

# *Sr. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Lake Worth, Florida*



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## UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

A monthly forum on the third *Saturday* of each month from 6:30 to 7:30 P.M. following Evening Prayer at 6  
Forums with Canon Richard T. Nolan  
Editor of [www.philosophy-religion.org](http://www.philosophy-religion.org)

Saturday, April 21, 2007

### *A Prayer To Be Said In Unison*

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who has committed to your Church the care and nurture of all the faithful; Enlighten with wisdom those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth, they may worship and serve you from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### *WAS THE RESURRECTION AN HISTORICAL EVENT?*

#### **I. The Importance of Events to the Hebrew Mind**

- a. the God Who Acts (including folklore, embellishments)
- b. the Exodus (including folklore, embellishments)
- c. the Resurrection (including folklore, embellishments)

#### **II. The Problem of Evidence**

- a. our possible reactions to U.F.O. claims
  - i. belief
  - ii. suspend judgment
  - iii. disbelief (fraud, hallucination, mistake)
- b. our possible reactions to a photo of the Resurrection
  - i. belief
  - ii. suspend judgment
  - iii. disbelief (fraud, hallucination, mistake)
- c. our possible reactions to:
  - i. being present at the Resurrection: belief, suspend judgment, attempt at interpretation
  - ii. first-hand observation of the Risen Lord: ditto above
  - iii. the testimony of others about the Risen Lord: ditto above
- d. the problem of all forms of evidence
  - i. what does one find persuasive as criteria for evidence?
  - ii. how is persuasive evidence to be interpreted?

### III. Our Available Sources for Evidence of the Resurrection

- a. the written testimony of others in a historical style (rather than as a parable, etc.)
  - i. some disciples and contemporary people find persuasive – testimony regarding the empty tomb
  - ii. some disciples and contemporary people find persuasive - testimony regarding first-hand observations of the Risen Lord
  - iii. some disciples and contemporary people find persuasive – testimony regarding the transfigured appearance (though the “physics” of the transfigured Jesus is beyond our knowledge)
  - iv. some disciples and contemporary people find persuasive – testimony regarding the transformation of the disciples’ despair changed to victory/joy

### IV. How Do We Account for the Change from Despair to Joy?

- a. hallucination?      b. fraud?      c. mistake?      d. wishful thinking/hysterics?      e. an event?

### V. What Kind of Event?

- a. an external event (one that could be perceived via human senses)?  
[role of startling, unexpected, scientific mysteries, such as in quantum physics]
- b. an internal event (one that was emotional, an event of the heart)?
- c. both?

### VI. Meanings of the Resurrection

- a. external: Creator's unique intervention to place "stamp of approval" on Jesus as His Word for humanity; provides the hope of everlasting life for others; ultimate victory will triumph over ultimate defeat.
- b. internal: encourages love, optimism, and rightness of Jesus' Way of life as the model for humanity.

### VII. Our Individual Decision (is based upon what we find persuasive.)

- a. belief in external and/or internal
- b. suspend judgment about external and/or internal
- c. disbelief in external and/or internal

### VIII. An Anglican Position (from [www.philosophy-religion.org](http://www.philosophy-religion.org)):

We may wonder whether the Resurrection was an historical event. While it is incorrect to affirm every detail of the New Testament post-Resurrection accounts of Jesus as if they could have been photographed, it is equally mistaken to declare them all as subjective products of spirited fantasy or inner conviction. The post-Resurrection passages include actual persons, places, and incidents that could have been videotaped, among them Thomas, other disciples mentioned by name, a place of burial, and the Risen Christ himself. These passages also contain or imply wonder-filled meanings beyond the range of any human or camera lens. Within and beneath the Easter texts, whether statements referring to photographable incidents or metaphors based on a unique event, is this central Christian discernment: that at an actual time and place of the Creator's own choosing, God's intention for humanity (God's "Word" for everyone - Jew and Gentile alike), embodied in Jesus the Christ, was born, ministered to many, was wrongly executed for treason by the Roman government, and was raised from death in a transfigured, exalted form unknown to us. Jesus "entered a new order of life: one which does not and cannot occur as part of the present order of things."<sup>1</sup> "...the resurrection of Christ was an objective event but of an unusual kind. Although it was not simply an event in the minds of the disciples, yet it was not publicly observable. Christ appeared only to chosen witnesses."<sup>2</sup> In the New Testament the Resurrected Christ is depicted with "a body identical yet changed, without the usual limitations of the flesh yet capable of manifesting itself within the order of the flesh."<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Resurrection was an historical happening - even though the physics of this "divine surprise" is beyond our knowledge. The meanings of the Resurrection are preached virtually every Sunday.

