification may be maintained in the absence of defeaters or lost in the presence of defeaters.\textsuperscript{117}

Though I hesitate to label Pannenberg an externalist, it might be appropriate to label him a proto-externalist, based on his argument against positivism, insisting that we simply do not know everything, or at least enough, to make absolute claims. However, most of the interpretations of the resurrection surveyed in chapter one are not only foundationalist, but internalist. Those defending a historical, physical resurrection do so by basing their arguments on the directly accessible evidence, be that a pre-critical reading of the New Testament narratives or compiling as much historical evidence as possible utilizing a positivistic historiography or (in the case, as will be seen, in Wright) a hypothesis-verification method. Those rejecting this position argue similarly, but claim that there is either not directly accessible evidence, or that there are alternative explanations to the very little evidence that is available.

\textsuperscript{116} O’Brien, \textit{An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge}, 96.
\textsuperscript{117} Porter and Pitts, “Critical Realism is Context,” 301.
We especially see this internalism in those appealing to analogy or who hold a supra-historical interpretation. The former insists that no contemporary analogy exists and so any directly accessible experience of resurrection is impossible, while the latter claims that though we might have faith in a historical resurrection, the evidence transcends ordinary experience and so is not directly accessible. In both cases, it is impossible to assert a resurrection that occurred within contingent history. The methodologies of each of these positions cannot satisfy the challenges posed by externalism. That is, we cannot justify our belief in the possibility or impossibility of a historical or physical resurrection based solely on the evidence or experience that is or is not directly accessible; according to externalism, this does not satisfy the conditions of justification.

The postfoundationalism proposed in this section relies on reciprocity, balancing in dialectic tension the objective and subjective, internal and external, individual and communal, and universal and particular. This has much more in common with an externalist reliabilism than foundationalism or coherentism (though it should be noted that there are internalist and externalist forms of both foundationalism and coherentism), for it does not base its justification of beliefs upon simply that which is directly accessible but tempers the intelligibility of external reality with contextually mediated personal prejudice, bias, and prior belief. The ‘constructive realism’ presented in the following section is a postfoundationalist model that is better equipped for an interpretation of the resurrection that adequately incorporates the Jewish eschatological category of resurrection, maintaining the tension between the continuous and discontinuous, and is not restricted to a personal reanimation.118

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118 It might be possible to advocate a form of ‘constructive realism’ without addressing the issues of foundationalism, or of externalism and internalism. However, the form of constructive realism that I am advocating is one that has at its essential core a postfoundationalist epistemology. Hence the issues raised in this chapter are vital for understanding PCR, as they deal specifically with these tensions that PCR wishes to uphold in a dialectic balance.
3.4. The Praxis: Toward Postfoundationalist Constructive Realism

This chapter has argued that the presupposed foundationalist epistemologies in much research on the resurrection has resulted in an inability of scholars to adequately incorporate the contextual communal categories of understanding (the Jewish eschatological category of resurrection) and to uphold both the continuous and discontinuous elements of Jesus’ risen nature. I have defended an alternative position that has arisen out of Pannenberg’s epistemology, labelled by van Huyssteen and Shults as postfoundationalism, and the following section presents constructive realism as the postfoundationalist model which will be adopted in this thesis. Constructive realism is a postfoundationalist re-appropriation of Wright’s version of critical realism that remedies several deficiencies by stressing the relational and communally conditioned nature of knowledge in a reciprocal dialectical tension with the acknowledgement of the intelligibility of external reality.

‘Critical realism’ is an epistemic position employed by a number of philosophers, theologians, and sociologists, and has been developed and applied within the contexts of the philosophy of science, biblical hermeneutics, and the philosophy of perception and sociology, though the three rarely interact. Wright’s version of critical realism has more in common with that developed within the philosophy of science, even though he primarily references critical realists within the hermeneutical tradition. This is not necessarily problematic, though a fuller engagement with the broader field of critical realism would have probably helped to make his proposal more comprehensive and avoid some of the deficiencies I detect below. However, the significant issue with Wright’s use of critical realism is that, as an epistemological model, it is

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119 Although it is a rather variegated term. Andreas Losch argues that ‘critical realism’ is an equivocal term, its ambiguity largely due to its being reinvented so often (Andreas Losch, “On the Relationship of Ian Barbour’s and Roy Bhaskar’s Critical Realism,” *Journal of Critical Realism* 16, no. 1 (2017), 70.)
not critical enough, conceptualizing knowledge as essentially unilateral, where I instead argue it be approached bilaterally.

**Wright’s Critical Realism**

It was shown in the previous section that Wright rejects both positivism and phenomenalism as satisfactory epistemological frameworks. Though his reasoning for this rejection is minimal, the alternative that he proposes bears similarities with the postfoundationalism that I have defended, and van Huyssteen has even gone so far as to categorize this alternative position of critical realism as postfoundationalist. This is questionable as the positivism-phenomenalism dichotomy is not analogous to the foundationalist-coherentist dichotomy, but there are certainly similarities which are elucidated below. This first part outlines Wright’s definition of critical realism, including those he has drawn from, namely Ben Meyer and Bernard Lonergan, before discussing a particular aspect that he stresses in his methodology, which I believe to be a strength of his proposal, namely, an emphasis upon the narrative form of knowledge and the influence of worldviews upon the formulation of this knowledge.

Responding to positivism and phenomenalism, Wright proposes critical realism as a third option that seeks to mediate these two:

I propose a form of critical realism. This is a way of describing the process of ‘knowing’ that acknowledges the reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower (hence ‘realism’), while also fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known (hence ‘critical’). This path leads to critical reflection on the products of our enquiry into ‘reality’, so that our assertions about ‘reality’ acknowledge their own provisionality. Knowledge, in other words, although in principle concerning realities independent of the knower, is never itself independent of the knower.

This critical realism, on the one hand, acknowledges the existence and intelligibility of an external reality beyond the self, and on the other hand, recognizes that knowledge of this reality is never separate from the subjectivity of the knower. Knowledge is a dynamic interaction

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120 van Huyssteen, *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology*, 40-41
121 Wright, *NTPG*, 35.
between the subject and the object. In other words, the interpretation of the experience of the object is influenced by the subject’s presuppositions, bias, and perspective, or one’s ‘worldview.’ There is no such thing as a ‘god’s-eye view,’ nor does the detached and entirely objective observer exist, and so, the provisionality of statements about reality must be acknowledged.\textsuperscript{122}

I will return to Wright momentarily, but it is helpful to understand the scholars from whom he draws this model, namely Ben Meyer and Bernard Lonergan, who have developed versions of critical realism specifically in the context of biblical hermeneutics. Lonergan responds to what he calls the ‘Principle of the Empty Head,’ which he defines as the belief in the possibility of ridding oneself of subjective influence and “attend simply to the text, see all that is there and nothing that is not there, let the author speak for himself, let the author interpret himself,” and “the less one knows, the better an exegete one will be.”\textsuperscript{123} Though the intentions are good, the remedy is wrong. It is a mistake to assume that all the reader must do is look at a text and simply see what is there. This myth – “that knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what is there to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is what is out there now to be looked at” – ignores value-judgments and the inescapability of subjective interpretation. He insists, on the contrary, that the presence of value judgments and personal interpretations is to be celebrated, not ignored or side-stepped, for it is precisely these value judgements that orient someone toward the things worth knowing.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Ibid.}, 32-37. Wright maintains this in his later \textit{Paul and the Faithfulness of God}, defining it as, “A self-critical epistemology which, in rejecting the naïve realism which simply imagines that we are looking at the material with a God’s-eye view, rejects also the narcissistic reductionism of imagining that all apparent perception is in fact projection, that everything is really going on inside our own heads. Critical realism engages determinedly in a many-sided conversation, both with the data itself and with others (including scholars) who are also engaging with it. This conversation aims, not of course at an unattainable ‘objectivity’, but at truth none the less, the truth in which the words we use and the stories we tell increasingly approximate to the reality of another world, in the historian’s case the world of the past” (Wright, \textit{PFG}, 51).


\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid.}, 238.
Lonergan proposes four levels of knowledge. The first is the empirical experience of external reality, where the knower takes in sense-data. The second is that of understanding, of analysing, integrating, questioning, and formulating hypotheses as a response to this sense-data. The third is judgment, where rational arguments are formed, evidence is assembled, and judgments are made. The fourth is that of belief, reflecting upon these judgments and determining possible actions. Timothy Walker notes that it is these third and fourth levels which place Lonergan within the critical realism school.

Ben Meyer builds upon Lonergan, quoting him regularly. Like Lonergan, he acknowledges the inevitable presence of what he labels ‘horizons,’ namely “the bounds [of] one’s field of vision,” and argues that this subjectivity is to be embraced. However, he takes the explicit step beyond Lonergan by insisting that it is through subjectivity that objectivity can be achieved, so long as this subjectivity is exercised “attentively, intelligently, reasonably, and responsibly.” Meyer sought to find a mediating position between objectivity and subjectivity, specifically between the positivist’s belief in the possibility of perception as unadulterated reception and the phenomenalist’s belief that perception is mere projection. Against these two, Meyer insists that a critical realist approach to reading insists that a better reading comes as the result of greater presupposed understanding, provided that the text is read properly and responsibly. The critical realist can “measure up to the challenge of the text,” and can, in fact, understand the meaning that the author was attempting to express:

It is perfectly true that the reader’s hold on the meaning of the text is mediated by the reader’s own experience, intelligence, and judgment; but, when the reader is competent and his reading accurate, the

125 Ibid.
127 E.g. regarding ‘horizons,’ especially Lonergan’s insistence upon the role of selection in interpretation (p. 50) and regarding Lonergan’s ‘Principle of the Empty Head,’ (pp. 61–62).
129 Ibid., 4.
130 Ibid., 89.
meaning so mediated is precisely the meaning that the writer intended and more or less skilfully expressed.\textsuperscript{131}

And he argues that a successful reading is

the accurate recovery of whatever meaning the writer has managed to objectify in words. That meaning is mediated, communicated, recovered, only if the reader reads well, only if he or she attends to an exact decoding of signs, to the particularities of the word-sequence that emerges, to how every element in it works with every other.\textsuperscript{132}

He elsewhere claims that knowledge of reality is attained “through the act of true judgment, by which reflective intelligence climaxes the discursive and often laborious process of trying to find out what is true.”\textsuperscript{133} Meyer, I suggest, veers precipitously toward that which Lonergan was reacting against, the principle of the Empty Head. He is overly confident in the ability of the reader to attain the precise message intended by the author.\textsuperscript{134} Meyer, I believe, has therefore been largely unsuccessful.

Wright demonstrates far less optimism than Meyer in the reader’s ability to “accurately recover” the intended meaning of the author. For Wright, determining what the author was attempting to say – and why – is the ideal to which the reader strives to grasp, but will forever remain out of reach, recognizing the likely existence of multiple meanings and interpretations, many peculiar to that particular reader. This is a more satisfying alternative to a positivistic optimism in objectivity and to an idealist or phenomenalist emphasis upon subjectivity. For Wright, knowledge is thoroughly relational. The act of knowing is not detached and uninvolved, rather it has “to do with the interrelation of humans and the created world.”\textsuperscript{135} This interrelation suggests dynamism, something essentially relational. Knowledge is a

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 2-3.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{133} Ben F. Meyer, “Critical Realism and Biblical Theology,” RelStTh 6, no. 3 (1986), 41.
\textsuperscript{134} He thus ignores the significant issues raised by Wimsatt and Beardsley’s ‘Intentional Fallacy,’ assuming that if one correctly reads the text, one understands the author, ignoring the possibility of meanings other than what the author may have intended, (W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” STRev 54, no. 3 (1946): 468-88).
\textsuperscript{135} Wright, NTPG, 45.
conversation of sorts, a back-and-forth dialogue between the perceiver and that being perceived.\footnote{Ibid., 63-64.}

The broader framework of this relational dynamic of knowledge is that of narrative and worldview. These narratives comprise the “basis of the observer’s way of being in relation to the world,” and the particular aspects of knowledge occur within this broader framework.\footnote{Ibid., 37.} Wright is challenging the inductive reasoning inherent within logical positivism, instead advocating a form of abductive reasoning, a model of hypothesis and verification: “We make a hypothesis about what is true, and we go about verifying it by further experimentation.”\footnote{Ibid.}

As it stands, this would be utterly positivistic, but within Wright’s broader critical realism the hypothesis is formed not merely out of sense data and experience, but from one’s larger framework of presupposed knowledge. Experience is filtered and interpreted according to prior understanding, a hypothesis – or narrative – is formulated, and this hypothesis is then analysed and verified according to further data, including comparison to other narratives.\footnote{Ibid., 37-44. To illustrate this, Wright uses the example of experiencing a shudder whilst driving a car. The driver, drawing upon prior knowledge, immediately formulates possible stories to explain the shudder: the road is rough; the car has a flat tyre; something is wrong with the suspension. These hypotheses are then tested against further data: the car behind is flashing its lights and the driver is pointing to one of the tyres. The second story seems most likely, so the driver pulls over, checks the tyre and sees that it is, indeed, flat. The road could well have been subpar, and there may in fact be something wrong with the suspension, but the simplest explanation for the shudder is a flat tyre.} A comprehensive narrative consists of, “Simplicity of outline, elegance in handling the details within it, the inclusion of all the parts of the story, and the ability of the story to make sense beyond its immediate subject-matter,” and when a hypothesis fails to meet the criteria, the prevailing narrative is confirmed.\footnote{Ibid., 42-43. Cf. Christopher McMahon, “The Relevance of Historical Inquiry for the Christian Faith: A Comparative Study of the Historical Methodologies of J. P. Meier and N. T. Wright,” Ph.D dissertation (The Catholic University of America, 2003), 158.}
The framework for knowledge is thus narrative. Human nature is essentially “grounded in and constituted by the implicit or explicit stories which humans tell themselves and one another,” stories which “are a basic constituent of human life.”\textsuperscript{141} Furthermore:

When, therefore, we perceive external reality, we do so within a prior framework. That framework consists, most fundamentally, of a worldview; and worldviews, as we have emphasized, are characterized by, among other things, certain types of stories.\textsuperscript{142} Stories frame our understanding and experience of reality and are an essential part of a worldview, which Wright understands as that which forms the interpretive grid through which one interprets and relates to the world, functioning as “the presuppositional, pre-cognitive stage of a culture or society,” embracing “all deep-level human perceptions of reality.”\textsuperscript{143} It is through and from these worldviews that stories are produced which provide the tools to enable humans to answer, or least engage with, the basic questions of human existence.\textsuperscript{144}

Along with stories, a worldview is comprised of sets of beliefs and aims, and demonstrated through symbols, events, and artefacts. Accompanying these symbols is a visible praxis. In a Christian worldview, theology provides Christians with vocation and direction and so a worldview, as expressed through stories and symbols, proffers direction and orientation.\textsuperscript{145} A person is most likely to act in accordance with their worldview and that of their cultural context. Furthermore, worldviews are expressed in literature – the articulation of stories, beliefs, and aims. Literature is “the telling of stories which bring worldviews into articulation,”\textsuperscript{146} and so it is important to recognize that this worldview is different to that of the reader, who should be sympathetic toward this different worldview.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 122-23.
\textsuperscript{145} Wright, NTPG, 125-34.
\textsuperscript{147} Wright, NTPG, 67. Worldview is rather similar in nature to ideology. Where the former is, in general, referring to one’s broader perspective of reality, I interpret the latter as an application of that worldview upon social life, particularly politics and economics. Of course, as noted by Eagleton, there is (much like critical realism, as will
There is in Wright’s critical realism a leaning toward an anthropocentric epistemology in his stress upon worldview. I similarly argue that knowledge has a perpetually contextual and communal nature. However, Wright remains reliant upon the criteria of authenticity in the study of the historical Jesus, especially that of dissimilarity, which states that an early saying attributed to Jesus is considered authentic if it is dissimilar to the Judaism of the time or the traditions of the early Christian church. This is a central part of his argument for the authenticity of the resurrection. Of course, Wright’s thought developed at a time when the criteria of authenticity were in vogue. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, these criteria have been heavily critiqued in recent New Testament scholarship, and Wright’s methodology should adapt accordingly. Wright’s use of these criteria gestures towards a reliance upon objectivism. However, his placing the locus of knowledge within the realm of a contextually conditioned worldview is especially useful for the current thesis.

Wright’s critical realism acknowledges the intelligibility of an external reality beyond the self while recognizing that knowledge of this reality is never separate from the subjectivity of the knower. Knowledge is thus fundamentally relational and conditioned by individual presuppositions and a communally contextualized worldview. Wright’s epistemology begins to be seen) no universally accepted definition of ideology, and the distinction between worldview and ideology is difficult to discern. For the purpose of this thesis, I will primarily adopt the language of worldview, especially Wright’s definition as the interpretive grid through which one interprets and relates to the world, as it encompasses a broad range of human experience. Cf. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), esp. pp. 1-31; Jan Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2014).

148 See, e.g. Wright, *JVG*, 132.

149 Wright, *RSG*, 685-718.

150 Reflecting the desire to discern a ‘genuine’ history, entirely divorced from historical or communal elaboration, a variety of criteria have been introduced to aid the determination of which aspects of Jesus’ life and teaching are to be considered authentic. For example, according to the criterion of embarrassment, anything that was said of Jesus that may have been perceived as embarrassing for a fledgling church to have included is likely authentic, and according to the criterion of multiple attestation, a story that has been recorded in multiple sources might also be considered authentic. Though there is some value in considering these elements of a story, the use of these various criteria presupposes the possibility of separating what ‘actually happened’ from how that was interpreted and retold. Chapter three argues that this is impossible. It is also interesting to note how easy it is to argue that a saying either fits or does not fit a particular criterion; it is impossible to know for certain what the early church likely considered embarrassing, we can only predict based on the scant evidence that exists for what usually happened.
to move away from the hard foundationalism that has disrupted an adequate interpretation of the resurrection. As it is, however, this epistemology remains insufficient for addressing the principal task of interpreting the resurrection – one which comprehensively incorporates the Jewish eschatological category of resurrection (Wright does, of course, connect the resurrection to ancient Jewish eschatology, but not adequately) and balances both its continuous and discontinuous characteristics. There are several significant, though not insoluble, problems with his version of critical realism, which will be highlighted following a discussion of the broader context of the notion of critical realism to locate Wright within this ongoing discussion and developing model.

**The Diversity of Critical Realism**

In a collaborative publication reflecting on Wright’s *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Alister McGrath recounts his appreciation of Wright’s contribution to recent hermeneutics. Where the Enlightenment’s desire for an absolute and objective rationality failed, “Wright does more than make helpful suggestions concerning the epistemological status of theological statements; he indicates the role of the early Christian community in shaping the manner in which reality would be represented.” However, within the broader field of critical realisms Wright’s version is somewhat confused, sharing many similarities with Meyer and Lonergan, from whom he primarily draws, but his definition is much closer to the critical realisms within the philosophy of science. The problem has to do with how ‘realism’ is understood, and there seems to be some conflict between Wright’s definition and implementation of critical realism. To illustrate this, I will briefly discuss the development of critical realism within these other disciplines, especially that of the philosophy of science. Furthermore, I highlight aspects from

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these other versions of critical realism that aid in the development of a more critical, constructive realism.

The notion of critical realism has developed in various disciplines and often independently of one another, and so while there is no single definition there are similarities between them.\textsuperscript{152} Its origins possibly trace back to Kant,\textsuperscript{153} but it primarily emerged in twentieth-century American philosophy of perception, particularly in the works of Roy Wood Sellars and Durant Drake, who respectively argued for the existence of an intelligible external reality despite perception of this reality remaining partial with interpretations never being identical.\textsuperscript{154} Neither, however, are referenced by the later versions of critical realism in the philosophy of science, despite the language being adopted. The main twentieth century proponents in this discipline are Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke, John Polkinghorne, and Roy Bhaskar, who each respond to positivism or scientific dogmatism on the one hand, and idealism or subjective realism on the other.\textsuperscript{155}

A commonality between these four variations of critical realism is the aim, as Peacocke puts it, “to tell as \textit{true} a story as possible” about reality, acknowledging that knowledge is partial,

\textsuperscript{152} Timothy Walker laments the lack of interaction between the various branches, claiming that this is a weakness in the development of the use of the term ‘critical realism,’ (Timothy Walker, “Approaches to Critical Realism: Bhaskar and Lonergan,” \textit{Journal of Critical Realism} 16, no. 2 (2017), 113).

\textsuperscript{153} Andreas Losch connects critical realism with Kant’s ‘empirical realism,’ which affirms the reality of an external object, though it is not in and of itself perceptible (Andreas Losch, “On the Origins of Critical Realism,” \textit{Theology and Science} 7, no. 1 (2009), 85-87). Losch also notes that a characteristic belief of this German school was that a form of critical realism has been the predominant, albeit implicit, philosophy of most of history. Peacocke makes a similar claim, that critical realism has been the default philosophy of science and most scientists “who aim to depict reality but know only too well their fallibility in doing so” (Arthur Peacocke, \textit{Theology for a Scientific Age}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (London: SCM, 1993), 11). Cf. John Wilson, \textit{A Physicist Examines Hope in the Resurrection: Examination of the Significance of the Work of John C. Polkinghorne for the Mission of the Church} (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 33.


mediated through subjective experience, and statements about reality remain hypothetical and provisional.\textsuperscript{156} Barbour’s critical realism stresses that “no theory is an exact description of the world,” for the creativity and imagination of the human mind bears significant influence upon the formation of theories.\textsuperscript{157} Polkinghorne suggests descriptions of reality are verisimilitudinous in nature, and never absolute or objective, but notes that knowledge of reality becomes increasingly accurate. For Polkinghorne, it is possible to affirm the intertwining of experience and interpretations (hence critical) alongside acknowledging a process of discovery (realism).\textsuperscript{158} For Bhaskar, on the one hand, positivists are right to stress the existence of laws and mechanism, but incorrect in asserting the universality of empiricism; and, on the other hand, anti-naturalism is correct to stress the existence of pre-interpreted reality, but is incorrect in its failure to provide the adequate possibility and means for rational criticism. A critical naturalism upholds the intuitions of both positions by affirming the existence of structures which exceed empirical testing (such as social structures), and can uphold the intransitivity of beliefs and meaning,\textsuperscript{159} while insisting that these structures and beliefs are susceptible to critique, recognizing that the world is structured, differentiated, and changing.\textsuperscript{160}


\textsuperscript{159} By which he means that beliefs and meaning are not necessarily conditional upon experience.

Wright shares with these philosophers of science the concern to find an intermediate position between a naïve realism and idealism, though he only makes two brief references to Barbour.\footnote{Wright, \textit{NTPG}, 33, 37. Of course, one should not be criticized for failing to refer to every single other scholar who has ever existed, but in this instance it is worth noting as these are the primary contributors toward the development of critical realism.} This overall lack of engagement is surprising considering how similar his proposal is to these philosophy of science versions, particularly those of Barbour and Polkinghorne. The former notes that his critical realism “affirms the role of mental construction and imaginative activity in the formation of theories, and it asserts that some constructs agree with observations better than others only because events have an objective pattern.”\footnote{Barbour, \textit{Issues in Science and Religion}, 172.} For the latter, “Our understanding of the physical world will never be total but it can become progressively more accurate.”\footnote{Polkinghorne, \textit{One World}, 17.} However, Wright’s primary source is Meyer, and is thus within the context of Lonergan’s critical realism. They appear to have a different understanding of ‘realism’ to Wright, seen especially in Meyer’s definition as that which is “intelligently grasped and reasonably affirmed.”\footnote{Meyer, \textit{Reality and Illusion in New Testament Scholarship}, 68.} Whereas Barbour and Polkinghorne’s understanding of realism is thoroughly scientific, Lonergan and Meyer’s is Kantian.\footnote{Cf. Andreas Losch, “Wright’s Version of Critical Realism,” in \textit{God and the Faithfulness of Paul}, ed. Christopher Heilig, J. Thomas Hewitt and Michael F. Bird (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 102-04.} Put differently, the philosophy of science version of critical realism understands ‘realism’ as objective external reality, whereas Lonergan and Meyer understand it as that which is merely grasped. Considering there exists no normative definition of critical realism, there is no need for Wright’s version to align to anyone else’s. However, there is some confusion within his method. It is not particularly clear, for instance, what he means by ‘realism,’ as his definition seems closer to that of the philosophy of science, with which he does not engage; but the implementation of this reflects Meyer and Lonergan, who seem to presuppose an entirely different understanding of realism from his own. Losch has argued that Wright merely equated Meyer’s critical realism with that of Barbour,
overlooking the diversity of understandings of critical realism.\(^{166}\) Wright has responded to Losch, acknowledging the various strands of critical realism and the need for him to clarify his own, but insists that he did in fact read Meyer’s work much earlier than Losch supposes, and before reading Barbour. It was Meyer’s earlier works which were particularly influential, but in *The New Testament and the People of God* Wright emphasized Meyer’s later works which dealt with method much more significantly.\(^{167}\) I suggest that Wright’s critical realism would be more comprehensive with further explicit dialogue with the broader field of critical realism, and if he had done so in *The New Testament and the People of God* his understanding of ‘realism’ might have been clarified.

Moreover, as an epistemic model, critical realism has developed since Wright first proposed his version of critical realism in 1992. In particular, there has been a much greater stress upon the stratified and multifaceted nature of reality, and upon the role of science. For Kees van Kooten Niekerk, who affirms the core aspiration of critical realism – a recognition, on the one hand, of the intelligibility of external reality beyond the human mind, and, on the other, that knowledge of this external reality is interpreted through the critical reflection of experience\(^{168}\) – knowledge is a distillation of the real from the mental, and thus has a particular interest in science, for “it is first and foremost there that we meet a successful critical treatment of the world of our experience.”\(^{169}\) However, theology – the critical reflection on Christian belief – has its own peculiar concerns distinct from science, involving ethical valuations, such as the determination of ‘good’ and ‘bad,’ ‘worth,’ and what one ‘ought’ to do.\(^{170}\) Niekerk stresses the


natural sciences without jettisoning the social, thereby recognizing the impossibility of a normative, universal methodology.

McGrath took this engagement with natural sciences a step further in *A Scientific Theology*, arguing that the success of the natural sciences demonstrates the efficacy of realism, and that a postmodern anti-realism is a superfluous over-reaction. However, he is suspicious of any realism which ignores the role of human reflection, and describes reality within a critical realist epistemology as being “apprehended by the human mind which attempts to express and accommodate that reality as best it can with the tools at its disposal.”\(^{171}\) McGrath builds upon Bhaskar’s critical realism, commending Bhaskar in particular for the recognition of the stratified and diverse nature of reality. Bhaskar refutes reductionism, refusing to allow everything to be reduced to certain categories, such as social categories or the laws of physics. ‘Natural’ reality is entirely different to ‘social’ reality and both adopt different methodologies respective of their particular subject matter. Hence, McGrath argues for a diversity of methodologies, which are determined by ontology; methodology cannot be determined *a priori*, but rather *a posteriori*. Furthermore, he encourages a ‘connectivist’ approach to avoid reality being reduced to any one level or area, a position similar to Grenz’s coherentism, where the correlations between the various areas are explored.\(^{172}\)

With Niekerk and McGrath, Heikki Patomäki urges any epistemic model to incorporate significant engagement with science, claiming that many critical realists have failed to pay it sufficient attention. The aspects of science which Bhaskar engaged with, namely within a linear, Newtonian science, have developed since his proposal of critical realism. Specifically, developments within the general theory of relativity and quantum mechanics have rendered


Bhaskar’s critical realism misleading. These advances, which invariably exceed normal human experience and are seemingly contradictory, “have re-opened in exciting ways old questions about causality, temporality and the origins and nature of the universe,” and challenge the underlying critical realist understanding of laws in terms of mechanisms which produce certain effects, albeit unobservable mechanisms. For Patomäki, critical realism needs to develop and move beyond the “classical notion of causal mechanisms operating within unidirectional time.” The present point to take from this is that knowledge is not simply a matter of interpreting an intelligible reality through critical reflection upon experience of this reality, for there is no guarantee that this experience will indeed be intelligible. Of course, this is not to conclude that knowledge of reality is thereby impossible, but to affirm at least the possibility that the laws that govern both our experience and interpretation may be incorrect or incomplete. The twentieth century critical realisms which presuppose a Newtonian understanding of experience, and its subsequent interpretation, of reality are thus now outdated as science shifts away from Newtonian mechanics.

The critical realism put forward by Andrew Wright similarly advocates a more complex view of the interpretation of reality, also recognizing a stratified and multi-faceted view of reality. “Human beings are simultaneously physical, chemical, biological, psychological, social, moral, aesthetic and spiritual creatures. Accounts of each level make unique contributions to our understanding of the whole person.” He therefore argues for a ‘connectivist’ approach with McGrath, while maintaining that there is no universal methodology, but rather that the

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173 For example, in general relativity, the cause of gravity is now recognized as having to do with the curvature of spacetime, rather than a force of attraction between two objects, and in quantum mechanics, hypothetical particles called gravitons mediate the gravitational interaction of subatomic particles, and yet they are strictly hypothetical as they cannot be observed according to the usual understanding of gravitation as a force (Heikki Patomäki, “After Critical Realism?” *Journal of Critical Realism* 9, no. 1 (2010), 67-68).

174 Ibid., 62.

175 Ibid., 69.

particular methodology be oriented to its specific subject matter. Furthermore, he reaffirms one of the central characteristics of critical realism, that knowledge is inseparably associated with our experience of reality.

The point to be taken from these more recent versions of critical realism is the recognition that critical realism increasingly insists upon the impossibility of a universal methodology and of reducing reality to a mechanistic materialism. With this has come an emphasis upon reciprocity, and in this regard a similarity with postfoundationalism. The PCR advanced here is a reappropriation of Wright’s critical realism in light of the postfoundationalism outlined above, and acknowledges this diversity of methodology, highlighting the way in which this reflects a postfoundationalist stress upon the reciprocity between epistemic tensions. However, two issues remain with this critical realism, which will be addressed immediately below.

**Postfoundationalist Constructive Realism**

Aside from Wright’s limited engagement with the broader field of critical realism, two problems remain. The first is that Wright’s critical realism is not critical enough. By this I mean that the ‘critical’ aspect of his critical realism is not comprehensive enough, having not engaged adequately those in the phenomenalist camp. The second is that any contemporary re-appropriation of this model must respond to the challenges presented by externalism. As it is, Wright’s critical realism remains internalist, relying on the reception, interpretation, and reflection of the direct experience of external reality. Both of these issues will be discussed below. Ultimately, Wright’s critical realism reverts to a foundationalist and internalist empiricism. However, these issues are not fatal, and I argue that an adjusted version of critical realism, which incorporates the reciprocity inherent in postfoundationalism, the observations

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177 Ibid., 352-53.
178 Ibid., 352. Cf. Kenneth A. Reynhout, who states that “to be a critical realist is to be an interpreter of reality,” (“Interdisciplinary Interpretation: Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Theology and Science” (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 2012), 25); Also, Margolis, *Pragmatism Without Foundations*, 175.
of recent critical realist proposals, and an externalist understanding of justification, is an appropriate model for proceeding. This adjusted critical realism is labelled ‘constructive realism,’ for it acknowledges the significant impact of the subject’s prior beliefs, prejudices, and worldview upon the interpretation of the external object.

Wright’s critical realism has not adequately considered the arguments of those in the phenomenalist camp, such as the coherentism presented by Rorty and Grenz. This does not mean that his epistemology is not critical at all, but rather that it could be developed further. He states that knowledge is “never itself independent of the knower,” and acknowledges the impossibility of absolute objectivity, but he does not incorporate the inevitable subjectivity of the individual into his methodology. He makes note of the to-and-fro, conversational dynamic of knowledge, suggesting the possibility that knowledge is bilateral, but the emphasis remains on how close one can get to knowing the objective truth of the object, and leans precariously towards a foundationalist, empirical realism and away from something particularly critical. It appears Wright has not adequately allowed room for the idealist or phenomenalist (critical) counterpoint to the naïve realism he denounces to influence his epistemology. Further, as highlighted by Porter and Pitts, Wright’s critical realism presupposes an internalist theory of justification. Wright adopts, with very little variation, the critical realism of Lonergan, who is pre-Gettier. Porter and Pitts claim that Lonergan’s critical realism is “classic internalism” due to his epistemic formulation of data, understanding, judgment, insight, and decision. Wright’s critical realism continues this internalist self-reflective feature. Any re-appropriation of this critical realism must be considered in light of externalism. Both of these issues are remedied

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179 Wright, NTPG, 35.
180 Porter and Pitts, “Critical Realism in Context,” 290-91. See Jonathan Bernier’s response to Porter and Pitts, who argues that they have not adequately engaged with Lonergan’s thought, declaring him an internalist and then arguing against internalism. For Bernier, this is not a substantial critique of Lonergan, but merely “guilt by association” (Jonathan Bernier, “A Response to Porter and Pitts’ ‘Wright’s Critical Realism in Context,’” JSHJ 14 (2016), 186-89.)
in a postfoundationalist reformulation by balancing the object with the subject, the individual with the communal, the universal with the particular in a reciprocal dialectic tension. As will be seen, the socially constituted categories of understanding significantly impact the formation of knowledge, that knowledge is bilateral (that is, knowledge is never mere reception of external reality, but the prior beliefs, prejudices, perspective, and worldview of the subject distorts this reception), and this is acknowledged in PCR.

Critical realism has much in common with postfoundationalism. Three aspects in particular within these recent developments of critical realism are especially valuable for the development of a postfoundationalist model: the recognition that knowledge is inherently connected to the experience of reality, the multifaceted nature of reality – and thus maintaining the importance of an interdisciplinary methodology – and that this reality, due to the possibility of its being experienced, is intelligible, albeit an intelligibility that refuses to be reduced to a particular set of categories or rules. This qualified understanding of the intelligibility of an inherently variegated and diverse reality implies that knowledge is not simply about perceiving ‘what is there,’ a point I will return to below. Van Huyssteen has explicitly presented critical realism as a postfoundationalist model for theological methodology.  

A postfoundationalist theological program can, by means of a fallibilist, experiential epistemology, properly aim for justified beliefs and for a tentative and provisional knowledge of what Christians have come to call God. What is retrieved here is not only a more nuanced way of dealing with the cognitive claims of religious and theological reflection, but also the important insight that rationality can never be reduced to natural scientific rationality. As a broader, holist approach a fallibilist, experiential program of postfoundationalist critical realism can, however, again link theology, philosophy of religion, and the sciences in their common search for intelligibility.  

The key observation is that knowledge is fallible, experiential, provisional, holistic, and interdisciplinary, traits common to both postfoundationalism and critical realism.  

181 “I believe a plausible, and very helpful, postfoundationalist model for theistic belief can be found in a carefully constructed critical realism,” (van Huyssteen, Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology, 40-41).
182 Ibid., 52.
It is not surprising, therefore, that critical realism has much in common with Pannenberg’s approach. James Page argues precisely this, highlighting several similarities, including the nature of history and the philosophy of science. The central similarity for Page is that both critical realism and Pannenberg’s thought assert the existence and intelligibility of external reality, but that knowledge of this reality is perpetually incomplete, and thus provisional, and should therefore remain interdisciplinary and be open to falsification. Within this schema, the existence of God and the resurrection of Jesus remain a possibility, not excluded as a priori impossibilities.\(^{183}\)

However, postfoundationalism and critical realism are not immediately compatible, despite having much in common. The critical aspect of critical realism does not take seriously enough the challenges posed by nonfoundationalism, particularly the way interpretation is influenced by a prior network of beliefs and the historically situated context of the interpreter. A constructive realism, to borrow Losch’s term,\(^{184}\) is a better postfoundationalist reappropriation of the goals of critical realism. A postfoundationalist model must incorporate both sides of each of the four pairs and couplets of Shults’ ideal postfoundationalism, as seen above.\(^{185}\)

Polkinghorne’s argument that knowledge is only ever a verisimilitudinous representation of reality is a step in the right direction and a good example of the admirable humility within critical realist epistemologies, but it arguably does not go far enough. Knowledge is not simply a representation of what is there, but as the knower brings something to the interpretation of reality that interpretation is distorted beyond what is simply there. Experience and interpretation do not occur in a unilateral direction. Indeed, this observation is central to the critical realist proposal, but where critical realism has not gone far enough is in the way in

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which what the knower brings to the interpretation *constructs* knowledge. It is not a matter of seeing ‘what is there,’ regardless of how incomplete this seeing is. Rather, there is an element of interpretation that is constructed not from observation, but from the worldviews, presupposed knowledge and *a priori* beliefs, and the historical and communal context of the observer.

Though all critical realists make particular note of the fact that observation is not value-neutral and is influenced by a variety of internal factors, they generally treat interpretation as though it is unilateral, object to observer, albeit observation that is partial and distorted. As a result, the *constructive* aspect of interpretation is not taken seriously enough. This is similar to Kenneth Reynhout’s criticism of critical realism as not adequately offering a solution to the fact that interpreters with different worldviews will invariably come to different conclusions, and that “there is no such thing as an isolated explanation that does not presume and anticipate understanding.”186 The idealist or phenomenalist counterpoint to the naïve realism or positivism is not given due respect; critical realism is not critical enough.

Instead, a constructive realism that balances the objective-subjective dichotomy, recognizing the bilateral direction of knowledge and interpretation, that is, an individual will always bring something to the observation of an external, intelligible, object, is a more comprehensive epistemological model. The four couplets of Shults’ postfoundationalism – interpreted experience and a network of beliefs; objective unity of truth and the subjective multiplicity of knowledge; individual rational judgement and culturally determined criteria of rationality; universal understanding and contextualized explanations – are better represented in a version of critical realism which takes seriously the *constructive* aspect of knowledge.

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186 Reynhout, “Interdisciplinary Interpretation,” 36-37.
I hesitate to give PCR a definitive definition, for central to this framework is the rejection of universal methodologies. Rather, it might be more faithful to the central values of PCR to treat it as more of a guide, providing general epistemic contours. The central concern of this framework is to balance the external object and its subjective interpretation without prioritizing one or the other, and to approach the external object as a dynamic tension between the two. Multiple disciplines and experiences are balanced in a mutually conditioning reciprocity. It also acknowledges the significant impact that the socially and historically mediated categories of understanding and worldviews have upon the interpretation of the event; knowledge is bilateral, not just the reception of the experience of the external object but its interpretation which is fundamentally shaped by the subjectivity of the individual. Hence the adoption of the term ‘constructive realism,’ for knowledge is both experience of the intelligible external reality and the constructive nature of the subjectively held prior frameworks of understanding.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has proposed the epistemological framework of Postfoundationalist Constructive Realism as an alternative to the foundationalist and empiricist epistemic underpinnings of the majority of scholarship which has assumed the language of resurrection refers to the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body. This epistemic foundationalism was found to be deficient due to its belief in the possibility of determining universal basic beliefs upon which all of knowledge can be founded. Pannenberg and Wright argue against objectivism and have provided alternatives to this foundationalist empiricism. Rather than either coherentism or theo-foundationalism, the former distancing itself from external reality and the latter minimizing human involvement in theological knowledge, postfoundationalism, which thrives on a mutually conditioning reciprocity and dialectic tension between the external and internal, community and individual, object and subject, between various disciplines and different experiences, has been defended in this chapter. Wright’s version of critical realism expresses
similar (though not identical) concerns, similarly seeking to balance objectivity and subjectivity, particularly the helpful contributions of positivism and phenomenalism. However, this model falls short, reverting to a veiled foundationalist empiricism. Rather a *constructive* realism is an adjusted version of this critical realism which is a model that better reflects the concerns of postfoundationalism, and so PCR is proposed.

The following chapter explores how this is applied to the discipline of history, where again communal categories are stressed without denying the possibility of the event in question as an event within contingent history. This PCR approach is better suited to interpreting the claim that Jesus rose from the dead within its ancient Jewish eschatological context than the methodologies of the scholars discussed in chapter two, capable of maintaining a dialectical tension between the continuous and discontinuous elements of the resurrection without running the risk of reducing the resurrection to little more than the reanimation of a personal body.
4. Tension in History: of Communities and Memories

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss methodological concerns regarding the consideration of Jesus’ resurrection as a historical event (that is, as an event that occurred within contingent history and as it was interpreted and communicated) in light of the PCR framework proposed in the preceding chapter, understanding the event within its communal context and avoiding either reducing the event to a personal re-animated body or emphasizing either its continuous or discontinuous elements. This involves considering how the resurrection may be understood as an event within contingent history without reducing it to an event comparable with any other ordinary event. This chapter does not attempt to ‘prove’ the resurrection as such, or to present a detailed historical method that could, but rather to argue for the possibility of treating the resurrection as an event within contingent history. A PCR approach to historical inquiry does not present a specific, universal historiography, but guidelines for approaching history, paying particular attention to the interaction between the external event and the communal and historical categories which impacted the interpretation of that event.

In approaching the resurrection, it is necessary to look at the theological categories that were utilized to interpret Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and so it is also necessary to consider the relationship between the theological claim of the resurrection and the nature of history. This is necessary because, as I demonstrated in chapter one, many scholars (such as Lessing, Kähler, Bultmann, Troeltsch, Barth, Brunner, Tillich, Bornkamm, Marxsen, and Schillebeeckx) insist on the separation between the disciplines of theology and history (i.e. what can be said about God, and what can be said about past events), relegating the resurrection to the realm of faith and not of historical inquiry. This relationship between history and theology is explored in section one, where it is argued that such a separation is based on a foundationalist empiricism
and is prohibited within PCR on account of the anthropocentric and constructive nature of knowledge. Here Pannenberg and Wright’s arguments are considered, the former insisting that history is the locus for divine revelation and the latter stressing the impact of worldviews upon the interpretation and communication of historical events. Though both provide helpful contributions that will be adopted within a PCR understanding of history, neither have fully acknowledged the significance of the theological presuppositions of the historian, particularly regarding the determination of which parts of history are to be considered revelatory. PCR neither removes the resurrection from history nor treats it as an ordinary historical event, but acknowledges the presupposed beliefs and communally-conditioned categories of understanding of the author and historian.

Having argued in the first part of the chapter that, with respect to the resurrection, history and theology should not be separated, due to the anthropocentric and constructive nature of knowledge, the second part of this chapter turns its attention more specifically to this anthropocentricity. This involves an analysis of Pannenberg’s Christological method, his earlier Christology ‘from below’ seeking to ‘get behind’ the NT text to discover the Jesus of Nazareth as he was within contingent history devoid of later theological interpretation, and from there moving to theological considerations of Jesus’ relationship with God. This Christology then later developed as Pannenberg attempted to balance this with a ‘from above’ approach, recognizing that ‘getting behind’ the text is methodologically impossible and that personal presuppositions perpetually influence interpretation. Indeed, everyone speaks and interprets within a particular communal context. In this regard, Wright stresses the role of worldviews, the presupposed understandings of reality through which experience is interpreted. A PCR approach to history appropriates Wright’s stress upon the narrative characteristic of history in the interpretation of the resurrection, focussing upon the theological category of ‘resurrection of the dead’ and how this category was utilized and developed by the early
witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection. This also incorporates the contributions of recent New Testament scholarship on the role of memory in the preservation and interpretation of historical events. History is both preserved in and distorted by memory, and how one remembers the past is dependent upon the present, and is further preserved within a community. As with the insistence that theology cannot be divorced from history, neither can the New Testament texts be divided into ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ material, but rather the accounts of Jesus’ life and fate, within a PCR framework, are a dynamic balance, a dialectical tension, between the objective event and its subjective interpretation, interpretation which is re-interpreted as it is remembered in new and changing contexts.

4.2. Theology Within History

The first section of this chapter considers the challenge levelled against the notion of a historical resurrection on the grounds that the disciplines of history and theology must remain methodologically distinct. Theological questions transcend historical inquiry, and so the resurrection cannot be a matter of history. This separation reduces history to objectivity and theology to subjectivity; theological notions such as resurrection are consigned to the realm of faith. In removing the resurrection from historical consideration it no longer bears continuity with empirical reality, but to emphasize its historical nature and compare it to ordinary events its discontinuous elements are minimized. The tension here is clear: to stress the continuous is to minimize the discontinuous, and to stress the discontinuous is to minimize the continuous; yet both must be upheld. Within a PCR framework, history and theology are balanced in a reciprocal tension, prioritizing neither.

In the following I analyse the historical and philosophical roots of this separation between history and theology, followed by the attempts of Pannenberg and Wright to reconcile these disciplines, the former claiming that history is the locus of divine revelation and Wright
maintaining that history informs theology. In both cases, the anthropocentric nature of the interpretation and communication of history is stressed, both arguing that God acts within contingent history. The resurrection, they claim, is a matter of public opinion and debate. Despite their valuable contributions, they ultimately prioritize history, ignoring the theological presuppositions of the historian. However, I believe that they have mounted a compelling case against those who would separate theological questions from historical inquiry. The PCR that I am advocating as an appropriate framework for acknowledging the dialectical tension within the resurrection between the continuous and discontinuous as a reflection of the Jewish eschatological hope for the renewal and transformation of creation (an event that exceeds the scope of personal reanimation) benefits from an engagement with Panneneberg and Wright’s arguments, though they have not gone far enough. As in the postfoundationalist stress upon the reciprocal balance between the external and internal, PCR balances theology and history, that the interpretation and communication of events – by the original witnesses and contemporary historian today – is influenced, and to a degree constructed, by the prior beliefs, worldview, and contextually conditioned categories of understanding.

**Resurrection and the Realm of Faith**

For almost as long as critical methods have been applied to the question of the resurrection has the resurrection been removed from the intellectual category, or realm, of history. Chapter one highlighted how many scholars sought to separate the discipline of history from theology, that the task of history remain wholly ‘objective,’ whereas theology and faith are relegated to the purely subjective. Since Lessing’s ‘ugly great ditch,’ which divorced historical events from universal truths, it became almost universal to assert that Jesus’ resurrection was a matter of faith and not of contingent history. Theological claims and religious faith cannot rest upon an event such as the resurrection that cannot be verified historically. In the following I will demonstrate that within a PCR framework, such a separation is unneeded and methodologically
impossible, for one cannot remove the accounts of historical events from the socially conditioned worldview of the one recounting said events. As Wright put it, history is the “meaningful narrative of events.” ¹ Furthermore, this division between history and theology is essentially foundationalist, presupposing the need for faith to have a single, universal foundation.

Removing the resurrection from the realm of contingent history and isolating it to the ambiguous realm of faith has been exceedingly common in the past few centuries. As noted in chapter one, following Lessing, Strauss insisted that the resurrection was a religious experience couched in mythological language, reflected by Kähler and Bultmann’s insistence that the historical Jesus is beyond the historian’s grasp, shrouded within an impenetrable fog of myth. The task of the historian, then, is to ‘demythologize’ the narratives to determine precisely what happened. For Troeltsch, history is homogenous and everything that does not have a contemporary analogy becomes simply a matter of faith; and for Barth, the New Testament authors were concerned with a decision of faith, not of historical knowledge. For Brunner, the resurrection is inaccessible without faith, for faith cannot be established upon “anything so unsafe as historical science.”² The separation is still clearly evident, for it implies that the resurrection is un-historical. This is further seen in Tillich, Bornkamm, and Marxsen, who stressed the existential experience of the resurrection and that the evangelists were primarily witnessing to Jesus’ messianic nature, as opposed to presenting historical biography. Schillebeeckx summarizes these concerns best, when he claims, “Historical study of Jesus is extremely important, it gives a concrete content of faith, but it can never be a verification of

¹ Wright, NTPG, 82 (original emphasis).
² Brunner, The Mediator, 156.
the faith.”  

In each case, the historical value of the resurrection is diminished, its continuous nature discarded, the gap between theology and history solidifying.