(1) Norris, *Understanding the Faith of the Church*, p. 137.

(2) Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, p. 226.

(3) quoted by Thomas, *ibid.*

# CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Easter Day [April 3, 1994]

Canon Richard T. Nolan

Hold on! This planet we're on is traveling 67,000 miles per hour in its annual journey around the sun. Scientists also tell us that the Milky Way Galaxy, our planet's neighborhood, is speeding along at 1.3 million miles per hour. Strange. I'm not aware of any such motion, nor are you. I guess things aren't the way they seem; there's more to it.

Some physicists report that along with our own immense, evolving universe, other parallel universes may be bubbling up; they also say that there may be ten dimensions rather than our familiar three dimensions of space plus one of time. Scientists are reminding you and me that things are stranger than we can imagine.

Because of scientific research, I've become very aware of the limitations of ordinary, human experiences. Dogs can hear sounds that we can't hear. Bees can see colors that we cannot see. Radio waves can pass through walls that are solid to our touch. Many other creatures can smell odors and taste flavors that we can neither smell nor taste. Our normal, mortal boundaries give us a very limited, personal experience of reality. Things aren't necessarily the way they seem to you and me; there's more to it than meets the eye.

In addition, I've become aware of the limitations of our human minds. At a particular time I may think that you're annoyed with me, but then learn that you're not; that notion was just in my own mind. We might try to reason through a complex mathematical problem, but we can't; we need a computer. We might interpret a poem, only to learn afterwards that the poet meant something very different. We might carefully explain some event only to discover that another responsible person has explained the same event very differently. Things aren't necessarily the way they seem.

Today we celebrate an extraordinary Event, one as incomprehensible as the speeding journeys of our planet and galaxy, one as astonishing as many scientific breakthroughs, one truly amazing Event beyond our ordinary experiences. We join with other Christians in the 2,000-year-old Good News that after his execution, Jesus Christ was raised up by the Creator.

In this unique Event the Almighty declared an awesome and powerful "No" to the human attempt to silence God's Word, Jesus Christ. As the defining moment in history, the Creator proclaimed an astonishing "Yes" --- that Jesus - his proclamation of God's sovereignty, his other teachings, the quality of his relationships, his healing presence - is indeed the clue to what life is all about. Crucified and risen, Jesus embodies the Creator's purposes for all humanity - as we travel speedily on this planet, in this universe, so limited by our human faculties.

Whereas the Hebrew people had based their lives on God's Exodus deliverance from Egyptian slavery to freedom in the Promised Land, the disciples of Christ based their lives on a new pivotal experience: that the Creator raised up the crucified Jesus as both Lord and Christ. Whereas the people for centuries had offered all sorts of sacrifices to establish a right relationship with God, the perfect offering of Jesus' faithfulness to the death put an end to the need for any further such sacrifices. Whereas membership in God's Old Covenant community was primarily by heredity, Jesus invites all human beings to be baptized into the New Covenant community. Whereas in the Old Covenant God was met primarily in the Temple, in the New Covenant humanity meets God directly in Christ - himself the new and resurrected Temple.

With blunt honesty St. Paul declared, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" Paul was correct. Without the Resurrection there would have been no Gospels, no history of the apostolic communities, no epistles, and no Church. Furthermore, the various accounts of the first Easter do not read like a mythological tale valuable only as a metaphor. Truly, those who would have preferred to suppress the Good News of the Resurrection Event could have done so - by producing the body of Jesus. They could not, and they did not. Moreover, the appearances of the Risen Christ to several disciples confirmed that he was alive in a new way. Their Good Friday doubts, confusions, fears

and disappointment were transformed. The Risen Lord was the divine guarantee that the Kingdom of God launched by Jesus would come to fruition. As a result, the disciples were changed and made new.

To be sure, the Resurrection is a vital metaphor for new beginnings after scarring tragedies, for joyous victory after painful despair, and for everlasting life. However, our hopefulness is based on the extraordinary Event of Christ's Resurrection, not on wishful thinking. It is within the ongoing Resurrection community, the Church, that we hear about and meet the life-giving Christ, especially in our Eucharistic celebrations. Within this fellowship the Resurrection becomes our account of the Risen Lord in our lives. Back at daily patterns, duties and relationships, as Easter Christians we choose the Easter perspective of hopefulness, confidence, and triumph rather than an outlook of immovable stones, insecurity, and failure. Indeed, the Easter Event authenticates who we are: that together you and I most fundamentally are children of God never separated from God's love and grace.

Basically I am a skeptic. For nearly three decades one of my treasured responsibilities as a philosophy professor and writer has been to encourage my students to join me in thinking carefully, in pondering, in wondering, and in examining claims and beliefs. I assure you that my brain does not shut down when it comes to theology. With my mind and heart I am persuaded that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is indeed a true, extraordinary Event. I am convinced that the New Testament portraits of Jesus are sufficiently illuminating for us to discover together, with room to differ, the rich meanings of the Gospel. As a Christian community we grow in our understandings of the Resurrection Faith and its significance for our lives individually, for the Church, and for the world.

Easter Day is powerful news to all humanity that things aren't necessarily what they seem. Life is stranger than we can imagine. There is more to it: Christ Is Risen! He is Risen Indeed. Alleluia!

#### RESURRECTION AND JUDAISM – N. Y. TIMES September 30, 2006

*EXCERPTS from “Beliefs” – The Case for What ‘Comes as a Shock to Most Jews and Christians Alike’  
by Peter Steinfels*

In classical Judaism, resurrection of the dead was a central belief, essential to defining oneself as a Jew. “Today,” writes Jon D. Levenson, professor of Jewish studies at Harvard, that fact “comes as a shock to most Jews and Christians alike.”

Apart from the Orthodox minority, most Jews, including those who acknowledge belief in the Resurrection as a part of Judaism’s historical legacy, seem to rush by the idea as quickly as possible, rendering it perhaps as a metaphor for how one’s good works live on, but in any case ushering it to the margins of their tradition, a minor and dispensable theme in a Judaism that focuses on life.

Resurrection of the dead, it is argued, is a Johnny-come-lately notion, not found in the ancient texts of the Hebrew Bible, which treated mortality matter-of-factly. Instead, the doctrine was an innovation of the Maccabean period, found in the Book of Daniel, written between 167 and 164 B.C.E .....

Professor Levenson’s new book, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (Yale University Press), is a frontal challenge to this account. But the reasons that it has become a staple of modern Jewish apologetics, he allows, “are not hard to find.”

On the one hand, the rejection or marginalization of resurrection offered a clear distinction between Judaism and a Christianity that celebrated the Resurrection of Jesus as the ground for human hope. On the other hand, it simultaneously aligned Judaism with the naturalistic and scientific outlook of modernity “of the sort that dismisses resurrection as an embarrassing relic of the childhood of humanity.”

Professor Levenson does not deny that an unambiguous belief in resurrection of the dead makes a late appearance in Judaism, or that some groups, like the Sadducees, mentioned in the Gospels and by the historian Josephus, never accepted it.

He argues, however, that this late appearance was “both an innovation and a restatement of a tension that had pervaded the religion of Israel from the beginning.” ....

To make this case, Professor Levenson works his way, step by step, through ancient texts and concepts. He explores the nature of Sheol, the Bible's gloomy abode of the departed, and whether anyone was thought to have escaped it. He illuminates differences between modern understanding of individual identity and the ancient Israelite understanding of the self as embedded in family and nation — and what, therefore, overcoming death means in each case.

For him, resurrection is distinct from the afterlife that philosophers from the Greeks to Kant have posited on the basis of an immaterial and imperishable soul or that New Age teachers envision as a result of one's own inward journeying. Resurrection is dependent on a gracious act of God, and it is intimately linked to an eschatology: a vision of the final culmination of history.

He analyzes biblical accounts of God's power to reverse life-threatening adversity — enslavement, infertility, loss of children, famine — or in exceptional cases, death itself. Many of his instances are the same ones that rabbis have cited over the centuries to support the doctrine of resurrection: from the opening of Sarah's infertile womb and the binding and near sacrifice of Isaac to the sufferings of Job, the miracles of the prophet Elisha and Ezekiel's vision of a new people arisen in the valley of the dry bones.

But Professor Levenson brings to this material the full panoply of modern critical methods for analyzing scriptural texts, placing them in historical and cultural context, drawing on archaeology and literary parallels in Canaanite mythology and Ugaritic texts.