As argued in chapter two, the presupposed epistemic foundationalism is the cause of this division, seen explicitly in this instance in those, like Brunner and Schillebeeckx, who refuse to allow history to become a foundation for faith. It is impossible to separate the objective and subjective; history is never so simple as pure objective observation. Within a PCR framework, history, as will be developed further throughout this chapter, is a dynamic tension between the external event and its interpretation, recollection, and communication. It does not seek a single foundation upon which to justify faith or theology, and so does not segregate the resurrection from historical research on the basis that it is a matter solely of faith. Socially conditioned worldviews, prior beliefs, and categories of understanding (including language itself) cannot be wrenched from the retelling of an event, and so theology cannot be divorced from history. If the resurrection does indeed bear a dialectic tension between the continuous and discontinuous; it must in some sense have occurred within time and space, but this can only be understood within the contextually mediated categories through which it was interpreted. I return to this in §4.3 when discussing method, but for now I note that the resurrection cannot be compartmentalized to either history or theology, or be relegated to the realm of faith.

**Resurrection and the Third Millennium**

David Bruce has observed a movement in recent historical Jesus research toward reconciling this division. The scholars within this movement he labels as ‘Third Millennials,’ who have challenged the seclusion of the resurrection from historical research, a movement “that does not firewall history off from philosophy and theology.” One of these Third Millennials is Alan

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3 Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 73-74.
Padgett, who published an essay in an interdisciplinary symposium addressing the resurrection entitled “Advice for Religious Historians: On the Myth of the Purely Historical Jesus.” In this essay he argues that there is no such thing as a purely objective approach to historical studies for there is no such thing as value-neutral methodology. He cites Habermas and Marxsen as examples of some who have attempted to overcome personal prejudice and bias for a neutral scientific method. However, they both arrive at entirely opposite conclusions regarding the resurrection (as we saw in chapter two), indicating that such neutrality is in fact impossible. This further illustrates the difficulties of foundationalism, in its belief in universal observation, whereas, as seen in Habermas and Marxsen, different people regularly interpret the same evidence in different ways. While reaffirming the possibility of the historian dealing with external reality, Padgett recognizes the influence of personal prejudice and asserts the need to embrace subjectivity, rather than attempting absolute objectivity. This evidently accords with the postfoundationalist tension between subject and object, which we will see is also reflected in other scholars, including Pieter Craffert and biblical scholars employing social memory theory such as Dale Allison and Chris Keith.

Bruce includes Wright within this broader movement, for whom a central goal has been to reconcile the disciplines of history and theology. This has become more explicit in recent publications, but he states in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, regarding all the volumes of his *Christian Origins and the Question of God* series, “The volumes are designed to form neither a ‘New Testament Theology’ nor a ‘New Testament History’, but a kind of dialogue between the two.” The two, he argues, “do not stand alone.” This is not merely to say that they complement one another, that through understanding the theology of the past we can have

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6 Wright, *PFG*, xvii.

a fuller historical picture. This is true, but the two have a much more intimate connection. He argues that we can glean some knowledge of God from contingent historical research. God, he insists, intervened – and intervenes – in contingent history, in the world, and so history is, therefore, intimately connected to revelation; “Christian faith is public truth. Christianity appeals to history; to history it must go.”

Wright expressly attempts to avoid collapsing either history or theology into the other, but has “tried to avoid history becoming a slave of theology or vice versa.” To separate the two is to lead toward either a form of Deism on the one hand, or a supernaturalism where God bypasses history on the other. They must instead go together. Despite this, however, historical research can never result in proving God. God continues to act within history, but historical research will never fully reveal God. Rather, history can only partially point to a ‘rumour.’ Of course, this presupposes the existence of God and his activity within temporality, a presupposition which must be acknowledged – and a PCR framework stresses the role of personal presuppositions, rather than attempting to sidestep them. In the context of this particular thesis, a systematic theological project – and hence one in dialogue with theologians (particularly with those with an interest in history) and not historians per se – the existence of God is presupposed.

For Wright, a significant reason why theology can never be divorced from history is because of the anthropocentric nature of history. History is not a neutral, objective task. This neutrality “was itself an Enlightenment fiction, generating the spurious belief that one might approach the New Testament through a supposedly neutral ‘history’, and then, when the ‘facts’ or at least

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10 Wright, PFG, 67.
12 Wright, RSG, 11.
the ‘data’ have been cleaned up historically, venture upon the further task of a ‘theological’ reading.” Historical research is interested not just in the ‘what’ but the ‘why’ of historical events, which involves understanding the people and their worldviews, and in order to understand these, it is vital to understanding their aims and beliefs, their presuppositions, prejudices, and biases. Furthermore, the primary source for Christian origins is the New Testament, which is a largely theological collection of texts. A central purpose for the writing of the New Testament was to communicate something that was seen to be theologically significant.

Wright could be charged with not developing a theological methodology comprehensively enough, for although he wishes to draw the two together, theology seems to be of diminished importance, functioning merely as foil to the discipline of history. Of course, this might be due to him being a New Testament scholar and historian rather than systematic theologian, but if he wishes to draw the two together more comprehensively he needs to develop a sophisticated theological methodology, and explicitly denote how this relates to history and to our understanding of God today, rather than a limited investigation into what the early Christians thought about God. His concern for doing history is, after all, fundamentally theological, to ensure Christianity is “not based on a mistake.”

Samuel Adams has recently criticized Wright on this relationship between theology and history. He argues that Wright has dichotomized history and theology and has insisted upon the priority of history. I agree that Wright methodologically prioritizes history, but it seems

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13 Wright, PFG, 55.
14 Wright, NTPG, 95-96, 139.
15 N. T. Wright, “The Historical Jesus and Christian Theology,” STRev 39, no. 4 (1996), 404. In PFG, Wright argues that part 3, chapters 9 – 11, on theology, form the climax of the book, again demonstrating his desire to connect theology with history. Cf. Sven Ensminger, who similarly argues that Wright’s methodology stumbles with regard to theology, that Wright is holding biblical studies and theology at arm’s length, and has thus been forced to determine certain categories to focus upon, namely monotheism, election, and eschatology. He has invariably excluded multiple other possible categories and divine attributes, such as the theme of grace (Sven Ensminger, “Barth, Wright, and Theology,” in God and the Faithfulness of Paul, ed. Christopher Heilig, J. Thomas Hewitt and Michael F. Bird (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 646-47).
Adams has not grasped Wright’s attempt to draw history and theology together. For Adams, Wright’s fundamental error is in his epistemological formulation of critical realism, particularly the assertion that Christian truth is public truth. He states, “Christian theology, according to Wright, is determined as a discipline according to the epistemological commitments of [critical realism], commitments that are not derived theologically. Rather, they are based upon an account of the general way in which humans know things.”

Wright’s emphasis upon worldviews and stories leads Adams to the conclusion that for Wright all history and theology is merely talk about talk. All we know is what other people have said and thus, “No theology can ever claim first-order status since it is always caught within the complexities of worldviews.” He acknowledges Wright’s attempt to reconcile theology and history, but insists that in practice Wright’s “historical method overtakes his theological commitment.”

Adams claims the contrary, that theology has logical and chronological priority over history. He argues that what theologians do best is “allow the reality of God to determine their method and attempt to conform their formulations and systems as best they can to this reality,” and that to do otherwise is “to conform God to human formulations and limits.” A proper methodology “begins with the material content of revelation and orders an epistemology around that content, especially the divine object of knowledge.” Knowledge of God cannot be dissected out of history; we cannot work our way up, if you will, to God, but require God to come to us. This concern is shared by Sven Ensminger, who implores Wright to learn from Barth’s doctrine of revelation, which stresses divine initiative, arguing that Wright reduces religion to a purely historical dimension. Furthermore, “While these ‘human’ concerns” – the historical

17 *Ibid.*, 56. He further argues, “Wright’s account of theology is an account that is primarily concerned with human discourse regarding human discourse” (p. 57).
examination of worldviews – “are not in and of themselves unimportant, if they are the sole point of emphasis, the result is something that resembles theology yet does not have God at its center.”

I agree with Adams’ assessment that, as noted, Wright has not connected theology and history sufficiently, and that his main focus is history. It is not particularly clear how Wright then moves from history to theology. He affirms that history informs theology, revealing the broader narrative of Israel’s relationship with her God, but how precisely history is a medium of revelation is unclear. For Wright, Christian truth is public truth, but – and this too is a problem for Pannenberg, as will be observed – how does one determine which parts of history are Christian? The point is that those who stress an emphasis upon historical research face the difficult task of determining which parts of history are revelatory. Wright does not claim that all of history is revelatory, just that some parts are, but he does not make it clear how one determines which parts. This is the strength of the third millennials, such as Padgett and Craffert, and an example of where Wright’s critical realism is not critical enough: history may indeed inform theology, but theology informs history. Put differently, the determination of the significance of particular contingent historical events depends upon the prior theological convictions of the historian. Furthermore, Adams’ concern that method correspond with the particular object of inquiry reflects the critical realism of McGrath and Andrew Wright, for a universal methodology is impossible and a fleeting foundationalist hope.

However, I take issue with a few of Adams’ points. I am not convinced that Adams has allowed for Wright’s critical realism, that Wright is attempting to find a mediating position between external object and internal interpretation, which translates to his historical methodology as taking seriously the worldviews which frame interpretation. History and theology cannot, for

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22 Ibid., 656.
Wright, be reduced to talk about talk, and I cannot agree that this anthropocentricity invariably removes God from the equation. Historical events, including any perceived divine activity, is mediated through this talk. Adams’ alternative, to prioritize knowledge of God, beginning with revelation and then moving to history, arguably swings too far to the other extreme, capitulating to the theo-foundationalism discussed in §3.3, which I argued was ultimately impossible. A PCR approach must acknowledge these concerns, balancing the tension between history and theology without prioritizing either. How this is done will become clearer throughout this chapter.

**Resurrection and Universal History**

Pannenberg might be categorized within this third millennialism in that he, even more strongly than Wright, attempts to connect history with theology in his understanding of revelation. What prevents this categorization, however, is Pannenberg’s reversion to a foundationalist universalism in his argument, explored below, that historical revelation “has universal character.” Wright’s problem, in asserting that Christian truth is public, is in distinguishing universal history from redemptive history. This problem is even more significant in Pannenberg’s thought, for he connects revelation and history much more intensively. We examined Pannenberg’s epistemology in the previous chapter, where he argued for a postfoundationalism that maintains a balance between the external and internal and is characterised by a reciprocity between multiple factors, as opposed to founding knowledge on a single belief, or prioritizing a particular experience or discipline. It is vital to recognize that this epistemology developed over the course of his academic career, and some of his earlier propositions do not consistently maintain this balance. His doctrine of revelation is one such instance, as is his early proposal of a Christology from below, which will be discussed in §4.3.

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Pannenberg’s understanding of history is inseparable from his doctrine of revelation, which he argues is an indirect self-revelation of God within history. Indeed, history is revelation. God is discerned not from a direct revelation – perhaps an explicit, face-to-face encounter with God, or treating the words of Scripture as coming directly from God’s mouth – or a subjective encounter with the Holy Spirit, but through retrospection, observing God’s involvement in human history, particularly regarding his making and fulfilling promises. Knowledge of God is not hidden, provided to a privileged few, but is public and open to anyone. A brief examination of his understanding of history and revelation is fruitful for developing a PCR integration of history and theology.

The first issue for Pannenberg was the reaffirmation of the nature of revelation as the self-revelation of God’s being, reiterating Barth’s argument that knowledge of God is impossible unless it comes from God himself, for God ontologically transcends creation.24 This revelation is, Barth maintains, found primarily in the person of Jesus who by his inherent divinity is the “objective reality of divine revelation.”25 Pannenberg argues in *Systematic Theology*:

> Human knowledge of God can be a true knowledge that corresponds to the divine reality only if it originates in the deity itself. God can be known only if he gives himself to be known. …If the knowledge of God be understood in such a way that in our own strength we can wrest from deity the secret of its nature, deity is lacking from the very outset. This kind of knowledge would not be knowledge of God, for it would contradict the concept of God.26

However, he lamented that this self-revelation had become so “strictly understood that it is no longer permissible to think of a medium of revelation that is distinct from God himself.”27 Instead, his interpretation of the Old Testament portrayal of Israel’s relationship with God is one that stresses the historical activity of God. The recognition of YHWH’s lordship and Israel’s commitment to obeying YHWH “was effected by the evidence of historical facts that

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24 Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2.1, 182-83.
26 Pannenberg, *ST*, vol. 1, 189.
27 Pannenberg, *RAH*, 4-5.
brought about salvation.’” 28 This is especially evident in the references to the Exodus, such as Deuteronomy 4.37-40, wherein after the Israelites were reminded that they were brought out of Egypt ‘with his own presence’ and ‘by his great power,’ they are commanded to obey ‘today.’ For Pannenberg, this demonstrates that God’s authority is grounded in the historical action of vindicating his people. 29

The two most significant expositions of his understanding of revelation of God as indirectly imparted via history are found in his 1959 essay, ‘Redemptive Event and History,’ and the collection of essays he edited in 1961, including his own ‘Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation,’ in Revelation as History. 30 In the former he claimed, “History is the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology,” and that all theological statements be framed by the historical relationship between God and humanity. 31 This stress on history was taken up in the latter, where he proposed seven theses regarding the historical nature of revelation. It is not necessary to discuss each of these seven theses, for the focus of the present section is upon the nature of history rather than the theological doctrine of revelation, but I highlight the third thesis, which states, “In distinction from special manifestations of the deity, the historical revelation is open to anyone who has eyes to see. It has universal character.” 32 Pannenberg argues in this thesis that a revelation divorced from natural knowledge distorts historical revelation. If knowledge of God is available only to some, and not to all, this knowledge becomes a secret knowledge and the “church becomes a gnostic community.” 33 This does not mean that knowledge of God comes through human reason, which he adamantly denies, but that knowledge of God cannot be separated from natural knowledge. We here see the

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28 Ibid., 126.
29 Ibid.
30 The former first appeared in English in 1963, and the latter in 1968.
32 Pannenberg, RAH, 135-39. The first thesis has already been addressed, dealing with the indirectness of God’s self-revelation mediated through history.
33 Ibid., 137.
postfoundationalist dialectic that we noted in §3.3, a reciprocal tension between human reason and God’s self-revelation. However, is this postfoundationalism consistent in his argument?

Carl Braaten notes that this particular thesis received the most criticism. Lothar Steiger’s early criticism is one such example, who argues that Pannenberg has rationalized faith, stating that faith “cannot be partners with a certainty arising from revelation-history,” and that “the element of knowing which faith has in itself cannot be separated from faith and moved over into the realm of rational intelligibility.” This reflects the arguments of a theo-foundationalism, and has misunderstood Pannenberg, who expressly states that “no one comes to the knowledge of God by his own reason or strength.”

Braaten correctly maintains that for Pannenberg reason does not replace faith, or that faith can be manufactured apart from God, but that Pannenberg’s emphasis is upon the medium of the knowledge of God being indirect, and thus consequently cannot be private.

However, the more significant issue for Pannenberg is that he makes no explicit distinction between universal history and what constitutes revelatory history. He implies that there is, in fact, no distinction, and that all of history is indeed revelatory. In his ‘Redemptive Event and History,’ he posits, “The symphony of all human life” witnesses to God, and that “redemptive history…essentially includes all events.” This is a tough pill to swallow. One could read from this that God doesn’t necessarily reveal himself in each individual moment or event, but that, in a perhaps panentheistic sense or reflecting his Hegelian influence (though he would reject panentheism and Hegelianism), God draws all things (sub ratione Dei) together in a broader

35 Pannenberg, RAH, 137.
mosaic to reveal his deity. That is, the word ‘all’ does not mean ‘every,’ but is used in a cumulative sense, as in ‘totality.’ This might be agreeable, but I do not think that Pannenberg makes this clear, and from these quotes, he seems to suggest that each individual event in history could be revelatory. The problem with this (apart from the ethical considerations of whether or not God could be revealed in the atrocities of history), has to do with the universal nature of this revelation. On the one hand, I agree that revelation cannot be private, but to claim that it is ‘open to anyone who has eyes to see’ and has universal character sounds untenably positivistic and foundationalist. He seems to imply that anyone who looks at the evidence will come to the same interpretation of the data. His later Systematic Theology unfortunately did not address this problem, simply reiterating the indirectness and historically-situated nature of revelation.39

A PCR consideration of the resurrection neither removes the resurrection from history nor treats it as an ordinary historical event, neither relies on faith to interpret the resurrection nor approaches it apart from recognizing the presupposed beliefs and communally-conditioned categories of understanding of either the ones interpreting and communicating the event, or the contemporary historian approaching these accounts. Wright and Pannenberg have attempted to bridge the gap between history and theology, a gap which presupposes a foundationalist epistemology. A PCR framework recognizes the inevitable and inherent anthropocentricity of history, that events are experienced and communicated by people within particular historical and communal contexts, and interpreted by historians in equally, yet entirely different, socially conditioned contexts. Any interpretation of the resurrection must therefore recognize this dynamic, prioritizing neither theology nor history, but balancing them in a reciprocal, dialectic tension. Furthermore, the resurrection cannot be relegated to the realm of faith, and so the arguments against its historicity fall short. To be clear, however, it is not my intention to

attempt to \textit{prove} the resurrection as a historical event, but to at least argue for its possibility, for to deny its historicity is to deny its continuity with empirical reality. Precisely how, then, to approach the resurrection as a historical event without reducing it only to a historical event is the topic of the next section.

\textbf{4.3. History Within Memory}

This chapter has so far considered the relationship between the disciplines of history and theology, maintaining that the two cannot be separated due to the personal presuppositions of the respective scholars which ultimately shape how they interpret external phenomena. The following section is related, examining how the interpretation of an event is framed and influenced by the personal presuppositions of the original witnesses.

First, an analysis of Pannenberg’s Christological methodology – Christology ‘from below’ – provides valuable observations about the nature of history and the theological presuppositions which influence the communication and interpretations of events within contingent history. This approach attempts to discover the brute facts of the historical Jesus as he existed within contingent history before moving to theological considerations, especially regarding his unique relationship to God. However, Pannenberg quickly recognized the impossibility of such a method and sought to balance the theological presuppositions of the historian with the historical inquiry itself. When applied to the resurrection, we can recognize that the theological presuppositions of the early witnesses to the resurrection and the early Christians who proclaimed the event significantly impacted how this event was interpreted. Second, this section considers the significance of communal context, arguing that the constructive nature of knowledge shapes the interpretation and communication of contingent historical events and that, subsequently, history is a human construction. Therefore, history bears a significant anthropological character. Finally, a PCR approach to history is presented: methodological
guidelines for interpreting the resurrection as a contingent historical event within its communal context and how it was remembered and re-interpreted within different and developing contexts.

Christology from Below

Pannenberg’s historical method is shaped by what is categorized as a Christology ‘from below,’ a response to Christologies which presuppose either soteriological concerns or the divinity of Jesus. For Pannenberg, these theological concerns should follow the historical study of Jesus of Nazareth, not precede it. In his early work, he insists on ‘getting behind’ the New Testament texts to discover the historical Jesus. However, this quickly developed as he became aware of the impossibility of such an endeavour. He retained a historical emphasis, but his methodology developed to being somewhere in between ‘from below’ and ‘from above,’ balancing the two and thus reflecting his postfoundationalist epistemology. Where his doctrine of revelation did not adequately develop in line with this postfoundationalism, his Christological method, to some extent, did, acknowledging the impossibility of separating the historical from the theological in the New Testament texts. As will be seen, with a variety of similarly minded scholars, this is an essential part of PCR, and will be explored here.

Pannenberg’s early Christological method is expounded in Jesus – God and Man, which has as its central concern the developing of a methodology suited to the justification of Jesus’ divinity.40 His turn to Christology and historical inquiry was motivated by a dissatisfaction with how Jesus’ divinity had previously been discussed and formulated, particularly in existential Christologies which focussed on soteriology, Christologies which merely presupposed Jesus’ divinity, approaching the task ‘from above,’ and Christologies which

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40 The translation of the title is perhaps something of a misnomer, implying that the main concern of the book had to do solely with the incarnation, whereas the original German title, Grundzüge der Christologie, suggests a greater emphasis upon methodological concerns. The divinity of Christ certainly has a central position in the book, but its core concern is how one can discuss or determine this divinity.
presupposed a Chalcedonian model.\textsuperscript{41} For Pannenberg, who Jesus was in his contingent historical and communal context is the presupposition for his significance for us, and thus we must first discern the historical Jesus.\textsuperscript{42} He states:

> Jesus possesses significance ‘for us’ only to the extent that this significance is inherent in himself, in his history, and in his person constituted by this history. Only when this can be shown may we be sure that we are not merely attaching our questions, wishes, and thoughts to his figure. …Soteriology must follow from Christology, not vice versa.\textsuperscript{43}

Hence, “Christology must start from Jesus of Nazareth, not from his significance for us,” and only then can we adequately approach soteriological, or any other theological, concerns.\textsuperscript{44}

For Pannenberg, determining who this Jesus of Nazareth was requires a Christology ‘from below,’ as opposed to a ‘from above’ approach which presupposes Jesus’ divinity. For Pannenberg, the essential task of Christology is to determine who Christ was and the nature of his relationship with God – this cannot be presupposed. Rather than a Christology ‘from above,’ exemplified by Barth, which centralizes the incarnation as the core concern (and, for Pannenberg, the core difficulty), a Christology ‘from below’ rises “from the historical man Jesus to the recognition of his divinity, [and] is concerned first of all with Jesus’ message and fate and arrives at the end at the concept of the incarnation.”\textsuperscript{45} How the divine Logos assumes human form in the incarnation is, he argues, an irreconcilable difficulty in a Christology ‘from above,’ which became the primary difficulty of a Christology presupposing a Chalcedonian formula, which I will address below. He provides three arguments against a Christology ‘from

\textsuperscript{41} We should also note that his stress upon historical Jesus research was also driven by his theology of history and revelation. When we understand his argument that history is the primary locus for theological knowledge, we understand more readily why he maintained a focus upon the historical Jesus.

\textsuperscript{42} Pannenberg, \textit{JGM}, 21. Timothy Bradshaw explains, “Pannenberg again concludes that we must focus on the person of Jesus himself, the historical figure, rather than his effects on us. …Objective fact with meaning must precede our subjective experiences of this content of faith for theology. He turns to Jesus through historical scholarship, but with a wide philosophical lens which takes in the relationship of Jesus with God; this must be discussed first, before any claim to his fulfilling human existence in general can be considered” (Bradshaw, \textit{Pannenberg}, 69).

\textsuperscript{43} Pannenberg, \textit{JGM}, 33.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, 34-35.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}, 15. Cf. McClean, \textit{From the Future}, 91. However, this sounds remarkably as though he is presupposing Jesus’ divinity.
above': it presupposes Jesus’ divinity, it minimizes and obscures the particularity of the human Jesus in his historical context, and requires “standing in the position of God himself in order to follow the way of God’s Son into the world.”

Pannenberg particularly criticized Chalcedonian Christology for its ambiguous presentation of Jesus’ divinity, and its enduring influence upon modern theologians who have assumed a similar position. The fifth century council at Chalcedon affirmed a two-nature doctrine, that there exists within Christ a divine and human nature united in the one person (hypostasis). These two natures are unmixed and unchanged; undivided and inseparable. For Pannenberg, this formula was little more than a compromise between the opposing Alexandrian and Antiochian Christologies, the former tending to emphasize the divinity and the latter the humanity of Jesus. The Chalcedonian formula did not, however, solve the dilemma of the incarnation, and indeed any Christology which presupposes Jesus’ divinity and assumes a two-nature doctrine faces insurmountable anthropological, theological, and philosophical challenges when addressing the incarnation. For Pannenberg, “two substances coming together to emerge as one individual is problematic,” and thus “either the two will be mixed to form a third or the individuality, Jesus’ concrete living unity, will be ruptured.” How can the two natures become one person without either creating a third person or compromising one of those two natures? The ambiguity in such a formulation and the appeal to mystery is excessively fideistic. If Jesus existed, it is indisputable that he was human, and therefore, insists

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46 Pannenberg, JMG, 18. Elizabeth Johnson notes, “Despite the dominance which this approach has enjoyed, Pannenberg brings it under fire mainly because it presupposes the divinity of Jesus Christ which it is the very task of Christology to substantiate” (Elizabeth A. Johnson, “The Ongoing Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,” Horizons 9, no. 2 (1982), 242).


48 Pannenberg, JGM, 324.

49 Ibid., 321.

50 Ibid., 323-24.
Pannenberg argued that the Chalcedonian formula, and Christologies ‘from above’ which followed it, lean toward either a semblance of Nestorianism on the one hand, or Docetism on the other, and that, as McClean explains, “if the human nature of Christ has a personal experience only in union with the divine person then the free humanity of Jesus will never be properly affirmed.” Pannenberg therefore concludes, “The dilemma…is insoluble so long as Christology is developed from the concept of the incarnation, instead of culminating in the assertion of the incarnation as its concluding statement.” Instead, Christology must begin ‘from below,’ searching for the historical Jesus in the particularity of his historical context, seeking to “go behind the New Testament to the base to which it points and which supports

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51 Chalcedonian Christology has, historically, been the most prominent Christological formulation, and has gone largely uncriticised. However, Pannenberg has not been the only one to question this formula. The Kenotic theology of the nineteenth century challenged the two natures, arguing instead for two ‘movements’: humiliation and glorification. Some, such as Adolf Harnack, have argued that the language utilized by the council is fundamentally Hellenistic and philosophical, irreconcilable with biblical language (Donald Macleod, “The Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,” *Themelios* 25, no. 2 (2000), 41). William Baker has listed criticisms of Chalcedonian Christology including its lack of definition of key terms (such as ‘person’ and ‘nature’), of articulation of Christ’s pre-existence, of reference to Jesus’ historical or public life, and of specification of how the overlapping of natures might actually operate. He further argues, “Two complete and separate natures in Christ only works if it is first asserted that God and man have absolutely nothing in common,” yet “humankind is made in the image of God,” and thus the Chalcedonian formulation of hypostasis is infeasible (William R. Baker, “The Chalcedon Definition, Pauline Christology, and the Postmodern Challenge of ‘From Below’ Christology,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 9, no. 1 (2006), 81-83). John Breck argues that Chalcedonian Christology has been characterized, on the one hand, as ‘crypto-monophysitism’ for it presents a Jesus who looks very much like a human but underneath is divine, thus making his humanity suspect, and, on the other, as guilty of Docetism for Jesus only appears to assume flesh (John Breck, “Reflections on the ‘Problem’ of Chalcedonian Christology,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1989), 147). Schleiermacher questioned the internal contradictions of the formula, and other ninth and twentieth century theologians and philosophers argued that the language itself is contradictory to orthodox understandings of the Trinity, and this understanding is dismissive of other religions (Mark S. G. Nestlehutt, “Chalcedonian Christology: Modern Criticism and Contemporary Ecumenism,” *JES* 35, no. 2 (1998), 175-76).

52 McClean, *From the Future*, 92-93.

53 Pannenberg, *JGM*, 329. Bradshaw similarly argues, “The history of the Chalcedonian mode of Christology, however remodelled by such theological doctors as Karl Barth, fails to overcome the dilemma of divine-human contradiction in Christ. There can be no true integration of the divine in the human under the Chalcedonian model” (Bradshaw, Pannenberg, 96).
faith in Jesus,” without presupposing the divinity of Jesus, but instead “grounding it in the activity and fate of Jesus in the past.”

A pure Christology from below is, however, methodologically impossible. Attempts at ‘going behind’ the New Testament texts to discover the ‘historical’ Jesus as he was within temporal time and space is, as has been demonstrated earlier, a contentious issue, and we will see below how recent New Testament scholarship has continued to shift and develop its own methodological approaches in ways that change the kind of Jesus it is possible to reconstruct. The core issue of a Christology from below is the erroneous belief that it is possible to glean from our limited source material the mythological, the embellishment, and the theological development, and be left with the purely historical, or what ‘actually happened.’ I will return to this at a later stage, but for now I will echo Luke Timothy Johnson’s argument that there is a ‘resurrection bias’ in the New Testament texts, that they were written post-resurrection and thus the resurrection provides the perspective from which these texts were written and influences not simply the selection of the stories but the very shaping of these stories.

The texts themselves comprise our primary sources regarding the life of Jesus, but these are inherently and irreducibly products of the faith of the early church. This is not to say that there is no historical value in the texts, but that the New Testament includes the theological presuppositions of early Christianity, and thus the intention of a Christology from below to avoid presuppositions is unattainable. Donald Macleod argues similarly, that the faith of the interpreter precludes the possibility of this methodology which requires initially treating Jesus

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54 Pannenberg, JGM, 11.
as a “mere man” and “without any recourse to the hypothesis of his divinity.” However, this doesn’t entail recourse to a Christology from above, as Macleod implores.

Pannenberg himself acknowledges the difficulties of a Christology from below. In the postscript to the fifth German edition of *Jesus – God and Man*, published in 1976 (12 years after the first German publication), Pannenberg states, “My own understanding of Christology has advanced considerably during this decade,” treating Christology from below as a “general framework,” and stressing the provisional character of this method. He particularly notes that the presupposition of the reality of God in Christology is a limitation in the ‘from below’ approach. In conjunction with the development of his anthropology and view of universal history in various other publications, his Christology developed, and his *Systematic Theology* reflects a postfoundationalist desire to uphold the need for historical research while acknowledging the communal context within which the New Testament was written – including, in Johnson’s language, a ‘resurrection bias’ – and the subjective influence of the historian’s presuppositions.

In Pannenberg’s *Systematic Theology*, both anthropology and Christology comprise the same chapter, reflecting a much closer relationship between the two not present in his earlier Christology. He still maintains a Christology from below, arguing, “All Christological

57 Donald Macleod, “The Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,” *Themelios* 25, no. 2 (2000), 20. Of course, one might ask whether those without a faith are likewise precluded.
58 Pannenberg, *JGM*, 459-60.
59 Interpretations of this development, and the extent of this development, vary. Commentaries on Pannenberg’s methodology following *Systematic Theology* generally make at least a passing reference to this development, but most fail to acknowledge the extent of this development, retaining the language and argument of the earlier *JGM* (Cf. Brian Ebel, *A Dialog in the Contrasting Christologies of Anselm of Canterbury and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Lexington: Emeth, 2016); Bradshaw, *Pannenberg; Kärrkäinen, Christology*; McClean, *From the Future*; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); Iain Taylor, “How to be a Trinitarian Theologian: A Critique of Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Systematic Theology,” *SJT* 60, no. 2 (2007), 192). Molnar, in particular, mentions this development, but argues this development is minimal and, practically and methodologically, essentially the same (Molnar, *Incarnation & Resurrection*, 264-65). Joanna Leidenhag, and Stanley Grenz successfully acknowledge this development (Joanna Leidenhag, “Two Accounts of Scientific Trinitarian Theology: Comparing Wolfhart Pannenberg’s and T. F. Torrance’s Theological Methodology,” *HeyJ* 57, no. 6 (2016), 942; Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 797-98). However, F. LeRon Shults’ assessment is the most accurate, noting that Pannenberg wants to hold the two movements – a Christology ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ – together as mutually conditioning (Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology*, 165-77).
statements about Jesus Christ must be vindicated in terms of his historical reality and an exposition of it,” and insists that Christology “must begin with the man Jesus and his story and consider how he requires and gains our faith.”60 However:

Only methodologically do we give precedence to arguing from below, presupposing of course, that this procedure leads to the conclusion that the concept of incarnation is not a falsification but a pertinent development of the meaning implicit in the coming and history of Jesus. In truth, material primacy belongs to the eternal Son, who has become man by his incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth.61 This is a clear development of the Christology from below presented in Jesus – God and Man, further arguing, “We cannot regard a Christology from below as ruling out completely the classical Christology of the incarnation,” but that it instead reconstructs and explicates in the light of historical research that which this classical Christology presupposed.62 We cannot then say that his Christology is either from below or from above, but a postfoundationalist utilization of both which he explains is a “real mutual conditioning between an idea of God and a human self-understanding.”63

The point to take from this discussion of Pannenberg’s Christological methodology is the reciprocal and postfoundationalist tension between the ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ approaches. If we apply this to the question of the resurrection, recalling the above discussion of the relationship between history and theology, we can observe two things. First, the theological presuppositions held by the witnesses of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and those who communicated this event, significantly influence how this event was interpreted. That is, the early Christians remembered and communicated the historical life of Jesus through a ‘resurrection bias.’ Second, the theological presuppositions held by the contemporary historian

60 Pannenberg, ST, vol. 2, 281-82.
61 Ibid., vol. 2, 289.
62 Ibid., vol. 2, 288-89. This is similar to Erickson’s (who downplayed or ignored the development of Pannenberg’s Christological methodology) proposal of an “Augustinian” model, where the early church kerygma is the starting point, which serves as hypothesis to be assessed by historical-critical methodology (Erickson, Christian Theology, 690-91).
63 Pannenberg, ST, vol. 2, 290. Shults is surely correct in his assessment that “from above” and “from below” are inseparable (Shults, The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology, 166-68).
similarly influences how this event is interpreted. We cannot separate the above from the below, and so must not attempt to remove the contextually conditioned categories and worldviews from the resurrection narratives, for the former shaped the latter. Further, we will see momentarily that the latter then re-shaped the former. This is all to say that the distinction between the historical and theological aspects of the resurrection cannot be easily distinguished, and we should hold the two in a mutually conditioning tension, as a ‘theologico-historical’ event of sorts. In the following, we will further explore this relationship between the external ‘historical’ event and the internal ‘theological’ presuppositions which frame the interpretation of history to consider how an anthropocentric historiography might be applied to the resurrection.

Communal Context

A PCR approach to history recognizes that the records of historical events are shaped by particular humans within particular contexts, and by acknowledging the constructive nature of knowledge – that is, prior beliefs, perspectives, prejudices, and worldviews distort and shape the experience and interpretation of external reality – we acknowledge that history itself is a human construction. The discipline of history is thereby closely related to anthropology and is concerned with the forces which acted upon the humans who witnessed, interpreted, and communicated these events. Pannenberg and Wright both stress this anthropocentric understanding of history, which is analysed in the following section before considering how this applies to an exploration of the resurrection within a PCR framework.

Anthropology is of considerable importance in Pannenberg’s later methodology. It is another example of his postfoundationalism, in that knowledge of God begins within human experience
but remains irreducibly divine self-revelation. There is, for Pannenberg, a reciprocal balance between anthropology and systematic theology. He claims that “everybody…works and speaks out of his or her own context,” and so maintains that “human experience of the world and of the individual’s existence…[is] the point of departure for discussing the reality of God.”

While anthropology is the methodological starting point, it is not to be understood in a foundationalist sense. Neither is the presupposition of the existence of God to function as an epistemic foundation. Rather, the relationship between anthropology and systematic theology in Pannenberg’s work is one of reciprocity. We saw above how this is reflected in his Christology, but he has not allowed this stress upon anthropology to impact his doctrine of revelation; though he correctly insists that people interpret experience and speak from within their own particular context, his understanding of divine revelation within history retains a foundationalist universalism. This was addressed in §4.2. Pannenberg’s model of reciprocity is central to PCR, and when turning to history it is vital to treat anthropology, like theology, within a mutually conditioning tension with historical inquiry.

Wright reflects this anthropological concern, insisting that historical research must focus upon the worldview which shaped the interpretation, communication, and reception of the event, maintaining that history is fundamentally a human construction. Wright’s critical realism attempts a mediating position between positivism and phenomenalism, balancing the objectivity of external reality with the subjectivity of the interpretation of the experience of that reality. Where positivism might stress the historical event divorced from communally conditioned values and embellishment, phenomenalism stresses the recording of this event and

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64 Shults notes, “Pannenberg’s use of anthropology signals a distinctive attempt to find a way past foundationalism without adopting relativism” (Shults, The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology, 155).
66 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 11.
the reading of this record, without moving beyond this to external reality. All history, he observes, involves selection, arrangement, and interpretation, and, hence, the ideal of an objective history is a myth. All history then is “fiction,” and it is “chasing after the wind to imagine that anyone, ancient or modern, could or can ‘simply record the facts.’”

This is not to say that knowledge of past events is impossible, arguing that we “simply can write history. We can know things about what has happened in the past.” For Wright, though, this is not knowing the bruta facta of the past or simply subjective interpretations but “the meaningful narrative of events and intentions.” Historical inquiry involves the study of human intentionality, to discover why things happened in the way they did and for what intended purpose. To do so, the historian must discern the aims, intentions, and motivations of those involved.

Wright is seeking to understand the events of the past but not in isolation from those who

67 Wright, *NTPG*, 81-82.
69 N. T. Wright, *How God Became King: Getting to the Heart of the Gospels* (New York: SPCK, 2012), xiii. Considering Wright’s quote in the following paragraph that it is possible to write history, this claim that all history is ‘fiction’ seems to be a rhetorical overstatement.
70 Wright, *RSG*, 85.
71 Wright, *NTPG*, 81. This is repeated in his later *PFG* (p. 50). Cf. N. T. Wright, “Jesus’ Resurrection and Christian Origins,” *Gregorianum* 83, no. 4 (2002), 631-32; O’Collins, *Christology*, 8. The ancient Roman historian William Batstone notes that for many, contra Wright, history simply cannot be done at all; “Having arrived at the conclusion that the past does not exist, that we have no access to it and cannot write an objective account of what happened, that our linear narratives distort, ahistorically privilege the present, and are inevitably complicit with hegemony and violence, why bother to write history at all?” (William W. Batstone, “Postmodern Historiographical Theory and the Roman Historians,” in The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians, ed. Andrew Feldherr (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 29-30).
72 Wright, *NTPG*, 82. Original emphasis. He argues, “There is not, nor can there be, any such thing as a bare chronicle of events without a point of view. The great Enlightenment dream of simply recording ‘what actually happened’ is just that: a dream. The dreamer is once more the positivist, who, looking at history, believes that it is possible to have instant and unadulterated access to ‘events’” (Wright, *RSG*, 82).
73 Wright defines ‘aim’ as the broad direction of a person’s life as determined by the mindset or worldview of the person, ‘intention’ as the specific application of this aim in any given situation, and ‘motivation’ as the sense that a specific action is appropriate or desirable – or not – in relation to the aim and intention (Wright, *NTPG*, 110-11).
enacted, witnessed, or reported these events. However, Wright does not comprehensively engage with the well-known difficulties of attempting to determine the ‘intentions’ of an author, brought to the fore especially by Wimsatt and Beardsley’s famous essay, “The Intentional Fallacy.” They argued that the “design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art.” If meaning is found in the intention of the author, a text’s meaning is wholly dependent upon the success of the author in communicating that meaning. If the author was unsuccessful, communicating something incongruous to what was intended, the meaning of the text is distorted, or, in fact, irretrievable. Rather, the text is no longer the property of the author’s or the interpreter’s alone, but the public, and has meaning in and of itself. This was further professed by poststructuralist thinkers, such as Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault, who distrusted the ability of language to communicate ‘pure’ meaning; the meaning attached to words is interpreted differently according to the various connotations – emotive or cognitive – that the particular person attached to that particular word.

James Downey presents an interesting argument against the Intentional Fallacy, posing the question: what if the author’s intention was (like Salvador Dali) to hide his intention? If the author was successful, we would not know, and thus deem it a failure, but if the author was unsuccessful, we must again deem it a failure; in either case, the author and text would be

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75 Ibid., 468-88. Cf. Robert Wenz’s critical portrayal of the impact of the ‘disease’ of this essay where, as he perceives it, words have lost all meaning entirely (Robert Wenz, “‘Truth’ on Two Hills: What Happens when Church and Culture Conspire to Ignore the Meaning of Words,” Christianity Today 48, no. 7 (2004), 46-48). This is, however, not what the essay claimed. Meaning is not lost entirely, but locus of meaning has shifted from the author to the text itself as distinct from the author.
76 Roland Barthes stated in his 1967 essay, ‘The Death of the Author,’ that “the unity of a text is not in its origin but in its destination” and, “In order to restore writing to its future, we must reverse the myth: the birth of the reader must be requited by the death of the Author” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in The Rustle of Language, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 54-55). Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1-28; Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” Screen 20, no. 1 (1979), 13-33. Furthermore, Stephen Moore and Yvonne Sherwood have claimed that though these critical issues have had a significant impact upon scholarship in general, they have largely been avoided within biblical studies (Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011)).
considered a failure. Such a response does not entirely dismantle Wimsatt and Beardsley’s argument, which Downey was not attempting, but stresses that it cannot be universalized.\footnote{James Downey, “A Fallacy in the Intentional Fallacy,” \textit{Philosophy and Literature} 31, no. 1 (2007): 149-52. Cf. Philip Barton Payne, who argued, “In spite of the crucial role the human author’s intention has for the meaning of a text his conscious intention does not necessarily exhaust the meaning of his statements, especially in more poetic and predictive writings.” His argument, though, that “ultimately God is the author of Scripture, and it is his intention alone that exhaustively determines its meaning” is unconvincing, presupposing a strong inerrantist view of Scripture (Philip Barton Payne, “Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author’s Intention,” \textit{JETS} 20, no. 3 (1977), 243.}\footnote{Ibid., 66.} While it is true that ascertaining the pure \textit{intention} of the author is neither completely attainable nor of primary necessity – what is of utmost importance is what was \textit{actually} said – a PCR framework balances the internal with the external and so acknowledges that the text does indeed speak of an external and intelligible event. Indeed, the text may carry unintended meaning, or express notions unobserved or uncritiqued by the author (Wright acknowledges this\footnote{Ibid., 122.}, but this should not mean that what we know of the author or the author’s context does not influence the meaning of the text. While we might not rely on discerning the intentions of an author we can speak of the broader social and historical forces upon the author which shaped the communication of certain events and ideas. In this regard, then, Wright is correct to stress the role of worldviews.

We touched on worldview in §3.4, but it is helpful for a more comprehensive understanding of the anthropocentric nature of history as communally conditioned to define this term more precisely. For Wright, worldview is defined as “the presuppositional, pre-cognitive stage of a culture or society,” comprising “all deep-level human perceptions.”\footnote{Ibid., 125.} Worldviews are inescapable and vital, but invisible; “They are that through which, not at which, a society or individual normally looks.”\footnote{Ibid., 125.} Wright particularly draws on James Sire, whose definition of worldview clarifies Wright’s argument:

A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we
hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.  

Worldviews are underlying perceptions of reality, unique to each individual and culture, which influence the stories told, the questions asked, the cultural symbols, and the resultant praxis. A major part of history for Wright is “Seeing with other people’s eyes” worlds which are foreign to our own. 

This sub-section has highlighted the contextually situated nature of any recorded historical event, and how the very act of witnessing, interpreting, remembering, and re-telling this event is shaped – constructed even – by the communally mediated and socially conditioning prior beliefs and worldviews. This is upheld within a PCR approach to the resurrection, which highlights both the communal and theological categories that were applied to, and inspired by, the event of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and the event itself which precipitated this theological reflection. The following section, building on the discussions of this chapter so far – specifically the reciprocal relationship between the disciplines of theology, anthropology, and history – offers some particular methodological guidelines championed within PCR for interpreting the resurrection as an event that occurred within temporal time and space and within its communal and theological context without reducing it to no more than a contingent historical event.

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82 Cf. Wright, NTPG, 125-26.

83 N. T. Wright, Paul and His Recent Interpreters (London: SPCK, 2015), 3-4. James Dunn adopts a similar methodology, reappropriating the critical realism of Meyer and Lonergan, noting that “the data themselves are never ‘raw’: they have already been ‘selected’ by the historical process; they are ‘selected’ again by the way they have been discovered and brought to present notice; they come with a context, or various contexts already predisposing interpretation; the interpreter’s framework of understanding or particular thesis causes certain data to appear more significant than others; and so on.” Despite this, “The task of seeking to describe and evaluate the data and to reach some sort of judgment regarding the facts, which is not merely subjective but may command proper critical respect, is not only viable, but in the case of the great event(s) of Jesus necessary” (Dunn, Jesus Remembered, 111).
A Postfoundationalist Constructive Realist Method

So far I have adopted Wright’s critical realism as a basic model and adjusted it to reflect the epistemic values of postfoundationalism, resulting in a constructive realism which incorporates, on the one hand, the belief in an intelligible external reality and, on the other, the constructive nature of knowledge in a reciprocal tension. This chapter has explored how this relates to issues of theology and anthropology, arguing that, when approaching the question of the historicity of the resurrection one cannot so easily separate theology from history, that the preconceived beliefs, prejudices, and contextually conditioned worldviews of the original authors, with that of the contemporary scholar interpreting this text, shape how this event is understood. Thus, the resurrection cannot be treated as a purely contingent historical event, but neither can it be relegated to the subjective realm of faith; preconceived theological notions cannot be isolated and divorced from objective inquiry.

All this is to say that the resurrection cannot be treated purely historically or theologically. Rather, we must recognize that the broader category of resurrection, which had enormous theological and sociological implications within ancient Jewish eschatology, extends beyond an isolated historical event, despite being directly applied to the events surrounding Jesus’ post-mortem existence. It is a theologico-historical event and to understand it as a historical event requires understanding the communally conditioned theological categories and how they were utilized and developed by the early witnesses to the resurrection. I return to this in chapter five. For now, I assess Wright’s application of critical realism to historical research, which he presents as a hypothesis-verification method. I note that, as with his critical realism, his method is not critical enough. He treats history as about determining ‘what really happened’ without fully integrating the observation – which he himself acknowledges – that history is a human construction. A PCR approach re-appropriates his stress upon the narrative characteristic of
history while incorporating the contributions of scholars who have engaged in social memory research.

In his *NTPG* Wright develops a methodology – which he maintains in his later *PFG* – based upon his proposal of critical realism which is built around the formulation and verification of hypotheses, narratives that explain the accumulated historical data. He describes a critical realist historiography as “The application to history of the same overall procedure as is used in the hard sciences: not simply the mere assemblage of ‘facts’, but the attempt to make sense of them through forming hypotheses and then testing them against the evidence.” In this description he has distanced himself from other critical realists who argue against a universal methodology. It is not immediately clear why a methodology suited to the hard sciences is appropriate to the discipline of history. Nevertheless, the notion of hypothesis as an explanatory story, a narrative which explains the experience of external stimuli, helps locate historical knowledge within a provisional and anthropocentric framework. The formulation of a hypothesis must follow three rules: it must include all available data without distortion, it must convey the simplest and most coherent explanation, and it must also make sense in other areas or explain other problems. Wright considers a palaeontologist fitting fossils together to construct a coherent skeleton: if a few large bones are omitted, the second criterion is favoured

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84 Wright, *PFG*, 52.
86 Wright, *NTPG*, 99. Wright illustrates this with an analogy of seeing a police car speeding down the wrong side of a road with its siren blaring. Because this is not a normal sight, evidently something is happening that is out of the ordinary. Guesses at what that is can be made: a crime is being committed, or an accident had just occurred. Hence, a hypothesis has been formulated, awaiting verification. Next, a fire-engine is heard and a cloud of smoke is seen arising from nearby, and thus the hypothesis is modified to incorporate this new data. Of course, the police car might have nothing to do with the fire-truck or the cloud of smoke, but it seems more likely to assume the simpler explanation, that the police car is heading toward the same location as the fire-truck, to the cloud of smoke where an accident has just occurred. Furthermore, this may explain why an explosion was heard five minutes earlier.
87 Licona lists five criteria: *explanatory scope*, where the hypothesis accounts for all the relevant data; *explanatory power*, where the hypothesis explains the data with as little effort and ambiguity as possible; *plausibility*, where the hypothesis coheres with other accepted truths; *less ad hoc*, where the hypothesis includes as few assumptions as possible; *illumination*, where the hypothesis explains other problems (Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 108-11).
at the expense of the first; if all the bones are used, but the skeleton becomes a convoluted mess, with seven toes on one foot and eighteen on the other, the first criterion is favoured at the expense of the second. Similarly, the historian must not allow either the quest for the simplest explanation or the quest for the most data to misconstrue the overall historical task.88

Where this hypothesis-verification model sets Wright apart from much other Jesus research is in this task of formulating a hypothesis before critically examining the minutiae of the data, rather than beginning with the determination of the most historically reliable and “critically assured” aspects of tradition and building up from this.89 In some sense, this distances him from Strauss, Bultmann, Crossan, and the early Pannenberg who all attempt to strip away the theological embellishment or mythological elements of the New Testament to ascertain a ‘purely’ authentic kernel of history. There is possibly some tension here with his reasoning for the necessity of historical research, where he insists that the task of history is to ensure that our contemporary picture of Jesus reflects the first-century Jesus to “see whether Christianity is not based on a mistake.”90 This sounds remarkably like an attempt to separate the ‘historical’ Jesus of Nazareth from the Christ of faith in the New Testament kerygma. In line with Käsemann, Wright argues, “If we don’t do historical-Jesus research, difficult though it may be, we are helpless against the ideology that manufactures a new Jesus to suit its own end.”91 Within a PCR framework which balances both the intelligibility of external reality with the subjective interpretation of that reality, Wright’s caution against reimagining Jesus for whatever prejudicial purpose we may have is to be heeded. However, this is an example of where Wright’s critical

88 Wright, NTPG, 104-05. He maintains this elsewhere: “I construct a hypothesis, and ask that it be judged by the regular criteria. Getting in the data with the minimum fuss and bother scores highly; achieving apparent simplicity at the cost of leaving data all over the floor, or of inventing extra hypotheses out of thin air, scores poorly. Loose ends are a sign of weakness, not of strength” (Wright, “Theology, History and Jesus,” 107).
91 Wright, PFG, 119-20.
realism is not critical enough, for we must acknowledge that the Jesus which the contemporary historian pictures, and his portrayal by the New Testament evangelist, will perpetually remain manufactured to some degree by presupposed beliefs and worldviews.

Heilig and Heilig raise a pertinent criticism. An essential element, they argue, is missing from Wright’s methodology: not just getting all the information, but selecting the relevant information. A person slipping over on a sidewalk might well be explained by the theory of gravity (and that would indeed explain why that person fell), but a more relevant explanation could be that that person happened to be wearing poor shoes on that particular day. With this criticism, they argue that Wright has not adequately detailed how this theory of abduction fits in his methodology. He has missed a step, that of the determination of which data is to be included in the formulation of the hypothesis. I would agree to an extent. Though it might seem that Wright has flung open the floodgates for an uncontrollably immense accumulation of data without an explicit method of determining the reliability of this data, there exists within his methodology an implicit process of selection, especially regarding the recognition of the worldview of the historian. However, this should be made more explicit for his abductive methodology to be more comprehensive. Furthermore, how one determines relevance is another example of the constructive nature of knowledge.

If we are to accept Wright’s method of formulating a hypothesis – a narrative to best explain the available historical data that does not discriminate between pure history and theological interpretation, and recognizes the historian’s subjective interpretation of the data – one further issue to consider is that history is never simply discerning ‘what happened.’ Though Wright rejects absolute and universal objectivity, at least in theory, history remains for Wright the

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93 Ibid., 118. They are concerned that Wright’s methodology would essentially introduce yet another historical thesis even broader than the one it is supposed to explain.
determination of historical ‘fact,’ free of any interpretive elaboration. Wright acknowledges the significant role of worldviews, but his purpose is to look *through* the worldview, not dissimilar to the demythologizing project of Strauss. Wright’s methodology does not take seriously enough the constructive nature of knowledge, that history is a balance between the external event and its interpretation, neither of which can be bypassed.

This sentiment is similarly expressed by recent biblical scholars who have incorporated new understandings of the role and nature of memory into their historical Jesus research. In essence, this movement is a response to positivistic historical critical methodologies which attempt to distinguish between ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ history, that is, the objective ‘what really happened’ from the interpretive embellishment, challenging this dichotomy and instead insisting that contingent history is distorted by memory and so all history has elements of both objectivity and subjectivity. History is preserved in memory, and how one remembers the past is dependent upon the present; the present needs, desires, and context determines what is remembered and how that memory is interpreted. This memory is then further preserved within a community, and the greater the significance of the historical event within the community, the greater this memory is reflected upon and reinterpreted, particularly to suit new and developing contexts. I will elaborate upon this momentarily, as it has significance for a PCR approach to the resurrection.

These biblical scholars employing social memory theory, notably Dale Allison, Chris Keith, Anthony Le Donne, and Rafael Rodríguez, are specifically responding to the ‘criteria’ approach. Within historical criticism, a variety of criteria have developed, methodological tools to identify within the NT text which sayings and stories are ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ history. Among these criteria include: the criterion of *dissimilarity*, where a story or saying attributed to Jesus is considered authentic if it is dissimilar to either Jewish or early Christian tradition, or to both; the criterion of *multiple attestation*, where authenticity is judged by how
many independent streams of tradition that include a particular story or saying; the criterion of *embarrassment*, where a tradition would likely be considered embarrassing or difficult for the early church, who might have preferred the particular tradition suppressed, and so its inclusion suggests its likely authenticity; the criterion of *coherence*, according to which a story or saying is considered authentic if it coheres with other established traditions. 94 A goal of the criteria approach was to identify oral traditions within the written texts in order to ‘get behind’ the texts to the undistorted historical Jesus, to reconstruct the original oral tradition without the later interpretation. 95 The assumption here is that it is indeed possible to separate later theological interpretation and embellishment from a genuine historical account of ‘what really happened.’ In recent decades, the criteria of authenticity have increasingly fallen out of favour. This approach is in many respects a remnant of positivistic historiography, and in the words of Chris Keith, “Scholars in search of authentic Jesus traditions might as well be in search of unicorns, the lost city of Atlantis, and the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.”96 I will not here systematically dissect each of the criteria, for that would exceed the scope of this thesis, 97 but brief comment should be made on two of the more commonly used criteria, that of dissimilarity and of embarrassment, as both have been employed by Wright. 98 The former exaggerates only the aspects which are dissimilar, thereby minimizing the overall significance of Jesus’

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96 Keith, “Memory and Authenticity,” 170.
97 Cf. Keith and Le Donne (eds.), *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity*, which includes a selection of essays analysing and highlighting the deficiencies of most of the major criteria.
98 This was mentioned earlier and is an example of how his critical realism has not accounted for the subjective, anthropocentric, and constructive nature of knowledge. Wright utilizes the criterion of dissimilarity in JVG to argue that Jesus saw himself as the one who would rally Israel and prepare them for the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God (JVG, 131-32), and the criterion of embarrassment in RSG to defend the historicity of the empty tomb narrative, namely that it would have been embarrassing for the early church to have *women* as the ones who discovered the empty tomb (RSG, 607-08).
contextual situatedness,\(^9^9\) and the latter, not particularly distinct from the former, merely renders the story or saying as embarrassing and only as such when read within the broader historical and literary context, but does not thereby authenticate the material.\(^1^0^0\) The most significant issue with the criteria is the presupposed assumption that the Gospel tradition consists of both authentic and inauthentic material and that these can be separated, which in the discussions above regarding the distinction between a Christology ‘from below’ and ‘from above,’ the perpetually anthropocentric nature of knowledge and of history, and the impossibility of separating theology and history, is seen to be impossible.\(^1^0^1\) In this regard, the criteria of authenticity are not themselves the problem \textit{per se}, and are not necessarily to be wholly jettisoned, but the employment of whatever particular methodology to strip the NT portrayal of Jesus of any later theological embellishment and interpretation is neither possible nor desirable.

Research into the role and nature of memory demonstrates that memory is neither the recalling nor re-experiencing of past events, as though we are simply replaying an old recording, but the reinterpretation of the \textit{impression} that past events had on the individual in light of the needs and frameworks of the present. When applied to history, this means that the author of the text recounting the contingent historical event is doing so in accordance with their memory of the event, that the event in question has been re-interpreted in light of the frameworks and categories that have influenced the author’s perception of the event at \textit{the time of writing}. In


other words, “All reflection on the past, whether at the level of the individual or the group, is an indissoluble mix of the past and present.”\textsuperscript{102} Or, put differently, memory is not about the past, but is about what is happening within our minds in the present, and this ultimately affects how we perceive the past.\textsuperscript{103} However, this is ultimately influenced by historical and communal context. Worldviews and categories of understanding remain contextually conditioned, and memory relies upon the external environment. For example, memories are often forgotten until triggered by a photograph, reimagined in light of similar events,\textsuperscript{104} and reinforced or reinterpreted according to other people’s memories of a particular event.\textsuperscript{105} The memory of an event invariably changes over time especially as a community changes and the categories of understanding evolve. By the time the accounts of Jesus were written, the memory of Jesus had developed, not least in light of the ‘resurrection bias’ of the early church, to return to Johnson’s language, and as Le Donne notes, the more significant the event, the more it is interpreted.\textsuperscript{106} This is not to say that Jesus was remembered by the early church as something or someone that was radically alternative to the reality, for that is incongruous to the nature of memory.\textsuperscript{107} However, and this in particular accords with a PCR understanding on the nature of knowledge, memory is impacted – and, to an extent, \textit{constructed} – by the needs, desires, frameworks, and categories of the present. The task of the historian is not the recovery of past events, but the interpretation of memories that have evolved within a community situated within a particular historical context. This is not to say that the event did not happen, but that how that event is

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{LeDonne} Le Donne, \textit{Historical Jesus}, 25.
\bibitem{LeDonne1} I find it difficult to differentiate between memories of previous Christmas lunches; they all seem to blur together in my mind. This might be due to their similarities, the traditions that are repeated year after year. But my memory of past lunches is enhanced and reinterpreted each new Christmas. It is difficult to remember, for example, what Christmas was like without my two young nieces or before I was married.
\bibitem{LeDonne2} Cf. Le Donne, \textit{Historical Jesus}, 32.
\bibitem{LeDonne3} \textit{Ibid.}, 37.
\bibitem{Keith1} Keith notes that Jesus couldn’t possibly be remembered as a sailor or as Caesar or, for that matter, as an astronaut. The reality of the past placed parameters upon how he was remembered (Keith, “Memory and Authenticity,” 172).
\end{thebibliography}
understood is inseparable from its interpretation within its original context and how that interpretation changed as it was remembered and re-remembered.

The social memory approach is specifically utilized in a PCR framework in a focus upon how a contingent historical event was re-interpreted and communicated in new ways in new contexts. In light of this approach, PCR analyses how the theological interpretation of the resurrection developed from the earliest testimonies (such as the pre-Pauline material in the Pauline literature) through to the later traditions (such as the Johannine literature), rather than systematizing a homogenized understanding of the New Testament portrayals of resurrection.\(^\text{108}\)

**4.4. A Postfoundationalist Constructive Realist Approach to the Resurrection**

The task of this chapter and the last has been to consider an alternative methodology for interpreting the resurrection that moves away from a hard foundationalism and empiricism without collapsing into a coherentism, and is capable of balancing antipodal statements of reality in a dialectic and mutually-conditioning tension. The framework of Postfoundationalist Constructive Realism was proposed and discussed in relation to various epistemological, historiographical, and theological concerns. This framework will now be applied to an examination of Jesus’ resurrection in the remaining chapters. Though it was noted earlier that the PCR framework does not have a prescribed formula or definition, precisely due to its inherent suspicion of ‘universal’ methodologies, it will be useful here to distil and re-iterate the key concerns reflected in chapters three and four, and clarify how this framework will be applied to the interpretation of the resurrection.

\(^{108}\) Wright seems to be guilty of this, providing very little comment on the differences between the unique portrayals within the four distinct gospels or with Paul. It is demonstrated in chapter six that the differences in the New Testament portrayals of resurrection are significant, albeit subtle, and that there is development of resurrection theology within the New Testament. It is this development which is of particular interest. It should also be noted that Wright has not as of yet engaged with the social memory approach.
PCR balances the objective-subjective dichotomy – the external object and its subjective interpretation – recognizing the bilateral direction of knowledge and interpretation. The interpreter will always impart their own contextually-conditioned categories of understanding upon the observation of an external, intelligible object or event; this constructive aspect of knowledge is incorporated into this framework. Importantly, both aspects of the dichotomy are upheld in a mutually conditioning reciprocity, neither being prioritized or functioning as epistemic foundation. Multiple disciplines and experiences are balanced in a similar reciprocity. Consequently, the significant impact of the socially and historically conditioned categories of understanding and worldviews upon the interpretation of the event are a central point of focus within a PCR framework. Furthermore, another central point is the recognition that knowledge is neither the external ‘objective’ event nor the re-telling of this event or the categories utilized to describe and interpret this event, but a dynamic interaction between the two, both imparting meaning upon the other. Where this concern is essentially epistemological, the next is historiographical.

Turning specifically to history and the examination of the claim that Jesus rose from the dead, PCR stresses the anthropocentric nature of historical knowledge on account of the constructive nature of all knowledge. Several observations consequently emerge. First, the memory of the event within the early communities of the Jesus movement invariably impacts its interpretation as the event is reinterpreted in new and evolving contexts. In light of this, a PCR approach to the resurrection emphasizes the development of the interpretation of the resurrection within the canonical New Testament corpus, from the earliest traditions (such as the Pauline literature) to the later traditions (such as the Johannine literature), as opposed to a systematized or homogenized understanding. Second, as noted above, the resurrection cannot be relegated to the ‘realm of faith,’ removed from historical inquiry. However, the resurrection must not be reduced to an ordinary historical event. Hence, this event should be approached alongside a
comprehensive analysis of the categories of understanding within which this event is ensconced, rather than treating it as either divorced from ordinary history or as indistinguishable from ordinary history. By doing so we are avoiding the potential pitfalls of a positivistic historiography that would invariably cause this event to become little more than an objective event of the past. Third, it is impossible to wrench the supposedly ‘authentic’ history from the apparently ‘inauthentic,’ or myth from reality in an attempt to ‘get behind’ the text and objectively verify precisely ‘what happened.’ The second and third observations here are essentially two sides of the same coin. History is neither the objective reality of past contingent events nor its interpretation and retelling, but a dynamic tension between these two poles, a tension which must not capitulate one way or the other. A positivistic historiography cannot do justice to this tension between history and theology, but is upheld in a PCR approach to the resurrection.

Regarding the resurrection, then, the task now is to understand the language and categories that were applied to Jesus’ post-mortem existence, not to wrench these categories away from the text to arrive at the pure and unadulterated event of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, but to assess the impact that this event had on the early Jesus movement and to discern why this particular language was adopted. It is also necessary to trace the development of the interpretation of this event as it is remembered and re-remembered, intertwined with the developing theological categories and evolving context, for there is no single or universal interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection in the New Testament. Finally, to be clear, this method moves beyond approaches like Wright’s Critical Realism by merging it with Pannenberg’s postfoundationalism.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how the resurrection might be interpreted as a historical event within temporal time and space without reducing it to an event indistinguishable from any other
ordinary contingent event,\textsuperscript{109} that is, how to treat it historically as an event that is both continuous and discontinuous with empirical reality. This has involved a range of issues. However, discussion has revolved around the anthropocentric nature of historical knowledge, from the initial experience and interpretation of the event through its reinterpretation in new contexts to the presuppositions of the contemporary historian who is required to make certain decisions regarding the theological significance, or lack thereof, of the recorded event. It has been argued that the resurrection cannot be relegated to the realm of faith, entirely removed from historical inquiry, but rather that it should be approached with appropriate recognition of the categories of understanding within which it is ensconced. PCR is characterised by balancing multiple tensions in a mutually conditioning reciprocity, and when applied to the question of the historical nature of the resurrection (which must be upheld if it is to retain continuity with empirical reality as the renewal of creation, which will be discussed in the remaining chapters), this framework balances the external event with its interpretation, balancing faith and reason, and history and theology. The very nature of historical knowledge is distorted by memory and the prior categories through which it was constructed.

The following chapters apply this PCR framework to the examination of the proclamation of Jesus’ resurrection. The first task is the comprehensive analysis of the category of resurrection through which Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted. The second task is to then turn directly to Jesus’ resurrection in light of this analysis. There is a developing resurrection tradition which can be traced from the earlier interpretations in Paul, through the synoptic Gospels, to later texts, such as John. It is important to note that this is not to say that either the earlier or later traditions are either correct or incorrect, but to observe how the prior theological category of resurrection was adopted to explain and interpret Jesus’ post-mortem existence in

\textsuperscript{109} This is not necessarily a particular or unique feature of PCR, but highlights the tension between theology and history.
new and developing contexts. It will be seen that within the early church, Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted as the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope for the end of history within contingent history, thereby bearing within itself both the renewal and transformation of creation, bearing both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality. The ancient Jewish eschatological category of resurrection is explored in chapter five, with chapter six analysing how this category was then utilized by the early Christians to explain Jesus’ resurrection.
5. Tension in Eschatology: of Renewal and Transformation

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapters have stressed the role and function of prior categories of understanding which shape interpretation of experience of external reality. These categories intertwine with experience and memory and may develop as they are re-remembered and re-interpreted in new contexts. This chapter turns to the primary category through which Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted and which provides the framework for how this event was understood: the ancient Jewish eschatological category of ‘resurrection of the dead.’¹ This should not be understood as a formalized doctrine, for the language of resurrection was utilized to stress a diverse array of theological concepts. It was a very malleable notion.² What this does indicate, however, is that the resurrection should not be reduced, as has often been the case (as explored in the second chapter), to a mere personal reanimation that fails to uphold and balance both the continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality that is implied within its reflection of the Jewish eschatological hope for both renewal and transformation of creation. Rather, within Jewish eschatology, the resurrection was inseparably connected to the broader spectrum of expectations for the end of history.

The ancient Jewish notion of a post-mortem resurrection from the dead primarily developed after the Babylonian exile, demonstrating influences from Zoroastrian, Egyptian, and Hellenistic understandings.³ Prior to the exile, Jewish eschatology did not tend to envision a

¹ As noted in the introduction, the terminology of ancient Jewish eschatology refers to the eschatological frameworks through which Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted. This stretches back to the early prophets up to the first century CE.
² Cf. C. D. Elledge, Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism 200 BCE – CE 200 (Oxford: OUP, 2017), 1-2, 16. This malleability is demonstrated by the portrayal of Jesus’ resurrection in the Gospel of Peter, for even though this extra-canonical text is written well after the majority of the New Testament texts, the resurrection in the Gospel of Peter is decidedly different and does not follow the general trajectory of the development present in the New Testament texts. This is returned to in chapter six.
meaningful afterlife; Sheol was dark and unenjoyable with hope being found not in the promise of a post-mortem reward but in the continuing covenant with YHWH. This is what Wright labels as the first stage in the development of the belief in a post-mortem resurrection.\(^4\) In this early theology, God’s judgment occurs within this life, not the next, and the main concern of the Israelites was the flourishing of God’s nation, with ‘life after death’ being achieved through children.\(^5\) This assessment reflects a general academic consensus.\(^6\) Though some early passages (Ps. 73.17, 21-28) do indeed seem to imply that a belief in a post-mortem existence was emerging, it was not until persecution under the Babylonians and then under Antiochus Epiphanes that this belief developed.\(^7\)

Some scholars, such as Wright, argue that by the first century CE, a developed belief in resurrection had become the vastly dominant understanding of the afterlife.\(^8\) Casey Elledge has recently suggested this ‘myth of dominance’ sees resurrection becoming by the second century BCE the universal belief of life after death. Though he acknowledges that resurrection is

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\(^2\) Of particular significance was the influence of Zoroastrianism upon post-exilic understandings of the afterlife. The Zoroastrian document *Fragment Westergaard 4.1-3*, states, “And the demons [will be] buried in the earth, i.e., their bodily forms will be broken. And by it the dead will be redressed. With its help, they give life back to the bodies and they will keep (their) souls with the bodies, that is, thereafter, they will not die” (quoted in Elledge, *Resurrection of the Dead, 47*). Daniel’s prophecy, however, restricts resurrection to the Jews, an alteration of the Zoroastrian doctrine which suggests the adaptation and alteration of this doctrine to suit the Jewish notion of Israel’s unique identity. Elledge suggests that the development of resurrection occurred in the Hellenistic era, as Israel was forced to reinterpret her traditions in the face of this new, and occasionally oppressive power, and do so in light of ideas borrowed from other cultures, such as Zoroastrianism (Elledge, *Resurrection of the Dead*, 50-53).

\(^4\) Wright, RSG, 89-93. Cf. Ps. 6.5; 115.17; Isa. 38.10-13; 2 Sam. 14.14. The second stage, argues Wright, was the development of the belief that YHWH’s love extends beyond the grave, seen especially in Ps. 16.10; 49.15; and 73.23-26 (Wright, RSG, 107). There are some, albeit few and certainly not the consensus, who present a case for an expectation of a more positive post-mortem existence. Cf. T. D. Alexander, “The Old Testament View of Life After Death,” *Themelios* 11, no. 2 (1986), 41-46; R. Mason, “Life Before and After Death in the Old Testament,” in *Called to One Hope: Perspectives on the Life to Come*, ed. J. Coldwell (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 67-82.

\(^5\) Ibid., 94-99. Cf. Exod. 20.12; Job 7.7-10; 14.7-14; Ecc. 3.19-21; Ps. 90.3.


\(^7\) This is particularly evident in Daniel 12.1-3 (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39, 371*).

repeatedly attested in a variety of texts between 200 BCE and 200 CE, distributed over a broad geographical area, and that Josephus attested to resurrection being a majority belief (Ag. Ap. 2.31), the idea that this belief was ubiquitous and universally held is an overgeneralization. However, it is practically impossible to determine precisely how widespread this notion was, as it is unclear whether the broader population ascribed to resurrection beliefs, as the texts that have survived are predominately from the elites. Furthermore, some elites, such as Philo, favoured a more Hellenistic immortality. The resurrection was indeed most likely a prominent belief, but we must be careful not to overemphasize its widespread subscription.9

This chapter begins by exploring the development of resurrection theology in Jewish eschatology, analysing several Hebrew Bible references (Hos. 6.1-3; Ezek. 37.1-14; Isa. 26.19; Dan. 12.1-3) which had a significant influence upon later resurrection theologies found in intertestamental Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. In these passages, resurrection is less concerned with individuals returning to life than with the broader issues of redemption and re-creation. A primary concern has to do with the general restoration of Israel’s relationship with YHWH. This emphasis upon the restoration of relationship is maintained in the intertestamental literature, where resurrection signifies to a much greater extent the transformation and re-creation of the cosmos; the entire universe is, in a sense, resurrected, not just individual bodies. With this cosmic renewal is an associated hope for the dispensation of justice. The second section then turns its attention to the few instances where the Jewish eschatological category is evident in the NT. How this category is applied specifically to Jesus’ post-mortem existence is the focus of chapter six, whereas the present chapter is analysing the category in general. The presupposition of this category and the accompanying belief that ‘resurrection’ stretches well beyond the reanimation of a personal body is especially evident in Jesus’ encounter with the Sadducees who question him about marriage in the resurrection

(Mark 12.18-27 // Matt. 22.23-33 // Luke 20.27-40); Paul’s response to the Corinthians’ rejection of resurrection (1 Cor. 15.12-58); Jesus’ discussion with Martha prior to her brother’s resurrection (John 11.21-27); and the ministry of Peter, John, and Paul as recounted in Acts (4.1-2; 17.18). The third section discusses the relationship between resurrection and Jewish eschatology in terms of the imagery of the new heavens and earth, arguing that this is the preeminent analogy for the eschatological hope for the end of history – the renewal and transformation of creation – that is encompassed within the language and category of resurrection.

This chapter reflects the PCR framework proposed in §4.4 in, first, its close examination of the communal and theological notion of resurrection within ancient Jewish eschatology to understand how this presupposed notion was applied to the objective contingent event of Jesus’ post-mortem existence and through which this event was subjectively interpreted, and, second, how the theological notion of resurrection developed within the new and developing contexts of the Jewish community, particularly during times of persecution. By adopting this framework, we may avoid the foundationalism that restricted interpreters to understanding ‘resurrection’ as personal reanimation, inhibited the comprehensive incorporation of communally-conditioned theological presuppositions, and the subsequent failure to uphold a dialectical tension between the continuity and discontinuity between the present and the future eschatological reality.

5.2. Resurrection and the Restoration of Relationship

The first section of this chapter analyses the language of resurrection within the Hebrew Bible and intertestamental literature. It is necessary to analyse these sources as they illustrate the

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10 There is very limited discussion of resurrection in general and of Jesus’ resurrection in particular in the extra-canonical texts. There are some potential allusions to Jesus’ fate, framed within a Gnostic understanding in the Gospel of Thomas, but not enough for any significant analysis in this chapter. The Gospel of Peter includes a curious account of Jesus’ resurrection, which I return to in chapter six.
theological notions which inform the New Testament conceptions of resurrection that will be analysed in the next chapter. It is here argued that the developing category of resurrection was diverse, rarely referring to a post-mortem reanimation of a personal body, but was used quite malleably to refer to hope for restoration of Israel’s relationship with YHWH, the transformation of creation and a return to an Edenic sanctuary, and the dispensation of divine justice. The first part of this section analyses the development of the earliest stratum of resurrection hope, occurring only minimally in the Hebrew Bible. In these references, resurrection is rarely seen as personal reanimation, with Hosea 6.1-3, Ezekiel 37.1-4, Isaiah 26.19, and Daniel 12.1-3 speaking primarily in terms of the restoration of Israel’s relationship with YHWH, a return to covenantal obedience. It is disputed whether Isaiah or Daniel includes the first reference to post-mortem life, rather than national redemption, though I contend Isaiah likely did not. However, in either case, a personal re-animated body is only a peripheral concern. Daniel’s primary concern is the dispensation of justice: reward for the righteous martyrs and punishment for the wicked persecutors.

The resurrection theology of the Hebrew Bible had a significant influence upon the later intertestamental literature, which envisioned a similar restoration of relationship, and used the language of resurrection in reference to the broader hopes of a transformed cosmos which includes bringing justice. Many of the texts include creation motifs to depict a renewed creation, transformed by YHWH to its originally intended function. For example, Ezekiel 36.9-11, 35 depicts fruitful multiplication, 1 Enoch 22 envisions transformation and entrance into God’s sanctuary with a central fruit tree, 2 Maccabees 7.11 predicts the creator returning lost limbs, and Pseudo-Ezekiel repeats the phrase ‘and it was so’). Resurrection is synonymous with transformation, not just of bodies, but of the universe (Dan. 12.3; 4 Ezra 7.31-32). Within this newly redeemed and transformed reality, resurrection is also seen as a solution to the problem of theodicy, a reversal of fates. However, there is significant ambiguity in how this resurrected
reality is portrayed, with some texts implying belief in an immortal soul, rather than bodily resurrection (Jub. 23.31; 1 En. 91-104; Ws. 9.15), others making no mention of bodies or corpses, but depicting an existence like the stars and angels (Dan. 12.1-3; 2 Bar. 50.2-3; 1 En. 104.2-6), with still others envisioning a very bodily existence (2 Macc. 7). What is evident, as this section will demonstrate, is that the category of resurrection was diverse, flexible in its application, and inseparable from the broader eschatological hopes for the end of history, depicting far more than a re-animated personal body.

**On Apocalyptic Imagination**

This section does not restrict its analysis of the resurrection to first century Jewish apocalyptic literature, but analyses the development of the broader notion of resurrection from its earliest inceptions within Jewish prophecy. However, there is significant development of the notion of resurrection within apocalyptic literature, and so a brief introduction to this genre is necessary.\(^{11}\) Of course, defining what is meant by ‘apocalyptic’ is notoriously difficult and contentious. The term ‘apocalyptic’ has been applied to a variety of phenomena, including literature, social movements, and eschatological expectations. Recent scholarship generally distinguishes between these three uses of the term; ‘Apocalypse’ as literary genre, ‘Apocalypticism’ as worldview, and ‘Apocalyptic’ as adjective, referring to the related imagery and eschatological motifs. As genre, ‘Apocalypse’ was never a formalized genre prior to Christianity, until the term was used in Revelation 1.1. However, its use here is ambiguous and it is unclear whether it refers to a distinct genre, revelation in general, or simply a description of the contents of the text. At around the same time, 2 and 3 Baruch were written, both of which are introduced as apocalypses. Though not a formal genre until the first or early second century CE, these texts nevertheless exhibit a variety of similarities, and the earliest examples of this

\(^{11}\) In particular I am indebted to the work of Frederick Murphy and John Collins for the following survey.
are the *Book of Watchers* (*1 En.* 1-36), followed shortly after by Daniel. The emergence of this genre occurred within the Hellenistic period following the conquests of Alexander and was a way to resist the new imperial context and its accompanying occupation, taxation, and submission to foreign powers. Hellenistic myths are inverted, for example, in the *Book of Watchers* which narrates a heavenly journey that depicts an alternative geography and cosmology and presents an alternative ideology of dominance.12

Several aspects which characterise a typical apocalyptic text are pseudonymity, the unseen world, the future, dualism (righteous/wicked, dark/light), eschatological timelines, end time tribulation, and dissatisfaction with the present. Apocalypses usually narrate divine revelation given to a human recipient by a heavenly figure, often disclosing a transcendent reality, presenting an alternative reality to empirical reality. Generally, there are two types of apocalypses: historical, surveying a broad sweep of history culminating in a final, divine judgment; and otherworldly journeys, including visions of heaven and hell. Apocalypses usually emerge in times of crisis, presenting the problems of the present within a cosmic, supernatural context. For example, the book of Daniel was written during a time of persecution under Seleucid reign, depicting a future judgment and veneration of the pious faithful, and Revelation portrays an alternative to oppressive Roman rule. The development of Jewish apocalyptic is an example of one of the key epistemological thoughts of PCR, of how presupposed categories of understanding influence the interpretation of new data and phenomena within new and developing contexts. Though Jewish apocalyptic is influenced by Israel’s exposure to foreign civilizations (particularly dualisms, heaven and hell, resurrection,

eschatological battles and combat myths, and dream visions coming from Persian, Mesopotamian, and Canaanite mythologies), it was also significantly influenced by the presupposed Jewish prophetic and wisdom traditions. The result is something entirely unique to ancient Jewish eschatology, the interpretation of new phenomena shaped by prior categories.\textsuperscript{13}

The purpose of apocalypses was to console and encourage the people of God amidst difficult times. Hope is presented in the form of the faithfulness of God, justice, and reward for those who remain faithful, while punishment is promised for the wicked. Other functions include the exhortation to continued obedience and the rebuke of the unrighteous.\textsuperscript{14} Resurrection, as will be seen in the following, emerged as a hopeful expectation for the \textit{eschaton} as vindication for those unjustly martyred. Though resurrection is not unique to apocalyptic thought, it did flourish and take on new significance within apocalyptic literature. However, it is now necessary to analyse the earliest references to resurrection within ancient Jewish eschatology – its appearance in Hosea, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel – to understand the earliest depictions from which Jewish apocalyptic (including Daniel) drew inspiration.

\textbf{Hope for Restoration}

The earliest occurrences of resurrection in Jewish theology appear in the Hebrew Bible, though it is here only a minor, or even peripheral topic. These disparate occurrences are less concerned with individuals returning to life than with the broader issues of redemption and re-creation. In fact, the imagery of resurrection in these instances does not seem to have a personal after-life in mind, but is concerned with the general restoration of Israel’s relationship with YHWH. It


is helpful to analyse these earlier references for two reasons. First, these passages significantly influenced later eschatology and framed the developing notion of resurrection in the intertestamental period, and so understanding this framework helps understand how resurrection was understood in the first century. Second, and importantly, a PCR framework is concerned with how ideas, memories, and categories develop over time as they are reinterpreted in new contexts. However, these new reinterpretations are not formulated in a vacuum but build upon prior frameworks. In the following, I will analyse the four most significant resurrection passages of the Hebrew Bible (Hos. 6.1-3; Ezek. 37.1-4; Isa. 26.19; Dan. 12.1-3) to show how each is concerned with the restoration of Israel’s relationship with YHWH, rather than a personal, individualized re-animated post-mortem existence.

The earliest resurrection reference is Hosea 6.1-3 (eighth century BCE), with the phrase, “On the third day he will raise us up,” (v.2) being of particular interest, especially in light of Jesus’ resurrection. Generally, this passage is read as a metaphorical reference to a hope in a national revival of God’s people. However, it has been argued that even if national revival is envisaged, it is employing a belief in a post-mortem reanimation of personal bodies on the basis that the ‘third day’ motif was taken up in the Gospels and Paul (1 Cor. 15.4) to refer to Jesus’ post-mortem existence, suggesting that Hosea was read as a reference to such a resurrection. Wright argues similarly, that this “passage has a claim to be the earliest explicit statement that YHWH will give his people a new bodily life the other side of death.”

15 We will return to the third day motif in §6.5.
18 Wright, RSG, 118-19.
the prophet envisaged a post-mortem re-animated body in this instance; not only is it far less explicit than Wright assumes – let alone whether it refers to a ‘bodily’ resurrection – but the context is preoccupied with the return of Israel to obedience of YHWH. Especially pertinent to the present discussion is the observation that, regardless of whether this is a reference to a reanimation existence or not, and regardless of the extent to which this passage was borrowed by later authors, from the initial stages of the development of the notion of resurrection it was not simply anthropological but was inherently connected to the much larger theme of God’s relationship with his people (as a chosen nation).

The graphic vision in Ezekiel 37.1-14 (sixth century BCE) is the second allusion to resurrection in the Hebrew Bible and, like Hosea, must be read metaphorically.\(^\text{19}\) This is not a doctrinal statement on an afterlife, but that, as Janina Hiebel puts it, “It is first and foremost a collective body whose death and, later, world-immanent re-creation is announced: the ‘House of Israel’ in its identity as the people of YHWH.” Furthermore, “We might also say: what dies and is re-created is the relationship between God and God’s people.”\(^\text{20}\) The metaphorical nature is explicit in the personification of the bones (v.3) and the statement, “These bones are the whole house of Israel” (v.11), and the image of unburied bones suggests a violent death.\(^\text{21}\) The implication is evident: the Israelites are metaphorically dead, separated from the life giver, YHWH.\(^\text{22}\) Hence, as God restores the bodies and breathes his spirit into them, this graphic and dramatic portrayal of the giving back of life is symbolic of being in relationship with God.

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19 Wright argues that this is “the most obviously allegorical or metaphorical” and that “Ezekiel is no more envisaging actual bodily resurrection than he envisages, when writing chapter 34, that Israel consisted of sheep rather than people” (Wright, RSG, 119-20).


again. This renewal of relationship is expressed in the covenantal formula, “They will be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezek. 11.20; 14.11; 37.23, 27; 34.24; 36.28) and represented visually in the re-establishment of a united Israel (Ezek. 37.15-28), the renewal of a monarchy (Ezek. 34.23-24; 37.22, 24-25), and the construction of a new temple (Ezek. 40-42).\(^{23}\) This covenantal implication is reinforced by the later Qumran text, *Pseudo-Ezekiel* 4Q385, which recounts this story with a depiction of a large crowd before the Lord in corporate worship.\(^{24}\) We should be careful not to read too much into this, but it appears the Qumran community could interpret the resurrection, on the rare occasions when it appealed to this notion, without depicting a personal reanimation.

Proto-Isaiah (sixth century BCE) includes two significant passages relating to the issue of resurrection: “He will swallow up death forever” (Isa. 25.8)\(^{25}\) and “Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awaken and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead” (Isa. 26.19). Though the resurrection references of Hosea and Ezekiel are generally considered metaphorical – references to the restoration of Israel and her relationship with YHWH – interpretations of Isaiah’s resurrection vary. Some argue that, as opposed to Hosea and Ezekiel, in this instance a post-mortem resurrection of individual bodies is envisaged as a reversal of the injustice shown to them, especially to the martyred.\(^{26}\) Accordingly, Wright argues that though the context promises


\(^{25}\) There might be some dependence upon Hosea’s proclamation, “O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your destruction?” (Hos. 13.14) which might have the alternative meaning of “I will be your plagues…I will be your destruction.” Paul quotes Isa. 25.8 in his discussion on the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15.54.

national restoration, resurrection here refers to an actual, bodily event. His insistence that Daniel 12 refers to a physical and bodily resurrection leads him to believe that Isaiah was interpreted similarly, as Daniel was reliant upon Isaiah.  

However, it seems more likely that Isaiah is closer to Hosea and Ezekiel in utilizing the image of resurrection as metaphor for national restoration. Isaiah 26.19 is immediately preceded by speaking of Israel as a woman in labour (vv.17-18), imagery carried through in v.19: “the earth will give birth to those long dead.” So argues Frederick Murphy, that “the reference to resurrection may be symbolic, representing restoration of the nation.”

John Collins highlights the contrast between the lords other than YHWH who have ruled over Israel and the nation that the Lord has increased (26.13-15), to argue that Isaiah 26 depicts Israel as dead and the resurrection as her miraculous restoration. This interpretation is strengthened when taking into account other instances in Isaiah where Israel is portrayed as dead as a result of her neglect of YHWH, and the removal of death in 25.8 is simultaneously the removal of her shame and disgrace. Furthermore, as Joy Hooker argues, chapters 24-26 stress the control that YHWH has over nations and empires. Isaiah does not have in mind a future, post-mortem return to a re-animated bodily life, but like Ezekiel – and perhaps dependent upon Ezekiel – views the restoration of Israel, and her relationship with YHWH, as being as miraculous as a

27 Wright, RSG, 116-17.
30 E.g. Isa. 5.13-14; 28.15, 18; 29.4.
return to life, and so we again find that this developing resurrection belief had primarily to do
with the broader eschatological hope for the restoration of Israel’s relationship with YHWH.

The fourth reference to resurrection in the Hebrew Bible is Daniel 12.1-3 (second century BCE)
which has a much greater apocalyptic character. It is here that it becomes especially evident
how resurrection was connected in a substantial way to other eschatological motifs, particularly
re-creation, with justice and national redemption still present, but cast on a much grander,
cosmic scale. The resurrection in Daniel 12.2 is most likely speaking about a post-mortem
return to life, more explicitly than its forebears. Wright overstates this, however, when he
claims that “virtually all scholars agree that [Daniel 12.2] does indeed speak of bodily
resurrection, and mean this in a concrete sense,” and that this passage “unquestionably refers
to physical resurrection.”

Though many scholars do agree that this is a reference to personal
resurrection, it is neither universal nor unquestionable that a bodily and physical resurrection
is depicted. What is clear, however, is that this resurrection is not an isolated event, but part
of a series of events, preceded by a period of anguish and a time of deliverance, and followed
by judgment and some sort of transformation. Resurrection should not, therefore, be read
simply in terms of bodily revivification, but as one part of a much larger whole.

33 Wright, RSG, 109, 322.
34 Cf. Nickelsburg, who argues that the language is a picture of Israel’s restoration and not of people who are
literally dead (Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life, 30-31); Ernest C. Lucas notes that the transformation
implied by Daniel prohibits an interpretation of a return to earthly life (Daniel (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 294);
D. S. Russell argues that this passage believes that upon death, the redeemed are transported to a cosmic realm
amongst the angels, and, further, this new eschatological life is not merely a future expectation, but available in
the present (Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic (London: SCM, 1992), 96-97; Martin-
Achard does not mention bodies, instead interpreting this as taking part in the glory of YHWH (From Death to Life,
140). Evidently, a physical and personal reanimation is not quite so unquestionable and ubiquitous as Wright
assumes.
35 This is further complicated by the fact that only a portion of the dead will be raised, as demonstrated by the
word ‘many.’ Its preposition – ‘of’ – should be understood as having partitive force, thus implying that not all
will be resurrected. This should not be understood as carrying explicative force, meaning, “many, that is, those
who sleep.” This does not do justice to the grammar which clearly carries partitive force. This makes it somewhat
unclear as to precisely what sort of resurrection is envisioned if only the especially righteous and the especially
wicked awake from death. Cf. Pannenberg, JGM, 71; idem., ST, 348; Gregory Goswell, “Resurrection in the Book
277; Murphy, Apocalypticism, 87; de Boer, The Defeat of Death, 48-50; Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, 144.
The main concern for Daniel, whether individual resurrection is envisaged or not, is national restoration. Daniel is generally dated to the mid-second century BCE, during a period of persecution under the Seleucid reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. Accordingly, Daniel’s concern is justice for his oppressed nation, and his adoption of language present in Isaiah echoes Isaiah’s concern for the restoration of relationship. This requires the reversal of the pain suffered and the one inflicting death to be destroyed. A transformation of the suffering caused by this persecution is anticipated, which includes those who died as a result. Hence, resurrection of individual bodies is present, but only insofar as to serve Daniel’s grander concerns of national restoration.

This analysis of these four resurrection passages in the Hebrew Bible reveals that, from its conception, resurrection in Jewish eschatology was inseparably connected to, and served, the larger issue of God’s relationship with his collective people. Of these four passages, only the latest envisioned a personal resurrection of individual bodies, but even here this was a secondary feature. What primarily mattered was a concern for justice and the redemption of the nation. The Israelites’ separation from YHWH and their unfaithfulness to the covenant made them metaphorically dead, and only divine intervention could redeem them, and this return to YHWH would bring them back to life. We will see that with this, a cosmic renewal was simultaneously envisioned, which Daniel alludes to in his reference to becoming like the stars. In order to redeem and perfect this relationship between God and his people, a significant

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36 Russel, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, 368; Lucas, Daniel, 293; Gowan, Daniel, 152. This becomes clear from Daniel’s use of “at that time,” referring to a specific point in history rather than an indefinite time in the distant future.

37 Daniel’s reference to the awakening of those asleep in the dust is borrowing from Isa. 26.19 and the notion that the risen wicked will become an abhorrence reflects Isa. 66.24, a description present in the HB only in these two verses.

38 Cf. Elledge, Resurrection of the Dead, 68-70; Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, 142.

transformation, not just of individual bodies but of the entire cosmos, is required, one where heaven and earth are united.

**Hope for Transformation**

In the Hebrew Bible and intertestamental period, resurrection was often understood as transformation, tied to a broader understanding of the re-creation of the cosmos, where the new eschatological creation is presented as an antediluvian paradise where all the risen righteous dwell in harmony with one another and with God. Elledge claims that resurrection is often less “concerned with the embodiment of the risen than with the new cosmic locale into which the dead will be transferred,” and thus “defining resurrection exclusively as a restoration to embodied life may be insufficient.” 40 It should be stressed that it was not just the individual body, or bodies, that were transformed, but the whole universe. Everything is expected to be cleansed and purified, and resurrection is a central part of this. 41 However, this transformation was not a mere discarding or replacement of the present universe but a bringing to perfection of what already exists, and with it the unification of heaven and earth, enabling the intended relational dynamic between God and his people. The following section highlights the various ways this idea of a cosmological transformation is understood, either explicitly or implicitly, in several presentations of the resurrection.

Many of these presentations include creation motifs, alluding to and in some cases directly borrowing, language and themes from the creation accounts in the book of Genesis. Immediately prior to the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, for instance, the prophet describes the restoration of Israel the language that echoes Genesis 2-3. This renewal includes cultivation of the land and will “become like the Garden of Eden,” (Ezek. 36.35),

within which the population will multiply and become fruitful (36.9-11). The vision of dry bones coming back to life reflects the creation of humanity in Genesis 2: the valley suggests an uncultivated, dry earth; bodies are formed but require God to breathe life into them; God plants a garden and sets humanity there as he promises to set (the same verb is used in Gen. 2.15 and Ezek. 37.14) the revivified back in their land. Creation language might also be present in Isaiah 26.19 and Daniel 12.2, where the dead are described as sleepers in the ‘dust,’ which echoes Genesis 2.7 when Adam is formed from the dust. We find this motif most strongly in the Book of Watchers, 2 Maccabees, and Pseudo Ezekiel, where God’s power is asserted. In 1 Enoch 22 (third century BCE), it appears that resurrection is itself transformative, an entrance into God’s sanctuary. This new location is described in subsequent chapters, and in chapter 25 a paradisiac tree plays a significant role in the very regeneration of the faithful (25.4-7). Unlike the tree in Genesis (Gen. 2.15-17, 3.1-7), however, the fruit is not associated with sin, but rather with the revitalization and maintenance of this renewed existence.

2 Maccabees 7 (second century BCE), a text written in the context of the Antiochian persecution, portrays resurrection with graphic physical imagery. Chapter seven recounts a narrative of seven brothers and their mother who refuse to disobey their ancestral laws and eat the pork their captors were impressing upon them. Upon refusing to eat the pork, each of the sons in turn is tortured and executed, while their mother encourages them to stay faithful to God’s laws. A major theme in the narrative is justice, which I will return to in the following section.

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43 de Boer, The Defeat of Death, 46. The imagery of dust is used elsewhere to describe the eventual location of all humanity, who will return to where they originated (Gen. 3.19; Ps. 90.3; 104.29; Ecc. 3.20; Job 10.9). However, this imagery is not used exclusively to allude to the creation narratives (Gen. 13.16; Deu. 28.24; 1 Sam. 2.8; Job 2.12; Isa. 29.5; 49.23; Lam. 2.10), and so it is impossible to discern precisely the extent to which Isa. 26.19 and Dan. 12.2 are relying on Gen. Given that apocalyptic literature often include creation motifs, as will be seen, we cannot exclude the possibility that Isaiah and Daniel might also be doing so. Furthermore, 4 Ezra 7.70 explicitly refers to Adam when discussing the eschatological judgment: “When the Most High made the world and Adam and all who have come from him, he first prepared the judgment and the things that pertain to the judgment” (4 Ezra 7.70).
44 Elledge, Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism, 78-81.
Here it is important to note that the brothers and their mother endure torture and maiming in the belief that their creator God will return their bodies and their lost limbs. In other words, they hope for resurrection, which is understood here as bodily re-creation. Referring to his tongue and hands, the third brother states, “I got these from heaven…and from him I hope to get them back,” (7.11) and as encouragement to her sons, the mother declares:

The creator of the world who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again. …I beg you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. And in the same way the human race came into being. (7.23, 28)

This God is seen as the creator of the present world and the “lord of life” (cf. 7.9; 14.46), and it is precisely as creator that he has power to restore the body.45 This motif is expressed again in Pseudo-Ezekiel (second century BCE), which incorporates the language of Genesis 1 into the rewriting of Ezekiel 37. The resurrection is here divided into three sections: the joining of bones, the covering of the bones with skin, and the breath entering the body. Each section (fr. 2.5, 6, 7-9) finishes with the words, וַיְהִי כָּן (“And it was so”), alluding to the phrase repeated in Genesis 1.7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30.46 This connection between resurrection and creation may also be present in the Messianic Apocalypse, where God’s spirit “hovers” over the poor (4Q521, fr. 2, line 6). This connected use of ‘hover’ and ‘spirit’ occurs elsewhere only in Genesis 1.2.47 Resurrection in these instances is connected to new creation, where God’s power to re-create is asserted. Resurrection is, hence, synonymous with transformation.

This new creation is seen, in many resurrection accounts, as a transformation not just of bodies but of the world, even encompassing the whole universe. This is implied in Daniel’s resurrection account, where “those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” (12.3). The extent to which this rather ambiguous imagery refers to a transformed reality is difficult to determine

46 Elledge, Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism, 80; Wold, “Agency and Raising the Dead,” 10-11.
47 Wold, “Agency and Raising the Dead,” 12.
and though Daniel’s primary concern is national redemption, this involves a transformed body that is set against a cosmic background. The transition from existing in the dust to inhabiting the cosmos suggests a “celestial destiny” for the wise. It is important to note that the imagery of stars was often used in apocalyptic literature to refer to the angels; the resurrected will not literally live in space, but will be transformed in such a way as to co-exist with the heavenly host.

However, while presupposing some form of transformation, Daniel’s emphasis here is more likely an anticipation of the exaltation of the wise. Precisely what this entails is unclear, as the passage is too brief for anything definitive, but these risen righteous have been placed among the stars, a strong contrast to Antiochus who desired this for himself (cf. Daniel 8.9-12). In this sense, Wright’s interpretation is compelling. The reference to the stars, he insists, is not an indication of the nature of the resurrected body but of the status of the risen. Referencing Numbers 24.17, 1 Samuel 29.9, 2 Samuel 14.17, 20, and Isaiah 9.6, he argues that the imagery of stars carries a royal connotation, and so the wise in Daniel 12.3, rather than becoming stars or angels, “will be leaders in God’s new creation.” The resurrected will be exalted to a position of authority and “to a state of glory.”

48 Elledge, Resurrection of the Dead, 32-33. This cosmological background is not unusual for Daniel, who includes the images of the “great sea,” the “four winds of heaven,” and a “river of fire,” and then describes the “Little Horn” waging war against heaven, where he even managed to trample on some of the stars he sent down to earth. This violation of heaven is resolved in chapter twelve.