He draws out subtle connections and makes fine distinctions, never claiming more for his evidence than what it will bear.

And if a modern Jewish apologetic has contrasted a this-worldly and ethically minded Judaism against an otherworldly and superstitious Christianity, he said, many Christians have misunderstood Judaism because of their assumption that belief in resurrection is exclusively associated with Jesus.

“The stereotypes on both sides are destructive,” he said, “and destroy an important bond between Judaism and Christianity.” For all the differences between the two faiths — and Professor Levenson is not known for minimizing them — “early Christianity and rabbinic Judaism had no division on belief in eschatological resurrection,” he said.

The most central of ancient prayers that rabbinic law prescribes to be said every day — morning, afternoon and evening — speaks several times of God's power to revive the dead, words that modern translations have often recast in ways that avoid the supernatural meaning that classical Judaism gave them. Traditionally this prayer, the Amidah, also referred to as Tefilla or Shemoneh Esreh, was said five times on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which occurs this year from sunset tomorrow until nightfall on Monday.

Agree or disagree with Professor Levenson about resurrection, it would be challenging during those solemn hours to have his case in mind.

from *THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY* “RESURRECTION”

**Historical Problems.** The early Church's resurrection faith involves a host of unresolved historical problems which we can only sample here. The first problem concerns the experienced mode of Jesus' resurrection. Stories about the empty tomb presume a bodily resurrection or a bodily assumption to heaven. Earlier traditions about postresurrection appearances are ambiguous. Although in their present form most of these stories posit a bodily presence almost without exception, elements in the stories strain against such an interpretation: Jesus materializes and disappears suddenly; he is mistaken as a mysterious stranger or a gardener; he is thought to be a spirit or ghost; the disciples disbelieve. This suggests an apologetic tendency in the tradition which objectified Jesus' presence by emphasizing bodily features or functions (or, later, by citing neutral or antagonistic witnesses). The tendency may have been a corrective to stories that were originally narrated in the tradition of angelophanies or divine epiphanies

and that may have presumed that the exalted Christ appeared from heaven. This viewpoint is amply documented in 2d-century gnostic sources (Robinson 1982).

A second problem is the place, witnesses, and order of the appearances. The earliest list in 1 Cor 15:5–7 is duplicated nowhere. An appearance to James is not documented in any of the canonical gospels. Only Luke mentions the primary, singular appearance to Peter (24:34), although the tradition seems to be reflected in a number of stories set in the historical ministry of Jesus. The appearances are set variously in Galilee (at the sea or on a mountain) and Jerusalem, with Matthew (except for the brief 28:9–10), Mark, Luke, and the original author of John opting for one tradition or the other. Only an uncritical inclusivism can harmonize these disparate traditions.

Finally, there remains the mystery of the genesis of the NT resurrection faith. The earliest credal and hymnic testimonies to this faith simply assert the traditional pattern of suffering, humiliation, persecution, death—vindication, exaltation. However, it is unlikely that belief in Jesus' resurrection or exaltation arose simply as a reasoned application of the pattern to the tragedy of his crucifixion. Different from all the Jewish texts are the primitive assertions of the universal significance of Jesus' exaltation, which is also implicit, and sometimes explicit in the commissioning functions described in the appearance stories. In the earliest available evidence, Jesus' resurrection means his unique exaltation to status and functions hitherto not ascribed to a historical person. As far back as we can go, belief in Jesus' resurrection is the foundation for the Church's speculations and claims about his unique status and role.

from *THE HARPER'S BIBLE DICTIONARY*

resurrection, a rising to life from death. The concept of resurrection is derived from Jewish apocalyptic literature. In earlier OT writings there is no belief in life after death (Ps. 115:17). When eventually this belief developed it was in the form of the resurrection of the dead, rather than of the immortality of the soul (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). Resurrection is to be distinguished from resuscitation or reanimation of the physical body. It denotes a complete transformation of the human being in his or her psychosomatic totality (1 Cor. 15:53-55). This is expressed in a number of metaphors. The resurrected will shine like stars (Dan. 12:3). They will be like the angels (Mark 12:25). Resurrection was thought of not as an event for each individual at death but as a corporate event. God would raise all of the elect at the end of history.