49 Collins, Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls, 112. Cf. 1 Enoch 104. Albert Wolters has argued that the word זֹ֖ה ר, which is usually translated as ‘brightness,’ refers to a specific luminary, namely Hayley’s Comet. He argues that this word is used elsewhere to describe a specific object rather than an abstract notion or to multiple heavenly objects (e.g. Ezek. 8.2; Matt. 13.43; in Aramaic, Arabic, and Ethiopic, various forms of this same noun refer either to the moon or to Venus), and that according to astronomical calculations, Halley’s Comet was visible at approximately the time of Antiochus’ death in 164 BCE, and might have been interpreted as a warning to all who oppose the God of Israel. There might be some validity in this interpretation, as astrology did indeed have a significant function in ancient cultic practices, and a comet such as Halley’s Comet would probably have piqued considerable interest. However, the poetic parallelism here likens the “brightness of the sky” with “the stars forever and ever,” and is thus not speaking of a particular, specific star, but speaking generally, metaphorically, of the location where the risen will co-exist with the heavenly host (Albert M. Wolters, “Zōhar Hārāqîa (Daniel 12:3) and Halley’s Comet,” JSOT 19, no. 61 (1994), 111-20; cf. Lucas, Daniel, 295-96).


51 Wright, RSG, 112. Contra Murphy, Apocalypticism, 87.

change in social status rather than a radically transformed human nature does not compel him to view ‘resurrection’ as much more than the reanimation of a personal body. Wright’s view, to be clear, has eschatological significance and sets resurrection within a wider transformation, but the point here is that any transformation in Wright’s vision is largely framed in light of an overemphasis upon the personal reanimation of Jesus’ corporeal body. I contend to the contrary, that the cumulative weight of evidence, the vast quantity and diversity of examples of resurrection referring to a reality much broader than human bodies suggests that the notion of resurrection should not be restricted to personal reanimation, and that the notion of bodies or personal existence should be interpreted in light of this broader, cosmic transformation. Furthermore, one might question precisely who they have authority over, considering Daniel does not envisage a universal resurrection. What is clear is that resurrection does not here refer simply to the reanimation of a personal body, but to broader social and political issues, and bound up within a new vision for reality, one where those who have sought relationship with God are rewarded precisely with that for which they were seeking.

A transformation of the cosmos in connection to resurrection is similarly presupposed or explicitly imaged elsewhere, and we again find further diversity amongst the apocalyptic literature on what exactly is expected. I will return to this issue later in this chapter when discussing the broader eschatological hopes, but it is worth noting several explicit occurrences. We have already seen that a transformed cosmic reality is anticipated in 1 Enoch 24-25, but elsewhere resurrection is placed within the broader promise of the renewal of creation, where mountains dance and hills leap, and the earth itself rejoices (51.1-5). In the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Pseudo-Ezekiel* anticipates a renewed world where the Israelites retake possession of their land, and the temple is restored. However, in the *Messianic Apocalypse*, a vast cosmic landscape is depicted, where the righteous inhabit the heavens not a renewed earth, and the wicked are confined to a location in the “valley of death” beyond the “bridge of the abyss” (4Q521 fr. 7).
Similarly, in 4 Ezra (first to second century CE), the present world will be no more as the entire cosmos is renewed, also alluding to the Genesis creation accounts: “And after seven days the world, which is not yet awake, will be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish. And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it” (4 Ezra 7.31-32). Elledge notes two distinct beliefs regarding this transformation within which the resurrection will occur emerge. Some, such as the Epistle of Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Messianic Apocalypse, and Daniel, envision a celestial existence, whereas the Book of Watchers, 2 Maccabees, Pseudo-Ezekiel, and Pseudo-Philo’s Biblical Antiquities suggest that this existence will take place on earth, albeit a transformed, renewed earth.\(^5\) Despite this diversity, what is evident is that this resurrection is again not an isolated event, nor is it simply a return to an embodied existence in an unchanged reality, but is inseparably connected to a transformed cosmos. In this sense, resurrection is regarded as referencing broader eschatological hopes for this new reality.

**Hope for Justice**

The issue of theodicy and the dispensation of justice is an essential element to the belief and development of resurrection, and so this motif is prevalent in many of the passages this chapter has already addressed. This is particularly evident in the earlier references in the Hebrew Bible, where a restored relationship with YHWH is desired. This notion develops particularly in the context of the Jewish submission to Hellenistic rule, and resurrection is inseparable from this. The belief in a transformed creation where the righteous dwell in restored relationship with YHWH is a solution to the present problems of pain and servitude. The new context of pain and servitude brought the hope for a redeemed afterlife, at least for those who suffered the most and unjustly, came to the fore. Wright correctly emphasizes the role of judgment in his interpretation of the notion of resurrection, noting that the most prominent resurrection

passages of the Hebrew Bible highlight “the common hope of Israel: that YHWH would restore [Israel’s] fortunes at last, liberate her from pagan dominion, and resettle her in justice and peace,” and that the primary focus was “that of the hope of the nation for national restoration.”\(^5^4\) This is the same concern of 2 Maccabees, where resurrection, the restoration of life to those martyred for the sake of God’s law, speaks to the much more pressing issue of the political redemption of Israel.\(^5^5\)

However, the relation between resurrection and justice is not restricted to national redemption, but is far more theologically intensive, addressing the issue of evil and being developed as a solution to the problem of theodicy in a time of foreign oppression. This is seen in both Daniel 12 and 2 Maccabees 7, where resurrection is the precursor to the reward and redemption of the persecuted.\(^5^6\) Here, as in *Pseudo-Ezekiel*, the *Messianic Apocalypse* 4Q521 frs. 2 and 4, Ps. of Solomon 3.11-12, 4 Ezra 7.31-34, resurrection hope is “the central expression of God’s righteous judgment and mercy for the Jewish people.”\(^5^7\) The extent to which this mercy spreads beyond Israel is minimal, however, again demonstrating the focus upon national restoration, but this was bound up with the desire to see the liberation and redemption of those who have unjustly suffered under persecution, especially those who were martyred for their commitment to the laws of their God.

The final utterances of the seven brothers and their mother in 2 Maccabees 7 demonstrate their belief in divine vindication and receiving resurrected and eternal life as reward for their refusal

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\(^{54}\) Wright, RSG, 121-22.


\(^{56}\) de Boer, *The Defeat of Death*, 49-51. This was a significant issue for Pannenberg who argued, “The course of the world showed that the righteous suffer and the ungodly prosper. Israel’s faith in the justice of its God had come to terms with this. It thus arrived at the idea of future reward or punishment for good or bad deeds that do not produce the appropriate fruits in this life. …The Jewish concept of the resurrection arose, then, out of the problems of theodicy, the justice of God, and its demonstration in the lives of individuals” (Pannenberg, *ST*, vol. 2, 347).

to disobey their ancestral laws. This passage was likely originally read allegorically, as encouragement for those being persecuted at the time, and, as David deSilva notes, the theme of national redemption permeates the book’s eschatology. Hence, it is probable that these references to resurrection and the receiving of new limbs and bodies should be understood in relation to the linking of loyalty to God’s covenant with vindication. The author might be anticipating a personal and bodily resurrection – and the extreme physicality of the imagery might testify to this – but the resurrection is of second importance to the larger concern of justice. Where Antiochus was attempting to defile their body, and with it their nation and cult, they hoped that God would redeem and purify them and their nation.

Resurrection thus became the permanent end to, and indeed reversal of, injustice. Even from the early references to resurrection, such as Isaiah 25-26, death is personified as a being who must be defeated and replaced, as in Daniel 12, by the glorified and exalted risen. For Daniel, the martyrdom of the stalwart leaders of the Jewish cult was a significant problem, incongruous with the belief that YHWH is just and sovereign. Chapters seven through eleven insist that the time of persecution will end, and the persecutor will be punished, but asks where is the justice for those who have already been martyred? The answer is given in chapter twelve, where God’s sovereignty over death is asserted – that justice may be afforded to those who had died unjustly. The brothers and their mother in 2 Maccabees 7 have strength to endure torture because of their hope in resurrection, where they will receive back their lost limbs, and in the

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58 The second brother declares, “The King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws” (7.9); the third brother willingly offers his tongue and hands for dismemberment, claiming that he received these from God and will receive them again (7.10-11); the fourth states that one can only “cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him” and promises that his torturer that will receive no resurrection (7.14). Finally, the mother encourages them with the promise that God will give life and breath back to them (7.23).
60 McDonald, The Resurrection, 11; Nickelsburg, Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life, 121.
61 So Wright argues, that this passage “demonstrates again the extremely physical nature of the anticipated resurrection,” (Wright, RSG, 323).
62 de Boer, The Defeat of Death, 45-47.
63 Gowan, Daniel, 152.
Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and Wisdom of Solomon, resurrection emphasizes the righting of the created order by God, as Wright notes, YHWH “has it in his power to overcome it and not only restore the righteous to life but install them as rulers, judges and kings.”64 Furthermore, in Pseudo-Ezekiel, resurrection is the response to the prophet’s question regarding justice for the righteous.65

The connection of the notion of resurrection to the issue of justice and the problem of suffering is another example of how this motif is inseparably connected to the broader eschatological hopes for the end times. According to Elledge, “Resurrection frequently transports the dead from and to a variety of spatial realms, in which the deity has already preconfigured justice into the very structures of the creation.”66 This is a helpful way of understanding the connection between resurrection, justice, and the new eschatological reality. This understanding of justice involves not simply rewarding the persecuted with a new, re-animated existence, but by providing a solution with a recreated world where injustice is no longer possible. Resurrection involves entering into this new reality. Elledge further argues, “Resurrection and divine justice came to be so intimately interconnected that they offered mutual, even inseparable, corroboration.”67 The connection between resurrection and justice is intensive, and thus resurrection once more is a reference to the larger spectrum of eschatological hopes and cannot be reduced to a single issue, least of all a personal re-animated body.

Resurrection in ancient Jewish eschatology is not limited to speaking of a re-animated bodily existence, but was inseparably connected to the broader spectrum of eschatological ideas, particularly a transformed creation within which justice is made a reality. Resurrection had to do with national redemption, the dispensation of divine justice, the redemption of covenantal

64 Wright, RSG, 173.
65 Elledge, Resurrection of the Dead, 83.
66 Ibid., 32.
67 Ibid., 82.
relationship, and cosmic redemption. The diversity of presentations of resurrection demonstrates the creativity of Jewish theology and the adaptability and malleability of this notion of resurrection, and should not be condensed into a homogenised doctrine. ⁶⁸ This very diversity reveals that the assumption that resurrection refers to no more than a personal or individual reanimation is an unhelpful generalization which overlooks the many shades of meaning within this category.

**Ambiguity in Jewish Eschatology**

Ancient Jewish eschatological texts exhibit ambiguity when describing the anticipated resurrected reality. The new reality is to be a *redeemed* reality, not a replaced one. There is evidence of a variety of expectations, from a thoroughly physical, bodily existence to a spiritual, immaterial one, but generally the nature of the resurrected reality (either of bodies, or the cosmos in general) was ambiguous. What was generally expected was an intensive, thoroughgoing transformation of the present creation; precisely what that would look like is impossible to determine. This ambiguity is reflected in the description of Jesus’ resurrection, as will be seen in chapter six.

Determining the nature of the resurrected reality is complicated by the observation that not all accepted bodily resurrection and that the belief in an immortal soul was not uncommon (cf. ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, 17-18, 43. Cf. Russell, *Divine Disclosure*, 100. The diversity of resurrection theology is seen in its rejection by the Sadducees, a group we have not touched on (principally because the focus of this chapter is to ascertain what resurrection meant, which invariably precludes both the space and necessity of discussing a group which did not think it meant anything). It is very difficult to ascertain the reason for why they rejected resurrection, as the main sources of information on what they believed are polemic against their beliefs, and hence are characterisations and impartial presentations of their theology. It is probable that the reason why they rejected resurrection was due to their emphasis upon the sole authority of the Torah, which does not propose a resurrection hope. Furthermore, it appears they concentrated on the present life and descendants to carry the family name after this present life ended. Reward comes not in a post-mortem existence, but in the present, either in the form of blessings or in offspring. Hence, there is no need for resurrection. Wright suggests a possible reason for the rejection of resurrection being what he views as an inherently revolutionary character of resurrection, where the Sadducees wanted to avoid political unrest. This is, of course, simply speculation, but I am unconvinced by Wright’s argument that resurrection was fundamentally a revolutionary doctrine. Cf. Wright, RSG, 129-35; deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*, 190-91; Elledge, *Resurrection of the Dead*, 101-06; Christopher Bryan, *The Resurrection of the Messiah* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 10-11; Josephus, *J.W.* 2.164-66; idem., *Ant.* 18.16.
Jub. 23.31; 1 En. 91-104; Assumption of Moses 10.9; Jewish War 2.154-58). In his attempt to argue that resurrection almost universally meant a physical re-animated body, Wright downplayed the significance and influence of the doctrine of immortality. He argues that often the Hellenistic overtones were a translation of a physical understanding of resurrection into Hellenistic language, but that a “firmly physical account of resurrection” is maintained. In one particular instance, he asserts that though Wisdom of Solomon “clearly teaches the immortality of the soul,” this is not antithetical to resurrection, that immortality would consist of a renewed bodily life. However, the verse Wright quotes (Ws. 9.15) seems to imply the opposite: “A perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind.” Wright’s argument that Wisdom of Solomon taught a compatibility between the immortality of the soul and a physical ‘bodily’ resurrection seems unlikely. Indeed, the Jewish perspective on resurrection is far more diverse than Wright allows. Immortality is, however, the exception rather than the norm. Despite this, its presence demonstrates that the Jewish expectation of the risen body was diverse and ambiguous, with some envisaging an entirely non-bodily post-mortem existence, whether one has been ‘resurrected’ into this existence or not.

Similar to this, though not maintaining a doctrine of immortality, was the belief in resurrection that consisted not of bodies per se, but of some sort of transformation into a glorified, heavenly or angelic existence. Daniel 12 avoids the language of ‘corpse,’ suggesting the author’s reticence to imply the resurrection of the physical remains, and is rather unclear of what the

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70 Wright, NTPG, 324.
71 Wright, RSG, 163.
72 McDonald observes that Wisdom of Solomon presupposes the immortality of the soul and has no place for a bodily resurrection (cf. Ws. 2.23-24) (McDonald, The Resurrection, 13-14).
resurrected body will consist. The claim that the resurrected will become like the stars certainly implies a non-corporeal resurrection. This becoming like the stars is reflected in 2 Baruch 50.2-3 (late first century to early second century CE). 1 Enoch suggests a transformation into an angelic state (1 En. 104.2-6), and Jubilees depicts a resurrection while entirely avoiding describing the nature of this resurrection, despite also depicting bones remaining in the ground (Jub. 23.30-31). Bauckham asserts that what is affirmed is the preservation of personal identity, rather than a mere return to the same bodily life. In their post-mortem existence, individuals bear their distinctive individuality in a radically transformed embodiment. In these examples, resurrection entailed a transformation of individuals so comprehensive that, though personal identity is retained, it is almost inappropriate to use the language of ‘body.’

On the opposite end of the spectrum to the immortality of the soul is the resurrection of bodies, which occurs occasionally. However, this is usually a metaphorical description for national redemption. This is evident in 2 Maccabees 7, which depicts resurrection hope in the most physical language of all Jewish eschatology. Similarly, Daniel 12.1-4 has been understood by some as a physical, bodily resurrection. This might similarly be reflected in the language of the dead being raised from the dust in 1QH 14.34, 19. Though the author may have a physical and personal reanimation in mind (though this is doubtful in the case of Daniel), the main concern for these texts is the restoration of Israel, using the language of resurrection as metaphor.

As has been argued in this section, resurrection signified much more than the reanimation of a personal body, and entailed a significant transformation. The nature of this resurrected reality,

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77 Cf. de Boer, *The Defeat of Death*, 50.
78 Wright, RSG, 109, 322; Vinzent, *Christ’s Resurrection in Early Christianity*, 31.
however, is unclear, with a vast array of possibilities put forward, all speculation and metaphor. There is continuity with the empirical reality, as creation is affirmed, but there is substantial difference. How this translates to the existence of the resurrected faithful is extremely ambiguous, and as this category of resurrection is applied to Jesus’ post-mortem existence, the body of the risen Jesus proves no less ambiguous.

5.3. Resurrection and Reanimation

The section above demonstrated within ancient Judaism the diversity of understandings and employment of the language of resurrection, and the connection of resurrection to the broader eschatological hopes such as national redemption, cosmological re-creation, and the dispensation of divine judgment. The notion of resurrection cannot be reduced to the reanimation of personal bodies, and so the majority of scholarship on the resurrection, which has failed to uphold both the continuity and discontinuity of Jesus’ resurrection, reflecting the Jewish hope for both renewal and transformation, assuming a notion of resurrection divorced from its Jewish context, is inadequate. Rather, the resurrection refers to a broad spectrum of eschatological hopes, largely tied up with the question of God’s relationship with creation. The focus in this present section is how the presupposed category of ‘resurrection of the dead’ was understood in the first century as especially illustrated in a few particular instances in the New Testament (Mark 12.18-27; Matt. 22.23-33; Luke 20.27-40; John 5.28; 11.21-27; Acts 17.18; 1 Cor. 15), as having to do with the fulfilment of a much broader array of eschatological expectations for the end of history. While some of these texts will be revisited in chapter six, this discussion lays the groundwork by stressing the category of resurrection and its relation to the broader hopes. Chapter six contains an analysis of the application of this category to the specific question of Jesus’ post-mortem existence.
Jesus’ encounter with the Sadducees as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, and Paul’s famous diatribe from the Corinthian correspondence, are the two most significant passages that suggest the presupposition of a Jewish apocalyptic understanding of resurrection within the early Christian church to communicate what they believed had happened to the person of Jesus. Interestingly, they both respond to a similar misconception about resurrection (at least from the perspective of our sources), that it anticipates a return to a physical embodiment comparable with empirical reality. Moreover, their respective responses demonstrate a reliance upon a Jewish apocalyptic notion of resurrection, extending ‘resurrection’ beyond the individual body to embrace eschatological notions of divine justice, cosmological re-creation, transformation, and glorification. Though there was a great deal of diversity in first-century Judaism and Christianity, resurrection often encompassed a much broader spectrum of eschatological conceptions, for which ‘resurrection’ often functioned as metonym.

The New Testament texts were written after the events of Easter which inevitably influenced how the early followers of Jesus understood the resurrection. Nevertheless, similarities with, and allusions to, the Jewish understanding of resurrection in the New Testament are prevalent, suggesting that there is a great deal of continuity between resurrection in the New Testament and the ancient Jewish eschatological category. Easter itself is understood through pre-existing frameworks. There is, evidently, a reinterpretation of the broader Jewish category of resurrection in light of Jesus’ own resurrection appearance, but it is not an utterly distinct innovation. Few have stressed this as strongly as Pannenberg and Wright, both of whom argue that Jesus’ resurrection can only be properly understood as a development within its Jewish apocalyptic context. However, the focus often becomes concentrated upon the question of personal or individual reanimation. Though it appears that an embodied resurrected existence

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was indeed part of the total picture, an isolated and arbitrary focus on Jesus’ ‘individual’ resurrection can work as a distraction from the broader notions communicated by this event.

Here I will highlight the presuppositions of a Jewish eschatological understanding behind the New Testament portrayals of resurrection of the dead in order to demonstrate that Jesus’ resurrection cannot be limited to the reanimation of a personal body. It will become clear over the course of this chapter and the next that a broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hopes were interpreted as being fulfilled in Jesus. The presupposition of this Jewish eschatological conception of resurrection is especially evident in the Sadducees’ challenge to Jesus regarding marriage at the resurrection (Mark 12.18-27; Matt. 22.23-33; Luke 20.27-40), Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 15 that the future resurrection of the dead has been confirmed in Jesus’ resurrection, and the apostles’ sermons in Acts (17.18), as well as scattered throughout John’s Gospel (5.28; 11.21-27).81

**When They Rise from the Dead, They Neither Marry nor are Given in Marriage**

Each of the synoptic Gospels narrate an encounter Jesus had with the Sadducees, who pose a hypothetical scenario with the sole intention of demonstrating the absurdity of belief in resurrection (Mark 12.18-27 // Matt. 22.23-33 // Luke 20.27-40). Jesus’ response is especially illuminating, revealing the influence of the Jewish apocalyptic idea of resurrection upon the early Jesus movement. Wright calls this passage “the most important passage about resurrection in the whole Gospel tradition,”82 as much can be gleaned from this small interaction. Significantly, its almost verbatim reproduction in each of the Synoptics testifies to the importance of resurrection belief in early Christianity. The passage is part of a series of

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81 Of course, Johannine eschatology is markedly different to the Synoptics and to Paul, as will be analysed in detail in chapter six. However, there is evidence that John’s eschatology is nevertheless influenced by a presupposed Jewish eschatological framework, and a close examination of the presence of this framework in John illuminates how this category was understood and utilized within the first century Jewish community.

82 Wright, *RSG*, 415.
stories about Jesus being challenged by the Pharisaic and scribal elite (Mark 11.27-12.34 // Matt. 21.23-40 // Luke 20.1-40), and is not a treatise on Jesus’ understanding of life after death. Even so, his response to the Sadducees’ question is significant.

Each of the Synoptics stress that the Sadducees reject the notion of resurrection and recount the same hypothetical story of a woman who is being widowed seven times and who dies childless. The Sadducees then ask, to which of the seven husbands will the woman be married in the resurrection? Commentators suggest their aim is not to learn, but to embarrass Jesus and ridicule the notion of resurrection. As mentioned above, the Sadducees did not subscribe to the notion of resurrection, as it was a later theological development and thus does not appear in the Pentateuch, which they took as supremely authoritative. The scenario they present Jesus with is based on the Levirate law of Deuteronomy 25.5-10, hoping to force Jesus to have to choose between the new innovation of resurrection or the law of Moses which surely would not have prescribed a law like this if resurrection was envisioned.

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83 These challengers include the chief priests, scribes, and elders questioning his authority, the Pharisees and Herodians questioning him about taxes, the Sadducees questioning his understanding of resurrection and the Mosaic law, and a scribe (or lawyer in Matthew) questioning him about the greatest commandment. Each are attempts at trapping Jesus. Luke does not include the fourth challenge, which he located much earlier in Jesus’ ministry (Luke 10.25-28).
85 There might be an allusion to the story of Sarah in the book of Tobit, who had had seven husbands, each of whom had been killed by the demon Asmodeus before she could conceive (Tobit 3.7-8). Cf. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* (Dallas: Word, 1995), 640.
86 Each of the Synoptics include ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει, hence referring to the technical category of resurrection, rather than the return to life of a specific individual.
89 Cf. Gen. 38.8; Ruth 3.9-4.10.
Jesus, however, responds by asserting that these are not the only choices, claiming that the Sadducees are fundamentally incorrect in their understanding of resurrection. They know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Of the three Synoptics, Mark’s version is a particularly critical rebuke, beginning and ending with the explicit proclamation that the Sadducees are in error, whereas Luke’s is softened, focused on their teaching. Jesus’ response can be divided into two parts: a statement on the function of marriage, followed by a defence of the validity of resurrection belief.

Jesus responds to the issue of marriage with the assertion that there will be no marriage in the resurrected reality, but that the risen will be like angels in heaven. One reason for the institution of marriage was to provide some sort of solution to the problem of death; within marriage, life can be perpetuated through children, and provide the means for continuing the family name (which in early Judaism was in some sense the equivalent of attaining a post-mortem existence). In the resurrected life, there will be no death, thus making marriage redundant. This is made explicit in Luke’s version (20.36). Hence, Jesus’ response is not a statement on marriage per se, but that the ‘age to come’ will be characterized by immortality.

This is what is meant by the reference to angels, for angels do not die and thus have no need for marriage. This is not a reference to the gendering or sexuality of angels, but rather their...
immortality. To be like angels, therefore, is to not need marriage.⁹⁷ According to Halvor Moxnes, Jesus here envisages a social revolution, directly challenging and subverting the patriarchal systems of power:

The question of levirate marriage in heaven (Mark 12:18-27 par.) receives this response from Jesus: life in heaven, in imitation of angels, is a life without sexuality, that is, without marriage. …With his sayings Jesus pointed to life in a kingdom that was far from the ideal patriarchal household. Those who belonged there, or who entered into the kingdom, were eunuchs, children, barren women, and couples who split up to become (sexless) angels. …These texts are not social descriptions of life in the group of followers of Jesus. They are all sayings that refer to the kingdom, or to life in the resurrection, in the time that will soon come.⁹⁸

However, behind Jesus’ understanding of the role of marriage in this resurrected existence is a far more intensive transformation. The imagery of becoming like angels is found elsewhere in Jewish apocalyptic thought (e.g. 1 Enoch 15.7; 51.4; 104.4; 2 Baruch 51.9-10), indicating that this future eschatological life will be transformed and elevated.⁹⁹ This is what was envisaged in Daniel 12.3, to become like heavenly luminaries. Due to the Sadducees’ rejection of the existence of angels, and of texts beyond the Pentateuch, Jesus’ reference to angels would not have been a particularly convincing argument. Rather, he attempts to correct their misconceptions regarding the diverse and extensive notion of resurrection. They had incorrectly assumed that resurrection referred to a return to the same earthly life consisting of

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⁹⁷ Davies and Allison, Matthew, 378; Garland, Luke, 808; Kilgallen, “The Sadducees and Resurrection from the Dead,” 483-86; Gedert, Mark, 288; Hagner, Matthew, 641. Blomberg states, “God is able to transform us into creatures who do not engage in sexual relations or procreate” (Craig L. Blomberg, Matthew (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 333). However, the point of the passage is not to provide explicit details about what sexuality may or may not look like after this present life. Boring, on the other hand, is correct in saying that this passage is simply pointing out what resurrection is not, namely that in an existence without death there is need for neither marriage nor property or inheritance rights (Boring, Mark, 340).


⁹⁹ Talbert, Matthew, 255; Boring, Mark, 340.
the same physical conditions, that it was an extension of the present life. Camille Focant states:

At the level of the mode of the resurrection (12:25), the objection of the Sadducees would only be valid if the aforesaid resurrection implied the prolongation beyond death of conjugal relations in this world. Now, according to Jesus, it isn’t going to be like this. The afterlife is not a simple prolongation of present life, but by God’s power something totally new. Such is the profound meaning of the reference to the angelic figure to be read as the proof that future reality will be in discontinuity with present reality.

The Sadducees assumed that the resurrected life would be no different to the present life, social institutions included, but Jesus draws on the apocalyptic expectations of a transformed existence, which we saw above was an essential element of a Jewish conception of resurrection. Turner focusses on the sexuality of the resurrected individuals, arguing that “God’s transforming power means that people after resurrection are no longer sexually active.” This interpretation stretches this passage well beyond its limits. To draw the conclusion that resurrected life is invariably an asexual one is to read something into the text that does not belong there. This passage is principally envisaging the removal of death and, subsequently, the social institutions put in place to deal with the issues associated with death. Jesus is not explicating precise details of what this transformed existence will consist, but demonstrating familiarity with an apocalyptic worldview, one that inseparably connects resurrection with transformation. This eschatological future will not be a simple continuation of empirical reality, even an idealized version of reality, but “will be less an earthly paradise than something transcendent, a time and place in which the boundaries between heaven and earth will become indistinct.” By using an analogy that makes reference to becoming like angels, Jesus affirms the Jewish eschatological tradition of anticipating a transformed life that is discontinuous from

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100 Edwards, The Gospel According to Mark, 367; Stein, Mark, 554; Garland, Lake, 808; Turner, Matthew, 531-32; Geddert, Mark, 288; Blomberg, Matthew, 333.
102 Turner, Matthew, 532.
103 Cf. Boring, Mark, 339.
104 Davies and Allison, Matthew, 379. Rather than Hagner’s claim that Jesus’ knowledge of resurrection “must here depend on supernatural knowledge,” (Hagner, Matthew 14-28, 641) I would argue that Jesus is instead relying upon apocalyptic tradition.
empirical reality, where death has ultimately been conquered and social institutions have been transcended.\textsuperscript{105}

Jesus then turns to the issue of resurrection, but, curiously, does not directly address the topic \textit{per se}, instead highlighting the faithfulness of God to his covenant. Some commentators argue that Jesus’ use of Exodus 3.6 suggests that resurrection was implicit in the Pentateuch.\textsuperscript{106}

However, as we have seen, resurrection developed much later – which is precisely why the Sadducees rejected the idea – and so we cannot say that Jesus was attempting to prove the resurrection based on this passage, but was rather addressing the presuppositional belief of God’s power. Indeed he could have quoted any of the resurrection passages, such as Isaiah 26.19 or Daniel 12.2, but instead references a passage that the Sadducees would not discredit or ignore. Yet, instead of quoting a passage such as Genesis 2.7 or Deuteronomy 32.39 which present God as a creative, life-giving deity and which might have been more relevant to the topic of resurrection, he quotes Exodus 3.6, which \textit{prima facie} makes it seem like he is arguing for some sort of spiritual immortality, rather than resurrection.\textsuperscript{107}

On closer inspection, Jesus is stressing the power and covenantal faithfulness of God rather than an afterlife, let alone personal reanimation.\textsuperscript{108} For Wright, the implication that the Patriarchs are still alive means an intermediate state where they await resurrection.\textsuperscript{109} This was not an uncommon idea (e.g. 1 Enoch 22, 4 Ezra 4.42, and 2 Baruch 30.1-5), and by the first century many Israelis envisaged the Patriarchs as residing somewhere awaiting their

\textsuperscript{105} Cf. Edwards, \textit{The Gospel According to Mark}, 368. Stuhlmacher argues, “With this confession, Jesus places himself on the side of the Pharisees in this question and directs his followers’ attention to the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament. A closer look at this matter quickly makes evident that the whole Christian expectation of the resurrection of the dead and the daring interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus are unthinkable without the ancient Jewish confessional tradition” (Stuhlmacher, “The Resurrection of Jesus,” 50).

\textsuperscript{106} E.g. Turner, \textit{Matthew}, 532; Hagner, \textit{Matthew}, 642. Turner goes so far as to say that Jesus \textit{proves} the presence of resurrection in the Torah from this scriptural reference.


\textsuperscript{109} Wright, \textit{RSG}, 424-25.
resurrection. However, this does not appear to be the focus of this passage. Rather, by referring to the Patriarchs and their relationship to God, the focus is upon the covenant and whether the covenantal promises made to the Patriarchs will be kept. If they are dead, God’s promises become finite and unfulfilled. On the contrary, Jesus proclaims, they are alive, and God’s covenant has not been invalidated. By specifically referencing Exodus, Luke makes it all the more explicit by providing the context (“in the story about the bush”), the covenantal promise of delivering Israel into the land promised to them is implied. If they are still alive, God remains obligated to fulfil this promise, and, hence, the Patriarchs would need to be resurrected.

In this encounter with the Sadducees, a wrong assumption about resurrection becomes apparent, and that is that resurrection has strictly to do with the reanimation of a body, and the continuation of a life comparable with the present. The correct assertion, on the other hand, is that resurrection encompasses a much broader theological horizon, including in it both a transformed existence and the fulfilment of God’s covenantal promises. This passage indicates, therefore, that the understanding of resurrection among some in the early Christian community is in continuity with a Jewish eschatological conception of resurrection, and further indicates that this category signified far more than the revivification of individual bodies.

Furthermore, resurrection is framed by relationship. The divine covenant is not arbitrary, but a

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110 Cf. Turner, Matthew, 532.
113 Boring notes, “However the intent of the resurrection of the patriarchs is visualized in this particular text, it is important for Mark’s theology as a whole to see its apocalyptic framework, which is concerned not merely with the survival of individual souls but with the redemptive act of God for history and the world, and the political implications for life in this world” (Boring, Mark, 341). Cf. Pannenberg, ST, 348.
commitment to a relationship between Israel and her God, and God is powerful enough to maintain this relationship even beyond death.\textsuperscript{114}

\textit{How Can Some of You Say that There is No Resurrection of the Dead?}

The other major resurrection passage, apart from the Passion narratives, is Paul’s discussion of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. The impetus for Paul’s discussion of resurrection in his letter to the Corinthians is their denial of the category of resurrection of the dead despite their proclamation that Jesus had risen. The significance of this should not be under-stated: that there were some within the early communities of the Jesus movement who rejected the notion of resurrection demonstrates that this notion was \textit{not} a widespread or homogenic notion. Of course, this should not be surprising in Greek communities such as Corinth, but it is important to note the diversity within the early Jesus communities. This diversity is highlighted by Mark Finney when, after an analysis of views on the afterlife in both Hellenistic and Jewish traditions, he notes that “Paul and the majority of the Greeks and Romans in the Corinthian community have differing conceptual frameworks of the afterlife and, although employing similar terminology, are largely talking past each other.”\textsuperscript{115} It was into this diverse context that Paul was writing, and sought to convince the Corinthians that Jesus’ resurrection – and the future resurrection of believers – should be understood within an ancient Jewish eschatological framework.

Paul insists that the rejection of the general notion of resurrection despite the claim that Jesus rose from the dead is contradictory as the two are essentially inseparable; the belief in resurrection of the dead is the \textit{presupposed framework} through which Jesus’ resurrection is


interpreted, and Jesus’ resurrection is the confirmation of the doctrine of resurrection.\textsuperscript{116} There are multiple possibilities for their rejection of resurrection, such as their possible belief that their experience of the Holy Spirit constituted resurrection, but it is likely that their main concern was not with resurrection per se, but with a bodily, corporeal resurrection, influenced by their Hellenistic context.\textsuperscript{117} Hence, Paul devotes a significant section to the character of the resurrected reality, which I will address in the following chapter, but it is important to note here that resurrection for Paul meant a radical transformation. As with Jesus’ response to the Sadducees, Paul corrects the misconception that resurrection meant returning to a physical state similar to the present one.

In this passage there are several themes which indicate a reliance upon the Jewish understanding of resurrection including the motifs of transformation, creation, national redemption, and glorification. Paul was an apocalyptic thinker and his letters in particular convey the eschatological fervour of the early Jesus movement, which will be of particular importance in the next chapter. For now, I note that he anticipated an imminent resurrection, as implied by his phrase, “We will not all die” (v.51). This anticipation of a resurrection that would occur at the end of time shapes his argument.\textsuperscript{118} Paul interprets Jesus’ post-mortem existence through the lens of a Jewish eschatological framework to emphasize the significance of this event and continues to do so throughout his argument. When he says, “if there is no


\textsuperscript{117} Cf. George T. Montague, \textit{First Corinthians} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 262; Mark T. Finney, \textit{Honour and Conflict in the Ancient World: 1 Corinthians in its Greco-Roman Social Setting} (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 211-12; Gordon D. Fee, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 794; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, \textit{The First Letter to the Corinthians} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 753-54. Of course, precisely how the Corinthians understood resurrection is a mystery lost to antiquity as their letters to Paul have not been preserved, but it appears, both in the content of Paul’s letter and their Hellenistic context, that their core concern was a physical re-animated body.

resurrection of the dead,” he is referring to a specific category, rather than a general claim about people rising from the dead.

Perhaps the most significant example of Paul’s presupposition of the Jewish conception of resurrection in this passage is in his insistence that the resurrection involves transformation. In verses 36-38 he uses the analogy of a seed that is buried and grows into a plant. What emerges from the ground appears very different to what was sown. In this, there is both continuity and discontinuity; the plant is the same kind as the seed despite being new and different. Similarly, there is both continuity and discontinuity between the human body that dies and the body that will be resurrected. There is transformation, but not as an utterly new creation. It is important to stress here both the continuity and discontinuity in order to avoid reverting to the binarism of stressing one over the other. This continuity despite radical transformation was a common motif in discussions of the resurrection, as we saw earlier (e.g. Dan. 12.3; 1 Enoch 24-25; 51.1-5; Pseudo-Ezekiel; Messianic Apocalypse; 4 Ezra 7.31-32).

Again, much like Jesus’ response to the Sadducees, Paul does not attempt to detail what this resurrected existence will look like but implies a comprehensive, radical transformation of reality in general. This new reality is discussed throughout Paul’s corpus, though not in a systematic way. In differentiating between different types of bodies (vv.38-40) Paul is stressing the newness of the future ‘spiritual’ body. Yet his affirmation of the defeat of death itself

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119 Finney, Honour and Conflict in the Ancient World, 213. Paul was probably aware that the seed does not actually die when it is sown, he simply uses this language to stress his point regarding resurrection.
121 Finney goes so far as to say, “The resurrected body will have nothing of the earthly in it at all; it will be composed, through divine transformation, of man’s immortal and incorruptible aspects” (Finney, Honour and Conflict in the Ancient World, 216). Cf. Scott Brodeur, The Holy Spirit’s Agency in the Resurrection of the Dead: An Exegetico-Theological Study of 1 Corinthians 15.44b-49 and Romans 8,9-13 (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1994), 17-19.
122 We will address the σῶμα πνευματικόν (‘spiritual body’) in the following chapter. Cf. Brodeur, The Holy Spirit’s Agency in the Resurrection of the Dead, 30-31. Wright suggests that Dan. 12 might be in the background of vv.40-41 (Wright, RSG, 344).
(cf. Isaiah 25.8) suggests this transformation goes well beyond individual bodies. Joseph Plevnik notes that annihilation of death is not a temporary freedom, but “involves eternal life in a body that is no longer subject to death. It is a profound change in the present mode of existence.” This change occurs instantaneously (v.52), implying that resurrection itself is transformation. Furthermore, bound up in this is the defeat of “every ruler and every authority and power” (v.24), connecting resurrection with the concerns of national restoration and justice. In this, the transformation of societal norms and institutions is connected to the defeat of death. Ultimately, the purpose of this transformation is for Paul the enabling of unhindered relationship between God and humanity, another central theme in the Jewish apocalyptic conception of resurrection. This is seen in verses 50-54 where, according to Paul, only imperishable bodies can enter God’s kingdom, and, hence, present physicality must “put on” imperishability and immortality, a radical transformation of reality.

Two other motifs are present in this passage which imply the presupposition of a Jewish eschatological understanding of resurrection of the dead: creation and glorification. We find creation language in several instances: in the references to Adam (vv.22, 45); humanity having its origin in the dust (vv.47-48) and of being image bearers (v.49); and in highlighting the sun, moon, stars, animals, birds, and fish (vv.39-41). As in many of the resurrection passages mentioned above (e.g. Ezek. 36.9-11, 35; 37.1-14; Isa. 26.19; Dan. 12.2; 1 En. 25.4-7; 2 Macc. 7.11, 28; 4Q385; 4Q521), the theme of creation is alluded to in this discussion of resurrection,

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123 Plevnik, What Are They Saying About Paul and the End Times? 41. Cf. Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 737. For Finney, this transformation “will mean the certain end of perishable, fleshly body. But this transformative death does not constitute a defeat, it is a transformation into victory for the new ‘form’ that is to come,” (Finney, Resurrection, Hell and the Afterlife, 113).
125 Ciampa and Rosner argue that there is an anti-imperial ideology present here (Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 769), whereas for Montague the concern here is demonic power behind these earthly authorities (Montague, First Corinthians, 272-73).
126 The emphasis upon relationship is further seen in verses 14-19, where it becomes evident that the goal of Jesus’ resurrection was communion with him. Cf. Holleman, Resurrection & Parousia, 70-71; Plevnik, What Are They Saying About Paul and the End Times? 60.
illustrating the belief that resurrection is tied to God’s creative power and symbolizes re-creation, renewal, and the fulfilment of God’s purposes. The final motif is that of glorification or exaltation, another common motif among discussion of resurrection (e.g. Dan. 12.3; 2 Bar. 50-52), particularly evident in verses 40-49. Paul differentiates between different types of bodies and glories, the significant point here being the distinction between these bodies, not the specific category of body. Involved in the transformation inherent in resurrection is glorification, an elevation to a higher existence; there is distinction between the present σῶμα ψυχικόν (‘physical body’) and the resurrected σῶμα πνευματικόν (‘spiritual body’). Resurrection means re-creation into a glorified existence.

Similar to the Sadducees, some of the Corinthians appear to have thought the language of resurrection referred to a re-animated personal body largely comparable with the present, hence their rejection of the resurrection of the dead, and like the Synoptics’ Jesus, Paul is arguing that resurrection involves a much broader, more intensive transformation, drawing on the Jewish eschatological conception. Behind Paul’s portrayal of Jesus’ resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is the belief that resurrection is the transformation, re-creation, and glorification of created reality, a reality devoid of death and injustice, where there is both continuity and discontinuity, and hence the language of ‘bodies’ is limiting.

I Know that He Will Rise Again in the Resurrection on the Last Day

There are several other instances in the New Testament where the notion of resurrection is used by the author to suggest an eschatological reality much broader than the reanimation of a...
personal body. These instances are discussed to reinforce the argument that ‘resurrection’ should not be reduced to a personal re-animated body, but refers to the fulfilment of a much broader spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope. The first two instances are present in the Gospel of John, which demonstrates a much more developed interpretation of resurrection, which we will return to in chapter five, and which views the hopes for the end of history that are bound up within the notion of resurrection as having already been fulfilled, compared to some of the earlier eschatology which viewed these hopes as only beginning to be fulfilled or to be fulfilled in the near future. However, I will argue there remains within John an inherited reliance upon this Jewish eschatological category of resurrection.

Two passages in John where this reliance upon Jewish eschatology is evident are 5.28-29 and 11.21-27. In 5.28-29 Jesus proclaims a universal resurrection of the dead that consists of some being raised to reward and others to punishment. Of particular importance here are the obvious similarities with Daniel 12.2.131 Within the context of this passage, which is focused on the theme of judgment, the reference to resurrection is telling. A focus on the dispensation of justice serves this concern, carrying connotations that go well beyond the reanimation of an individual body.

Of course, this does not exclude the possibility of some sort of post-mortem personal life, as reflected in the discourse of John 11.21-27. Following the death of Lazarus, Martha expresses her frustration and confusion to Jesus, believing he could have prevented this death. In response, Jesus tells Martha that her brother would rise from the dead, to which she responds

with an affirmation of the belief in a future resurrection of the dead.\(^{132}\) However – perhaps similarly to Jesus’ response to the Sadducees and Paul’s response to the Corinthians – resurrection stretches beyond the re-animated existence of Lazarus and is connected directly to the role and function of the Messiah (notably in the assertion that Jesus is the resurrection), indicating the symbiotic relationship between resurrection and national redemption. These two brief references to resurrection in John indicate the presupposition of a broader Jewish eschatology, specifically connecting resurrection to broader hopes of justice and redemption, rather than explicitly describing a post-mortem existence.

There are several instances in Acts that are worthy of mention, as they further demonstrate how Jesus’ resurrection was interpreted in light of a Jewish eschatological understanding of resurrection of the dead. Paul is ridiculed by some Athenian Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Acts 17.18 for speaking about the resurrection, being called a “babbler.”\(^{133}\) The plural “foreign deities” might suggest that his polytheistic audience interpreted Paul as introducing a deity alongside Jesus, named Anastasis.\(^{134}\) That resurrection was a foreign or asinine concept to the Hellenistic audience reinforces the Jewish character of the belief,\(^{135}\) but, significantly, this broader, general resurrection hope is connected explicitly with Jesus’ own resurrection, demonstrating again that this event was interpreted in light of a general theology of


\(^{133}\) The phrase ὁ σπερμολόγος refers to small birds who pick at seeds. In this instance it is a derogatory term which, according to Bock, “has the connotation of a person who picks up bits of information and passes them off as if he knows what he is talking about,” i.e. “foolish babbler” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 561-62. Cf. C. Peter Wagner, *The Book of Acts: A Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Ventura: Regal, 2008), 399).


\(^{135}\) Of course, simply because it neither originated nor was accepted in Hellenistic culture does not mean it had to have developed in Israel. As suggested earlier, the concept of resurrection was influenced to some degree by foreign religions, especially Zoroastrianism. However, Paul’s sermon – at least to the extent of Luke’s record (it is unhelpful to draw comparisons or distinctions between Paul’s understanding of resurrection in Acts and his discussion in 1 Corinthians 15) – likely has a Jewish apocalyptic notion of resurrection in mind, and it is this which the philosophers were responding to, further suggesting that the early Christian interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection was shaped by Jewish eschatology, rather than Hellenistic notions of the afterlife.
resurrection. This is similarly exhibited in 4.1-2 where Peter and John are said to have been “proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead.” This is not merely a reference to Jesus’ resurrection—though this is certainly in view— but, rather, indicates that the events of Easter were interpreted as the fulfilment of these apocalyptic expectations of resurrection.

The significance of this will become clear in the following chapter. A third instance in Acts where resurrection of the dead is mentioned is in chapter 23, where Paul stands before the Jewish council and, noticing the mix of Pharisees and Sadducees on the council, proclaims, presumably as a distraction, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead” (23.6). Luke connects Paul’s teaching with precisely that issue which divided the Pharisees and Sadducees: resurrection of the dead. Hence, these three examples in Acts further demonstrate that many early members of the Jesus movement interpreted Jesus’ post-mortem existence in light of broader Jewish eschatological understandings of resurrection of the dead.

One final example that demonstrates the presupposition of a Jewish eschatology is the Christological hymn of Philippians 2.6-11, despite there being no reference to resurrection in this passage. Rather than explicitly referencing resurrection, Paul is stressing the glorification and exaltation of Jesus following his humiliating death. Some have argued that early Christians made no distinction between Jesus’ resurrection and his ascension. With both Wright and Dale Allison, I do not believe the evidence supports this, for the emphasis here is on glorification, which was often associated, as we have already seen, with resurrection (e.g. Dan.

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136 This is contrary to Bock, who connects this directly to Jesus’ resurrection (Bock, Acts, 187).


140 Allison, Resurrecting Jesus, 286-87; Wright, RSG, 227, 466.
12.1-3; 2 Bar. 50.2-3; 1 En. 104.2-6). Though resurrection is not explicitly mentioned, the broader eschatological expectations are.\textsuperscript{141} Hence, the Easter events were interpreted within the context of these eschatological expectations, often described in the language of resurrection, but as demonstrated in this passage, could also be described in various other ways.

From these various New Testament passages, it becomes evident that many of the early followers of Jesus, and especially those associated with the proto-orthodox movement who later came to define the New Testament canon, initially presupposed a Jewish eschatological conception of resurrection, and it was in this framework that the events surrounding Jesus’ post-death existence were interpreted. In the New Testament, resurrection is consistently connected to much broader eschatological hopes of transformation, justice, and glorification.

As with the Jewish eschatology analysed above, resurrection here does not simply refer to a reanimated corporeal body, but often refers, in a metonymic sense, to a spectrum of eschatological hopes. Hence, a binarism, a dualistic either/or mentality that has obscured the interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection, is inappropriate and restrictive.

This analysis of these New Testament passages has demonstrated that the presupposed framework of resurrection significantly shaped the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence as bearing a character that should not be limited to a personal reanimation but signifies a dialectic tension between continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality (which will be further detailed in the following chapter).

5.4. Resurrection and the Unification of Heaven and Earth

This chapter has thus far argued that the notion of resurrection of the dead was a Jewish eschatological category inherently and inseparably connected to broader eschatological hopes

\textsuperscript{141} Nickelsburg comments, “Although the hymn makes no reference to Jesus’ being “raised,” resurrection’s frequent function as exaltation is central” (Nickelsburg, \textit{Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life}, 230).
for the end of history, particularly the dispensation of justice and the restoration and transformation of creation. This is neither a homogenous doctrine nor a universally accepted idea, but there were evident concerns associated with resurrection that went well beyond hope for a personal re-animated body. However, as I demonstrated in chapter two, much scholarship on the resurrection assumes it was concerned primarily with the return to life of individual bodies, and consequently becomes entrapped in discussions concerning whether to interpret this personal reanimation literally or metaphorically or emphasizing the continuous or discontinuous elements. As seen in the emphasis upon the restoration of relationship in the Hebrew Bible, the hope for the transformation of the cosmos, and the dispensation of justice, of reward, punishment, and the redemption of the nation of Israel, it is evident that resurrection encompasses a much broader spectrum of eschatological hope. This is reinforced in the New Testament texts which demonstrate the way in which this Jewish eschatological notion formed the presupposition for the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence. We will see in chapter six how this is similarly reflected in the portrayal of Jesus’ resurrection, wherein both transformation and renewal are upheld, both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality. This Jewish eschatological hope for both renewal and transformation is expressed most poignantly in the imagery of a new heavens and earth. This section will unpack this imagery, exploring its occurrences in Isaiah 65.17, 2 Peter 3.13, and Revelation 21.1, demonstrating how this relates to the notion of resurrection and to new creation, and how it is a helpful illustration for the resurrection hope.

One of the most significant eschatological expectations (again acknowledging the diversity in Jewish and Christian eschatology) was a renewed, or unified, heavens and earth. As seen above, a common theme in Jewish eschatology was a redeemed world and universe, many texts adopting creation language, envisioning an antediluvian and paradisiacal location, others depicting a celestial landscape, for the resurrected righteous to occupy. Central to this was a
tension between this new landscape demonstrating both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality, a tension reflected in the descriptions of resurrection, best seen in Paul’s analogy of a seed turning into a plant (1 Corinthians 15.35-41). In some instances, this tension is envisaged as a new heavens and earth, a cosmological upheaval of empirical reality, not to be understood as a replacement of the present, as though the present can be discarded, but a process whereby reality is perfected. This is seen in Ephesians 1.10 where all things in heaven and earth are “gathered” up in Christ as the fulfilment of a divine plan. This section explores this eschatological hope for the end of contingent history as the fulfilment of God’s intended purposes for creation, untainted by death and misery, represented in the illustration of the unification of heaven and earth. It is this general eschatological hope for renewal which encompassed both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality, and included the broader hopes for justice, redemption, re-creation, and transformation, with which ‘resurrection’ was inseparably connected, and the framework within which Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted.

A New Heaven and New Earth

A prima facie reading of the key passages that deal with a new heaven and earth (Isaiah 65.17, 2 Peter 3.13, and Revelation 21.1) might lead one to the conclusion that the present world is expected to be discarded and replaced by a new instance of creatio ex nihilo. In the following I will demonstrate that early Christians did not usually understand it in this way, and that this new eschatological reality would instead be characterised by both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality, and as signifying a unification of a transformed heaven and earth. This reveals that in Jewish and Christian eschatology the hopes which formed the framework (and provided the language) within which Jesus’ resurrection was interpreted envisaged a transformation of empirical reality that enables unhindered relationship between God and
humanity. The language of resurrection of the dead pointed toward a unification of heaven and earth.

The earliest explicit instance of the anticipation of a new heavens and earth is in Isaiah 65.17: “For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.” Of course, this passage is a much older, pre-Christian passage, but its image of new creation was especially significant for apocalyptic expectations, which the first century Jesus Movement drew from. The context of the passage is marked by postexilic optimism, and this verse points to a time that directly contrasts the “former troubles” mentioned in the preceding verse. Hence, this act of new creation is one of salvation. Indeed, the earth itself seems to be saved, as verses 18 through 25 do not illustrate a scene of doom or catastrophe; annihilation of the created order is not envisaged. According to David Russell, “The word “new” while evocative does not contend for a new creation ex nihilo but...points to a miraculous transformation in history.” This is reflected in 2 Corinthians 5.17, which appears to echo Isaiah 65.17: those who are “in Christ” and are a “new creation” have not been discarded but have been transformed.

Rather than an annihilation of the created order, the arrival of a new heavens and earth heralds a peaceful reality, where there is no distress or death (Isaiah 65.19-20), labour is fruitful (65.21-22), blessing and prosperity abound (65.23), God and humanity exist in mutual relationship (65.24), and peace reigns in the natural world (65.25). God’s work of redemption extends

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beyond humanity to the entire created order.\textsuperscript{146} Indeed, an idealized Eden is anticipated (cf. Gen. 2), and perfect harmony replaces the chaos of the empirical reality.\textsuperscript{147} Moreover, central to all of this paradisiacal reality is the restoration of relationship, especially in the allusions to Genesis, as seen below, where the relationship between humanity and God is one of intimate friendship, and between humanity and creation one of harmony. John Oswalt summarizes succinctly: “The Creator’s original purpose in creation may be realized. Indeed, heavens and earth rejoice.”\textsuperscript{148}

The second occurrence of this motif appears in the decidedly more apocalyptic 2 Pet. 3.12-13, consisting of what might appear to be the Bible’s most explicit reference to the total destruction of earth by fire,\textsuperscript{149} followed by a new heaven and earth. However, rather than an annihilationism, this passage is closer in theology to Isaiah 65.17, envisaging renewal rather than total destruction.\textsuperscript{150} Renewal is implied in, first, the allusion to the Noahic flood (2 Pet. 3.5-6), the purpose of which was renewal (Gen. 6.17-21) and of which were survivors (Gen. 9.1-29); and, second, the observation that the imagery of fire often implied judgment and refinement, rather than annihilation (e.g. Ps. 12.6; Isa. 48.10; Zech. 13.9; Mal. 3.2; 1 Cor. 3.13; 1 Pet. 1.7; 4.12; Rev. 3.18) which fits the literary context of this passage.\textsuperscript{151} According to Albert Wolters, “The author of 2 Peter...pictures the day of judgement as a smelting process from


\textsuperscript{147} Mark Stephens notes, “Isaiah 65 promises that God himself will bring about a new state of affairs for his faithful servants, by exercising his sovereign creative power to impart order and harmony where there is now presently chaos and discord” (Mark B. Stephens, \textit{Annihilation or Renewal?: The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation} (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 27). Brueggemann highlights the Isaianic tendency towards the new, the redemption of Israel and the reversal of her pain (Brueggemann, \textit{Isaiah 40-66}, 246).


\textsuperscript{149} Cf. Russell, \textit{The "New Heavens and New Earth"}, 186.

\textsuperscript{150} John Macarthur has argued for an annihilationist interpretation, stating, “Peter foresaw the disintegration of the entire universe in an instant ‘uncreation’” (John MacArthur, \textit{2 Peter and Jude} (Chicago: Moody, 2005), 125).

which the world will emerge purified.” Furthermore, the word παρελεύσονται in reference to the heavens ‘passing away’ (2 Pet. 3.10) has a variety of meanings, none of which refer to an annihilation. Indeed, the word primarily signifies movement, either of time or of someone passing by something or someone. Hence, what is envisaged is a global renewal, where the future reality is transformed into a new creation following a purifying of the present. What we have here is creatio ex vetere, not creatio ex nihilo.

The final passage for our analysis is Revelation 21.1, which, like 2 Peter, draws on Isaiah 65.17 to envisage cosmic renewal. The similarities between Revelation 21.1-5 and Isaiah 65.17-25 include the new heavens and new earth with the old being forgotten (Isa. 65.17; Rev. 21.1, 4), a new Jerusalem (Isa. 65.18; Rev. 21.2), communion with God (Isa. 65.24; Rev. 21.3), no more crying (Isa. 65.19; Rev. 21.4), long life (Isa. 65.20; Rev. 21.4), and the destruction of evil (Isa. 65.25; Rev. 21.1). In Revelation, however, we find a reference to the absence of the sea. The sea was a common image of chaos, evil, and death (e.g. Gen. 1.1-5; Exod. 15.8; Ps. 46.2-3; 69.2; 77.16; Isa. 57.20; Zech. 10.11; Matt. 8.23-27), and so its removal indicates the removal of chaos in the new eschatological reality. Its absence should not be interpreted as a destruction of the physical oceans on the earth’s surface. Rather, John is anticipating a transformation of

153 παρελεύσονται is a cognate of παρέρχομαι (3rd person future middle indicative) which carries the connotations of going past a reference point (Sir. 42.20; Mark 6.48; Matt. 8.28), of having to do with time and being no longer available (Matt. 14.15; Acts 27.9), of coming to an end (Matt. 5.18; 24.35; Mark 13.31; Luke 16.17; 2 Cor. 5.17; Rev. 21.1), of ignoring or neglecting something (1 Mac. 2.22; Jos., Ant. 14.67; Luke 11.42; 15.29), of passing by without touching (Matt. 26.39; Mark 14.35), of passing through an area (1 Mac. 5.48; Acts 16.8), or of stopping at a place as one comes by (Luke 12.37; 17.7; Acts 24.6) (BDAG, 775-76).
154 Cf. Pheme Perkins, First and Second Peter, James, and Jude (Louisville: WJK, 1995), 191; Peter H. Davids, The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 291; Robert G. Bratcher, A Translator’s Guide to the Letters From James, Peter, and Jude (London: UBS, 1984), 164; Stephens, Annihilation or Renewal? 137. Gene Green states it well: “In spite of the destructive forces of the divine judgment (3:7, 10-12), the Christian hope is the renovation of creation and not its annihilation” (Gene L. Green, Jude & 2 Peter (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 334).
155 Emerson, “Does God Own a Death Star?”, 291.
empirical reality. As with 2 Peter 3, the language of “passing away” does not connote annihilation, and, importantly, the heavens and earth are not thrown into the lake of fire with death and Hades (20.14). Renewal is envisaged, not total destruction.\(^\text{158}\)

As with Isaiah 65.17, central to this joining of the heavens and earth is the renewal of relationship between God and humanity. In verse three, the author adopts the covenantal language of Leviticus 26.12 and Ezekiel 14.11 in the declaration that the people will be God’s and God will be theirs, but presents this in a remarkably intimate sense, with God dwelling among the people, even wiping away every tear.\(^\text{159}\) The goal of this eschatological transformation is communion with God.\(^\text{160}\) This is then further demonstrated by the vision of the new Jerusalem.\(^\text{161}\) This is not a reference to a physical structure or city, but is rather referring to the people themselves who will be “prepared as a bride for her husband,” again implying the intimacy of the relationship between God and humanity. The fact that the new Jerusalem never reaches earth suggests that it functions as a threshold between heaven and earth, indicating the unification of these two realms, and the absence of a temple suggests that humanity can now encounter God directly.\(^\text{162}\) In Revelation, the new heavens and earth do not indicate a defined space or location but refer primarily to the redemption of relationship, the


\(^{159}\) There might be a chiastic structure here between verses 1 and 5a, bracketed by something new (“A new heaven and a new earth”; “I am making all things new”), the centre being this intimacy between God and humanity with the affirmation that death has been defeated (another Isaianic – and possibly resurrection – reference, i.e. Isa. 25.8).

\(^{160}\) Raabe, “‘Daddy, Will Animals be in Heaven?’” 153; Mangina, *Revelation*, 239.

\(^{161}\) The restored city of Jerusalem has an old tradition, found in various texts, e.g. Isa. 65.18-19; 1 En. 10.16-19; 90.28-29; Jub. 4.26; 4 Ezra 7.27-30; 10.25-49; 12.32-34; T. Dan. 5.12; Pss.Sol. 17.25, 33; 2 Bar. 4.3; 29, 39-40; Gal. 4.26; Heb. 12.22; Rev. 3.12.

enabling of unhindered communion between God and humanity, seen as the fulfilment of the initial purposes for creation.

We have thus analysed the three most prominent passages concerning a new heaven and earth and have found that what is anticipated is a renewal and transformation of empirical reality, rather than its disposal and replacement. This is significant for the present thesis as it demonstrates that the eschatological hopes which formed the framework within which resurrection was understood envisaged an eschatological reality characterised by the unification of heaven and earth – thus bearing both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality – and a transformation that enabled unhindered relationship between God and humanity. It is this new eschatological reality comprised of a unification of heaven and earth that is depicted in the notion of resurrection. Resurrection, then, depicts a reality that extends well beyond (and hence cannot be limited within the confines of) the reanimation of a personal body.

The final part of this chapter will continue its exploration of these eschatological hopes to show the themes of renewed creation and redeemed relationship were prominent concerns. Moreover, it will demonstrate the connection between these eschatological hopes and resurrection to further support the argument that resurrection referred not simply to personal or individual reanimation but to the fulfilment of the broader spectrum of eschatological hope.

*The Renewal of Creation*

These New Testament expectations for a renewed eschatological reality should not be interpreted as an interruption within contingent history, that at some arbitrary and undisclosed time in the future God will surprise reality and all within it with a cosmic renewal and the arrival of a new heaven and earth. Instead, this act of cosmic redemption was believed to be a fulfilment of God’s intended purposes for creation. This renewal of creation was often
interpreted as the telos of temporal history, with many writers strongly connecting the end with the beginning. This is seen in the description of the eschatological reality as a return to an antediluvian paradise. For example, both Hosea 2.18 and Isaiah 11.6-8 and 65.25 envisage a reality where all the animals live in harmony, and Ezekiel 34.25-27 and Revelation 22.1-2 describe a creation that functions productively and fruitfully.\textsuperscript{163} In the deuto-canonical 1 Enoch 25.3-7, the tree of life plays a significant role in the very regeneration of the faithful, and in 2 Enoch 42.3 (in the longer version) this paradise is analogous to the Garden of Eden, despite being located in heaven. There is diversity in how this paradisiacal eschatological reality is described, some emphasizing its earthly characteristics (T. Levi 18.10-11; Jub. 2.7; 2 En. 30.1; 4 Ezra 3.6) and others its transcendental and celestial characteristics (1 En. 61.12; 2 En. 8.1-8; 2 Bar. 4.3; 4 Ezra 6.26),\textsuperscript{164} but the intended purpose of returning to an antediluvian paradise was to stress that this eschatological reality was a fulfilment of God’s initial purpose for creation.\textsuperscript{165}

The proclamation of a new heavens and earth is a renovation of the present universe.\textsuperscript{166} This eschatological reality, marked by the unification of heaven and earth, is an existence in this world, albeit a renewed and transformed one, as Russell maintains:

The restoration of the community within history or in an entirely transformed new age is still presented in this-worldly language and thus serves to affirm God’s original creative intentions. The apocalyptic

\textsuperscript{163} Cf. Russell, \textit{The “New Heavens and New Earth”}, 57; Brevard S. Childs, \textit{Isaiah} (Louisville: WJK, 2001), 537-38. As Carol Dempsey states, “This new creation will, in some ways, resemble the creation of the first heavens and the first earth (Gen. 1:1) in their pristine, peaceful state before transgression entered into the picture (Gen. 3)” (Dempsey, \textit{Isaiah}, 191).

\textsuperscript{164} Russell highlights the diversity in opinions regarding the relation between the Beginning and End: analogy of the old describing the new (Isa. 65.17, Jub. 1.29, 1 Enoch 91.16, 2 Peter 3.12f., Rev. 21.1, 5), restitution of the perfect order of the original (T. Levi 18.10f., Jub. 23.26ff., 1 Enoch 90.37f., Rom. 3.24, Col. 1.15-20, Rev. 20.13), transformation of the old (Isa 26.1ff., Dan. 12.3, 1 Enoch 45.4f, 2 Baruch 51, Rev. 21.13), identity of the new with the old (1 Enoch 24-25, Rev. 27.21.1), reservation of certain elements of the original (2 Esdras 6.49f., 2 Baruch 29.4) (Russell, \textit{The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic}, 282-83).

\textsuperscript{165} Cf. Epistle of Barnabas 6.13; 4 Ezra 6.1-6; 7.30; 2 Baruch 3.7. Elledge argues that “the resurrection life will, thus, fulfill the deity’s original plan for the creation (Elledge, \textit{Resurrection of the Dead}, 81), and according to Russell, “Behind this picture of re-creation and redemption, then, is the strong conviction that God’s purpose, which embraces the life of the whole created universe, will at last reach its glorious fulfilment” (Russell, \textit{The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic}, 284).

\textsuperscript{166} I have here borrowed the language of renovation from Svigel, as it is an apt description (Svigel, “Extreme Makeover,” 405).
writers did not renounce the created order. It therefore can be stated with confidence that the apocalypticists
clearly were not disposed toward a spiritual-material dualism. In fact...they viewed God’s creation as
above all “perfectly good.”

This eschatological reality is a transformed and perfected version of God’s intention for
creation, a reality that enables the unhindered relationship between God and humanity.

The purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that the eschatological hopes encompassed
within the notion of resurrection, and that this future eschatological reality, analogous to
resurrection, consists of both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality. When we
recognize that resurrection was an anticipation of a reality depicted as a new heavens and earth
– and all that that entails – it follows that the language of resurrection referred to much more
than simply a re-animated bodily existence. George Montague elucidates:

The promised destiny is not merely the bodily resurrection of each individual faithful person. It will be
the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:2), the wedding feast of the Lamb (19:7, 9; 21.9), the banquet of the
kingdom (Matt 22:1-14), the new heaven and the new earth (Rev 21:1), the consummation of union not
only with God but also with one another.

The eschatological reality portrayed in the various images of resurrection, re-creation, and new
heavens and earth is characterized by a desire for a redeemed relationship between God and
humanity. All of reality will be united and marked by harmony. There is no longer separation
between God and humanity, as “heaven and earth will be united into a larger reality,” as God
dwells among his people. When the New Testament makes reference to the resurrection of
the dead (e.g. Mark 12.24-27; John 11. 23-25; Acts 4.1-2; 1 Cor. 15.12-13), the broader
eschatological hopes are often evoked, rather than limited to some sort of re-animated body.

Therefore, when this language is applied to whatever was believed to have happened to Jesus,

167 Russell, The “New Heavens and New Earth”, 132-33. Cf. Jub. 1.29; 1 En. 45.4; 72.1; 91.16-17; 2 Bar. 32.6;
57.2; 2 En. 65.7.
168 Montague, First Corinthians, 274.
169 Dempsey, Isaiah, 186, 191. According to Green, “The expectation of a new world order was not simply a hope
that revolved around the destiny of the material world; within Jewish reflection this hope also embraced the moral
order (see, e.g., 1 En. 45.4-5). The new heaven and new earth, in contrast with the present world filled with evil
deeds... will be one” (Green, Jude & 2 Peter, 335).
it is vital to not reduce this to a mere reanimation but to see within Jesus’ post-mortem existence a much grander image of eschatological fulfilment. This fulfilment includes a broad spectrum of hopes, including both the transformation and renewal of creation. There is both continuity and discontinuity within this event. This is, however, the focus of the next chapter, but for now it is important to highlight the inseparable connection between the idea of resurrection and the broader hopes for the end times, characterised by the inauguration of the new heavens and earth, which as we have seen in this section meant the eradication of the distinction between, and the redemption and re-creation, of these two categories.

5.5. Conclusion

In following the PCR methodology proposed in §4.4, this chapter has analysed the prior theological framework which shaped how Jesus’ post-mortem existence was understood by the early Jesus movement (recognizing that knowledge is a bilateral interaction between the ‘objective’ meaning inherent to the external event and the ‘subjective’ interpretation of that event and the meaning imported unto the event by the interpreter), and has analysed how this framework developed in new contexts. It has been argued that the category of resurrection in ancient Jewish eschatology encompasses a broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope for the end of contingent history, especially the renewal and transformation of creation and with it the dispensation of divine judgment. It was seen in several passages in the Hebrew Bible that the language of resurrection had primarily to do with the restoration of relationship with YHWH, rather than the reanimation of a personal body. Reanimation may well have been anticipated, implied by its use in Daniel 12.1-3, but its principal purpose had to do with the return to covenantal obedience of YHWH; disobedience and loss of relationship was tantamount to death, and the restoration of this relationship was thus the resurrection of Israel. This stress upon restoration of relationship, as well as the connotations of judgment and transformation, pervade the later intertestamental and apocalyptic literature. Resurrection is
maintained through Jewish eschatology as virtually synonymous with transformation and re-
creation, as seen in Ezekiel 36.9-11, 35, 1 Enoch 22, 2 Maccabees 7.11, Daniel 12.3, and 4
Ezra 7.31-32, and presents a solution to the problem of theodicy. What this resurrected reality
looks like is diverse, with some stressing an immortal soul (Jub. 23.31; 1 En. 91-104; Ws.
9.15), some envisioning transformation into something akin to the stars or angels (Dan. 12.3;
2 Bar. 50.2-3; 1 En. 104.2-6), of others anticipating a bodily resurrection (2 Macc. 7). What is
evident, however, is that the diversity and malleability of the category of resurrection prohibits
it from being reduced to the mere reanimation of a personal, corporeal body.

This is similarly expressed in much of the New Testament. Jesus corrected the Sadducees’
assumption that resurrection (which they rejected) signified a return to a bodily existence
comparable with the present, claiming that social institutions will be radically altered and
ultimately unnecessary (Mark 12.18-27; Matt. 22.23-33; Luke 20.27-40). Some of the
followers of Jesus in Corinth were rejecting the ‘resurrection of the dead’ based on a different
understanding of a post-mortem embodied existence, which Paul responded to by emphasizing
the transformative nature of resurrection. In both cases, the assumption that resurrection
referred only to a personal reanimation was rebuffed. Through Jewish eschatology and the New
Testament, the category of resurrection encompasses much more than a re-animated body,
instead balancing, on the one hand, the renewal of creation, returning it to its ideal and original
purpose of enabling unhindered relationship between God and creation, and, on the other, its
radical transformation, with justice imbued within the very fabric of this new reality and the
inhabitants of this transformed creation being elevated and glorified. There is both continuity
and discontinuity; it is the same creation, yet utterly different. This is expressed best in the
analogy of the new (and unified) heavens and earth. It is this balance which is seen in the
description of the risen Jesus, who was described as the personification of the fulfilment of this
eschatological hope. This is the topic of the next chapter, to which we will now turn.
6. Tension in Jesus: of Heaven and Earth

6.1. Introduction

Having argued, in the previous chapter, that the ancient Jewish eschatological notion of ‘resurrection’ encompassed far more than a personal reanimation, but in fact referred to the broader spectrum of eschatological hope, incorporating the themes of justice, re-creation, transformation, exaltation, the inauguration of God’s sovereign rule, and, of course, the return from death of the faithful, we can now turn our attention directly to the resurrection of Jesus. This chapter implements the PCR stress upon tracing the dynamic interaction between the external event and the communal and historical contextuality of the observer, as depicted in the New Testament writings, by analysing the way in which the communal reflection upon, and understanding of, Jesus’ post-mortem existence developed and was re-interpreted as it was remembered in new and evolving contexts, and how it intertwined with the Jewish category of ‘resurrection of the dead.’ In so doing we can trace the development of resurrection theology in the early Christian communities into a belief that this event constituted the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hopes. This event was more than a reanimation of Jesus’ personal body, but simultaneously his exaltation and elevation to a position of authority in a new reality, the dispensation of justice, and the inauguration of a new eschatological age.

The New Testament authors’ attempts at describing the risen Jesus fall short, precisely because of the fact that Jesus’ resurrection was not simply a return to a re-animated bodily existence, but was the personification of the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological expectation for the eschaton, fulfilled within history in and to the person of Jesus. That this event was understood as something much broader than his reanimation, but in fact encompassed the fulfilment of an array of eschatological expectations, is suggested by the claim that Jesus was raised on or after the third day, ‘according to the Scriptures’ (Matt. 16.21; 17.23; 20.19; 27.63; Mark 8.31; 9.31;
This phrase, I suggest, refers neither to a specific day nor to a specific scriptural prophecy, but rather a broad spectrum of eschatological hope.

That the category of resurrection in particular was utilized by the Jesus movement to interpret his post-mortem existence is especially informative. As seen in the narratives of the raising of Lazarus (John 11.38-44) and of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5.21-43; Matt. 9.18-26; Luke 8.40-56), some early Christian authors were perfectly capable of describing the event of someone returning from the dead without necessarily implying the broader eschatological significance that accompanied the notion of ‘resurrection of the dead.’ However, this notion was applied to the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, marking it as distinct. The use of this notion to understand and describe Jesus’ post-mortem existence suggests that this event bears incredible eschatological significance that extends well beyond his personal re-animated body.

The interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection proposed in this chapter, as per PCR, differs from those analysed in the second chapter, and of Pannenberg and Wright, in its application of a postfoundationalism which enables both the continuous and discontinuous elements of the resurrection to be upheld in a dialectic and mutually-conditioning fashion, rather than the foundationalism which has led many to prioritize one over the other. Its emphasis upon the constructive and bilateral nature of knowledge enables the resurrection to be understood as an interaction between the external, ‘objective’ event of Jesus’ post-mortem existence and the ‘subjective’ presupposed communally-conditioned categories of understanding, namely the ancient Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection of the dead. The interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence evolves as it is remembered in new and changing contexts, without relegating this event to the ambiguous realm of faith and not of history. In short, the interpretation proposed in this thesis does not reduce the notion of Jesus’ resurrection to no more than his reanimation, but maintains the dialectical tension between the continuous and
discontinuous elements of Jesus’ resurrection. That is, in Jesus’ post-mortem existence, those elements that reflect empirical reality are elevated and unified with those elements that reflect the new eschatological reality; both are equally present and personified in the description of the risen Jesus.

Echoing the role of social memory theory within PCR, this chapter is largely concerned with the development of the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence within the early Christian communities (as described in the New Testament corpus), as it was remembered in new contexts and as it interacted with prior and developing theological categories. Hence, following a discussion on the third day ‘according to Scripture’ motif which frames the New Testament portrayals of Jesus’ resurrection, this chapter analyses the resurrection passages within the New Testament in a rough chronological order, highlighting not only the way in which interpretations of this event develop but also themes that remain consistent. In doing so, we see in particular the development of the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence from an event (according to the earlier traditions) that ushered in the eschatological hopes for the eschaton, to an event (according to the later traditions) that was the fulfilment of those hopes in and of itself. This is reflected to the claim that Jesus’ death and resurrection on the third day occurred in accordance with Scripture (Matt. 16.21; 17.23; 20.19; 27.63; Mark 8.31; 9.31; 10.34; Luke 9.22; 13.32; 18.33; 24.7, 46; Acts 2.23-24; 10.40; 1 Cor. 15.4) and further indicates that Jesus’ post-mortem existence encompassed much more than the reanimation of a personal body. Here we see the PCR stress on the development of interpretation within communal memory as it interacts with evolving categories of understanding and within the new context where Jesus’ return is not imminent but indefinite.

For the present thesis, it is this later tradition of interpreting Jesus’ resurrection as the ultimate fulfilment of these hopes for the end of history within history which provides the best understanding of Jesus’ post-mortem existence for a systematic interpretation, for it represents
the most developed stratum of the biblical resurrection tradition. This is not to prioritize it at the expense of earlier traditions, nor is it to claim that the later traditions are the ‘more correct’ interpretation, for within a PCR framework it is precisely this development which is indispensable. The later traditions were not developed in a vacuum, after all. The argument of this thesis is that Jesus’ resurrection cannot be reduced to his personal reanimation, but is the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope, particularly the hope for the renewal and transformation (continuity and discontinuity) of creation.

6.2. “According to the Scriptures”

A theme that appears in several instances in the early and synoptic traditions is the claim that Jesus died and rose from the dead after three days or on the third day (Matt. 16.21; 17.23; 20.19; 27.63; Mark 8.31; 9.31; 10.34; Luke 9.22; 13.32; 18.33; 24.7; Acts 10.40), according to Scripture (Acts 2.23-24), or both (Luke 24.46; 1 Cor. 15.4). What makes this theme curious is the lack of obvious antecedent. As we have seen, the notion of resurrection was present—albeit briefly—in the Hebrew Scriptures and was a common theme in the intertestamental literature. However, no particular passage predicts the resurrection of the Messiah, let alone an individual in the midst of contingent history. Furthermore, Hosea 6.2 is the only passage which connects resurrection with the three day motif, and yet the evidence that it was interpreted as a resurrection passage is scant, and it is neither quoted directly, nor utilized elsewhere. All the more perplexing is the fact that the Easter narratives do not use the three day motif, rather placing the discovery of the empty tomb on the first day of the week, despite the incorporation of the resurrection predictions into the narrative of Jesus’ pre-crucifixion life.

1 This is present in the later John (2.19-22; 20.9) but seems to bear much less significance than it did in the earlier traditions. The two instances in John could perhaps be explained as the author simply including earlier tradition.
In the following, this three day motif, as it applies to the resurrection of Jesus, and the claim that this was predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures, will be analysed, and it is argued that rather than referring to a specific proof text, the full scope of eschatological hope is in mind. That is, Jesus’ resurrection was not interpreted as the fulfilment of one specific eschatological promise, but was the fulfilment of a broader spectrum of eschatological hope. Furthermore, the three day motif was a common cultural motif that was occasionally used to indicate an event of significance. Hence, the claim that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures does not refer to a specific text, such as Hosea 6.2, but indicates that early witnesses interpreted Jesus’ post-mortem existence as significant, fulfilling not one particular promise but Scripture in its entirety.

The most explicit expression of this theme is found in 1 Corinthians 15.3-4: ‘For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died 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.’ It is generally accepted that verses three through five constitute an early, pre-Pauline creedal formulation, though with Pauline additions. This formula is therefore an early tradition, though determining its provenance is difficult, especially considering the formula is reflected in other earlier traditions, such as Mark, and implied in Q, and is not used in the empty tomb narratives.

The phrase ‘in accordance with the Scriptures’ should not be restricted to ‘he was raised’ – where it might be easier to ascertain a particular referent scriptural text – but to the entire

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2 James Ware, “The Resurrection of Jesus in the Pre-Pauline Formula of 1 Cor 15.3-5,” NTS 60, no. 4 (2014), 475; Allison, Resurrecting Jesus, 234-35; Hans Conzelmann, “On the Analysis of the Confessional Formula in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5,” Int 20, no. 1 (1966), 18-20; John S. Kloppenborg, “Analysis of the Pre-Pauline Formula 1 Cor 15:3b-5 in Light of Some Recent Literature,” CBQ 40, no. 3 (1978), 351-67. This is against David Garland, who argues that Paul articulated this formula (David E. Garland, 1 Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 684).

3 Cf. Lidija Novakovic, Raised from the Dead According to Scripture: The Role of Israel’s Scripture in the Early Christian Interpretations of Jesus’ Resurrection (Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2012), 120-22.
clause, including ‘on the third day.’ This third day motif is connected to Jesus’ post-mortem existence in several instances elsewhere, most notably in Jesus’ resurrection predictions. However, there is some discrepancy as to whether it was predicted to occur on the third day, or after the three days. According to each of Mark’s predictions (8.31; 9.31; 10.34), the resurrection will occur after three days (μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας); according to Matthew (16.21; 17.22-23; 20.18-19), it will occur on the third day (τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ); according to Luke (9.22; 18.31-33), it will occur on the third day, but he varies his language, using ἐγερθῆναι in 9.22 and ἀναστήσεται in 18.33. The change from after, in the earlier Gospel, to on, in the later, demonstrates the development of the tradition, as the later evangelists reconciled the discrepancies that emerged when the three day tradition was connected to the empty tomb tradition. The fact that this formula was so malleable suggests that it probably did not have a concrete chronology in mind.

The particular interpretive difficulty of this formula is the claim that this resurrection on the third day was prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures. Several scriptural passages have been proposed as antecedent. Joel White argues that this formula has the cultic calendar of Leviticus 23 in mind, particularly the first fruits offering. According to the earliest Christian tradition, the resurrection took place on the day after the Sabbath following Passover, which would have been the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the day of the first fruits offering. Hence, Jesus’ resurrection was prefigured by this cultic practice. Indeed, Paul connected Jesus’ post-mortem existence to this festival in the very same chapter (1 Cor. 15.20, 23), and so it is certainly possible that Paul had this practice in mind. However, this does not explain the

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4 This is especially so considering the three day motif is utilized elsewhere. Cf. Joel R. White, “He was Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4): A Typological Interpretation Based on the Cultic Calendar in Leviticus 23,” TynBul 66, no. 1 (2015), 105.

5 Cf. Novakovic, Raised from the Dead According to Scripture, 116-18; Allison, Resurrecting Jesus, 231-32. Luke includes another Passion prediction in 9.44, but does not predict resurrection and doesn’t provide a time frame.

6 Furthermore, 1 Cor. 15.4 uses on the third day (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ), and Matthew elsewhere claims that the Son of Man would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

7 White, “He was Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4),” 106-19.
presence of the three day motif, or the claim that Jesus rose from the dead according to Scripture, elsewhere; the resurrection prophecies and Q’s allusion to Jonah (discussed in following sections) do not allude to cultic practice. It seems that the three day motif is an earlier tradition, reflected in Mark and in Q, which was a part of the creedal formulation which Paul adapted to his purpose.

To which scriptural passage does this early formula then refer? The account of Jonah is a potential candidate, as such an allusion is present in Q (11.29-32) which Matthew then explicitly connects to the three day motif (Matt. 12.40). However, this is a fairly obscure reference, and there is nothing to suggest that Paul or Mark (14.58; 15.29) were alluding to Jonah. Another possibility, suggested by Nicholas Lunn, is day three of creation (Gen. 1.9-13). On the third day of creation, dry land appears, comparable to the baptismal theme reflected in the story of Jonah. Upon this dry land sprouts vegetation, literally the *first fruits* of the earth. Furthermore, the verb ὄψθη is used four times in 1 Corinthians 15.4-8 and twice in LXX Genesis 1.9 and 13 to describe the appearance of the land, and then not appearing elsewhere in Genesis with regards to God’s creative activity. The appearance of land in Genesis might be analogous to resurrection in that the earth is that from which humanity is created and to which humanity returns; Jesus’ return from this earth, his emergence from the tomb, reflects the new archetypal creation of the new eschatological humanity. Paul might have had Genesis 1.9-13 in mind when suggesting that the resurrection on the third day was predicted in the Scriptures. Lunn does not pursue this possibility any further, and for good reason. Though creation language is often utilized in the description of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, the connections

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9 Ibid., 532-34.
here are tentative. The emphasis in Genesis 1.9-13 is the initial appearance of land rather than its reappearance, and the first fruits reference in 1 Corinthians 15.20 reflects Leviticus 23.9-14.

Perhaps the most likely candidate for antecedent to which this formula refers, if we assume that a specific passage or promise is in mind, is Hosea 6.2, where resurrection is explicitly connected to the three day motif. Lidija Novakovic argues that there is evidence in rabbinic literature that Hosea 6.2 was interpreted as a resurrection passage, quoting in particular Deuteronomy Rabbah 7.6, Jerusalem Talmud 5.2, Genesis Rabbah 56.1, and Esther Rabbah 9.2. Though the former two seem to connect this passage to resurrection, the commentary on Genesis 22.4 is merely listing references to the three day motif – including Hosea 6.2 – rather than interpreting this text as a resurrection passage, and the commentary on Esther 5.2 seems to be largely speaking of national redemption, of God’s covenantal faithfulness to his people.10 However, a common objection against assuming that Hosea 6.2 was the intended antecedent of the phrase ‘in accordance with the Scriptures’ or the various cognates of this formula is that this passage is not referenced anywhere else in the New Testament.11 Of course, this is not conclusive, but it does indicate that it is unlikely that the early Christian communities interpreted this passage as bearing any eschatological significance, especially considering the prevalence of scriptural allusion throughout the New Testament. Furthermore, I think it more likely that resurrection was connected to this motif in the later Rabbinic texts because of the tradition of connecting resurrection to the broader eschatological hopes, rather than utilizing Hosea 6.2 as a proof-text for Jesus’ resurrection.

The formulaic assertion that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures shares similarities with several passages in the Hebrew Bible, including the cultic

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practice of the offering of first fruits and the account of Jonah, both of which are explicitly connected to Jesus’ resurrection elsewhere, an allusion to the third day of creation, which would not be wholly uncharacteristic as creation language often accompanies accounts of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and Hosea 6.2, which is the only passage to link the third day motif to resurrection. Though it is impossible to entirely rule out any of these passages as the scriptural antecedent intended by the formula, no single passage seems to fit with any clear certainty.¹² That is because, I contend, the formula is referring to the full scope of Jewish eschatological hope, which will be demonstrated in the following section.

Rather than attempting to retrofit a passage to function as antecedent to the early tradition that Jesus’ resurrection was fulfilment of scriptural prophecy, it makes more sense to interpret this tradition as referring to the full scope of eschatological hope rather than one specific passage. The three day motif likewise cannot be pinned to a particular passage, but was, rather, a common cultural motif that was often used to indicate an event of significance. The incorporation of these two traditions (the three day and ‘according to Scripture’ motifs) with the language of resurrection in connection to Jesus’ post-mortem existence demonstrates that this event was interpreted as bearing considerable significance, functioning as the fulfilment of not one particular prophecy but of the full scope of eschatological promise.

The tradition that Jesus rose according to the Scriptures is usually interpreted as a general reference to ancient Scripture, as no individual passage seems to function as a prophecy for the resurrection of the Messiah on the third day.¹³ To be more specific, Jesus’ post-mortem


existence was interpreted as “the culmination of Israel’s history,” events which were planned by God “in accord with and as a fulfillment of his Word in the OT.” This was not victory over Roman occupation but over sin and death itself. Wright refers to this as the climax of the “entire biblical narrative,” that the resurrection was the sign that the full scope of the story of Israel, and the demonstration of God’s sovereignty, have found their conclusion, the moment to which this story has been building. Novakovic questions whether this would have satisfied early Christian interpreters or would have been convincing to first century Jews. However, I contend that resurrection encompassed the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope, and so the early communities of the Jesus movement would not have required a specific proof text, because a specific prophecy was not in view; hence the relative ease with which the formula can refer to ‘the Scriptures.’

Hosea 6.2 is not the only passage in the Hebrew Bible to adopt a time frame of three days. In fact, it is quite a common designation (Gen. 22.4; 30.36; 31.22; 34.25; 40.20; 42.18; Exod. 3.18; 19.11, 15-16; Lev. 7.17-18; 19.6, 7; Num. 7.24; 9.12; 19.12, 19; 29.20; Josh. 2.16; 3.2; 9.17; Judg. 20.30; 1 Sam. 20.12; 30.1; 2 Sam. 1.2; 1 Kgs 3.18; 12.5, 12; 2 Kgs 2.17; 10.5; 20.5, 8; 1 Chr. 12.39; 2 Chr. 10.5, 12; Ezra 6.15; Esth. 4.16; 5.1; Hos. 6.2; Jon. 1.17; 2.1). Apart from references to the first or seventh day, both of which bore cultural significance usually in reference to either creation or the Sabbath, reference to the third day in the Hebrew Bible is a disproportionately recurring time frame, indicating that it bore symbolic significance. Martin-Achard has suggested that this time frame is also found in rural agricultural cults practiced around Palestine, as well as being found in Egyptian, Sumerian, and Roman myths of the dying

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14 Bailey, Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes, 430.
15 Witherington III, Conflict & Community in Corinth, 299.
16 Bailey, Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes, 430.
17 Wright, RSG, 320-21, 726; Wright, “Early Traditions and the Origins of Christianity,” 127.
19 There are 74 references to either ‘three days’ or the ‘third day,’ with two/second occurring in 20 instances, four/fourth 16, five/fifth 12, six/sixth 22, eight/eighth 19, nine/ninth 8, and ten/tenth 21.
and rising of Osiris, Inanna, and Attis, respectively. Hence, he claims, Hosea borrowed, either intentionally or not, from this tradition, supported by the observation that Hosea utilizes symbols common in other myths, such as the lion, dawn, and dew. The extent to which Hosea was influenced by foreign practices is impossible to determine, but it seems likely that the ‘third day’ motif was not an uncommon reference to an occasion of significance, an interpretation that seems more satisfying than merely a short period of time.

That this formula had in mind the full scope of scriptural eschatology, rather than a particular passage, is further seen in the insistence in the Gospel narratives that the resurrection occurred on the first day of the week, with no mention of the third day, despite the prevalence of the three day motif throughout their respective narratives. The allusions to Jonah (Matt. 12.38-42 // Luke 11.29-32), the prophecy of the destruction of the temple and its reconstruction in three days (Matt. 27.40 // Mark 14.58 // John 2.19), and the resurrection predictions (Mark 8.31 // 9.31; 10.34 // Matt. 16.21; 17.22-23; 20.18-19 // Luke 9.22; 18.31-33) demonstrate that the evangelists were aware of this tradition and incorporated it into the narrative on several occasions. Yet the Easter narratives are entirely devoid of this motif, instead stressing the first day. They did not edit the three day motif to be harmonious with the Easter narrative, nor did they incorporate the motif into the Easter narrative. The three day motif was, therefore, primarily understood symbolically. Furthermore, the Easter narratives include the occasional allusion to the Hebrew Bible (especially that of creation), and though there are no direct

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22 Wright emphatically argues that there is a lack of scriptural allusion or theological development in the Easter narratives, despite the regular use of the Hebrew Scriptures throughout the Gospel narratives, including the crucifixion, and builds on this to stress the distinctiveness of the Christian proclamation of resurrection (Wright, “Early Traditions and the Origins of Christianity,” 132-35; *RSG*, 599-602). I am not entirely convinced. It is true that there is not a great deal of scriptural allusion and there is no direct biblical quotations, but allusions are certainly present, in the use of the ‘first day,’ the day after Sabbath, sunrise, a garden, the various apocalyptic elements, and indeed the very language of resurrection. Furthermore, there are stories in the Gospels which do not have biblical quotations. Many of the accounts of miraculous healing, which would surely conjure up images of a creative or healing God, have no scriptural quotation (e.g. Matt. 9.2-8, 18-31; 12.9-14; Mark 1.21-34; 5.21-43; Luke 4.31-41; 7.1-17; John 5.1-18), nor do many of Jesus’ sayings which could so easily include a commentary
biblical quotations, if Hosea 6.2 was truly the intended antecedent to the formula, ‘raised on
the third in accordance with the Scriptures,’ there would likely be further, and perhaps more
explicit, allusions to this passage. This motif was understood metaphorically, a reference to an
occasion of significance, and its combination with the claim that Jesus’ resurrection
(understood as the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope) had occurred in accordance
with the Scriptures, demonstrates that in Jesus’ post-mortem existence, the full scope of Jewish
eschatological hope has found its fulfilment, and a new age has indeed dawned.\(^{23}\)

This section has demonstrated that the prevalence of the claim that Jesus rose from the dead
either on or after the third day ‘according to Scripture’ does not refer to a specific biblical
prophecy but refers to the fulfilment of a broad array of Jewish eschatological expectations.
The resurrection, in light of this, should not therefore be reduced to the reanimation of the
personal body of Jesus but implies an event of such significance that it extends well beyond
anthropology and that within this event the hope for the dispensation of justice, the renewal
and transformation of creation, and the restoration of relationship with YHWH has found
fulfilment. This event is, then, characterised by bearing both continuity and discontinuity with
ordinary reality. The three day ‘according to Scripture’ motif frames the interpretation of Jesus’
post-mortem existence as the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of eschatological hope, and in the
following it will be demonstrated how this pervades the New Testament corpus.

6.3. Pauline Traditions: Resurrection and an Imminent Eschaton

The earliest interpretations of Jesus’ resurrection, found in the Pauline epistles, demonstrate
that within the various Christian communities a significant diversity of interpretations existed,
from those emphasising Jesus’ exaltation, to those explicitly utilizing the category of

‘resurrection of the dead,’ to those – such as the Corinthians – who had some in their community who denied resurrection outright. However, Paul’s view of resurrection, which seemingly became the predominant view, understood Jesus’ post-mortem existence in terms of the broader Jewish eschatological hopes, that it was the inauguration of a new reality to be accompanied imminently by the general resurrection and the arrival of the eschaton. The resurrection was expected to usher in the end-times immediately. 24 Dale Allison argues that “Paul interpreted the resurrection of Jesus as part of the general resurrection of the dead” and that ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν (‘resurrection of the dead’) was a technical term for the general resurrection (Rom. 1.4; 1 Cor. 15.13, 21, 42; Phil. 3.10). 25 It is precisely this expectation which develops in the later resurrection traditions; for Paul, the Jewish eschatological expectations are being fulfilled, where in later developments, particularly John, the Jewish eschatological expectations have already been fulfilled. In fact this delay of the Parousia is that which precipitated the development of the theological interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection, interacting with the communal memory of the event, and the prior theological category of ‘resurrection of the dead.’ 26

24 Cf. Leander E. Keck, “Paul and Apocalyptic Theology,” Int 38, no. 3 (1984), 236. Furthermore, Beale comments, “In early Judaism and in the Gospels…resurrection was so linked with the very end of the world that it was almost synonymous with the end, since it was the last event to happen together with judgment, after which the eternal new creation of the new age to come would commence,” (G. K. Beale, A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 249).

25 Dale C. Allison, The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus (Wipf & Stock, 1985), 67. Paul’s preferred term was ἐγείρω which appears in reference to Jesus (as opposed to the resurrection of believers) and occasionally with νεκρῶν in Rom. 4.24, 25; 6.4, 9; 7.4; 8.11, 34; 10.9; 1 Cor. 6.14; 15.4, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20; 2 Cor. 4.14; 5.15; Gal. 1.1; 1 Thess. 1.10. He seems to use both terms interchangeably as they are both carry eschatological connotations. Cf. Murphy, Apocalypticism, 313.

Furthermore, for Paul Jesus’ post-mortem existence encompasses more than a re-animated body, but reflects the Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection which referred to the broad spectrum of eschatological hope. Indeed, the resurrection was Jesus’ exaltation (Phil. 2.6-11; Rom. 1.3-4; 1 Thess. 4.13-5.11) and the inauguration of not just the general resurrection but of a new, transformed eschatological age. The particular significance that I will draw out from Paul is that he interpreted Jesus’ resurrection in light of the broader Jewish eschatological understanding of resurrection, that is, in this event, the full spectrum of expectations for the eschaton are being fulfilled.

This section will begin with an analysis of three passages generally considered by commentators to derive from pre-Pauline material (Phil. 2.6-11; Rom. 1.3-4; 4.25) and so represent some of the earliest resurrection traditions. Paul’s incorporation of these, which present a diverse picture of Jesus’ resurrection, suggests his willingness to include within ‘resurrection’ an array of motifs. Though resurrection is presupposed in the Philippian Christ hymn (Phil. 2.6-11), resurrection itself is absent, speaking rather in terms of an exaltation to a new, transformed position of authority. This is contrasted by Romans 1.3-4 which similarly interprets this event as his elevation to a position of authority, but explicitly connecting this to his personal resurrection. Romans 4.25, however, envisages the inauguration of a new eschatological reality, wherein justification is now available. In each of these texts, Jesus’ post-mortem existence, not always expressed as resurrection, implies a transformation and the glorification of Jesus. Following this, 1 Thessalonians – probably Paul’s earliest canonical letter – incorporates significant apocalyptic metaphors when depicting the broader

Resurrection Thought? in Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament, ed. Richard Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 171-202. Woodbridge and Longenecker are among those, albeit the minority, who attempt to salvage the ‘disputed’ Pauline texts (Col., Eph., 2 Thess., 1-2 Tim., Titus) as authentically Pauline. Cf. Gathercole, who has surveyed a range of scholars who dispute the delay of the Parousia theory: Simon J. Gathercole, “The ‘Dela of the Parousia.’” Early Christianity 9, no. 1 (2018), 1-7. This thesis follows the more prominent academic consensus that there is theological development within the Pauline corpus, particularly with regard to his understanding of Jesus’ Parousia, and that these later deuto-Pauline texts reflect a later moment in the development of the early church.
eschatological reality, envisaging radical cosmic transformation, a transformation that was initiated in Jesus’ death and resurrection (1 Thess. 4.13-5.11, esp. 4.14). This eschatological new life is reflected in Galatians 2.19-20 and Romans 5.10, as well as in the themes of vindication that suffuse Romans 1-4, the renewed cosmos of Romans 8.18-24, and the covenantal connotations of Romans 10.4-10, 11.15, and 15.12. Finally, attention will return to Paul’s most famous of resurrection passages, 1 Corinthians 15, where his incorporation of eschatological motifs, especially that of ‘first fruits’ and of the Genesis creation accounts again indicates the broader eschatological framework within which Jesus’ post-mortem existence has been interpreted. This section will address neither the possible pre-Pauline formulation of vv.3-7, which was addressed in §6.2 when analysing the notion that the resurrection occurred according to Scripture, nor the question as to the nature of resurrected reality, which will be discussed in §6.6. The important point to note here is the early indications that Jesus’ post-mortem existence was interpreted as the fulfilment of the notion of ‘resurrection of the dead,’ encompassing a broad array of eschatological hopes, which would become increasingly prominent in the later biblical traditions as they were remembered and re-interpreted in new and evolving contexts, and which enabled the resurrection to be understood as bearing both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality.