**The Resurrection of Jesus:** The post-Easter proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus is to be seen in the context of this apocalyptic hope. Jesus' resurrection is an act of God. God raised the Son from the dead as the first fruits in anticipation of the general resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). The resurrection of the believers would follow as a result of Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 15:22).

**Earliest Traditions:** The earliest traditions about the Easter event are not to be found in the appearance stories at the ends of the Gospels (Mark 16:9-20, though part of the canonical text, is not part of the original Mark). They are all later developed traditions emanating from subapostolic times. The earliest witness we have of the Easter event is to be found in 1 Cor. 15:3-8. Paul wrote this account around A.D. 55 and was quoting what he delivered to the Corinthians when he founded that community ca. A.D. 50. But, vv. 3-7 were already a tradition Paul had received from others who were Christians before him (v. 1). This takes us back to the time of his call to be an apostle (ca. A.D. 33) or at the latest Paul's visit to Jerusalem ca. A.D. 35 (note that the two persons mentioned in vv. 5 and 7 are the same persons Paul saw on that visit, Gal. 1:18-19).

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2d second  
NT New Testament  
OT Old Testament  
vv. verses  
v. verse

From 1 Cor. 15:3-8 we learn that faith in the resurrection was based not on the empty tomb, which Paul does not mention, but on the appearances of the Lord. The word used for ‘appeared’ is the same Greek word used elsewhere for visionary experiences. We may today characterize these experiences as revelatory disclosures from the transcendent realm. No distinction was drawn between the resurrection and ascension. The appearances are manifestations of the resurrected and already ascended Christ from heaven.

The impact of these disclosures is: first, the conviction that God raised Jesus from the dead (note that the language used here is derived from Jewish apocalyptic literature; we might say today that God took Jesus into his own eternity); second, the consolidation of the disciples into a community, later designated ‘church’ (Gk. *ekklēsia*), i.e., the end-time people of God; and third, the inauguration of the community’s mission to Israel and later to the gentile world.

In the Gospels: The story of the empty tomb as found in the Gospels, though in its present forms belonging to the later tradition, nevertheless appears to rest on an early report of Mary Magdalene and other women that on visiting the tomb after the burial they discovered it empty. In itself this discovery does not establish a resurrection and might conceivably suggest a mere resuscitation. It is also susceptible of other explanations, some of which are mentioned in the Gospels themselves (cf. Mark 15:47; Matt. 28:13; John 20:15). The disciples after the appearances welcomed the women’s report as congruous with their faith in the resurrection and developed the empty-tomb narrative as a vehicle for the Easter proclamation.

Later the Gospels developed appearance narratives. The effect of this attempt at narration is the growing materialization of the appearances and of the understanding of the resurrection. Jesus now walks on earth as he had walked before (Luke 24:15). He talks, eats, drinks, and invites people to touch him. The theological motivation for this materialization is often held to be anti-docetic (i.e. against the idea that Jesus was nonmaterial) but that would probably be an anachronism. More likely it originated in a profound conviction of the identity of the risen Lord with the earthly Jesus. A further effect is a growing desire to separate the ascension from the resurrection (Luke 24:51; John 20:17). This tendency culminates in Acts 1:9-10 in a period of forty days between the resurrection and ascension (a period lengthened in later apocryphal, Gnostic revelations about the risen Jesus). As treated by Luke-Acts the ascension has a double effect on the understanding of resurrection. In Luke’s Gospel it forms a conclusion to the earthly life of Jesus while in Acts it inaugurates his heavenly reign.

*from the EERDMAN’S BIBLE DICTIONARY*

**RESURRECTION** (Gk. *Anástasis, égersis, exanástasis*).† The raising from death to new life, in biblical usage specifically a raising of the righteous of all ages at the end of earthly history. Implicit in the very idea of resurrection is a positive valuation of life in the physical body, which sets Christianity against worldnegating mysticisms that see the body as an impediment that must be sloughed off. The expectation of the resurrection is thought by most Christians to include also the unrighteous, whose resurrection will be followed by their consignment to eternal punishment. The Christian hope of the resurrection of mankind is based on the resurrection of Christ, which has already occurred in history rather than waiting for the end of history and which is understood as a proleptic preview of the final destination of history.