Pre-Pauline Liturgy and the Exaltation of Jesus

The first passage to analyse is the Christ hymn of Philippians (2.6-11), which makes no mention of resurrection, despite detailing his death and Christ’s post-mortem existence, namely his vindication and subsequent exaltation. The provenance of this hymn is almost certainly pre-Pauline, though adapted by Paul to suit the theological needs of the letter.27 That Paul

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incorporated this passage approvingly is significant, for he upheld and actively promoted a doctrine of resurrection that signified broader eschatological aspects and was not restricted to the reanimation of individual bodies. Indeed, that he was comfortable incorporating a hymn which made no mention of resurrection as such but spoke purely in terms of exaltation suggests he viewed the category of ‘resurrection of the dead’ as encompassing exaltation and glorification.

As seen in the previous chapter, the theme of exaltation was inherently connected to the doctrine of resurrection; Jewish eschatology often hoped for the reversal of injustice, pain, and shame, with the pious being elevated to positions of glory and honour. This connection between exaltation and resurrection is reflected in Philippians 2.6-11, in the shame of Jesus’ death upon a cross, and his return to a place of high honour. Nickelsburg observes, “Although the hymn makes no reference to Jesus’ being ‘raised,’” resurrection’s frequent function as exaltation is central.”

In contrast to Jesus’ crucifixion (v.8), God ‘highly exalted’ him. The verb used is ὑπερψώσεν, a NT hapax legomenon and a stronger version of the simple ὑψόω, essentially meaning to ‘super-exalt.’ Joseph Hellerman argues that “we may assume that ὑπερψώσεν includes both the resurrection and ascension,” and Dennis Hamm argues that this “surely

Pauline language (e.g. ὀμοίωματι, άνθρωπος, θανάτου) indicates the probability that Paul adjusted the hymn. Significantly, as will be seen momentarily, if we were to remove the possible Pauline insertions, the exaltation motif would remain central. On these indicators, cf. Ben Witherington III, Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 139; Mark I. Wegener, “Philippians 2.6-11 – Paul’s (Revised) Hymn to Jesus,” Currents in Theology and Mission 25, no. 6 (1998), 508-15. Some, however, have argued that this hymn is a Pauline composition, including Gordon Fee and Adela Yarbro Collins (Gordon D. Fee, “Philippians 2:5-11: Hymn or Exalted Pauline Prose?” BBR 2 (1992), 29-46; Adela Yarbro Collins, “Psalms, Philippians 2:6-11, and the Origins of Christianity,” BibInt 11, no. 3/4 (2003), 361-72).


So defined by Todd D. Still, Philippians & Philemon (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 71; Joseph H. Hellerman, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament: Philippians (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2015), 119; Witherington III, Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, 151-52; Dennis Hamm SJ., Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 103. Aside from Phil. 2.8, ὑπερψώσεν is only found in Synesius’ Epistolographi 79 p. 225a and 1 Clem. 14.5, meaning to raise to a height. However, it is clear that has much greater significance than ὑψόω, which similarly means to raise high and to increase fame, position, power, and fortune (cf. Matt. 11.23; 23.12; Luke 1.52; 10.15; 14.11; 18.14; John 3.14; 8.28; 12.32; Acts 2.33; 2 Cor. 11.7; 1 Pet. 5.6). The preposition ὑπερ connotes excelling and surpassing (BDAG, 1030-31, 1034, 1045-46). The translation of ‘super-exalt’ seems fitting.

Hellerman, Philippians, 119.
alludes to Jesus’ resurrection.”\textsuperscript{31} Hence, though speaking primarily in terms of exaltation – a motif present elsewhere, particularly in Luke, Q, Hebrews, and much of the Deutero-Pauline literature – we know that Paul, on account of his regular reference to the resurrection elsewhere (including this very letter – Phil. 3.10-11), would have at least presupposed resurrection in his adoption of this hymn, indicating that Paul shared the Jewish tendency to treat resurrection in a malleable way and to refer to a range of eschatological themes.

This hymn could also reflect several other apocalyptic motifs. It could be expressing, according to Frederick Murphy, an Adamic Christology if read against Genesis 1-3. Where Adam was the ‘image’ of God, Jesus was in the ‘form’ of God; Adam sinned to be equal with God, whereas Jesus willingly gave up his equality.\textsuperscript{32} This is unlikely as the similarities are loose, and there is nothing here that explicitly connects Jesus to Adam or to the Genesis accounts. Swinburne connects this hymn to Wisdom literature that speaks of God’s Wisdom as an agent in creation.\textsuperscript{33} This is possible, as it is found elsewhere in the New Testament,\textsuperscript{34} but does not account for the description of Jesus’ post-mortem existence. It seems likely that this hymn is simply reflecting the apocalyptic hope for the exaltation of the faithful dead, despite using language other than resurrection. Hence, whatever happened to Jesus was not solely interpreted in terms of ‘resurrection’ from the very beginning, but Paul’s incorporation of this hymn indicates that the category of resurrection enveloped the broader spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope.

The ‘super’ exaltation of Jesus in this hymn should not be interpreted as his receiving a status or nature other than – or higher than – his previous status as bearing ‘equality with God’ (v.6), but that, rather, he has been given the highest possible position. David Moessner has

\textsuperscript{31} Hamm, \textit{Philippians, Colossians, Philemon}, 103. Hamm is, however, correct in asserting that the emphasis is on the status to which Jesus has been elevated.

\textsuperscript{32} Murphy, \textit{Apocalypticism}, 342-43.

\textsuperscript{33} Swinburne, \textit{The Resurrection of God Incarnate}, 112. Cf. 1 En. 42.1-2.

\textsuperscript{34} John’s prologue utilizes the divine \textit{logos}, Col. 1.15-20 might be a song of praise to Wisdom, and Q material might be drawing on Wisdom literature.
highlighted the importance of status for a first century Hellenistic culture, and how radically counter-intuitive the notion of Jesus’ ‘emptying’ himself of his status and being reduced to a shameful crucifixion would have been. The notion of class and status were then “turned completely ‘upside down’” in his exaltation. This is further seen in the giving to Jesus the name ‘Lord,’ a direct challenge to Caesar. The significance in this is that whatever happened to Jesus was interpreted as a major transformation of societal norms and practices, a transformation which, as was seen in Jesus’ dialogue with the Sadducees regarding marriage, was similarly connected to resurrection hope and hence goes well beyond the transformation of Jesus himself. More to the point, this passage is not a reference to Jesus’ resurrection per se, but is, rather, a reference to the same event to which resurrection also referred, described in this instance as the ancient Jewish eschatological expectation for the exaltation and glorification of the righteous martyrs.

Two other instances of pre-Pauline material that locate resurrection under a much wider eschatological umbrella, thereby indicating that resurrection cannot be reduced to the reanimation of a personal body are found in Romans. Romans 1.3b-4 is a possible pre-Pauline liturgical formulation which reflects a similar early tradition of connecting Jesus’ post-mortem existence with his exaltation and elevation to a new position of authority, in this instance adopting explicit resurrection language. This opening salutation includes the statement, “Who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead” (1.3b-4).

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36 Jeffrey A. Gibbs, “Christ is Risen, Indeed: Good News for Him, and for Us,” Concordia Journal 40, no. 2 (2014), 119-20; Marchal, “Expecting a Hymn, Encountering an Argument,” 248; Still, Philippians & Philemon, 72. Furthermore, the use of ‘Lord’ could well be a reference to the Tetragrammaton, the name YHWH which was translated as κύριος.

Christ hymn of Philippians, the theme of exaltation is central, as are the accompanying anti-
 imperial connotations. More specifically, the creed is concerned with Jesus’ status as Son of
God. Reflecting, perhaps, a similar tradition to Philippians 2.9-11, this creed asserts that Jesus’
post-mortem existence elevated him to a position of authority, namely ‘Son of God with
power.’ Though this declaration has to do with Jesus’ status, that as a result of the resurrection
he has received a new office or position, rather than asserting a form of adoptionism, there
is nevertheless a sense that something has changed. Though Murphy says too much in his
argument that it “is Christ’s resurrection that makes him a Son of God,” the eschatological
tone of the creed (seen particularly in the integration of the reference to the lineage of David,
the unusual appendage ‘with power,’ and especially the technical ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν) indicates that this new appointment of Jesus is indicative of a new, eschatological age,
inaugurated by the event to which the language of resurrection has been attributed.

For Schreiner, the primary indication that this creed envisages a new eschatological age is the
use of πνεῦμα, which he interprets as a reference to the Holy Spirit, recalling Joel 2.28.
However, as is the case in 1 Timothy 3.16, which will be addressed in §6.3, the contrast is
between the pre-resurrection and post-resurrection Jesus, and not comparing human physicality
with the Holy Spirit. The stress of this creed is upon the exaltation of Jesus that was
accomplished in his post-mortem existence. Furthermore, this is not, as has been suggested by

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Bates, “A Christology of Incarnation and Enthronement: Romans 1:3-4 as Unified, Nonadoptionist, and
39 On this interpretation, see Bates, “A Christology of Incarnation and Enthronement,” 125-27, and Schreiner,
Romans, 42. This is repeated in 10.9-10, where the creedal formula, ‘God raised him from the dead,’ is connected
with the proclamation that ‘Jesus is Lord,’ thereby asserting that in the event described as resurrection, Jesus is
40 On whether this creed expresses adoptionistic theology, see Jeffrey A. Gibbs, “Christ is Risen, Indeed: Good
News for Him, and for Us,” Concordia Journal 40, no. 2 (2014), 118; Swinburne, The Resurrection of God
Incarnate, 113.
41 Cf. Kruse, Paul’s Letter to the Romans, 46; Gibbs, “Christ is Risen, Indeed,” 118.
42 Murphy, Apocalypticism, 319.
43 Schreiner, Romans, 44.
some, a reference to the general resurrection. There is no indication of any subsequent resurrection following Jesus’. Rather, this is strictly referring to whatever happened to Jesus, namely resurrection from the dead which I have argued referred to the fulfilment of the broader spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope, further supported by the connection to the lineage of David and thus the covenantal promises.

Another pre-Pauline formulation in Romans that demonstrates an early propensity to interpret Jesus’ post-mortem existence as an event which extends well beyond Jesus’ personal reanimated body and functions as the fulfilment of ancient eschatological hopes is 4.25, which also explicitly uses resurrection language (in this instance the less technical ἠγέρθη). The creed echoes Isaiah 53, but the formulation of Jesus’ resurrection serving as the means for our justification is curious. It is conceivable that Jesus’ resurrection might be interpreted as his vindication, following his shameful crucifixion, but the extension of this to his followers only makes sense when understood in light of the broader resurrection hope, encompassing the full spectrum of eschatological expectations. In other words, in describing Jesus as having been raised, the creed interprets Jesus’ post-mortem existence as the inauguration of the new eschatological age, within which justice may be dispensed.

We learn from these few pre-Pauline liturgical or hymnal formulations that early traditions existed which interpreted Jesus’ post-mortem existence primarily in terms of exaltation, and that Paul’s approving incorporation of these formulations – and his lack of inserting explicit resurrection language into the Christ hymn of Philippians – indicates that he envisaged

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44 Ibid., 44; Matera, Romans, 30.
45 On this being a pre-Pauline creed, possibly baptismal liturgy, see Michael F. Bird, “‘Raised for our Justification’: A Fresh Look at Romans 4:25,” Colloquium 35, no. 1 (2003), 32. Bird highlights its two part structure, the use of διὰ instead of Paul’s more commonly used ὑπέρ, δικαίωσιν instead of δικαιοσύνη, and the reflection on the Suffering Servant, which is uncommon in Paul (2 Cor. 8.9 and Phil. 2.5-11 being potential exceptions, though the latter is probably pre-Pauline also). Also note the presence of ὃς. Cf. Schreiner, Romans, 243.
46 Bird argues similarly, that “in the resurrection of Christ the justification of the age to come has dawned” (Bird, “‘Raised for our Justification,’” 35-36.
resurrection as encompassing far more than a mere reanimation, but included broader themes of Jewish eschatological hope, particularly exaltation, the dispensation of justice, and the inauguration of a new eschatological reality. As seen in chapter two, these themes are often, in many systematic interpretations of the resurrection, either downplayed or ignored outright in order to emphasize the continuity of Jesus’ resurrected body with empirical reality, or elevated as the discontinuity of the resurrection is emphasized. We will see in the remainder of the Pauline corpus, and the Easter narratives in subsequent sections, that Jesus’ post-mortem existence, when interpreted through the framework of the ‘resurrection of the dead’ cannot be reduced to the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body (even if some sort of post-mortem existence is affirmed), upholding both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality.

Paul and the Eschatological New Age

Paul’s understanding of resurrection is the fulfilment of the Jewish eschatological hopes for Israel and the cosmos in general. In this, I am in agreement with Wright who notes that the redemption of Israel inaugurated “a new, unexpected period of history.”47 Herman Ridderbos similarly remarks, “What has taken place in Christ forms the termination and fulfillment of the great series of divine redemptive acts in the history of Israel.”48 Wright observes the presence in 1 Thessalonians 4.13-5.11 of several apocalyptic metaphors, including the imagery of clouds, reflecting Daniel 7.13, and of light and dark, the implied vindication of the covenant people, and also the general resurrection, indicating that Jesus’ post-mortem existence initiated the installation of a new eschatological reality. Furthermore, the meeting with Jesus in the air, coupled with the imagery of childbirth, suggests cosmic transformation and the joining of heaven and earth.49 This new eschatological age is reflected in the new life of Galatians 2.19-

47 Wright, RSG, 219.
49 Wright, RSG., 215-19. Lincoln notes, “Because of Christ’s resurrection, heaven has a new significance for Paul; its significance can be said to be no longer merely cosmological but Christocentric,” (Andrew T. Lincoln, Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul’s Thought with Special Reference to his
20 and Romans 5.10, the themes of vindication that suffuse Romans 1-4, the renewed cosmos in Romans 8.18-24, and the covenantal connotations of Romans 10.4-10, 11.15, and 15.12.\(^{50}\)

For Paul, says Wright, “The resurrection of Jesus, part of the divine plan to usher in ‘the age to come’ in place of ‘the present age’, is the beginning of the creator’s ‘new creation’, and gives retrospective meaning to Jesus’ death.”\(^{51}\) Wright has highlighted the way in which Paul draws together the diverse themes of Jewish eschatology into the framework of ‘resurrection,’ which makes it all the more surprising when Wright reduces Jesus’ resurrection to a re-animated body. Here, Wright’s critical realism demonstrates a reversion to a foundationalism which is simply not critical enough, failing to incorporate the broader eschatological connotations of resurrection. To be fair, 1 Thessalonians 4.13-5.11 is describing eschatological events still to come, rather than speaking explicitly of Jesus’ resurrection. However, these events are anticipated momentarily and connected to Jesus’ dying and rising in 4.13, and so arguably encompassed within Jesus’ post-mortem existence, a reality which goes well beyond a re-animated community of believers and foreshadows a re-created universe.

Paul’s most extensive treatment of Jesus’ resurrection, and his most explicit use of resurrection language, is 1 Corinthians 15 (mid-50’s CE), which we have returned to periodically already and to which we will return again in §6.6 when addressing the issue of the nature of the resurrected ‘body.’ The previous chapter analysed the way in which Paul was immersed in a Jewish eschatological framework which understood Jesus’ post-mortem existence as part and parcel of a broader notion of resurrection of the dead. Here, it is worth briefly exploring how

\(^{50}\) Wright, RSG, 220-74.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 224. Beale says something similar: “The fact that resurrection is a new-creational concept is clear in that a resurrected body is a newly created body to pass to the other side of the new creation. The coming new creation penetrated back into the old world through the resurrected body of Jesus,” (Beale, A New Testament Biblical Theology, 298). However, it is clear from this quote that, for Beale, this ‘new creation’ is interpreted in light of Jesus’ personal reanimated body.
Paul has utilized two other eschatological motifs in his interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and how he has integrated these into the category of ‘resurrection.’

The first of these motifs, that of ‘first fruits’ (15.20, 23), evokes the Levitical cultic practice of presenting a sheaf of the first fruits of harvest before the priest who in turn raises the sheaf before the Lord (Lev. 23.9-14). By using this imagery, Paul has the general resurrection in mind, in that Jesus represented the first of a bountiful harvest. Paul might be drawing on the same tradition from which the Gospel authors later drew that placed the resurrection on the prescribed day for the offering of first fruits, that is, the day after the Sabbath after Passover. The second motif has to do with the theme of cosmic re-creation, evident in the reference to the animals, the heavenly and the earthly, the sun, moon, and stars, the ‘first man,’ Adam, who was from the dust, and the bearing of an image (15.39-41, 45-49). As we have seen, the theme of creation was associated with the resurrection of the dead, and so it is not surprising to see this motif reflected here. While some commentators avoid the creation motif, Wright, to his credit, does not, claiming that this chapter is framed by the Genesis creation accounts, “an exposition of the renewal of creation.” The reference to Adam, the ‘first man,’ suggests that the renewal of humanity has come in and through Jesus, the ‘second man.’ Paul views Jesus’ resurrection as the renewal of creation, reminiscent of the Jewish texts which envisage an

52 Lunn, “ Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures,” 531; Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “Redemption and Resurrection: An Exercise in Biblical-Systematic Theology,” Themelios 27, no. 2 (2002), 18-19; Garland, 1 Corinthians, 705-06. Lincoln argues, “Heavenly existence has begun with the resurrection of Christ. The Corinthians can experience it now through the Spirit, but they are not yet fully heavenly. This will only occur when they bear fully the image of the heavenly man, that is, when their bodies share in heavenly existence,” (Lincoln, Paradise Now and Not Yet, 54). Though Lincoln highlights how the future resurrection and post-mortem existence of believers is characterised by that of Jesus, which is helpful, it is clear from this quote the extent to which Lincoln focuses on the personal body, which is unhelpful.

53 Such as David Garland, who lists the animals and heavenly bodies, and makes a minor reference to Gen. 1.20-27, but seemingly ignored the creation motif (Garland, 1 Corinthians, 730-31).

54 Wright, RSG, 313. He goes on to say, “This passage is, indeed, all about new creation as the fulfilment and redemption of the old” (p.334).

55 Felipe de Jesús Legarreta-Castillo argues that this is a deliberate allusion to the Fall. However, there is nothing in this passage that says anything explicitly negative about Adam. Paul’s emphasis is upon the contrast between the fleshly physicality of the original creation and the transformed glory of the new, renewed creation (Felipe de Jesús Legarreta-Castillo, The Figure of Adam in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15: The New Creation and Its Ethical and Social Reconfiguration (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 148-49). Cf. Wright, RSG, 342-47, 355.
antediluvian and paradisiacal reality (Hos. 2.18; Isa. 11.6-8; 65.25; Ezek 34.25-27; 1 En. 25.3-7; 61.12; 2 En. 8.1-8; 30.1; 42.4; T. Levi 18.10-11; Jub. 2.7; 4 Ezra 3.6; 6.26; 2 Bar. 4.3).

The use of a variety of images and motifs (including that of transformation, national redemption, and glorification, which were discussed in the previous chapter) demonstrates that Paul is doing more than focusing on Jesus’ personal reanimation, exaltation, or even upon the general resurrection of the faithful, but weaves them together, demonstrating that his understanding of ‘resurrection’ encompasses the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope, and that this is being fulfilled in Jesus’ post-mortem existence.

**Reflections on the Early Traditions**

In accordance with the PCR framework proposed in §4.4, and its stress (echoing social memory theories) upon analysing the development of ideas and interpretations of Jesus’ post-mortem existence as they were remembered in new contexts, this section has focused on the earliest interpretations of Jesus’ post-mortem existence before moving onto later interpretations to be analysed in subsequent sections. We learn that Paul’s understanding of Jesus’ resurrection encompassed far more than Jesus’ re-animated body, incorporating within the framework of resurrection a variety of eschatological hopes, the fulfilment of which had begun in Jesus’ resurrection. Paul interpreted Jesus’ post-mortem existence in terms of Jewish eschatology as the inauguration of a new reality to be accompanied imminently by the general resurrection and the arrival of the *eschaton*.

The Christ hymn of Philippians 2.6-11, which Paul adopted and repurposed, makes no mention of Jesus’ resurrection, referring instead to his exaltation, his elevation to a new position of authority in a transformed reality that includes all of creation (“every knee…in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue”). This exaltation is similarly reflected in another pre-Pauline liturgical formulation, Romans 1.3b-4, but which connects this directly to Jesus’
resurrection. We can assume then that Paul presupposed resurrection in Philippians 2.6-11, but understood this to encompass the eschatological hopes for an exalted post-mortem existence and the inauguration of a new age, an age characterised by justice (Rom. 4.25; 5.10; 1 Thess. 4.13-5.11; Gal. 2.19-20). This is again reflected in 1 Corinthians 15, where he envisages a transformation of reality and which, as will be seen in §6.5, bears both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality.

The most significant way that these early resurrection traditions differ from the later more developed traditions (found particularly in the Johannine literature, the deutero-Pauline epistles, Hebrews, and the Petrine Epistles) is that Paul anticipates the imminent fulfilment of the events to accompany the eschaton, not least being the general resurrection. This is especially evident in Paul’s claim that “we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died,” and “we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together” (1 Thess. 4.15, 17). Jesus’ resurrection was the beginning of the end-time events. Furthermore, the messianic community – the church – is a unity, indeed united in and as Jesus’ body (1 Cor. 12.12). As a unity, resurrection is expected as a corporate event involving the entire people of God. For Paul, the resurrection of a sole individual was an impossibility, for such an occurrence would constitute an aberration of his Jewish expectations. Jesus’ resurrection is thus inseparable from that of the early Jesus followers (seen also in the first fruits analogy of 1 Cor. 15.20, 23), and so their resurrection should be occurring within a short time. Moreover, for Paul, Jesus’ post-mortem existence is ushering in the eschatological expectations for the end of history, whereas the later New Testament traditions came to interpret this event as their fulfilment.

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56 Other verses that demonstrate an expectation of an imminent Parousia include 1 Thess. 1.10; 1 Cor. 1.7-8; 15.20; Phil. 3.20. Cf. Nickelsburg, Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life, 232; Madigan and Levenson, Resurrection, 21, 27.
57 Madigan and Levenson, Resurrection, 34-35.
6.4. Synoptic Traditions: Resurrection and Eschatological Hope

The synoptic tradition reflects a development in resurrection theology, as various early Christian communities reflected upon Jesus’ post-mortem existence and incorporated an even broader array of eschatological themes in a narrativized form. The expectation of an imminent eschaton is less pronounced than in Paul’s corpus (the Olivet Discourse – Mark 13 // Matt. 24-25 // Luke 21 – being a possible exception) but has not yet reached the tendency of later traditions to view Jesus’ post-mortem existence as constituting the ultimate fulfilment of broader eschatological hopes. Within a PCR framework, the focus is upon the reciprocal interaction between external event and prior frameworks and how this is re-interpreted as it is remembered and recounted in evolving and changing contexts. This begins to become clear through the synoptic texts, especially Matthew and Luke, as the Parousia and the events expected with the eschaton are gradually understood to have been delayed. There is, of course, some development within the Pauline corpus itself, especially seen in 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 which addresses the question of why the Parousia has not yet happened and provides encouragement that those who have already died will still experience the benefits of resurrection. However, this development is less pronounced than the development seen in the Synoptics. Hence, the event of Jesus’ post-mortem existence is reinterpreted as memory is intertwined with prior eschatological categories, categories which consequently change.

The following section analyses the synoptic accounts of resurrection and the various traditions therein. Mark incorporates the empty tomb tradition (absent in Paul) but curiously does not include a risen Jesus, implying a risen body but not describing it, indicating that for Mark, resurrection encompasses far more than a personal return to a bodily existence and that Jesus’ resurrection is the inauguration of a new age. 58 A comparison of Matthew and Luke highlights

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58 It has been suggested – particularly by Bultmann – that Mark’s transfiguration account was a displaced resurrection narrative. The validity of this suggestion will be assessed in this section. It is argued that though the
how they have developed along different paths, demonstrating how interpretation of an event develops within different communities as recollection collides with different contexts. Both adopt the empty tomb tradition and incorporate the appearance traditions, but Luke is much more restrained with regard to eschatological motifs, opting for simpler apocalyptic imagery than Matthew, preferring to highlight Jesus’ exaltation as the Son of Man and his elevation to a role of authority in a new world order. Matthew, on the other hand, adorns his imagery with dramatic elaboration and apocalyptic imagery. In both cases, however, the post-mortem existence of Jesus is described in the eschatological language of the ancient Jewish category of resurrection, particularly the inauguration of a new eschatological age. Within this new reality, the exalted Jesus is Lord.

Mark

Assuming the majority position of Markan authority, Mark’s Easter account (late 60’s CE) is thought to be the earliest account of the resurrection in narrative form. It is also the shortest and least theologically adorned, and reflects the earliest empty tomb tradition. Mark 16 has created considerable controversy and debate, particularly surrounding its multiple endings which were almost certainly later additions. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage in debates surrounding the ‘shorter’ or ‘longer’ endings of Mark, and I simply follow the conventional position, that the original concluded at v.8. Furthermore, the narrative itself is

transfiguration was not a misplaced resurrection narrative, there are definite connections with resurrection and provides clues to how Mark’s Easter narrative might be understood.

59 There are of course issues with ending the chapter at v.8, the major issue being the brevity of the resurrection narrative and the absence of Jesus himself, despite the regular foreshadowing of the resurrection throughout the Gospel (6.14; 8.31; 9.9, 30-31; 10.33-34; 12.18-27; 14.58). However, this could well be intentional, to leave the reader uncomfortable, reflecting the evangelist’s inability to explain with any certainty precisely what actually happened to Jesus. The narratives within vv.9-20 seem to be later insertions, probably drawing on other widely known, later developed traditions that are present in the other Gospels, perhaps included as a solution to the abrupt ending of Mark, or possibly to replace an ending that had been lost. Cf. Moloney’s argument for the shorter ending (Francis J. Moloney, The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 339-41) and France’s argument that the chapter did not end at v.8 (R. T. France, The Gospel of Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 670-74). There is very little in the extended ending which would be of particular relevance for the topic at hand.
rather perplexing: it is unclear who rolls away the stone or how;\textsuperscript{60} Jesus himself is absent; the tone of the narrative is one of confusion and fear; it ends abruptly; and we do not know if the women actually told anyone (although presumably they did given the subsequent birth of the church). The presence of these baffling elements and the lack of theological adornment may be reflective of Mark’s relatively early tradition when compared to subsequent Gospels.\textsuperscript{61}

Despite the lack of extended theological reflection, this short narrative is not devoid of eschatological character. Mark reflects a tradition similar to Paul, that Jesus’ post-mortem existence was the inauguration of a new eschatological age. Unlike Paul, Mark has narrativized this motif and integrated it with an empty tomb tradition. It is unclear whether the empty tomb is a pre-Markan tradition or a Markan innovation, but given the lack of an apologetic character (it is not an attempt to prove Jesus’ physicality, for example), it would seem to reflect an earlier tradition, albeit one that Paul either did not know about or did not consider relevant. In either case, Mark is using the context of the discovery of an empty tomb to present Jesus’ resurrection as the start of a new age, signified by the women discovering the tomb “very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen” (16.2), almost gratuitous detail considering the brevity of the passage.\textsuperscript{62} The reference to the rising sun recalls the darkness that accompanied Jesus’

\textsuperscript{60} In this regard Roger David Aus has suggested that the narrative of Jacob rolling the large stone away from the well in Genesis 29.1-14 serves as background for Mark 16.1-8 (Aus, The Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus, and the Translation of Moses in Judaic Tradition, 176-97).

\textsuperscript{61} Dale Allison reflects, “Maybe the odd paucity of clear theological and apologetical features in Mark’s text is a hint – not strong evidence but a hint, a fragment of a clue – that there is some history behind it, that it was not simply the product of the Christian imagination” (Allison, Resurrecting Jesus, 321).

\textsuperscript{62} Richard France notes that Mark makes no note of when the resurrection itself actually occurred, only when the tomb was discovered to be empty. However, Mark places a great deal of significance upon the time of this event, implying that this timing is not trivial (R. T. France, The Gospel of Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 678).
death in 15.33, and the rising of the sun in 16.2 functions as a metaphor for the rising of Jesus. In this event, the new eschatological age has dawned.

Furthermore, the narrative might be illustrating an assumption interpretation of Jesus’ fate, that is, he was assumed into heaven in a similar manner to Elijah (2 Kgs. 2.11) and Enoch (Gen. 22-24). The absence of either a body or a risen Jesus seems to suggest this interpretation, particularly if we connect Mark’s transfiguration account, which mentions Elijah and Moses, to Jesus’ resurrection (an idea addressed momentarily). However, there are two elements of Mark’s narrative which are incongruous with other assumption narratives: the fact that Jesus died and was buried, rather than being taken up into heaven prior to death, and the presence of resurrection language, the inclusion of ἠγέρθη (‘to rise’), which is foreign to assumption narratives because resurrection would be superfluous. Daniel Smith offers the solution that Mark incorporated two traditions, that of assumption and that of resurrection. Jesus’ disappearance means that he has been raised. The absence of Jesus in the narrative is a curiosity, especially as his presence would have been a particularly helpful inclusion if Mark’s intention was to frame Jesus’ post-mortem existence as the reanimation of his personal body. Jesus’ absence, on the other hand, might suggest that resurrection signified more than a return to a bodily existence; Mark is capable of using the language of resurrection without including a risen Jesus in his narrative. Mark’s Easter narrative is a good example of how, in Dale

I am hesitant to connect, as Brendan Byrne does, this darkness to the primordial darkness of Gen. 1, explicitly recalling creation (Brendan Byrne, A Costly Freedom: A Theological Reading of Mark’s Gospel (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008), 254). There might be a creation motif present, considering the mention of “the first day of the week,” but it is not explicit in this narrative, and is not a common motif elsewhere in the Gospel. The later Easter narratives – especially John – do, however, incorporate this theme.

Dane Ortlund, “‘Rising’ Language in Mark and the Dawning New Creation,” CTR 13, no. 2 (2016), 27-45. Ortlund connects this specifically to Jesus’ bodily resurrection, in light of the emptiness of the tomb (p.42-43). However, the lack of Jesus’ actual body casts doubt on this interpretation.

This has been argued by Daniel Smith, who also argues that this is evident in the Q material, which will be addressed below. If this is true, there might some connection between the pre-Markan and Q traditions. (Daniel A. Smith, The Post-Mortem Vindication of Jesus in the Sayings Gospel Q (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 160-62).

Of course, there is always the possibility that the true ending of Mark’s Gospel has indeed been lost, which might have included an extended resurrection narrative.
Allison’s words, “historical memories can be pressed down and shaken together with mythological motifs.”

The absence of an actual body in Mark’s narrative might be explained by Mark’s account of the transfiguration (9.2-8) being a misplaced resurrection narrative. Bultmann in particular was an advocate for this interpretation of the transfiguration. This is suggested by the presence of apocalyptic features, such as the two figures of Elijah and Moses, the mountain location, shining garments, the presence of supernatural beings, and the demonstration of God’s glory. If this is so, the argument that ‘resurrection’ should not be reduced to a personal reanimation but functions as the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of ancient Jewish eschatological hope and is characterised by both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality is strengthened. Furthermore, according to tradition, Moses never died (cf. Deu. 34.5-6) but was taken up to heaven, and Elijah was taken up in whirlwind in 2 Kings 2.11. In fact, Roger Aus suggests that Moses’ presence in this narrative makes very little sense unless it is understood in connection to the Judaic tradition of Moses’ assumption. If this transfiguration account is a misplaced resurrection narrative, the presence of these two figures might support the argument that Mark depicts an assumption of Jesus.

68 Allison, Resurrecting Jesus, 305.
72 Some, such as Focant, Smith, and Stein, have suggested that Moses and Elijah here represent the Law and Prophets, respectively, and so Jesus is the fulfilment of the Jewish Scriptures. This too would strengthen my thesis if this is, in fact, a resurrection account. However, it seems unlikely that these two figures represent the Law and the Prophets for several reasons: Elijah was not a writing prophet and was a champion of the law against idolatry, and Moses was not just the giver of the Law but was also considered a great prophet. Of course, these are not definitive arguments, and the presence of these two figures (especially Elijah, who is connected to the Day of the Lord in Malachi 4.5) gives this narrative a markedly eschatological tone. Those who argue for Moses and Elijah representing the Law and Prophets: Camille Focant, The Gospel According to Mark: A Commentary, trans. Leslie Robert Keylock (Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 355; Robert H. Stein, Mark (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 417; Morton Smith, “The Origin and History of the Transfiguration Story,” USQR 36, no. 1 (1980), 42. Those who argue against: Dorothy A. Lee, Transfiguration (London: Continuum, 2004), 17-18; David E. Garland, A Theology of Mark’s Gospel (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 302.
However, it is unlikely that the transfiguration account was a misplaced resurrection narrative, and does not seem to have many advocates in contemporary scholarship. For C. Clifton Black, this assertion leaves more questions than answers, such as what benefit would Mark have of putting this heavenly confirmation of Jesus’ identity here rather than with his resurrection? For Mark L. Strauss, George Aichele and Richard Walsh, and Robert H. Stein, the differences between the transfiguration and resurrection narratives are too great: in the transfiguration account, Jesus is silent, but speaks in Matthew and Luke’s post-resurrection narratives; in the transfiguration Jesus was initially with his disciples before ascending the mountain alone, whereas in the resurrection narratives, Jesus is initially absent and then suddenly appears, joining the disciples; Jesus is easily recognized in the transfiguration despite the change (which, furthermore, is only temporary) but is not in the resurrection; there is no voice from heaven in the resurrection narratives; no resurrection narrative has Jesus with Peter, James, and John and this trio is not mentioned by Paul 1 Corinthians 15.3-4.

Despite these differences, the similarities cannot be ignored. Though we might not be able to say with certainty that the transfiguration account is a misplaced resurrection narrative, we can say that they are connected, with the transfiguration foreshadowing Jesus’ resurrection. In particular, this narrative depicts Jesus’ coming glorification and the transformation of his nature accordingly. Whiteness and luminous transformation are common descriptions of the righteous (Dan. 7.9; 1 En. 104.2; 4 Esd. 7.97), and clouds were symbols of God’s presence and glory (Exod. 19.9, 16). Some commentators have extrapolated from this the revelation of Jesus’ —

divinity. I am less confident in this interpretation, as the imagery primarily depicts *glorification* rather than *deification*, as that imagery is not always applied to God (e.g. Dan. 12.3). However, the transfiguration is depicting the exaltation of Jesus, an eschatological theme connected to the notion of resurrection and the new eschatological reality. This is accompanied by the metamorphosis of Jesus. Mark 9.2 and Matthew 17.2 use the verb μεταμορφώθη (‘metamorphosis’) but was translated by William Tyndale, John Wycliffe, and the KJV as ‘transfigured,’ which Aichele and Walsh argue downplays the transformation of Jesus’ physicality. ‘Transfiguration,’ they insist, implies little more than a shift in perspective, whereas ‘metamorphosis’ implies a radical change of both body and identity.

Even if we don’t view the transfiguration account as a misplaced resurrection narrative, the two are connected, with the former providing clues as to how Mark’s Easter narrative should be interpreted, namely as one that connects Jesus’ post-mortem existence with the much broader spectrum of ancient Jewish eschatological hope, implying that his resurrection entailed his glorification and a radical transformation. This transformation includes a considerable change of what constitutes a body (echoing Paul’s discussion of the various bodies in 1 Corinthians 15.35-58), which *might* be why there is no body in Mark’s Easter narrative.

Before continuing, it is worth mentioning Mark 6.14-16, where Elijah is again connected to the idea of resurrection. In this account, Herod, upon hearing of the success of Jesus’ ministry, mistakenly believes Jesus to in fact be John the Baptist returned from the grave. Some others believe him to be Elijah while still others suppose him to be one of the prophets. Resurrection

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78 Though the main point to take from this is that the empty tomb does not necessarily entail a physical reanimation.

79 For an extensive analysis of John the Baptist functioning as an Elijah figure, cf. Joel Marcus, *John the Baptist in History and Theology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2018), 46-61.
here seems to be discussed without the larger eschatological connotations and, given the graphically physical description of John’s execution, seems to envisage a bodily, material resurrection. However, Herod’s assumption is historically problematic, as the careers and lives of John and Jesus overlapped; for Jesus to be the risen John, Jesus would need to have appeared after John’s death. I interpret this passage then as a narratological tool: John is a precursor to Jesus. This is of course a common motif in the Synoptics, and so is not out of place here. This passage foreshadows the question of Jesus’ identity and his predictions of his death and resurrection (8.27-31) and ultimately the Passion narrative itself.

As a narratological tool, it is therefore impossible to discern from Mark 6.14-16 anything concrete about whether or not anyone did in fact think of ‘resurrection’ without the broader eschatological connotations. R. T. France claims, “To call Jesus the ‘resurrected John’ is, therefore, better seen not as the articulation of a thought-out ‘doctrine’ of resurrection (still less involving any idea of reincarnation), but as a rather clumsy but vivid way of expressing a sense of continuity.” This is strengthened by the possibility, as suggested by Joel Marcus, that John the Baptist saw himself as an Elijah figure (strongly implied in John 3.27-30) and so likely saw Jesus as Elisha. As Elisha succeeded Elijah (1 Kings 19.16), so Jesus succeeded John the Baptist. Of course, this Elijah-Elisha typology is present primarily in the later Gospel traditions, but Marcus insists that “it did not come out of nowhere” and that it is historically likely that John did in fact see himself as Elijah and his disciple, Jesus, as Elisha.

82 Markus Bockmuehl is certainly correct in his claim that passages such as this allude to the possibility that a first century Jew might think of an individual being resurrected (the diversity of beliefs regarding resurrection was discussed in the previous chapter). However I maintain that it is very difficult to ascertain significant detail regarding a resurrection ‘doctrine’ from this passage alone (Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, “Compleat History of the Resurrection: A Dialogue with N. T. Wright,” JSNT 26, no. 4 (2004), 500-501).
84 Marcus, John the Baptist, 87-89.
However, even if we take this account at face value, it serves only to further distinguish Jesus’ resurrection from these other accounts of people returning to life, mistaken or not. The accounts of Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, and Herod’s assumption that John has risen from the dead, are devoid of the eschatological connotations that were connected with Jesus’ post-mortem existence.85 Rather than indicating that a pervasive understanding of resurrection of the dead existed in the first century that was not connected to a broader array of eschatological themes, we can learn from passages such as Mark 6.14-16 (if we momentarily set aside the narratological function of the passage) that first century Jews had ways of speaking about the reanimation of personal bodies. That Jesus’ post-mortem existence was described in a dramatically different fashion indicates that it was an event of an entirely different sort.

**Matthew and Luke**

Turning to the Easter narratives in Matthew and Luke (80-90 CE), we see how the two have incorporated Jewish eschatological concepts into their retelling of the various traditions surrounding Jesus’ resurrection, but do so in quite different ways. Matthew emphasizes the apocalyptic character of ‘resurrection,’ whereas Luke emphasizes the exaltation of Jesus. Luke continues this emphasis in Acts. Yet both Matthew and Luke incorporate a wide variety of traditions: the empty tomb (Matt. 28.1-5 // Luke 24.1-12 // cf. Mark 16.1-8), the presence of angels in the tomb (Matt. 28.2-7 // Luke 24.4-7 // cf. Mark 16.5-7), the exaltation and glorification of Jesus (Matt. 28.16-20 // Luke 24.30-32, 44, 50-52; Cf. Phil. 2.6-11; 1 Tim. 3.16; Col. 1.15-20), and the appearances to the disciples (Matt. 28.16-17 // Luke 24.36-43; 1 Cor. 15.3-8);86 Luke includes Q’s use of Son of Man (Luke 24.7; cf. Q 12.8-9; 17.22-24), the

85 If Mark 6.14-16 were not an account of a mistaken identity we might see some eschatological significance in the reference to Elijah and the ‘miraculous powers’ at work in Jesus.

86 Luke 24.34 might well be an earlier pre-Lukan formula, as there is nothing in Luke’s account that indicates that Jesus appeared to Peter (or, apparently, to any other disciple) or that anyone else should know of this appearance. Its inclusion reflects the traditional prioritizing of Peter. This demonstrate that the appearance traditions had entered communal memory from an early stage.
prioritizing of the appearance to Peter (Luke 24.12; cf. Mark 16.7; Luke 24.34; 1 Cor. 15.3), and the belief that resurrection fulfilled Scripture (Luke 24.25-27; cf. 1 Cor. 15.4). For the present argument, it is important to note how these texts demonstrate propensity for some early members of the Jesus movement to seek out and employ a variety of eschatological motifs within their interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, with the category of resurrection encompassing an array of eschatological hopes. For both Matthew and Luke, Jesus’ post-mortem existence is not simply a personal re-animated body, but suggests a new eschatological reality has been inaugurated, with the exalted Jesus as ruler.

Matthew and Luke suggest that the tomb was discovered empty at dawn on the first day of the week. Assuming Markan priority, this reflects the prior tradition of contrasting the dawn of Jesus’ resurrection with the darkness at his crucifixion, as both Matthew and Luke similarly include a reference to darkness covering the land as Jesus died (Matt. 27.45 // Luke 23.44). As with Mark, I suggest that this detail evokes connotations of the dawning of a new age. This is reinforced in Matthew by the inclusion of several apocalyptic elements. The angels, for example, reflect traditional theophanies, particularly Matthew’s description of the ‘angel of the Lord,’ whose ‘appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow’ and who inspired fear, though Luke’s two angels are described more simply, as wearing ‘dazzling clothes.’

Matthew’s inclusion of the saints rising from their tombs (27.51-54), the earthquake (28.2) – Earthquakes are a common apocalyptic image depicting a tumultuous and destructive end of the age (Isa. 26.9; Ezek. 38.18; Zech. 14.5; Hag. 2.6-7; Joel 3.1-2, 9-16; 2 Esdras 9.3; 2 Baruch 70.8; Rev. 6.12) – and Matthew’s overall focus upon Jesus as Messiah further reinforces the

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87 The fact that Luke and John’s accounts includes two angels, rather than one, as in Mark and Matthew, is a curiosity, but could be the result of the development of the tradition in communal memory, or it could be that Mark and Matthew did not include a second angel which was present in the original tradition. After all, Mark and Matthew do not specify the precise number of angels present. There doesn’t appear to be any particular significance attached to the number of angels.

88 On similar theophanies, where the description of lightning, brightness, and white clothing are present, cf. Dan. 7.9; 10.5-6; 4 Ezra 10.25-27; 1 En. 14.20; 71.1; 3 En. 22.9; T. Levi 8.2; Rev. 10.1. Cf. Keener, The Gospel of Matthew, 700; Sim, Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew, 143.
interpretation that for Matthew, whatever happened to Jesus marked the start of the new eschatological age.\footnote{According to Wright, “With the combined events of Jesus’ death and resurrection the new age, for which Israel had been longing, has begun,” (Wright, RSG, 635).}

For Luke, however, though he adopted the first day of the week motif, little is said of this new eschatological age coming through Jesus’ resurrection. Allison suggests this could be due to a polemic against an over realized eschatology or proto-gnostic theologies held by competing groups of Christians.\footnote{Allison, The End of the Ages Has Come, 74-79.} However, Luke does see in Jesus’ post-mortem existence the inauguration of a new world order and the exaltation of Jesus to a new position of authority. As we have seen elsewhere, the exaltation of Jesus involved the receiving of a new name and new office (Phil. 2.9-11; Col. 1.15-20; Rom. 1.3-4). This is implied in the titles of Messiah and Lord applied to Jesus (Luke 24.26, 34, 46), the repeated claim that what had happened to him was the fulfilment of ancient promise (24.6, 27),\footnote{Jesus teaching the disciples en route to Emmaus reflects the twelve year old Jesus teaching in the temple (2.41-51), where had been for three days.} and his ascension into heaven (24.50-53).

However, it should be noted that a dying Messiah was essentially an oxymoron; though these categories were applied to Jesus, they were re-interpreted around him due to, I suggest, the eschatological significance attributed to his post-mortem existence.

The theme of Jesus’ exaltation continues through Acts and is repeatedly connected to the Holy Spirit, a prominent motif in Luke-Acts which drives the so-called Christian mission. The most common way of referring to the resurrection in Acts is part of the formula: the Jews crucified Jesus; God raised him from the dead (Acts 2.23-24; 3.15; 4.10; 5.30; 10.39-40; 13.29-30). This formula is significant as it reflects the reversal of injustice, rewarding the righteous martyr, a common motif in Jewish apocalyptic and is somewhat ironic that it is used in Acts as an indictment against the Jews.\footnote{Furthermore, it indicates a later dating for Acts, in that the Jews were negatively depicted as opposing Jesus and his followers.} Further, it recalls the humiliation-exaltation formula that we
have already seen in Philippians 2.6-11. One such example of this formula is in Peter’s speech following the coming of the Holy Spirit in 2.22-24, and partially repeated in v.32. The significance of resurrection in this speech explaining the coming of the Spirit reveals that Pentecost was, for Luke, inherently connected to Jesus’ resurrection; Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2.28) has been applied to the fate of Jesus, and Pentecost has been interpreted in terms of resurrection. Furthermore, in this event Jesus has been ‘made’ Lord and Messiah (2.36), being exalted to a new position of authority. This is particularly significant as it is another instance where resurrection encompasses more than the reanimation of a personal body. Whatever happened to Jesus was interpreted – at least in the Lukan tradition – as being inherently connected to the coming of the Spirit and hence also the inauguration of the new eschatological age.

At this point it is also worth noting the presence of the ascension narrative in Luke-Acts, the only explicit recording of this event in the New Testament canon. Some other texts occasionally seem to not make a distinction between resurrection and ascension (Rom. 8.34; Eph. 1.19-20; Col. 3.1; Phil. 2.9-11; 1 Tim. 3.16; 1 Pet. 3.21-22), but Luke very deliberately separates these events. Though a distinction is implied in the post-resurrection narratives of Matthew and John, it is somewhat curious that they do not explicitly recount Jesus’ being ‘carried up into heaven’ (Luke 24.51). However, it makes sense when read in light of Luke’s emphasis upon the exaltation of Jesus; the ascension is an extension of the glorification of Jesus present in his resurrection. As has been argued above (cf. §5.2), this glorification is an integral theme of the

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93 Cf. Schnabel, Acts, 140-41; Luke Timothy Johnson, Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 62. I disagree with Darrell Bock who compares 24.32-33 with 1 Cor. 15.3-5, arguing that in both instances resurrection is seen as “a historical fact like the death and burial, not an interpretation of an event. The resurrection is not a symbol or a metaphor for anything” (Bock, Acts, 130). The apologetic character of these passages indeed demonstrates the authors’ desire to present Jesus’ resurrection as occurring within history, but that does not mean that they are not interpreting the event or suggesting that it is a metaphor. The very fact that they apply the language of resurrection to this event demonstrates that they have, in fact, interpreted it.

94 As well as the implications present in Jesus’ own words: John 3.13; 6.62; 20.17.
notion of resurrection of the dead, and Luke has narrativized this as a way of explaining, as Wright understands the ascension, the missing body and empty tomb. The ascension reflects the language of Daniel 7, of the Son of Man being exalted to sit beside the Ancient One.95 Douglas Farrow maintains, “If in the resurrection Jesus is already transfigured and transformed…in the ascension he is also translated or relocated,” defining the ascension as “a transformative relocation into a time and space and mode of life defined by full participation in the trinitarian economy.”96 Farrow thus essentially views the ascension as a second act of transformation, reinforced in his claim that, “In the ascension God does something quite new with and for the man Jesus.”97 This, I believe, is problematic, as it sets the resurrection and ascension in opposition, raising doubts about those passages which speak of Jesus’ exaltation without using the explicit language of resurrection. Furthermore, Paul does not speak in terms of the future ascension of believers, but of their resurrection.98 The need to see in the ascension a new, or second, act of transformation is the result of having to deal with the problem of an ascending body, one seen primarily in terms of continuity with the pre-crucifixion body. Hence, I contend, the ascension only makes sense if it is seen as an extension of the event that came to be described as Jesus’ resurrection, reflecting the unification of continuity and discontinuity. Jesus, whose existence is, in some sense, continuous with his pre-crucifixion existence, is ascending into heaven.