*I. Old Testament and Early Judaism*

The idea of resurrection is not attested in early parts of the Old Testament and appears only in postexilic apocalyptic literature. The general conception was of a shadowy existence for the dead in Sheol,

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Gk. Greek

Gk. Greek

† Major revision

and some Old Testament texts seem to deny any possibility of life after death (e.g., Job 14:12–21). In Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37:1–14) the striking image of return from death simply foreshadows the return of the exiles from Babylon, but an over-literal interpretation of this prophecy may, however, have contributed later to a genuine resurrection belief. Other texts that speak of a return from death also employ such a thought as a metaphor for national revival (Isa. 25:8; 26:19; Hos. 6:2; 13:14 [but cf. RSV]). Ps. 16:10; 49:15 (MT 16) refer not to a return from death but to God’s protection of the psalmist in circumstances that might otherwise lead to death. Job 19:25–27 speaks of a vindication after death, but places it in a momentary vision of the vindicator, not in a lasting resurrection. Dan. 12:2, however, predicts that “many” will rise from death, the righteous (the Maccabean martyrs) to reward, the wicked to “everlasting contempt.” According to some scholars, the idea of the resurrection may have been borrowed by the Jews from Zoroastrianism, encountered in the Persian Empire during the Exile.

In post-Old Testament Judaism the resurrection doctrine became widely held, but with a number of variations concerning who will rise—only some or all of the righteous, or both the righteous and the wicked—and concerning whether this rising is to be spiritual, or physical with the return of the very body that died, or experienced as a transformation into a glorious angelic form. Belief in the coming resurrection was not universal among Jews; the Sadducees specifically denied such a belief (cf. Acts 23:8).

## *II. New Testament*

The entire New Testament was written in the shadow of the resurrection of Jesus. This event has, of course, affected what is said about the coming general resurrection, though what is said still falls within the general range of possibilities presented by Jewish belief in the resurrection. What was believed about the coming general resurrection was understood to be in accord with Jewish belief and in conflict with the beliefs of most Gentiles regarding the condition of mankind after death (Acts 24:15, 21).

Jesus himself believed that both the righteous and the wicked would be present at the final judgment (Matt. 10:15; 12:41–42). He also believed in physical resurrection in its most literal sense, such that wounds inflicted in this life would be carried over into eternal life (18:8–9). Jesus’ words about the resurrected righteous becoming like angels (Mark 12:25) mean only that marriage will not be part of existence after the resurrection. He also apparently believed in an intermediate state between death and the final judgment, wherein the righteous poor would enjoy bliss in the presence of Abraham, while the wicked rich would suffer in flames in Hades (Luke 16:22–24).

Paul viewed the coming resurrection as the deliverance of creation from bondage, the preparation of the individual for eternal glorious life, and the triumph of Christ on God the Father’s behalf (Rom. 8:19–23; 1 Cor. 15:23–28, 35–49). He does not refer in his letters to the wicked as being involved in the resurrection (cf. Acts 24:15). In response to questions that arose because of the death of some Christians, Paul described them as “those who are asleep” (1 Thess. 4:13; cf. 1 Cor. 15:18), but this use of a common euphemism for death need not imply any particular view of the intermediate state (cf. John 11:11–14). The possibility of his own death before the return of Christ did cause Paul to think more definitely about the time between death and resurrection, which he viewed negatively (2 Cor. 5:1–4), though he continued to believe that death would bring him immediately into the presence of Christ (v. 8; Phil. 1:23).

John of Patmos writes of the resurrection of Christian martyrs who will reign with Christ during the millennium, after which all the rest of the dead, good and evil, will rise to be judged by their recorded works, the roll of the saved already having been set down in the book of life (Rev 20:4–6, 11–15). He also mentions an uncomfortable intermediate state of the martyrs (6:9–11).

The New Testament writers link the future general resurrection closely with the past event of Jesus’ resurrection, which is regarded as the first stage of the general resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23; Col.

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cf. compare, see

RSV Revised Standard Version

MT Masoretic Text

v. verse

1:18), as the model of the future resurrection of believers (Phil. 3:21), as that which guarantees believers' resurrection (1 Cor. 15:17–20; 1 Thess. 4:14–16), and as instrumental to believers' resurrection (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:21–22). Along with his death on the cross, Jesus' resurrection is considered essential to the present salvation of believers (Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 3:21).