95 Wright, RSG, 654-56. Wright elsewhere argues, “Part of the point of the resurrection in the New Testament, as I understand it, is not that Jesus died and was bodily raised to heaven…That’s precisely not what’s going on. The collapsing of resurrection and ascension into one another in a lot of popular New Testament scholarship, I think, just misses the point entirely,” (Wright in Robert B. Stewart, ed. The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright in Dialogue (London: SPCK, 2006), 42).
97 Ibid., 44.
98 Furthermore, it would then become difficult to make sense of Paul’s claim that his witness to the risen Jesus was of the same sort as the other appearance accounts, in that, in the Luke-Acts narrative, he encountered the risen Jesus after Jesus’ ascension.
According to the four-source hypothesis, the Q source refers to the material shared by Matthew and Luke that is not present in Mark, possibly reflecting an early collection of Jesus’ sayings and teachings, and reflects another early tradition recounting the life of Jesus, particularly his teachings, and says nothing explicit about Jesus’ death or resurrection. However, there are instances in this material that seem to imply his death and resurrection. Accordingly, we might treat Q as another, independent, example of an early Christian tradition discussing the post-mortem existence of Jesus without the use of explicit resurrection language, and while maintaining the same connotations that were encompassed by the belief in Jesus’ resurrection. It is important not to belabour the point; Jesus’ post-mortem existence is only implied in Q, and there is certainly no particular resurrection tradition (though this is not surprising given that Q is a sayings source and not narrative).

Though there is neither a Passion or Easter narrative nor any resurrection prophecies in the Q material, several passages seem to indicate a knowledge of Jesus’ death (Q 6.22-23; 11.47-51; 13.34-35; 14.27),99 framed by the Deuteronomistic tradition of the persecution of the prophets, rather than drawing on the tradition of viewing Jesus as righteous sufferer.100 John Kloppenborg’s insistence that “there is no reason at all to suppose that those responsible for the formation and transmission of Q were unaware of…[Jesus’s] death,”101 is overstating the case,102 but it is hard to imagine that members of the early Jesus movement, amongst whom multiple Passion and Easter traditions had already circulated, could hear the words, “Whoever

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99 I here adopt the convention of using Luke to refer to the Q material.
100 Cf. John S. Kloppenborg, “‘Easter Faith’ and the Sayings Gospel Q,” Semeia 49 (1990), 81. Kloppenborg further observes, “In Q we seem to be at a very primitive stage of theologizing the experience of persecution. Jesus’ fate evidently was not yet an issue which required special comment.”
102 It is, after all, impossible to determine with certainty what a hypothetical source was either aware or unaware of, especially when taking into consideration the difficulties associated with ascertaining the origins of this source material.
does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Q 14.27), and not be reminded of Jesus’ crucifixion.103

Similarly, there is no explicit reference to resurrection, but it could be implied in various passages. Q 11.31-32 concerns judgment but claims that the Queen of the South will be raised (ἐγερθήσεται) and the Ninevites will also arise (ἀναστήσονται). Smith argues that this envisages the general resurrection, which is not implausible as resurrection was often the prelude to, or the means of, judgment.104 Wright sees something similar in Q 3.8, where God will raise (ἐγείρατο) up a chosen family, 12.4-10, where the faithful need not fear the loss of body, 13.28-30, where many will come from all over to eat with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, 17.33, where the challenge to martyrdom could imply the promise of resurrection (reflecting 2 Macc. 7), and 22.30, where Jesus and all within the 12 tribes are gathered for judgment.105 However, Wright does tend, once again, to emphasize the personal and individual nature of the resurrection here, as with the physicality implied in the act of eating, rather than focusing on the larger eschatological motif of divine judgment.

It should be noted that ἐγείρω (‘to raise’) and its cognates are not used exclusively to refer to a subject rising from the dead – it is used to refer to waking from sleep (Matt. 1.24; Mark 4.27), getting up to move (Matt. 2.13; Mark 14.41-42; John 11.29; Acts 12.7; Rev. 11.1), nations rising against nations (Matt. 24.7), physically standing up (Luke 5.23; John 13.4; Acts 9.8), and increasing in quantity (Phil. 1.17) – and so its presence in Q does not necessarily refer to resurrection.106 On the other hand, ἀνάστασις is almost exclusively used to refer to the

104 Smith, The Post-Mortem Vindication of Jesus, 22.
106 BDAG lists thirteen different definitions of ἐγείρω, including awaking from sleep or causing someone to wake (Matt. 1.24; 8.25; Mark 4.27, 38; John 11.12; Acts 12.7; Rom. 13.11), to cause someone to physically stand up (Acts 3.7; Mark 1.31; 9.27; Acts 10.26; Matt. 12.11; 1 Clem. 59.4), and to cause to come into existence (T. Levi 18.2; Luke 1.69; Matt. 3.9; Acts 13.22; Phil. 1.17).
resurrection (Luke 2.34 is the one exception), and so Q 11.32 is a probable reference to eschatological resurrection. Furthermore, references to the Patriarchs and twelve tribes recalls the covenantal promises, as opposed to envisaging a post-mortem existence. However, the cumulative effect suggests that Jesus’ teachings were interpreted eschatologically. Again, this does not immediately equate to an expectation of resurrection, but the presence of resurrection language and the call to martyrdom, framed by divine judgment and covenantal promise indicates that Jesus’ teachings were likely interpreted within the framework of the eschatological notion of resurrection from the dead. It seems these themes were common in resurrection theology, even if resurrection is not been explicitly mentioned in Q.

The most notable passage in Q to imply resurrection is the sign of Jonah (Q 11.29-30). It is especially explicit in Matthew’s version: “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12.40). Followed by the saying of the Queen of the South and the Ninevites rising to deliver judgment, this sign almost certainly evokes resurrection. Given the presence of the three day motif, the similarities between the story of Jonah and Jesus’ descent into darkness and subsequent return, and Matthew’s interpretation of the Son of Man residing ‘in the heart of the earth’ (ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ τῆς γῆς), this saying gestures towards Jesus’ resurrection. Hence, Jesus’ teaching seems to have been interpreted within a pre-existing Jewish eschatological framework, where resurrection is connected a broad spectrum of hopes.

_The Risen Saints_

Another distinctly apocalyptic element that Matthew incorporates into his narration of Jesus’ death and post-mortem existence is the curious inclusion of a particularly confounding passage

that recounts Jesus’ death as being accompanied by a number of saints rising from their tombs and appearing to people in Jerusalem (Matt. 27.51-54). All the more perplexing is the inclusion of a chronological gap between their rising and their coming out of the tombs following Jesus’ resurrection. This passage demonstrates the degree to which the interpretation and memory of Jesus’ post-mortem existence had become intertwined with apocalyptic thought. In accordance with PCR, I highlight here how this apocalyptic thought shaped the resurrection narrative, as this event was interpreted through an ancient Jewish eschatological lens which incorporated a much broader array of eschatological hopes that extend well beyond a personal reanimation.

For Wright, Matthew is here articulating a tradition of strange events surrounding Jesus’ crucifixion, incorporating biblical allusions into his retelling. The rising of these saints out of their tombs did not constitute the general resurrection, but was “a strange semi-anticipation of it,” alluding to the opening of graves in Ezekiel 37.12-13, the rising of the corpses in Isaiah 26.19, and the awakening of those who were asleep in Daniel 12.2. Wright argues that it is unlikely that a) it is a Matthean invention, designed to fulfil these verses (and Zech. 14.1-5), on the grounds that it would be unlikely for a first century Jew to insist that national redemption, or the general resurrection, had occurred, when they clearly had not; b) that Matthew has drawn from the Gospel of Peter, where three men walk out of the tomb; and c) that it was Matthew interpreting the crucifixion as an apocalyptic act of God.108

Wright’s interpretation is, however, uncompelling. He is certainly correct in highlighting the biblical allusions,109 but the apocalyptic character of the passage attests against it being understood as an event within contingent history, and Wright’s interpretation as such reveals his assumption of a soft foundationalism. Indeed this is likely a pre-Matthean tradition, on the

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108 Wright, RSG, 632-36.
109 Cf. Sim, Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew, 111; Allison, The End of the Ages Has Come, 42-44.
basis of the presence of ἁγίων, rather than Matthew’s usual δίκαιοι (13.17), and the phrase ‘after his resurrection,’ which seems to be a Matthean amendment, reflecting the tradition of Jesus’ priority as ‘first born.’ It is likely this early tradition, as with the traditions analysed above, is simply an attempt at making sense of an event that did not fit neatly within pre-existing eschatological frameworks. In other words, the inclusion is an attempt to reconcile Jesus’ individual resurrection with the broader framework of ancient Jewish apocalyptic beliefs and desires.

Dale Allison argues that this passage draws primarily upon Zechariah 14.4-5, rather than Ezekiel 37.1-14, for Matthew makes no mention of bones, and the holy ones entering Jerusalem is a tentative parallel to Ezekiel’s exiles returning to Israel. Despite Zechariah 14.4-5 not traditionally being a resurrection passage, Allison observes that the north panel of the Dura-Europos synagogue, dating to the third century CE, portrays the resurrection as occurring on the Mount of Olives, which has been split in two, alongside a fallen building which might suggest an earthquake. Coupled with the Targum on Zechariah 14.3-5, which introduces the text with a reference to resurrection, there appears to be evidence that this passage was indeed interpreted as a reference to resurrection. Ronald Troxel argues against Zechariah 14.4-5 being an inspiration behind this story, suggesting that Zechariah merely implies a resurrection and that Matthew only has the description of the ‘holy ones’ in common with Zechariah. Instead, Troxel suggests that 1 Enoch’s Apocalypse of the Weeks is a more likely source. 1 Enoch 93.6 mentions a vision of holy ones, who were described in 61.12 as those who are in

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110 According to BDAG, ἁγίων appears on only four occasions in Matthew (4.5; 7.6; 24.15; 27.52-53), but δίκαιοι at least fourteen times (1.19; 5.45; 9.13; 10.41; 13.17, 43, 49; 23.28, 29, 35; 25.37, 46; 27.4, 19).

111 Ronald L. Troxel, “Matt 27.51-4 Reconsidered: Its Role in the Passion Narrative, Meaning and Origin,” NTS 48, no. 1 (2002), 37, 41-41; Allison, The End of the Ages Has Come, 42. There is distinctively Matthean vocabulary (ἐσείσθη, πέτραι, ἠγέπθησαν, τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν) and the use of μετὰ plus an accusative is found elsewhere in Matt. (1.12; 25.19; 27.62-63) demonstrates that Matthew adapted the tradition.

112 Allison, The End of the Ages Has Come, 42-44.
heaven, and 51.1-2 then claims that the earth will give back those who had been entrusted to it. It is from this that Matthew drew inspiration for the epithet, ‘the holy ones.’\textsuperscript{113}

Attempts to determine a specific passage from which this tradition consciously draws are fruitless. The passage appears as an amalgamation of various eschatological motifs, similar, as seen above, to the claim that Jesus was raised ‘in accordance with the Scriptures’ (1 Cor. 15.3). Resurrection was inseparably connected to the broader spectrum of eschatological hope, and so passages such as Zech. 14.4-5 could be later depicted as a resurrection despite bearing little resemblance to other resurrection passages. Matthew’s Easter narrative is imbued with apocalyptic elements that neither Mark nor Luke have included, revealing that Matthew’s narrative had developed along a different, more apocalyptic, trajectory.\textsuperscript{114} Considering Matthew’s use of Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel, and possibly Zechariah, the implied connection to the general resurrection, and the amendment, “after his resurrection,” this story was Matthew’s incorporation of the broader eschatological hopes into what he believed happened to Jesus.

\textit{Reflections on the Synoptic Traditions}

The most significant aspect of the resurrection as portrayed in the synoptic traditions is the development from an expectation of an imminent \textit{eschaton} that was present in Paul to the beginning of the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence as functioning as the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of ancient Jewish eschatological hopes for the \textit{eschaton}, which becomes especially prominent in the later traditions, particularly John. Over time, theological reflection on Jesus’ post-mortem existence became increasingly intertwined with the Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection of the dead, and so the narrativization of Jesus’ resurrection is imbued with apocalyptic motifs and eschatological themes that go well beyond


\textsuperscript{114}On the apocalyptic elements in Matthew’s Gospel, see Murphy, \textit{Apocalypticism}, 265-66, and Blomberg, \textit{Matthew}, 420-21.
a re-animated body, incorporating the eschatological hopes for exaltation, justice, and the renewal and transformation of creation. Furthermore, the Synoptics demonstrate a diversity in the development of resurrection theology, with Matthew and Luke incorporating diverging traditions which were not present in Mark. This is in contrast with the Passion narrative (Matt. 26-27 // Mark 14-15 // Luke 22-23) which each of the Synoptics presents fairly uniformly.\textsuperscript{115}

This very fact suggests that the early interpreters of Jesus’ post-mortem existence were able to draw from a vast array of motifs to describe this event, suggesting that the notion of ‘resurrection’ encompasses a broad spectrum of eschatological hopes rather than being simplified to a personal reanimation.

To recap, Mark includes the earliest surviving reference to the empty tomb tradition, utilizing this as the context for his narrative. Jesus’ resurrection is regarded as the inauguration of a new eschatological age, as seen especially in the mention of the specific time that the tomb was discovered: ‘Very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen.’ The empty tomb is not an apologetical tool, attempting to prove a bodily resurrection. Rather, ‘resurrection,’ for Mark, has to do with far more than a re-animated body, an event which includes Jesus’ glorification and his transformation (as further suggested by its possible connection with the transfiguration narrative). This is similarly reflected in the Q material, where resurrection is presupposed, but speaks primarily in terms of Jesus’ exaltation. The common eschatological themes of covenantal promise, exaltation, and divine judgment are repeatedly emphasized. The ‘Sign of Jonah’ also probably has Jesus’ resurrection in mind suggesting that the Q source interprets Jesus’ teaching within a pre-existing Jewish eschatological framework, which aligned resurrection alongside an array of hopes much broader than just a personal reanimation.

Turning to Matthew and Luke, we find two distinct narratives which extend the Markan tradition and incorporate further Jewish eschatological concepts. Matthew emphasizes the apocalyptic character of resurrection, whereas Luke emphasizes the exaltation of Jesus. In their retelling of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, they incorporate a variety of eschatological motifs within the broader category of resurrection, again demonstrating that resurrection means more than a re-animated personal body. The apocalyptic elements of Matthew (and the influence of Jewish eschatology upon Matthew is evident in his inclusion of the tradition of the saints rising out of their tombs alongside Jesus’ death and resurrection), the titles given to Jesus in Luke, and Luke’s connection between the resurrection and Pentecost, suggest that for both Matthew and Luke, a new eschatological age has dawned in Jesus’ resurrection.

This new eschatological age is further seen in the comparison between Jesus’ resurrection and the Gospel accounts of other people rising from the dead (for example, Matt. 9.18-26; 10.8; Mark 5.21-24, 35-43; Luke 7.11-17; 9.49-56), namely in the way Jesus’ resurrection is unique. The core difference between these previous accounts and Jesus’ resurrection is that Jesus’ was interpreted as having to do with the fulfilment of the eschatological promises. His post-mortem existence was interpreted within the framework of the Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection of the dead, and, as such, is markedly different to the others. If early Christian communities interpreted Jesus’ resurrection as a mere reanimation, a return to ordinary life, his resurrection would have been described much more similarly to these other accounts. Jesus’ resurrection, throughout the synoptic tradition, and reflecting the earlier traditions from which they drew, was interpreted not as any other miracle, or any other resuscitation, but indeed as the dawn of a new eschatological age, the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope. As such, Jesus’ resurrection extends well beyond the reanimation of his personal body and is characterised by a dialectic unity between the continuous and discontinuous.
The PCR framework proposed in §4.4 has shaped this thesis in two primary ways. First, it has explored the development of how Jesus’ post-mortem existence was understood in new and changing contexts, as this event interacted with the presupposed eschatological category of resurrection of the dead – reflecting social memory theories and the epistemological claim that knowledge is bilateral. Second, the thesis has maintained a dialectical tension between the continuous and discontinuous elements of Jesus’ pre-Easter and post-Easter existence rather than assuming ‘resurrection’ to envisage a re-animated personal body and so emphasizing either its continuity or discontinuity with ordinary reality – reflecting a postfoundationalist epistemic model. The next section of this chapter traces resurrection within the later traditions, exploring the most developed interpretations of Jesus’ post-mortem existence: how this event was remembered and interpreted in the Christian communities of the later part of the first century and the early-mid second century, where Jesus’ post-mortem existence is finally seen not as the beginning of the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of ancient Jewish eschatological hope, but as its total fulfilment, in and of itself.

6.5. Later Traditions: Resurrection and Fulfilment

By the later traditions, as seen particularly in the canonical New Testament texts John (11.23-27; 20.1-29; 21.1-14), Hebrews (1.3-4; 2.9; 9.26; 10.12), the deutero-Pauline epistles (Eph. 1.20; 2.6; Col. 1.15-20; 2.12; 2 Thess. 2.14; 1 Tim. 3.16), and the Petrine epistles (1 Pet. 1.3; 3.21-22), as well as in the extra-canonical Gospel of Peter (10.39-42), resurrection theology bears a markedly less apocalyptic character. Reflection on Jesus’ post-mortem existence remains saturated with eschatological connotations, but whereas the earlier traditions viewed the resurrection as the initiation of eschatological hopes which were being fulfilled, or would be fulfilled within a short time, these later traditions understand Jesus’ post-mortem existence as bearing within itself the actual and total fulfilment of these hopes. While the synoptic
tradition gestures towards this interpretation of the resurrection as such, it is more prominent in John.

These later traditions reveal the way in which both memory of the event and the category of ‘resurrection of the dead’ coalesced. This is a central concern of a PCR historiography, that is, the dynamic interaction between observed event and the presuppositions and prior frameworks – influenced greatly by the communal context – of the observer, as the event is remembered and reinterpreted in new contexts. The task of both the theologian and historian in determining the meaning of the claim that Jesus rose from the dead is to trace this development to show how Jesus’ post-mortem existence was able to express the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hopes, not only as expectations for the eschaton, but also as fulfilled within the contingency of history.

**John**

Differences between the Gospel of John (90-110 CE) and the Synoptics demonstrate the extent to which the Easter narratives had developed within early Christian communities by the late first century. The focus shifts in John from a future-oriented resurrection or imminent Parousia evident in the early traditions, to Jesus’ resurrection as the fulfilment of eschatological promise. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, salvation and eternal life became available in the present. Despite this development, many of the central traditions prior to John are nonetheless reflected in John, and indeed developed. This is especially so with regard to the motif of new creation. The focus for John is upon the post-mortem existence of Jesus functioning as the fulfilment and inauguration of the Jewish eschatological hope for a redeemed creation.

An example of John presenting the resurrection as the fulfilment of the Jewish category of resurrection and encompassing a broad array of eschatological hope is found in the account of Jesus’ raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11.23-27). This passage was touched on in the
previous chapter where I argued that when Martha says she will see her brother again ‘at the resurrection’ she is not simply referring to the general resurrection, but to the broader eschatological category of resurrection, which includes the fulfilment of a broader array of eschatological hopes. Jesus’ response is particularly significant, claiming that he is the resurrection (ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις).

Considering the context, Jesus seems to be referring, not to his own or Lazarus’ future resurrection, or even simply to the general resurrection, but to these resurrection hopes, of which Martha spoke, and which had been fulfilled in him. The life promised in the eschatological age has already come in and through Jesus, beginning anticipatorily in his ministry (particularly the ‘signs’ he performed and especially, for John, in his crucifixion; cf. 2.11, 23; 3.2; 4.54; 6.14; 9.16; 12.23-25; 17.1-5) and decisively in his post-mortem existence, namely, his resurrection.

John regularly refers to this life and its arrival in Jesus, and often describes it as αἰώνιον (‘eternal’; 3.15, 16, 36; 4.14, 36; 5.24, 39; 6.27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10.28; 12.25, 50; 17.2, 3). In fact, John uses this adjective exclusively in conjunction with ζωή (‘life’). Rather than understanding ‘eternal life’ as a long period of time, it is best understood qualitatively, functioning as John’s equivalent to “the age to come” (Dan. 12.2).

Other things similarly described as ‘eternal’ include the invisible things (2 Cor. 4.18), the glory which accompanies salvation (2 Tim. 2.10), the gospel (Rev. 14.6), and salvation itself (Heb. 5.9), none of which are understood quantitatively, indicating that when connected to life, ‘eternal’ was not understood as an extended period of time. The life that has come in and through Jesus, particularly his post-mortem existence – his resurrection – is the life of the new and promised

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116 The use of ἐγώ εἰμι followed by a predicate echoes six other occurrences in the Gospel of John where, following this same formula, Jesus is said to be the ‘bread of life’ (6.41, 48, 51), the ‘light of the world’ (8.12), the ‘gate’ (10.7, 9), the ‘good shepherd’ (10.11, 14), the ‘way, truth, and life’ (14.6), and the ‘true vine’ (15.1, 5).

117 αἰώνιον is used in LXX Dan. 12.2.
eschatological age. Jesus is the resurrection, the fulfilment of the eschatological hopes, and through him the future eschatological new age has been made available in the present.

Various interpretations of John 11.25 have been proposed, but not all connect Jesus’ claim to the Jewish notion of ‘resurrection of the dead,’ or at least not explicitly. Andrew Lincoln does not make this connection at all, and for Andreas Köstenberger, Jesus’ claim to be the resurrection and the life is primarily a matter of trust, that is, “Jesus seeks to shift Martha’s focus from an abstract belief in resurrection on the last day to personal trust in the one who provides it in the here and now.” Wright’s interpretation focuses on the promise for the future resurrection of believers following their bodily death; new life – eternal life – is now available, meaning physical death need not be the end of the individual (again emphasizing a physical reanimation). Bruce Milne connects 11.25 to the Jewish eschatological resurrection in his assertion that Jesus “is the Resurrection, the embodiment of the promised life and salvation of God.” While each of these interpretations affirm that eschatological life is available in the present, it is crucial to emphasize that Jesus’ resurrection is here not simply seen as the reanimation of his personal body or a return to life following death, and that through this eternal life has become available for believers, but rather, much more explicitly connected to the fulfilment of the broader spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope.


\[119\] The claim that Jesus is the resurrection and the life might be an intentional adaptation of the technical ‘resurrection of the dead,’ replacing ‘dead’ with ‘life.’ If so, this would demonstrate a development of resurrection theology within the early Christian community; the ‘resurrection’ – the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of eschatological hopes – has already occurred in Jesus, thereby bringing life.


\[121\] Andreas Köstenberger, John (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 335.

\[122\] Wright, RSG, 447-48.

The significance of this becomes apparent when the pericope is read in light of John’s recurring theme of renewed creation, a theme especially evident in his resurrection narrative. In John, the creation motif demonstrates God’s eschatological purposes for the world and what has been accomplished in Jesus. Jeannine Brown argues that the use of this creation motif suggests that John sees Jesus as the culmination of “the ongoing story of God’s creation.” In the prologue, the phrase ‘in the beginning’ evokes the Genesis creation account, introducing the themes of life and light, both of which are derived from Genesis 1, and the use of the noun λόγος (‘word’) reflects God speaking creation into being. Furthermore, the noun ζωή (life) is a frequent occurrence (1.4; 3.15; 4.36; 5.40; 6.27; 8.12; 10.10; 11.25; 14.6; 17.2; 20.31), is found in three of the ‘I Am’ statements (6.35; 11.25; 14.6), and is even included in the Gospel’s statement of purpose (20.30-31). The notion of life is connected directly to resurrection in 11.25. As we will observe, these themes of life, creation, and the resurrection are interwoven through the Gospel, and find their climax in the Easter narrative.

The Easter narrative in John 20.1-29 is similarly imbued with creation connotations, and functions as the climax to the Gospel’s motifs of creation, life, and fulfilment of eschatological hopes. Concerning the allusion to the Genesis creation accounts, John sets the scene in a garden (19.41), which is reinforced by Mary mistaking the risen Jesus for the gardener (20.15). Jesus then breathes the Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα ἅγιον) upon the disciples (20.22), alluding to God breathing the breath of life into Adam. For Köstenberger, Jesus’ resurrection signifies the climax of John’s creation theology, William Brown similarly emphasizes the garden, stating

125 Ibid., 276-78.
126 Wright also notes the similarities between John 20 and the prologue, in particular the themes of light and dark, reflected in Mary arriving while it was still dark, and Jesus breathing the Spirit upon the disciples (Wright, RSG, 667; cf. idem., NTPG, 410-17).
127 Brown, “Creation’s Renewal in the Gospel of John,” 279-83. Brown also suggests that as Jesus is presented to the crowds with the words, “Behold, the man!” (19.5) John is contrasting Jesus with Adam, and hence Jesus is the antitype of the first gardener. I am, however, not convinced by this particular comparison, which seems to be stretching the comparison too far.
128 Andreas J. Köstenberger, A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 353.
that John has “transported us back to the primordial past of the first garden.”\textsuperscript{129} However, he argues this demonstrates Jesus’ divinity, whereas another perspective would be to see the context of the garden as a narratological tool which demonstrates how the eschatological hope for the renewal of creation has been fulfilled in the post-mortem existence of Jesus.

Another significant element which recalls Genesis 1-2 is the stress that John places upon the resurrection occurring on the first day of the week. It was noted above that this was a significant feature in Mark, which was later adopted by Matthew and Luke, but here John emphasizes this further through repetition (20.1, 19).\textsuperscript{130} Brown emphasizes the creation motif in John’s Easter narrative, highlighting that this happened on the first day of the week. Moreover, the stress upon the first day of the week might signify an eighth day of creation, supported by Jesus appearing to the disciples ‘a week later,’ or literally ‘after eight days’ (μεθ᾿ ἡμέρας ὀκτὼ).\textsuperscript{131} Wright agrees, arguing that the resurrection constitutes John’s eighth sign (the other seven being 2.1-11; 4.46-54; 5.2-9; 6.1-14; 9.1-7; 11.1-44; 19.1-37). The seven signs reflect the seven days of creation, and the eighth sign is the first day of the renewed creation.\textsuperscript{132}

The resurrection as recounted in John represents significant development in the communal memory of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and the incorporation of Jewish eschatological hope has become much more intensive, no longer anticipating an imminent \textit{Parousia} and general resurrection, but viewing these hopes as having been fulfilled in the person of Jesus. This does not mean that John no longer envisages a future resurrection for the faithful, however, as this hope is still reflected in 5.28-29 and 11.23. In particular, the eschatological hope for a renewed creation is central in John’s narrative. John has adapted the empty tomb tradition, but has explicitly located it in a garden. Furthermore, John’s motif of light and dark is reflected in

\textsuperscript{130} It might be reinforced even further in placing Jesus’ appearance to Thomas a week later, which would happen to be the first day of that particular week (20.26).
Mary’s arriving while it was still dark, rather than at or after sunrise as in the synoptic tradition. The point for John is that Jesus’ post-mortem existence constituted the fulfilment of the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope, which stressed the redemption not just of bodies but of the cosmos, and has been framed by the motif of resurrection which encompassed these hopes. In whatever happened to Jesus, the anticipated new creation has arrived. Hence, John – and a common theme throughout the New Testament corpus, from the early to the later traditions – envisages a resurrection that encompasses far more than personal reanimation and is characterized by a dialectical tension between both continuity and discontinuity with ordinary reality.

**Later Epistles**

The next texts for analysis are the later New Testament epistles of Hebrews, the Deutero-Pauline epistles, and 1 Peter, where explicit resurrection language is rare, but similar motifs to John are present, particularly of exaltation and new creation. Much of the theology and interpretations of Jesus’ post-mortem existence are also found in John, but in some key instances there is divergence. It is important to recognize the diversity amongst the various developments. Hebrews, for example, does not mention Jesus’ resurrection, though there might be some allusions to it, instead focusing on his exaltation. These later traditions reveal that the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence did not develop in a unilateral or uniform direction, demonstrating the early church’s capacity to speak of Jesus’ post-mortem existence in a variety of ways, presupposing the resurrection, while emphasizing his exaltation. The general and broader hopes for a renewed creation and the inauguration of a new eschatological

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133 William Brown observes, “Resurrection ultimately cannot be limited to the raising up of our bodies. Resurrection includes the whole of life in its vast eschatological sweep,” (Brown, “The Ecology of Resurrection,” 22).
age have been fulfilled in Jesus’ post-mortem existence, stretching well beyond the limitations of the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body.

The focus of Hebrews (late-60’s CE), as with Luke-Acts, Philippians 2.6-11, and 1 Timothy 3.16, is upon the exaltation of Jesus when interpreting Jesus’ post-mortem existence (Heb. 1.3; 2.9; 4.14; 5.9; 7.26; 10.12; 12.2; 13.20). The prime example is found in the epistle’s opening, which might be part of an early confessional hymn: “When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs” (1.3b-4). This follows the claim that the present time constitutes the ‘last days,’ signalling the eschatological perspective of Jesus’ death and the events following. The author of Hebrews incorporates the tradition of Jesus receiving a new, highly exalted name, and echoes the formula of Philippians 2.6-11, that Jesus died in service to humanity, and as a result was exalted high, to a place of authority, and given a new name and office. This new office is described in Hebrews 4.14-16 as a perpetual high priesthood. Furthermore, as in the Philippian hymn, there is no explicit mention of resurrection, let alone a reanimated body. Though there are references to Jesus’ resurrection or the doctrine of resurrection in general (6.2; 11.35; 13.20), Jesus’ post-mortem existence is interpreted primarily as exaltation and glorification. The imagery of Jesus sitting down at the right hand of God (1.3; 8.1; 10.12; 12.2) might envisage Jesus’ reanimated body, but it cannot be any less metaphorical than the anthropomorphic notion that God has a right

135 This has been suggested by Donald A. Hagner, Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).
137 Gibbs similarly makes this connection (Gibbs, “Christ is Risen, Indeed,” 121). The author of Hebrews might also be incorporating the tradition reflected in Col. 1.15-20, adopting the phrases, ‘heir of all things,’ ‘through whom he also created the worlds,’ and ‘sustains all things.’
138 Vinzent, Christ’s Resurrection in Early Christianity, 55-56.
139 The reference to ‘the power of an indestructible life’ in 7.16 might refer to Jesus’ resurrection, though the focus is on Jesus’ identity as Son of God and as high priest. Cf. Gibbs, “Christ is Risen, Indeed,” 122; Hagner, Hebrews, 108.
hand. It is an honorific description of Jesus’ exaltation, symbolically making use of Psalm 110, rather than an explicit description of Jesus’ post-mortem existence. Furthermore, Jesus’ death and resurrection constitutes the fulfilment of the law and covenant (2.9; 4.14; 7.23-8.7; 8.13; 9.26; 10.12, 14, 19-22). Hence, in Jesus’ post-mortem existence, the eschatological hopes for exaltation and a new reality have already dawned, not necessarily in a personal reanimation, but in the fulfilment of a broader spectrum of ancient Jewish expectations.

This is similarly evident in the deuto-Pauline epistles, the eschatology of which is markedly different to the Pauline texts.\(^{140}\) This is seen in 2 Thessalonians (late first to early second century CE), which seems to outright contradict and criticise the eschatology of the original letter, focusing salvation upon the possession of the glory of Jesus (2 Thess. 2.14), \textit{fulfilled} rather than as having come through Jesus’ resurrection (cf. 1 Thess. 1.9-10; 4.14). The author of Ephesians connects Jesus’ resurrection directly to his exaltation in the claim that God raised Jesus ‘and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places’ (Eph. 1.20), and has similarly done so to the faithful in the present (Eph. 2.6). Again, resurrection is presupposed with the stress upon exaltation and the believers’ present experience of this exaltation; the broader eschatological hopes have been fulfilled.

Another significant passage, which seems to have been a liturgical hymn adapted and incorporated by the author,\textsuperscript{141} is Colossians 1.15-20 (70’s – 80’s CE), which, as with Philippians 2.6-11, makes no explicit mention of resurrection, but the imagery bears a great deal of similarity to the resurrection motif. Resurrection seems to be presupposed, but spoken of in different terms, again demonstrating that resurrection encompassed a range of eschatological hopes rather than simply personal reanimation. Throughout Colossians, Jesus’ resurrection is discussed exclusively in connection to our present identification with his death and resurrection (Col. 2.12; 3.1),\textsuperscript{142} and this is present in this hymn, in the description of Jesus’ resurrection as the ‘first born.’ This hymn possibly reflects Wisdom literature, potentially an adaptation of a praise of Wisdom or Logos; Christ is placed in the role of Wisdom as a means through which God creates.\textsuperscript{143} The relation to Wisdom literature only goes so far, however, for Wisdom is often described as a created entity (Prov. 8.22-23; Sir. 1.4, 9) and the world is not created \textit{for} Wisdom.\textsuperscript{144} Regardless, this hymn now has Christ at the centre, around whom creation is reborn. The ‘first born’ refers to the eldest child and heir of the estate, indicating priority. However, it is important to read this here in connection to ‘of all creation.’ The phrase ‘first born from the dead’ indicates Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and so we can surmise that this

\textsuperscript{141} As with Phil. 2.6-11, the passage begins with ὃς, indicating that it is likely a creedal formulation. James Dunn highlights the matching rhythmic units, the clear structure of two strophes with parallel motifs (1.15-18a; 18b-20), a self-contained meaning that is not dependent upon its immediate context, and the presence of various particularly uncommon terms (‘visible,’ ‘thrones,’ ‘beginning’) as indicators of it being an earlier hymn (James Dunn, \textit{The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 83-84). Cf. Paul Foster, \textit{Colossians} (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 174.

\textsuperscript{142} Vinzent, \textit{Christ’s Resurrection in Early Christianity}, 45.


hymn has in mind an image of a new, rebirthed creation, over which Christ has authority. In this new creation, the Son has precedence, and functions as its ‘head.’

However, the relation to creation is far more intensive, as all things therein were created ‘in him,’ ‘through him,’ and ‘for him.’ The proximity of the words ‘image’ (εἰκών) and ‘beginning’ (ἀρχή) to the motif of creation evidently frames Christ within an interpretation of Genesis (both ἀρχή and εἰκών are used in LXX Gen. 1.1 and 1.27), establishing him as a new Adam within a renewed eschatological creation. Wright argues that in Colossians, “The point of resurrection…is the reaffirmation of creation.” Paul Foster argues differently, that v.15 reflects Prov. 8.22, which admittedly reflects Genesis 1.1, but insists that the connections to Genesis are loose. The presence of the words ‘image,’ ‘the beginning,’ and ‘heaven and earth’ (νόστανος και γῆς; cf. LXX Gen. 1.1) connected to the creation motif seem to me to point undeniably to Genesis 1. Yet, this hymn is an interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and so connects this event to the broader eschatological hopes for the renewal of creation – not just of bodies, but of all creation.

Furthermore, this hymn encompasses more than just the Son, or the church, but indeed ‘all creation’ and ‘all things.’ Walsh and Keesmaat conclude from this that there is here an implicit ecological ethic. All of creation finds redemption in Christ, and through Christ all things are reconciled to God. The cosmic significance is evident, again reflecting the apocalyptic

145 Cf. Sumney, Colossians, 65; Bird, Colossians & Philemon, 52; Hamm, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 173; Christopher R. Seitz, Colossians (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014), 95-97; Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon, 97.
146 Foster, Colossians, 194; Markus Vinzent, Christ’s Resurrection in Early Christianity: And the Making of the New Testament (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), 46. Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat suggest that there might be anti-imperial connotations here, that Jesus is Lord, not Caesar. They consider this passage “subversive poetry” (Brian J. Walsh, and Sylvia C. Keesmaat, Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 83-90).
147 Michael Bird makes this argument central to his exegesis of this hymn (Bird, Colossians & Philemon, 49-52). This reflects what Paul says in 1 Cor. 15.45-47. Cf. Hamm, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 173.
148 Wright, RSG, 240.
149 Foster, Colossians, 178.
150 Christopher Seitz similarly connects this hymn to Gen. (Seitz, Colossians, 94).
conviction that creation, not restricted to anthropology, will be redeemed at the *eschaton*. Wright similarly interprets the creation theme in this hymn as insisting “that Jesus’ resurrection, as a one-off event, is an act not of the abolition of the original creation but of its fulfilment,” but unfortunately does not seem to see the significance of this as extending beyond the realm of anthropology. Jesus is the first born of all creation, not just the creation of human bodies. Though resurrection is not explicitly mentioned, it is implied and connected to the broader spectrum of Jewish eschatological hopes, especially that of the re-creation of the cosmos and the exaltation of Jesus to a position of authority.

1 Timothy 3.16 (late first century to mid second century CE) is another probable creedal formulation adopted by the author of 1 Timothy, which similarly demonstrates an interest in Jesus’ post-mortem existence without using explicit resurrection language while emphasizing his exaltation. The phrase, “vindicated in spirit,” has been interpreted as a reference to Jesus’ resurrection, but as with Philippians 2.6-11, this could be adopting the language of exaltation common in ancient Jewish eschatological hope. This is strengthened by the translation of πνεύματι as Jesus’ human spirit or spiritual nature rather than a reference to the Holy Spirit, as argued by Wright. Brice Martin argues that the σάρξ/πνεῦμα contrast is often used to distinguish between humans and the Holy Spirit (for example, Gen. 6.3; Joel 2.28; John 3.6; 6.63; Acts 2.17; Rom. 1.3; 8.4-9, 12; Gal. 3.3; 4.29; 5.16; Phil. 3.3) and so it should be here understood as referring to the Holy Spirit, as in the NIV translation, “vindicated by the Spirit”. David MacLeod’s interpretation (and the NRSV translation) is preferred, that in his

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152 Wright, *RSG*, 239.
153 Dunn also emphasizes the creation theme (*Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, 86, 98).
156 Wright, *RSG*, 271.
fleshly ‘sphere,’ he was lowly, weak, and murdered, yet in his spiritual ‘sphere,’ he was vindicated and his claim to be the Christ was validated. The implicit contrast is then between Jesus’ humiliation ‘in the flesh’ and his subsequent exaltation ‘in spirit.’ This exaltation is then further stressed in his appearance to angels, which seems to suggest the presentation of a glorified Christ before the heavenly host. We find in these deutero-Pauline epistles the interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection as functioning as the fulfilment within contingent history of the broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hopes, particularly that of exaltation and the inauguration of a new reality, and believers are invited to experience these fulfilled hopes in the present.

Similarly, 1 Peter speaks of resurrection in terms of Jesus’ exaltation to a position of glory and the believers’ experience of this glorification in the present. The author claims that God ‘has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Pet. 1.3), a new creation motif found elsewhere in the New Testament (John 3.3, 7; Rom. 8.14-17; 2 Cor. 5.15; Titus 3.5), demonstrating the transformation that was associated with Jesus’ post-mortem existence. The transformation signifies the inauguration of a new age, which is why the author draws out the saving significance of this event. As Vinzent comments, “The Resurrection is the moment when the future is being mediated to us.” Put differently, through Jesus’ post-mortem existence, a new world order and reality has entered history in which the faithful may enter through identifying themselves in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

159 Ibid., 342-43; Ham, “The Christ Hymn in 1 Timothy 3:16,” 225-228. Ham argues that the aorist passive ὤφθη followed by a dative is often used to refer an appearance of the resurrected Christ (e.g. Luke 24.34; Acts 9.17; 1 Cor. 14.5), thereby connecting this text to the resurrection motif. However, there are several instances where this is used apart from the risen Jesus (e.g. Matt. 17.3; Mark 9.4; Luke 1.11; Acts 7.2; Rev. 11.19) and is, hence, not unique to the resurrection tradition.
160 Joel B. Green, 1 Peter (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 26. Donald Senior notes that the verb ἀναγεννήσας, that appears only here and in v.23, places the emphasis on the activity of God and so a better translation should be, ‘(God) has begotten us anew’ (Donald P. Senior, 1 Peter (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 30).
161 Vinzent, Christ’s Resurrection in Early Christianity, 47. Cf. Green, 1 Peter, 28.
Jesus has been elevated to a place of authority and privilege within this new reality through his resurrection (1.21; 3.21-22), a theme consistent with various other traditions, as we have already seen. The author of 1 Peter interprets Jesus’ post-mortem existence in terms of exaltation and new creation, extending well beyond the reanimation of his personal body, and in which we may participate through identification with Jesus’ death and resurrection.

**Gospel of Peter**

The final text for analysis is the extra-canonical *Gospel of Peter* (mid second century CE), the only text to actually describe the resurrection itself, as opposed to narrating only the empty tomb or appearance traditions. *Gospel of Peter* 10.34-42 demonstrates the malleability of the notion of resurrection and the diversity of early interpretations of Jesus’ post-mortem existence. It is, furthermore, despite being significantly different to the canonical Easter accounts, another good example of how ‘resurrection’ should not be reduced to no more than a personal reanimation and how the early Christian communities understood Jesus’ post-mortem existence as, in and of itself, the *fulfilment* of a broad spectrum of ancient Jewish eschatological hopes. Hence, there is both continuity and discontinuity with ordinary reality in the description of the risen Jesus: it is still the same, recognizable Jesus, emerging from the tomb within which he was buried, and yet there are radical transformation and significant eschatological connotations that extend well beyond a personal body.

It is worth quoting this passage in full:

> Early in the morning, when the Sabbath dawned, there came a crowd from Jerusalem and the country round about to see the sealed sepulchre. Now in the night in which the Lord’s day dawned, when the soldiers were keeping guard, two by two in each watch, there was a loud voice in heaven, and they saw the heavens open and two men come down from there in a great brightness and draw near to the sepulchre. That stone which had been laid against the entrance to sepulchre started of itself to roll and move sideways, and sepulchre was opened and both young men entered. When those soldiers saw this, they awakened the centurion and the elders, for they also were there to mount guard. And while they were narrating what they had seen they saw three men come from the sepulchre, two of them supporting the other and a cross following them and the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but that of him who was being led reached beyond the heavens. And they heard a voice out of the heavens...
crying, ‘Have you preached to those who sleep?’ and from the cross there was heard the answer, ‘Yes.’”

There are several curiosities in this passage, but of particular interest is the depiction of a giant Jesus, his head reaching beyond the heavens, and a walking and talking cross which – despite there being no mention of it being buried in the tomb – follows Jesus and the heavenly men out of the tomb. This rather strange passage is without parallel in early Christian literature, which Paul Foster describes as “a popularizing version of the crucifixion and resurrection” and “is not theologically sophisticated.” In Wright’s attempt to present Jesus’ risen nature as bodily and ‘robustly physical,’ he dismisses the resurrection account in the Gospel of Peter, insisting that “it is impossible to tell with any precision what precisely the author…believed about the nature of Jesus’ resurrection body,” and the Gospel “remains an enigma, but an enigma which need not materially affect our assessment of the four major accounts of Jesus’ resurrection.”

This is another instance of Wright reverting to a (soft) foundationalist empiricism, essentially arguing that if we cannot know what the author of a particular text believed, then it is of very little value. Both Foster and Wright overstate the case. Indeed the passage is perplexing and without parallel, and is all the more curious considering that there are very few instances of the miraculous in the rest of the Gospel, but it is worth consideration as it sheds further light on the diversity of opinions regarding Jesus’ post-mortem existence in the early Christian communities.

Against Foster, who maintains that the curiosities of this passage (especially the walking, talking cross) are creative innovation, Deane Galbraith observes that the rest of the Gospel is relatively conservative, only building upon miraculous events already introduced by

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164 Wright, *RSG*, 596.
165 One might, furthermore, criticize Wright for ignoring passages which do not fit, or cannot be made to fit, within his prior theological convictions regarding the resurrection.
Matthew. Mark Goodacre floated the idea (he is careful to note that this not a concrete proposal) that at some point during the process of copying this text, a copyist or scribe incorrectly wrote σταυρόν (‘cross’) where the original was σταυροθεντα (‘crucified’), so that originally it was not the cross, but Jesus – the crucified one – who came walking out of the tomb. The two men were not physically holding him up, but were simply leading him out.

Foster argues against this interpretation, noting that the proposed change would see Jesus being present in two places at once – both with and following the other men – and that there are examples of inanimate objects being brought into motion earlier in *Gospel of Peter* (6.21; 9.37). Hans-Josef Klauck argues that the angelic men surely cannot be supporting Jesus for he is much taller than they are, and maintains that the cross is a symbol for the crucified Jesus.

The interpretation which makes the most sense of this passage is that of Galbraith, who argues that this passage is a Christocentric interpretation of LXX Psalm 18.1-7. When the *Gospel of Peter* has made changes to the story of Jesus’ life and fate, these changes are subtle and drawn from Christocentric interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. For example, *Gospel of Peter* 2.5 and 5.15 draw on Deuteronomy 21.23 (that the sun should not set on an executed person), and uses Isaiah 59 in *Gospel of Peter* 3.6, 5.15, and 5.18 (that Jesus’ scourging occurred ‘on the run’ rather than stationary as in Matt. 27.26-30). Hence, we can assume that when the author departs from the canonical Gospels, such as in the resurrection narrative, it is likely that a passage from the Hebrew Bible is being recalled. In this instance, it could well be that the resurrection in *Gospel of Peter* 10.39-42 reflects LXX Psalm 18.1-7, which was interpreted elsewhere as

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Christocentric prophecy (Rom. 10.18; 1 Apol. 40; Dial. 64; Ref. 8.10). Jesus’ exit from the tomb and expansion to heaven is an interpretation of the groom departing his bridal chamber and ascending to heaven (LXX Ps. 18.5-7) and the two heavenly speeches, from God and from the cross, are an interpretation of the speeches from the heavens and the firmament (LXX Ps. 18.2).¹⁷¹

For the present purposes of this thesis, Gospel of Peter illuminates three things in particular. First, Jesus’ post-mortem existence is interpreted within an ancient Jewish eschatological framework, in this instance probably reflecting a Christocentric interpretation of LXX Psalm 18.1-7, which had broader cosmic connotations. Hence, second, ‘resurrection’ is again not understood simply in terms of a personal re-animated body. Indeed, Jesus comes walking out of the tomb, but does so as a giant with his head beyond the clouds. Third, this passage is significantly different to the canonical narratives and, as such, demonstrates the diversity of interpretations of Jesus’ post-mortem existence. The Gospel of Peter joins the other later resurrection traditions of the Gospel of John, Hebrews, the Deutero-Pauline epistles, and 1 Peter in suggesting that Jesus’ post-mortem existence had developed within the communal memory of the early communities of the Jesus movement, interacting with presupposed theological categories and frameworks, and was interpreted as the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of eschatological hope.

**Reflections on the Later Traditions**

The later texts reveal that interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence had developed significantly from the earlier texts, and though there are similarities and common motifs, this development was not uniform. This development is significant for a PCR interpretation of the resurrection, and I here emphasize the re-interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence within

¹⁷¹ Galbraith, “Whence the Giant Jesus and his Talking Cross?” 478-91.
a new context in which the *Parousia* is delayed (acknowledging the development and re-interpretation in changing contexts reflects the PCR integration of recent social memory theories). A generation or two after the initial – thoroughly apocalyptic – interpretations of the resurrection, the Christian community was forced to re-interpret this event which was so wrapped up in the coming of the fulfilment of the eschatological hopes in light of the observation of this potentially indefinite delay. Yet they did not postpone these hopes to the indefinite future, but insisted that Jesus’ resurrection itself was the fulfilment of these hopes.