While the resurrection of Jesus is thus a central event for the faith of the New Testament writers, the nature of the risen Jesus is portrayed in differing ways. Sometimes an effort is made to distinguish the nature of the resurrected Jesus from the nature of Jesus as he had lived before the cross, so that place can be made for his spiritual presence and his transcendent lordship (1 Cor. 15:44–45, 50; 1 Pet. 3:18; cf. Rom. 1:4). Thus Jesus is able to appear in closed rooms (John 20:19), to disappear suddenly (Luke 24:31), and to appear in forms other than a simple human being on earth (Acts 7:55–56; 9:3–5; 22:6–8; 26:13–15; cf. 1 Cor. 15:8). At other times, however, the physical humanness of Jesus after the Resurrection is emphasized (Luke 24:36–43).

Mark, probably the earliest of the Gospels, announces the resurrection of Jesus and depicts his tomb as being empty (Mark 16:1–8). Appearances of the risen Jesus came to be described in the later Gospels (and in late additions to Mark; e.g., vv. 9–20), although 1 Cor. 15:5–7 shows that from earliest times preaching of the gospel included accounts of appearances of the risen Jesus. The account of the discovery of the empty tomb itself developed into a resurrection appearance story (compare Mark 16:1–8 with the parallels in the other Gospels), which then underwent development in different directions.

All of the resurrection appearance stories, however, have the same emphasis on the surprise the event produced in the followers of Jesus and on the risen Jesus' relation to the community of his followers, an emphasis that becomes especially important in references to Jesus' inauguration of the mission of the Church after his resurrection (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:44–49; John 20:21–22; 21:15–17; Acts 1:6–8). It was to believers alone (and those who would become believers) that Jesus appeared, and it was as witnesses of the risen Jesus that the early preachers of the gospel spoke (v. 22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33).

At some points, aspects of Jesus' burial, his resurrection, and his appearances after his Resurrection are mentioned to help attest that his resurrection did, indeed, occur (John 20:20–27; 1 Cor. 15:5–7). His resurrection itself then is regarded as proof of what God is doing in salvation history (e.g., Acts 17:31).

The resurrection of Jesus and the coming general resurrection are used together as a metaphor for the spiritual experience of believers (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 2:5–6; Phil. 3:10; Col. 2:12–13; 3:1–3). This metaphor does not mean that the final physical resurrection was no longer expected (cf. Phil. 3:11; Col. 3:4), though its use did provide the basis for an overrealized eschatology that did deny the future resurrection (2 Tim. 2:18). Such a redefinition of "resurrection" was probably the basis for the problems addressed at 1 Cor. 15.

from *THE EVANGELICAL DICTIONARY OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY*

*The New Testament.* The resurrection of Jesus is the principal tenet of the New Testament. Baptism is centered in Jesus' resurrection. Even though Jewish illustrations were present for at least a hundred years before Christ, Paul applies the act symbolically to death, burial, and resurrection. He says, "When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12 NRSV; see also Rom. 6:3–5; 1 Peter 3:21–22).

The Lord's Supper is less connected in its symbolism than baptism, but the early correlation that it was celebrated on the Lord's day, that is, on the day that Jesus raised from the dead, reveals an early association.

The retelling of the empty tomb of Jesus is found in all four Gospels (Mark 16:1–8; Matt. 28:11–15; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:11–18). The empty tomb of Christ stands in sharp contrast to other world religions whose prophets and their adherents never make such a claim.

The appearances of Jesus after his resurrection to chosen individuals play an important role in the proclamation of the gospel message (e.g., Matt. 28:9–10, 16–17; Luke 24:34; John 20:11–17; 21:1–2; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:20; 10:40–41; 13:30–31; 1 Cor. 15:5–7).

The resurrection of Jesus is a testimony to the general resurrection of all humans, which will be followed by the dispensing of God’s justice; to the righteous there will be a “resurrection of life” and to the unrighteous a “resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28–29; cf. Rev. 20:4–6). Regardless of the complex time sequence involved in the various resurrections recorded in the New Testament, Jesus’ bodily resurrection is the basis for the future resurrection of humans (1 Cor. 15:42–50). The Spirit, which was given after his resurrection, is the “guarantee” (or “first installment”) that God will raise the righteous from the dead, and that they will not be found “naked,” that is, incorporeal (2 Cor. 5:1–5; cf. Eph. 1:13–14), but will have a corporeal existence with God. Even though believers “groan” while in their bodies (2 Cor. 5:2), they will be “further clothed” after their resurrection (v. 4). There will be recompense for what was done in the body; therefore, one must seek to please God (vv. 6–10).