Of particular importance for the present thesis is a) the recognition that though the Jewish category of resurrection was presupposed in these traditions, Jesus’ post-mortem existence was described in a variety of ways, particularly emphasizing his exaltation, and b) that this event constitutes the fulfilment of these eschatological hopes within contingent history and invites believers to experience this in the present, as opposed to the earlier traditions of viewing Jesus’ resurrection as the initiation of these hopes which were *being*, or would shortly be, fulfilled. In particular, the themes of new creation, justice, and exaltation are encompassed within the framework of resurrection, themes that are, notably, present within the traditions that do not explicitly adopt resurrection language. This demonstrates that the event was interpreted as having to do with a broader spectrum of ancient Jewish eschatology, an event only accessible to the historian through the varied frameworks utilized by the early Christians to describe an event that they ultimately could not fully comprehend, but which appeared to be the fulfilment of eschatological hope.

These later traditions exhibit a much less apocalyptic character, instead viewing the eschatological hopes as having been already fulfilled, becoming increasingly focused upon the experience of Jesus’ glorification in the present, and believers’ participation in this glorification and in the inaugurated new reality. It was in Jesus’ post-mortem existence, then, that the Jewish eschatological hopes found their fulfilment. This is what John meant by Jesus’ claim to be the
resurrection and the life, and locating Jesus’ resurrection in a paradisiacal Edenic garden, saturated in the creation motif. This new creation is similarly reflected in 1 Peter’s language of new birth, connecting this with Jesus’ glorification and our participation in that glorification. The author of Hebrews is clearly aware of the tradition that Jesus rose from the dead, referencing it once, the general resurrection in another instance, and implying resurrection in several other instances, but focuses heavily on Jesus’ exaltation, his elevation to a position of honour and authority. The deuto-Pauline epistles make no explicit mention of resurrection, speaking of Jesus’ post-mortem existence in terms of exaltation and our participation in that glorification. The Gospel of Peter diverges from the canonical gospels but nevertheless interprets Jesus’ post-mortem existence in light of a Christocentric interpretation of LXX Psalm 18.1-7. Hence, the later communities reflect a spread of interpretation very similar to that of the early traditions, but in these instances, the fulfilment of eschatological promise has already occurred and is available in the immediate present, rather than something that has initiated this fulfilment to become available shortly. Within this broader eschatological framework, ‘resurrection’ should not, therefore, be limited to the reanimation of a personal body, and is characterised by both continuity and discontinuity with ordinary reality.

6.6. The Risen Jesus and the Unification of Heaven and Earth

This chapter has traced the development of resurrection theology in the early and diverse communities of the Jesus movement, and has demonstrated that Jesus’ post-mortem existence was described in a variety of ways which were encompassed within the category of ‘resurrection.’ This presupposed interpretative framework, drawn from ancient Jewish eschatology, was intertwined with the communal memory of this event, with two themes becoming particularly evident: that Jesus’ post-mortem existence functioned as the fulfilment of the ‘resurrection of the dead,’ which encompassed within itself a broad spectrum of
eschatological hopes, and, as such, that the redemption of creation and the inauguration of a new reality had arrived, a reality that extends well beyond a personal reanimation.

This new reality is best characterised by a dialectical tension between continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality, for which the image of a new heaven and a new earth – understood as a unification of the two – is the most helpful analogy, as explored in chapter five. If, therefore, Jesus’ post-mortem existence was described in terms of resurrection of the dead, encompassing an extensive array of ancient Jewish eschatological expectations, we can subsequently understand this event in terms of the unification of heaven and earth. The ambiguity of the attempts at describing Jesus’ risen body in 1 Corinthians 15 and the Easter narratives reflect the attempt to narrativize and personify, within the resurrection of Jesus, the fulfilment of this broad spectrum of eschatological hope.

This dialectic tension is particularly evident in the ambiguous description of Jesus’ resurrected nature in the Gospels and 1 Corinthians 15. Chapter two explored some of the ways in which this ‘body’ has been described by scholars, with a clear dichotomy emerging: some, on the one hand, interpret this risen body in terms of a physical re-animated body and an event occurring within contingent history, stressing the continuity with empirical reality, whereas others interpret it in terms of a ‘spiritual’ and immaterial body, and a suprahistorical event, stressing the discontinuity with empirical reality. Neither succeeds in accommodating both the continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality evident in the New Testament witness. The following will explore the ambiguity of the portrayals of the nature of the risen Jesus, as depicted in the New Testament texts (reflecting, in turn, the ambiguity of the resurrected reality in Jewish eschatology; cf. §5.2), depicting a risen Jesus who bears both continuity and discontinuity with ordinary reality, both of which must be held in dialectical tension. The resurrection of Jesus is the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hope, inaugurating a new reality that transforms and redeems the present creation without disbanding it.
Continuity and Discontinuity in the New Testament

As noted above, in §6.2, Paul interprets Jesus’ post-mortem existence in 1 Corinthians 15 in terms of the Jewish eschatological category of ‘resurrection of the dead,’ viewing this event as not solely Jesus’ re-animated body, but as in some way inseparably bound up with the themes of creation, justice, and redemption. When addressing the issue of what sort of ‘body’ this would entail, his description is confoundingly vague, seemingly scrambling for an appropriate analogy and falling short. It seems likely that in this risen nature, there is both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality, that creation is re-affirmed yet radically transformed, and though Paul uses the language of ‘body,’ he is well aware that this description is only an approximation.

It was mentioned in §5.3 that a central impetus for the Corinthians’ rejection of the resurrection is their issue with a physical, bodily resurrection, and yet Paul does not outright or explicitly refute this. What he does refute is their assumption that there is no resurrection of the dead, that since Jesus has been raised, so too then will the faithful. However, despite the insistence that Jesus’ risen body was a model of the type of body believers would receive, there is considerable ambiguity in Paul’s description of this body. If Paul was strictly refuting the Corinthians’ disbelief in a physical, bodily resurrection, it is surprising that he has not described a physical risen body, or to reassure them that this body is immaterial. As has been argued, Paul’s concern, reflecting the Jewish tradition of connecting resurrection with re-creation, is

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172 Finney notes, “That [Paul] is struggling to articulate the transition of life to afterlife is evident in the twisted changing similes that follow,” (Finney, Resurrection, Hell and the Afterlife, 111). Cf. Carnley, The Structure of Resurrection Belief, 115-16.
174 Smith, Revisiting the Empty Tomb, 32; Bailey, Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes, 465. Bailey does, however, insist upon an embodiment not much different to the present body, citing the empty tomb tradition despite Paul never referring to an empty tomb.
that this eschatological resurrected reality would consist of an entirely new existence and therefore entails radical transformation.

What is important here is that Paul is not arguing that the resurrection is wholly other or discontinuous with ordinary reality. The resurrected reality transcends the categories of ‘body,’ ‘physical,’ or ‘spiritual,’ and has, rather, transformed into something new that nevertheless came out of the old, which is the point of the analogy of the seed.\textsuperscript{175} Hence Paul’s enigmatic descriptor, σῶμα πνευματικὸν (‘spiritual body’), which is the logical extension of his understanding of a transformed reality. On the one hand, this ‘spiritual body’ invariably is not something comparable to present physicality, for he says in v.50 that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; this body is free from the constraints of material corporeality.\textsuperscript{176} Brian Schmisek argues that the term ‘spiritual body’ was an oxymoron, that πνεῦμα and σῶμα were contradictory terms. The former is, in Greek parlance, immaterial (cf. 2 Cor. 2.13; Rom. 1.9) and the latter material. In so doing, “Paul comes closest to speaking of the mystery of the resurrection,” that is, the appropriate language to express what Paul had encountered eluded him, and so he instead attempted to express the Jewish notion of resurrection in Hellenistic terms.\textsuperscript{177}

On the other hand, what is not envisaged is an immaterial existence. There is continuity between the two types of realities, in the same way that there is continuity between the plant and the seed.\textsuperscript{178} If Paul were proposing an entirely immaterial existence, it is surprising that he

\textsuperscript{175} Habermas and Licona argue that Paul implies a physical, bodily resurrection, that “what goes down in burial, comes up in resurrection” (Habermas and Licona, \textit{The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus}, 155). This is drastically overstating the case, for Paul’s argument in the analogy of the seed sprouting into a plant is that what comes up is precisely \textit{not} what goes down, but actually comes up significantly different. Granted, there is considerable continuity, but the plant remains distinct to the seed.

\textsuperscript{176} Allison, \textit{Resurrecting Jesus}, 225.


\textsuperscript{178} Paul similarly expresses this new type of body in Phil. 3.20-21, where again he does not show contempt for the present body, that despite radical transformation, it is \textit{the same person} which is changed. Cf. Brian Schmisek,
compares πνευματικόν with ψυχικόν, which itself does not inherently imply physicality. Surely σαρκικός would have been better if this was the comparison he was attempting to make. What Paul is contrasting is, in James Ware’s language, two “modes of existence in this same body.”

James Dunn understands these adjectives as the body’s life force, ψυχικόν limited to the present, physical life. For Wright, Paul is speaking about what animates the body, with the risen body being animated by the indwelling Spirit of God, and that this body remains “robustly physical.”

However, Paul’s description of Jesus’ post-mortem existence is overly ambiguous to ascertain anything definitive, but the transformation that Paul depicts is far too intensive and radical to reduce this to simply what animates a ‘physical’ body. Joseph Smith’s critique of Wright’s interpretation is accurate, that Wright has not adequately recognized how radical the transformation is, that language of physicality is inappropriate, for Paul does not envisage a new type of physicality, but an entirely new reality. To reduce the risen nature to a physicality is to ignore the analogies that Paul has employed to suggest both continuity and discontinuity: a seed to the plant (15.37), the many different types of bodies (15.38-41), perishability to imperishability (15.42), dishonour to glory, weakness to power (15.43), natural to spiritual (15.44), the man of dust and the man from heaven (15.45-49). Paul uses of a variety of imagery in his attempt to express a new reality that is essentially sui generis; this transformed reality (a reality which exceeds the limitations of present categories, such as the language of ‘body’) is

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179 James Ware, “Paul’s Understanding of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:36-54,” JBL 133, no. 4 (2014), 832. Ware claims that this body is, however, one composed of flesh and bones.

180 James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 77-78.


182 Wright, RSG, 477-78.

characterised by the dialectical tension between continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality.

The ambiguity of Jesus’ risen nature is present in the Easter narratives of the Gospels, where it is the same person but radically transformed. On the one hand, the risen Jesus can be touched and bears the wounds inflicted upon his pre-crucifixion body (Matt. 28.9; Luke 24.39-40; John 20.20, 27), he could eat fish (Luke 24.43), had breath (John 20.22), and was not a ‘ghost’ (Luke 24.39). Despite this, there are significant peculiarities about this Jesus. He could ‘suddenly’ appear among them, sometimes despite locked doors (Matt. 28.9; Luke 24.36; John 20.19, 26), was not immediately recognized (Luke 24.16; John 20.14-15; 21.4, 12), would vanish (Luke 24.31), some of the witnesses doubted, despite their joy and worship (Matt. 28.17; Luke 24.41), was carried into heaven (Luke 24.51; Acts 1.9-10), and his appearance bears similarities with theophanies, causing fear and providing reassurance (Matt. 28.10; Luke 24.36-37; John 20.19). Jesus’ risen nature is described as being the same and yet entirely different.

For Pannenberg, “The appearances reported in the Gospels...have such a strongly legendary character that one can scarcely find a historical kernel of their own in them.”

As observed in chapter four, this reflects the impossible desire of separating the ‘authentic’ history from the myth, but his insistence that these narratives are so infused with legend is persuasive, and one of the tasks of this chapter has been to trace the interaction between memory of the event and the presupposed eschatological framework of resurrection of the dead. The very description of the risen Jesus demonstrates the early propensity to interpret Jesus’ post-mortem existence in light of the Jewish eschatological hope for resurrection and the renewal of creation, one where creation is simultaneously affirmed and radically transformed.

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184 Pannenberg, *JGM*, 83.
I won’t here repeat the arguments outlined in chapter two put forward by those stressing either the continuity or discontinuity of the risen body, but will highlight Wright’s solution to this ambiguity, which he labels as the ‘strange portrait of Jesus’:

The stories exhibit... exactly that surface tension which we associate, not with tales artfully told by people eager to sustain a fiction and therefore anxious to make everything look right, but with the hurried, puzzled accounts of those who have seen with their own eyes something which took them horribly by surprise and with which they have not yet fully come to terms. In other words, the Easter stories portray the attempts at narrativizing an event which was not fully understood or comprehended, hence the inclusion of seemingly contradictory descriptions. I would agree, but to a point. Rather than saying that they had no comprehension of what occurred and were simply recording history, or at least accounts of history that had been circulating in the early Christian community, I would argue that they did indeed have some sense of what happened but lacked the language to adequately describe it. Similar to my argument above in §6.2 regarding the notion that this had been predicted in Scripture, the fact that the category of ‘resurrection of the dead’ had been applied to Jesus’ post-mortem existence indicates that the early Christians were not merely recounting, but interpreting, this event. Hence, as in 1 Corinthians 15, the presence of these antithetical elements of the risen Jesus reflects attempts at describing this new eschatological reality, affirming the same Jesus while asserting his radical transformation; both continuity and discontinuity must be upheld.

185 Wright, RSG, 612.

186 Wright’s argument is bolstered by his emphasis upon the lack of scriptural reflection in these narratives, which I contested above in §5.4. Furthermore, for Wright, the presence of the women in the narratives attest to their historical reliability, for it is unlikely that a manufactured story would include women, who were deemed unreliable witnesses. This is reinforced by Luke’s statement that the women’s retelling of the empty tomb was considered an ‘idle tale’ by the disciples (Luke 24.11) (Wright, RSG, 607-08. Cf. David Lyle Jeffrey, Luke (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012), 283; Smith, “N.T. Wright’s Understanding of the Nature of Jesus’ Risen Body,” 53). There is truth to this, but I would add that it was likely not simply because of who was recounting the resurrection that caused the incredulous response from the disciples, but the what. The presence of, and response to, the women adds to the utter strangeness of the story.

187 For Joseph Smith, Wright’s assessment is undermined by his failure to appreciate the radical transformation of Jesus’ body (Smith, “N.T. Wright’s Understanding of the Nature of Jesus’ Risen Body,” 54).
Though Wright insists that this new nature is “robustly physical,” his proposal of ‘transphysicality’ is a step in the right direction toward understanding this dialectical tension within the risen Jesus. In the neologism, ‘transphysicality,’ Wright refers to transformed physicality. He claims that this term “puts a label on the demonstrable fact that the early Christians envisaged a body which was still robustly physical but also significantly different from the present one.”\textsuperscript{188} The significant new characteristic of the new resurrected nature, in comparison to the old, is that it will no longer be corruptible, and that, furthermore, rather than claiming that it is no longer, or any less, physical, it is now indeed more physical, in the sense that it finally becomes what it was initially intended at its original creation.\textsuperscript{189} Indeed, Wright should be commended for acknowledging a significant transformation, but his problem remains in his retention of the notion of physicality and assuming the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body. In so doing, the discontinuity of Jesus’ risen nature from his pre-crucifixion body is minimized for, according to Wright, it is merely the same corporeal physical body with an upgrade.\textsuperscript{190} To be fair to Wright, it is precisely here that he comes closer than most to upholding both the continuous and discontinuous elements; this ‘transformed physicality’ remains the same body but is animated by the Spirit. However, I contend that both Paul and the Evangelists envisaged a reality so radically transformed that the category of physicality is no longer appropriate, and that the language of ‘body’ is only a limited and approximate metaphor; Wright’s ‘transphysicality’ does not allow for how intensive this transformation was. The opposite, however, is not true either, that Jesus’ risen nature has become entirely immaterial and incorporeal, for such categories are similarly inappropriate. The elements of continuity and discontinuity must be upheld in dialectical tension; the resurrection transcends

\textsuperscript{188} Wright, RSG, 477-78. Christopher Bryan has proposed something similar, that the hope for resurrection was “not merely for restored physical life, but for a transfigured physical life” (Bryan, The Resurrection of the Messiah, 15).


\textsuperscript{190} Cf. Joseph Smith, who argues that Paul remains noncommittal regarding how ‘physical’ the resurrected body will be (Smith, “N.T. Wright’s Understanding of the Nature of Jesus’ Risen Body,” 36-37).
these categories, functioning not simply as a reanimation, but as the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of Jewish eschatological hopes and as such the redemption of creation. This indeed would have included Jesus’ body, but only as one part of a much larger eschatological event. It is this much larger event which receives less than adequate attention when the language of ‘resurrection’ is assumed to have primarily to do with the reanimation of a personal body. In light of all of this, it seems to me that the analogy of the new heavens and earth, which as seen in §5.3 meant the unification of heaven and earth and thus the enabling of unhindered relationship between God and his humanity, is the most helpful imagery for the risen Jesus.

6.7. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the notion of Jesus’ resurrection in light of the findings of chapter five regarding the ancient Jewish eschatological category of ‘resurrection of the dead,’ and I have here demonstrated that Jesus’ post-mortem existence was understood as the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of eschatological expectations. This is especially evident in the claim that Jesus rose from the dead on, or after, the ‘third day’ (a cultural motif implying an event of special significance) and in accordance with the Scriptures (not a specific scriptural passage or prophecy, but the broader eschatological hope of the Hebrew Scriptures in general). This cannot be limited to the reanimation of a personal body but includes the glorification and exaltation of the martyred Jesus, a renewal and recreation of reality – not just of Jesus’ body, but, in some sense, of the cosmos in general – and the inauguration of a new eschatological age where divine justice is prevalent. Accordingly, the various New Testament depictions of Jesus’ resurrected reality are profoundly ambiguous, and I have argued from this that this new reality is characterised by both continuity and discontinuity with ordinary reality, maintained in a dialectical tension. That is, it is still the same Jesus who is recognizable and touchable, and who lived within contingent history, but is nevertheless very different and who personifies the fulfilment of the eschatological hopes expected at the eschaton. It is precisely this tension that
general scholarship has not adequately acknowledged, along with its assumption that resurrection solely, or primarily, envisages personal reanimation (as highlighted in chapter two). This is the very tension raised by Paul in his analogy of a seed growing into a plant and the seemingly confused picture of the risen Christ in the Gospels; it is vital that both the continuous and discontinuous elements of Jesus’ post-mortem existence must be upheld. The resurrection includes Jesus’ personal body, but is much more than this.

Following the PCR framework proposed in §4.4, I have here attempted to explore the interaction between prior frameworks of understanding (in this instance, of the ancient Jewish eschatological category of ‘resurrection’) and the memory and developing interpretation of the external event of Jesus’ post-mortem existence in new and evolving contexts (particularly the growing realization that the Parousia was indefinitely delayed). Bearing the bilateral nature of knowledge in mind, it is necessary to acknowledge this interaction; it is impossible to ascertain the brute facts of ‘what happened’ for we only have access to the recording of the interpretation of this event, a recording which is invariably clouded by the subjectivity of the author, but we can still affirm the intelligibility of the external event which nevertheless has its own inherent meaning. It is similarly necessary to understand the categories which were applied to this event and through which this event was understood.

Regarding the interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection, this entails the analysis of the development of the interpretation of the resurrection within the evolving contexts of the early communities of the Jesus movement, and the interaction between this developing interpretation and the presupposed framework of the ancient Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection. We have seen in this chapter that from the early traditions to the later, Jesus’ post-mortem existence was seen as inseparably connected to a broad array of eschatological expectations, but where the early traditions viewed Jesus’ post-mortem existence as part of, or the beginning of, the fulfilment of these expectations, the later traditions viewed this event, in and of itself, as the
fulfilment of these expectations. Therefore, Jesus’ post-mortem existence should not be reduced to no more than personal reanimation and, as the fulfilment of the hope for both the renewal and transformation of creation, this event constitutes the unification of both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality, the unification of heaven and earth (reflected in the ambiguous description of the nature of the risen Jesus).
Excursus: The Future in the Now

The fact that the eschatological category of ‘resurrection from the dead’ was applied to Jesus’ post-mortem existence indicates that the early Christian community considered this event the fulfilment of a vast array of eschatological expectations, and of particular significance was the belief that in this event, the cosmos has been both renewed and re-created. However, as depicted in 1 Corinthians 15 and the Easter narratives of the Gospels, this new creation is not the eradication of the old. As with the new heavens and new earth imaged in Isaiah 65.17, 2 Peter 3.13, and Revelation 21.1, this new creation is characterised by both continuity and discontinuity with empirical reality. Hence, Jesus’ resurrection is the embodiment of the fulfilment of the Jewish eschatological hopes for a renewed creation – the unification of heaven and earth – which thereby explains the ambiguity of the descriptions of the risen Jesus.

The significant problem remains, however, that though this event was interpreted as the fulfilment of the hopes that were expected to occur at the eschaton, the contingency of history invariably continued. It is for this reason, as explored in chapter two, that many scholars, particularly Barth, argued that this event was suprahistorical, that its eschatological character inhibited it from being considered an event within contingent history, at least analogous with other historical events. As was argued, this overemphasizes the discontinuous nature of Jesus’ resurrection at the expense of its continuity with empirical reality. As with the dichotomy between ‘physical’ and ‘spiritual,’ as far as such categories can be applied to Jesus’ risen nature, it is necessary to balance both continuity and discontinuity, as it pertains to the contingent historicity of this event, in dialectical tension. In other words, how can it be possible that what is expected at the end of contingent history has already occurred within contingent

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1 Wright does not explicitly connect the resurrection with the imagery of the new/unified heavens and earth, but he does state, “Heaven and earth, after all, are the twin partners in the creation which, at the heart of the passage Paul has in mind throughout [1 Cor. 15], the creator has declared to be ‘very good’” (Wright, RSG, 355).
history? It is at this particular junction that Pannenberg’s notion of anticipation is helpful. The following will explore this notion, proposing a *moderate* version of Pannenberg’s anticipation as a possible solution to this difficult question.

It should be noted that this section is a slight digression from the central argument of this thesis that the notion of ‘resurrection’ should not be assumed to envisage only the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body. However, the question of how we might understand the fulfilment within contingent history of hopes expected for the *eschaton* is nevertheless connected to the thesis argument. To ignore this question is to ignore the broader theological implications of this thesis. For these reasons, the following discussion is included as an excursus rather than being incorporated within a particular chapter.

For Pannenberg, knowledge is perpetually provisional due to the finitude of humanity, that truth is a process (rather than some finished, abstract, product) and is recognized proleptically.² Pannenberg’s use of *Vorgriff* (anticipation) is in contrast to, and a play on the word of Hegel’s *Begriff* (concept), which referred to the full conceptual understanding of all of reality wherein all things are known in their interrelatedness to all other things.³ Pannenberg places this *Begriff* in the future, at the *eschaton*, asserting that this can only be known provisionally, and in anticipation of its eventual demonstration in its totality. He argues:

> The meaning that we ascribe to the data of our own individual histories and to the events of social history depends on anticipation of the totality which is developing in history, i.e., on its future, and these anticipations constantly change with further experience because as we move ahead the horizon of experience broadens.⁴

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⁴ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 55.
Thus, regarding theological knowledge, “All the statements that we make about [the reality of God]…rest on anticipations of the totality of the world and therefore on the as yet non-existent future of its uncompleted history.”

Some have interpreted Pannenberg’s position as theological Hegelianism, such as Steiger, who, soon after the publication of Revelation as History, argued that Pannenberg adopted Hegel’s universal history uncritically, setting Hegel against the problems he saw in Bultmann and Barth without considering the problems with Hegel or the issues of knowledge within idealism. Though he concedes that some statements in Revelation as History may have implied Hegelianism, Pannenberg insists that the emphasis of his argument was to retain a modified idealistic view that all of history is the revelation of God, “relating it to biblical eschatology, to the end of history as the condition of its totality.” Pannenberg appropriated Hegel’s understanding of history, but modified it, integrating it with his understanding of biblical eschatology and relegating the meaning of history to the eschaton, thereby retaining an openness to the unknown future, a modification which for Don Olive decidedly separates him from Hegel. Clayton observes that “Pannenberg has rejected enough of Hegel and incorporated enough of others that the label “Hegelian” will not stick.”

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8 Ibid., vol. 1, 229. Pannenberg wanted to return “to the idealistic thesis of all history as the revelation of God, but in such a way that the idealistic view of history undergoes decisive correction by the thought of the anticipation of the totality of history in the light of its end as we find this in the eschatological thrust of the teaching and work of Jesus. …The reshaping of the idealistic view of universal history by relating it to biblical eschatology, to the end of history as the condition of its totality, made it possible to abandon the restriction of the historical self-demonstration of God to exceptional miraculous events.”
9 Olive, Wolfhart Pannenberg, 44.
This notion of anticipation was developed early in his career, particularly in his Christology and interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection. Pannenberg argues that “the resurrection of Jesus is indeed infallibly the dawning of the end of history,” and this end of history has “been anticipatorily realized in [Jesus].”\(^{11}\) In other words, in Jesus’ resurrection, the eschaton has arrived, and, therefore, the ultimate meaning of history is fundamentally theological. If the resurrection constitutes the signalling of the end of contingent history, then the meaning of history has been revealed in anticipation of the future consummation, and the promises of God are now present. Hence, “All reality is referred to the future and is experienced as eschatologically oriented,” as God “leads history into a new future,”\(^{12}\) a future that is “powerful in the present.”\(^{13}\)

Here Pannenberg’s dialectic once again comes to the fore, and Mostert relates this concept of anticipation to the realized eschatology of the “Christian experience of the already and the not yet.”\(^{14}\) The future is still not yet realized, and contingent history is yet to find its ultimate meaning; yet the end of history has already dawned in the person of Jesus, and so God’s blessings, salvation, and kingdom are presently active and powerful. The notion of anticipation and prolepsis affirms that the meaning of individuals, history, and historical events is still outstanding, awaiting – and being guided toward – future confirmation and consummation, despite this meaning having already been determined in the future, a meaning that is presently accessible, provisionally.\(^{15}\)

\(^{11}\) Pannenberg, “What is Truth?” 24.


\(^{15}\) “Pannenberg understands the end of history, the ultimate, is present to every moment of history and that every moment of history is characterized by its anticipation of the ultimate” (Pasquariello, “Pannenberg’s Philosophical Foundations,” 346).
Yet this also has an ontological aspect. Drawing on German idealism, particularly the close connection between ontology and epistemology, Pannenberg argued that the meaning of a being is inseparable from its essence, and if meaning is determined in the future and recognized only in anticipation, a being exists anticipatorily, awaiting its ontological determination: “only the future decides what something is.”17 He states in *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, “As long as the future is the source of the possible wholeness of an individual human existence, then we must say that its essence, and thus its “what it is,” are determined by its future.”18 When this future is arrived upon, it bears “retroactive power” to determine what that essence had always been.19

On the basis of this notion of anticipation, he can therefore conclude, “In a restricted but important sense, God does not yet exist.”20 This is overstating the case, for if we were to follow this logic then we would have no ground to say that anything truly exists. His point, however, should be clear: the future is open and unknown, history is incomplete, but is moving toward its completion, a completion which will illuminate and thus determine the present.21 There is tension between the past and future, but Pannenberg is neither a process theologian nor does he advocate for a determinism.22 Todd Labute encapsulates this tension best: “What something

19 Pannenberg, *MIG*, 105. Furthermore, “Things would then be what they are, substances, retroactively from the outcome of their becoming on the one hand, and on the other in the sense of anticipating the completion of their process of becoming, their history” (p. 107). Benjamin Meyers responded to those (such as Brian Walsh and Niels Henrik Gregersen) who have argued that Pannenberg’s ontology threatens ‘temporal difference,’ that salvation is more than an emancipation from finitude, by arguing that these critics ignored Pannenberg’s understanding of the differentiated parts, that his ontology was “was not of a totality that eliminates difference,” and that he sought “to articulate the unity between the particular and the whole” (Benjamin W. Meyers, “The Difference Totality Makes: Reconsidering Pannenberg’s Eschatological Ontology,” *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 49, no. 2 (2007), 149-51).
22 Todd Labute has effectively argued against the claim that Pannenberg adopts a process theology, arguing that process theology generally views the actual event as providing the determination of what it will become or will mean, whereas for Pannenberg the opposite is true: the actual events don’t carry the meaning in themselves, but receive that meaning from the future (Todd S. Labute, “The Ontological Motif of Anticipation in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg,” *JETS* 37, no. 2 (1994), 279).
is now is not what it always will be. But what it ultimately becomes is what it always will have been.”23

This tension was highlighted by Philip Clayton as problematic. Clayton argues that there are two senses of anticipation in Pannenberg’s metaphysics: the eschatological future breaking into contingent history at a particular point, namely the resurrection, and the openness of history which relies upon the contingency of history.24 These two distinct senses of anticipation require resolution. He further argues that the idealist framework, the tension between a deterministic and a process view of history, and the problems regarding human freedom in light of the end of contingent history already being manifest in Jesus’ resurrection, are problematic. While Clayton does not reject Pannenberg’s doctrine of anticipation outright, he urges hesitancy toward adopting or building upon such a system. Instead of a strong notion of anticipation, which presupposes an idealist framework – which “may be difficult to swallow for those not sympathetic to the idealist tradition”25 – Clayton advocates for a ‘weaker’ epistemological notion of anticipation, wherein the end of contingent history is not a given, but is that which makes faith possible, a hope in the coming judgment of God which enables faith in the present.26

These issues raised by Clayton are, however, not particularly problematic when one takes into account the postfoundationalist dialectic imbedded within Pannenberg’s methodology.27 It is precisely Pannenberg’s reticence toward foundationalism which prohibits his privileging either the present or the future over the other, and enables his championing of this tension.

23 Ibid., 281.
24 Mostert agrees with Clayton (Mostert, God and the Future, 125).
26 Ibid., 137-42.
27 David Zehnder has argued that the tension between the past (and present) and future in Pannenberg’s eschatology “threaten[s] the logical coherence that his system requires as a universal, public theology.” I argue the contrary, that this tension is not as incongruent as Zehnder supposes, that Pannenberg’s epistemology leads inextricably toward the possibility of upholding this tension (David J. Zehnder, “The Origins and Limitations of Pannenberg’s Eschatology,” JETS 53, no. 1 (2010), 126-29.
Pannenberg responded to Clayton, arguing that this weaker notion of anticipation is unable “to express the truth claim that is inherent in the Christian affirmation that the God whose kingdom is still to come has been revealed definitively in the history and person of Jesus.” These two notions, he argued, belong together. Indeed, they must remain together, in tension, to make sense of the New Testament’s seemingly paradoxical proclamation that the arrival of God’s kingdom – and with it, salvation – was not merely a future event, but one that had come in the person of Jesus (i.e. the dialectical tension between continuity and discontinuity with ordinary reality).

The more significant issue for Pannenberg’s notion of anticipation – which was highlighted by Clayton but not given adequate attention – is the reliance upon a strong connection between ontology and epistemology. If a being’s essence is only determined by the revelation of its historical meaning, which lies in the unforeseen future, and if, therefore, this being does not yet, in some sense, exist, there is very little to distinguish between the ontic and noetic nature of this being. However, this is incongruous to the epistemology he presents, which was analysed in the previous chapter. Though he argues against the possibility of universal, absolute objectivity, he does retain a form of realism, seen particularly in his argument for the universality of the truth of God. He therefore does not collapse ontology into epistemology, and therefore a strong notion of anticipation is an inconsistency.

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28 Wolfhart Pannenberg, “A Response to My American Friends,” in The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 320. Furthermore, “If this Christian hope will come true, our present faith will have been more than pure guesswork. It will presuppose the advent of that future, which is still open in our actual experience” (p. 320).
29 Ibid., 321. Cf. McClean, From the Future, 89.
30 Matt. 11.5; 12.28-29; Mark 1.15; 2.18-20; Luke 4.21; 7.22; 10.9, 17-20; 17.20-21; 21.31; John 5.25; 18.36; Rom. 8.18-30; 2 Cor. 5.17; Gal 1.4; Eph. 2.6; Phil. 3.12, 20-21; Heb. 2.8-9; 1 John 3.2. Cf. Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1971), 103-08; Grenz, Theology for the Community of God, 473-75, 609-12.
31 This criticism, it should be noted, is slightly different to that of Clayton and Zehnder, who did not take seriously enough the dialectic inherent within Pannenberg’s methodology, whereas my concern is the inconsistency between his overreliance upon an idealist framework in his notion of anticipation and the development of his epistemology, which is markedly distinct to idealism, refusing to collapse ontology into epistemology.
To reject an ontological notion of anticipation and resort purely to epistemology, as Clayton does, is unnecessary. Rather than a weak notion of anticipation, it is still possible to uphold a moderate notion of anticipation. A PCR framework recognizes that knowledge and understanding of reality is communally and contextually conditioned, and that there is no clear distinction between ‘subjectivity’ and ‘objectivity.’ Knowledge is a perpetual interaction between external object and internal interpretation. We can therefore say, in a restricted sense, that a being is determined, to some (though not insignificant) sense, by its perception, a perception governed by the perceiver’s communal context. This is invariably provisional, as this context will change, and thus the perception will also change, and subsequently the being itself.

Pannenberg’s doctrine of the resurrection places significant emphasis upon the belief that in Jesus’ resurrection the eschaton was present on account of the resurrection, in the apocalyptic tradition, being a general resurrection and thus “the beginning of the events of the end of history.” He argues:

The significance of Jesus’ resurrection was originally bound to the fact that it constituted only the beginning of the universal resurrection of the dead and the end of the world. Only under this presupposition is the end present in Jesus’ resurrection. …All these statements about the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection are bound to the connection of this event with the imminent end of the world and the general resurrection of the dead.

The category of resurrection from the dead was suffused with the expectation of the eschaton. That is, the end of contingent history would be marked by the resurrection; that this has occurred in Jesus means, in some sense, that the end of contingent history has arrived. As I have noted, the hope for resurrection encompassed a broad spectrum of eschatological hope that extends well beyond the reanimation of a personal body, and hence Jesus’ post-mortem

34 Cf. Bradshaw, Pannenberg, 77.
existence was not merely connected to the general resurrection, as Pannenberg here suggests. This makes it all the more significant that the hopes for the end of contingent history were believed to have occurred within contingent history.

In this sense, Jesus’ resurrection is a significant development of the Jewish eschatological notion. Resurrection was envisaged as a communal event that occurred at the end of contingent history. Either all people or a select few were to be resurrected to receive judgment, transformation, and entry into the new reality at the end of temporal history; the claim that this resurrection has already occurred and only to one person was a radical claim.\(^ {35}\)

It is important to note that Jesus’ resurrection wasn’t a partial fulfilment of the eschatological hope, for the theological framework of resurrection was inseparable from the hopes for the eschaton. This hope was fulfilled in its entirety. This event was the proleptic anticipation of the future eschatological resurrection, that is, it is the present actualization of the future reality.\(^ {36}\) Ted Peters has adopted Pannenberg’s notion of anticipation, arguing similarly that the transformative and redemptive power of God “has happened ahead of time, proleptically,” in Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and that the “future renewal of all things…has already appeared.”\(^ {37}\) The resurrection of Jesus became understood within the early communities of the Jesus movement as the fulfilment of the ancient Jewish eschatological hopes that were expected to occur at the eschaton. A moderate version of Pannenberg’s anticipation helps solve the dilemma of an event that constituted the end of contingent history within the contingent history without ignoring the eschatological significance of this event or relegating it to supra-history.

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Within a PCR framework, the tension between external event and internal interpretation, conditioned by evolving historical and communal contexts, allows for a moderate form of anticipation that upholds the paradoxical tension between the *now* and the *not yet*, that the resurrection inaugurates within contingent history a new eschatological age in proleptic anticipation of its ultimate fulfilment.
7. Redefining Resurrection: Concluding Remarks

This thesis has argued, first, that the notion of ‘resurrection’ cannot be reduced to little more than the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body but that Jesus’ post-mortem existence is the fulfilment of the eschatological hopes for the dispensation of divine justice, the renewal and transformation of creation, and the exaltation of the righteous, and, second, that as such the resurrection constitutes the unification of present, empirical reality with the future eschatological reality.

As I demonstrated in chapter two, scholarship has generally assumed that the language of ‘resurrection’ envisages little more than a personal re-animated body and has interpreted Jesus’ resurrection accordingly. That is, some have defended a literal, physical reanimation of Jesus’ body following his death and burial, while others have insisted that such a claim is entirely absurd for a modern audience and so must be metaphorical – either primitive mythical language expressing something they didn’t understand or the rise of faith within the disciples – while still others maintain that the idea of a person coming back from the dead is of such eschatological character that it is removed from ordinary history. In each instance, the assumed meaning of the language of ‘resurrection’ is primarily of the reanimation of a personal body and is subsequently interpreted in light of this, as literal, metaphorical, or supra-historical.

Subsequently, it was argued that these interpretations have failed to uphold both the continuous and discontinuous elements of the resurrected reality, as expressed in the ancient Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection and in the New Testament portrayals of Jesus’ resurrection. These scholars have emphasized one at the expense of the other. Those who argue for a physical event within contingent history have stressed the continuity of Jesus’ resurrection with his pre-crucifixion body and with ordinary reality. In so doing, this event is reduced to little more than any other event within contingent history, thereby ignoring the considerable
discontinuity and minimizing the eschatological significance of this event. Advocates for a metaphorical interpretation have similarly assumed the language of ‘resurrection’ to principally stress continuity but insist that such a thing – a physical body being reanimated after death – is impossible and must, therefore, be a reference to something else, such as an intense emotional memory, the continuation of Jesus’ mission, or the rise of faith within the disciples, expressed in mythical language. On the other hand, those who argue for an immaterial, ‘spiritual’ resurrection have stressed the discontinuous elements of the resurrection. They maintain that the descriptions of the risen Jesus which resemble physicality or a personal reanimation are either metaphorical depictions of this new immaterial existence or that the risen Jesus merely appears in a familiar and recognizable form. Similarly stressing discontinuity are those who argue this event constitutes supra-history, that the eschatological nature of this event thereby removes it entirely from ordinary contingent history. This thesis has argued that stressing either the continuity or discontinuity at the expense of the other is a misunderstanding of the ancient Jewish eschatological notion of resurrection, which simultaneously affirmed the renewal of present creation (and not its disbandment) as well as its radical transformation. Both must be upheld in a dialectical tension.

Essentially, this thesis has attempted to reframe the assumed understanding of ‘resurrection,’ moving away from a singular focus upon a personal re-animated body and toward a much broader eschatological act of new creation (which nevertheless invariably includes a body) that intensively incorporates and integrates the ancient Jewish eschatological category of resurrection with the developing memory and interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence. The interpretation of this event was a dynamic interaction between the external, objective event of Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and the categories and frameworks of understanding (the eschatological category of ‘resurrection of the dead’) which were applied to this event and

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through which this event was understood. This interpretation then developed as this event was remembered and re-interpreted in new and developing contexts, particularly the growing realization that the Parousia was indefinitely delayed.

The literature review of chapter two examined the major trends of resurrection theology from the pre-Enlightenment period to the present, highlighting how scholarship has so often assumed that the language of resurrection primarily envisages a personal reanimation and has subsequently emphasized either the continuity or discontinuity of the resurrection with empirical reality. The pre-Enlightenment era was characterised by a pre-critical hermeneutic and so Christian scholars generally interpreted Jesus’ post-mortem existence as a physical and personal reanimation. The continuity of Jesus’ risen nature with ordinary reality was heavily emphasized with little or nominal attention given to the discontinuous elements. Though it was observed in this chapter that the three-Quest demarcation was ultimately artificial and restrictive (though adopted to highlight general trends), mainstream scholarship of the ‘First Quest’ generally viewed the Easter narratives in terms of myth. Within the emerging critical consciousness of the era, resurrections – understood as the reanimation of personal bodies – were seen as aberrations of the natural order and so were interpreted as metaphor. Following this, in the early twentieth century, the supposed ‘No Quest’ period was characterised by a general aversion to historical research and a focus upon theological interpretation. Scholars in this era tended to emphasize an existential reading of resurrection or interpreted this event as supra-historical, thereby emphasizing the discontinuous and minimizing the continuous by entirely removing this event from ordinary contingent history. Again, the assumption was that resurrection primarily envisaged the reanimation of a personal body.

The ‘New’ or ‘Second’ Quest of the mid twentieth century was marked by a reignited concern for historical Jesus research, but viewed the resurrection primarily as a kerygmatic tool. The ‘historical Jesus’ is important and the New Testament proclamation about Jesus bears
significant continuity with the Jesus who lived within contingent history. However, whether or not the resurrection occurred within this contingent history is unimportant. Hence, as with the previous era, the discontinuous was emphasized at the expense of the continuous and ‘resurrection’ is similarly assumed to refer to a personal re-animated body. At some point toward the end of the twentieth century, this Quest may have evolved into a distinct ‘Third’ Quest, and a general characteristic in scholarship was a greater focus upon the Jewish context within which Jesus lived and the New Testament (especially the earlier texts) was written. In particular, apocalyptic literature became particularly prominent, and Jesus was often viewed as a subversive political leader. The resurrection was interpreted accordingly. However, whether or not the resurrection occurred within contingent history was again often deemed unimportant or remained a supra-historical event, apart from a few not insignificant scholars who vehemently argued for a physical, literal event. In the 21st century, particularly following Wright’s *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, interest in the resurrection waned and was largely reserved for apologetic debates, where Jesus’ resurrection, as a personal reanimation, was defended or ridiculed.

In questioning the essential meaning of the notion of resurrection and affirming an interpretation that seeks to balance antipodal realities in a dialectical tension, a re-evaluation of the epistemological and historiographical presuppositions pertaining to the study of Jesus’ resurrection was required. This was the task of chapters three and four.

Following the literature review, chapter three turned to epistemological concerns and proposed a postfoundationalist constructive realist epistemic framework. This framework is not a definitive or universal methodology (as central to PCR is a rejection of universal methods) but rather a guide, providing general epistemic contours. PCR attempts to balance the external object and its subjective interpretation as a dynamic tension or interaction with neither functioning as foundation or becoming subordinate to the other. There is, hence, a strong
emphasis upon reciprocity, with multiple disciplines and experiences functioning without any being prioritized. Furthermore, this framework stresses the socially and historically mediated categories of understanding and worldviews. Ultimately, knowledge is bilateral, not unilateral, that is, knowledge is an interaction between the meaning inherent to the external object and the meaning applied to that object by the subjective interpreter. Hence the emendation of ‘critical realism’ to ‘constructive realism.’ The value of this framework for interpreting Jesus’ post-mortem existence, rather than the many foundationalist or empiricist methodologies often used to interpret the resurrection, lies in (a) its ability to balance multiple epistemic sources in a postfoundationalist reciprocity which aids in the balancing of the antipodal elements of continuity and discontinuity present in the resurrected reality, and (b) its emphasis upon the significant role that the prior communal and eschatological categories of resurrection had in the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence.

Chapter four was then concerned with the question of the historical analysis of Jesus’ post-mortem existence. A PCR approach to historical inquiry into the resurrection stresses the anthropocentric nature of history, refusing to allow it to be relegated to the ambiguous realm of faith – entirely removed from historical inquiry – and recognizing the categories of understanding which were applied to the event and through which this event was understood. The interpretation of the external event was understood and shaped by prior categories – recognizing that knowledge is a bilateral interaction between the object or event and its witness or interpreter – and distorted by memory, which then develops in new and evolving contexts. History is a dynamic tension between the objective reality of past events within contingent history and the subjective interpretation and memory of the event.

Applying this PCR framework to Jesus’ resurrection entailed two primary tasks. First, it was necessary to analyse the category of resurrection which shaped the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence: the ancient Jewish eschatological category of resurrection of the dead.
Second, it was then necessary to analyse how this category was specifically applied to Jesus’ post-mortem existence and how it interacted with the memory of this event in new and developing contexts.

The first task was the concern of chapter five, which analysed the category of resurrection in ancient Jewish eschatology. It was here demonstrated that the notion of resurrection was inseparably and intimately connected a broad array of eschatological hopes, particularly the restoration of relationship with YHWH, the transformation of the cosmos, and the dispensation of divine judgment. In each of these eschatological expectations, resurrection held a central role. Hence, the resurrection of the dead was practically synonymous with this broad spectrum of eschatological hope. Furthermore, this language depicted a new reality that extended well beyond personal bodies. An essential aspect of this new reality that resurrection particularly attested to was the simultaneous affirmation and renewal of ordinary reality and its radical transformation, imbued with divine justice, enabled unhindered relationship with YHWH, and is devoid of death and suffering. This is expressed best by the imagery of the new (and unified) heavens and earth.

Chapter six took up the second task of analysing how this category was applied to Jesus’ post-mortem existence, and the corollary analysis of how this category developed in light of Jesus’ post-mortem existence. This event came to be understood, particularly in the later resurrection traditions, as the fulfilment of a broad spectrum of eschatological expectations for the eschaton. The claim that Jesus’ resurrection occurred on, or after, the third day, and happened according to Scripture suggests as much. This chapter traced the development of the interpretation of Jesus’ post-mortem existence as it interacted with eschatological motifs and was remembered and re-interpreted in new and evolving contexts. This was not a strictly linear or homogenous development, but was generally interpreted within the early traditions as the initiation of, or a part of, the eschatological expectations for the eschaton, and in the later traditions as the
fulfilment in and of itself of these eschatological expectations. Jesus’ resurrection was connected to a broad array of eschatological motifs that exceed the scope of the reanimation of a personal, corporeal body, particularly regarding the redemption and transformation of creation as a whole (not just of Jesus’ body), the dispensation of divine judgment, the glorification and exaltation of Jesus, and the inauguration of a new eschatological age. Hence, there is both continuity and discontinuity between Jesus’ post-mortem existence and empirical reality, seen especially in the depiction of the risen Jesus in the Easter narratives of the Gospels and in Paul’s description in 1 Corinthians 15.

From this analysis I conclude that Jesus’ post-mortem existence cannot be reduced and restricted to a personal re-animated body, and we must be careful not to emphasize either the continuous or discontinuous elements of the resurrection but must balance the two in a dialectical tension.

The broader theological implications of this argument are extensive and cannot be addressed in this thesis, as they require extended reflection. The claim that Jesus’ post-mortem existence constituted the fulfilment of the eschatological hope for the renewal and transformation of creation itself touches on a larger creation theology that must be addressed. I suspect that if we were to follow this train of thought, the broader scope of reality beyond anthropology would constitute a significant and integral aspect of theological thought. In Jesus’ resurrection, it is not simply humanity which is being redeemed, but creation in general. If we were to consider the relationship between the resurrection and the incarnation, it might not be too much of a stretch to say that Jesus’ post-mortem existence was the resurrection of creation. How this extends to the non-human world must be considered, and might well be extremely important at a time when climate change is becoming increasingly problematic.
Another significant theological implication has to do with the anthropological conceptions of the self and identity. If the resurrection was more than a personal reanimation, what sort of existence is anticipated for people in the new eschatological reality that is to come, without ignoring the renewal and redemption of creation? How does this impact upon theological anthropology and God’s intensions for humanity? Again, these questions require significant further consideration and exceed the scope of this thesis.

A final – perhaps pastoral – thought concerns the acceptance of this argument. It is a difficult task to encourage people to reshape deep-rooted notions, especially the notion of resurrection which has a central position within the Christian faith. It should be noted that this thesis is not an attempt to deny that something might well have happened to Jesus’ ‘body,’ but that the language of ‘body’ is restrictive, too-easily confused with Western and Cartesian notions of the individual, and excessively stresses continuity with ordinary reality. Paul uses ‘body’ to describe Jesus’ risen nature, but it seems that he saw this language as somewhat inadequate, which is precisely why he qualified this description with a variety of illustrations.  

Nevertheless, as demonstrated in chapter two, the notion of resurrection has become virtually synonymous with personal reanimation, and convincing people otherwise will be a slow and difficult task, but – I believe – a necessary one.

If we reframe resurrection to be understood as a broader eschatological event which extends well beyond Jesus’ body and upholds both the continuous and discontinuous elements of this resurrected reality, an array of theological possibilities is opened to us. In particular, we may see Jesus’ post-mortem existence as the dispensation of divine justice, the renewal and

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2 Finney remarks, “What [Paul] appears to mean in terms of post-mortem existence was actually a new entity for which he (confusingly) uses the term ‘body’ with all its encumbrances of natural flesh and blood,” (Finney, *Resurrection, Hell and the Afterlife*, 112-13).
transformation of creation, and the exaltation of the righteous. The hopes for the end of history have occurred within contingent history itself and a new eschatological age has already dawned.
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