**First Corinthians 15.** The earliest teaching in the New Testament concerning the resurrection is undoubtedly 1 Corinthians 15. Paul “passes on” that which he has received (presumably by oral tradition), which is of “first importance.” Paul says that the resurrection was in accordance with the Scriptures—a perception that was an important one considering the magnitude of the teaching. **The seemingly insignificant detail of the time sequence (“the third day”) is not an inconsequential component; rather, it reveals the historical nature of the event, which was not a private, subjective experience but one that occurred in actual time and was attested by Cephas, the Twelve, and five hundred people.**

Paul, using simple logic, concludes several things “if the dead are not raised.” The specific problem that he is addressing is that some of the Corinthians were saying that there was no resurrection of the dead. If there is no general resurrection, then the conspicuous conclusion that “Christ has not been raised” can be deduced. **If “Christ has not been raised,” then several philosophical conclusions can be outlined.**

**First, the missionary proclamation concerning Christ “is useless” (v. 14).** This perception was undoubtedly an important one for Paul considering that his commission to the Gentiles was rooted in the idea that Jesus was “first to rise from the dead” (Acts 26:23). Therefore, Paul’s mission to the Gentiles unfolds in light of the resurrection of Christ and the corollary futility of his own life ensues if there is no resurrection. Paul corresponds with the Corinthians with much passion in these verses. The collapse of the resurrection was commensurate to Christianity being fallacious for Paul.

**Second, if there is no resurrection the faith of the believer is “vain” and “futile” (vv. 14, 17).** The eschatological aspect of faith is rooted in the notion of resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of the believer. Future salvation is based on the resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, faith in God’s justice in resolving the problem of theodicy is “vain” (cf. 1 Peter 3:21; Rom. 4:25) if there is no resurrection.

Jesus’ resurrection is a prototypical event. As “the firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:23) he gives the Spirit as the firstfruits to the believer (Rom. 8:23). This Spirit indwelling is the “first installment” (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14) and the basis for the hope of the “redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23).

**Third, the early missionaries were “misrepresenting God” if there is no resurrection (1 Cor. 15:15).** Paul’s logic allows no room for a “spiritual” approach that discounts the resurrection. **The belief in bodily resurrection is commensurate with belief in God. If God exists and if he created the universe and has power over it, he has power to raise the dead. Attempts to explain the resurrection as a mere sociological phenomenon without the supernatural element minimizes the magnitude of the event and the role that it played in the formation of Christianity.**

For example, the fourth of Paul's conclusions—"you are still in your sins" (v. 17)—shows the magnitude for Paul of the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus showed that Christ's oblation as the sacrificial lamb was accepted by God, which is the basis for the giving of the Spirit to believers and the forgiveness of their sins.

Fifth, if there is no resurrection "those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost" (v. 18). In other words, they have returned to dust with no future cognizance of any existence. This statement gets at the core of the basis for hoping and not fearing death. It also affects morality. God's future judgment modifies earthly behavior. Paul's conclusion that "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (v. 32) reveals the tenable resolution of materialistic hedonism, when the resurrection of Christ as the firstfruit and the ensuing general resurrection are dismissed. As in the Old Testament, theodicy, especially in times of persecution, was perceived as futile if there was no future vindication.

Finally, the result of such logic led Paul to declare that "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (v. 19 NRSV). Paul articulates the persecution he received at Ephesus in verse 32, which only has meaning if the dead are raised. The persecution and even death of many of the early Christians led to Paul's conclusion that theodicy is resolved by bodily resurrection.

The rhetorical question is asked in verse 35, "With what kind of body will they come?" Paul's answer is to stress continuity of identity. Even though individuals will be "changed," they will remain in essence who they are. He illustrates this by using a grain of wheat that will, after it is planted, be changed, but will remain wheat. In the Gospels, the appearances of Jesus stress the continuity of his identity even though he changed. His pierced hands and side attest to the continuity of his identity.

Paul's discussion on the "first Adam" who is born of "dust" and the "second Adam" who is Christ and is a "life-giving spirit" has as its goal the statement "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." In other words, spiritual rebirth is necessary to enter the eternal kingdom of God.

Not only does the resurrection of Jesus have implications for the individual, according to Paul, but Christ's passage through the cosmos unharmed by evil spirits has placed the universe itself in his subjection (vv. 24–28). This early perception, the so-called classic view of the atonement, is common in the New Testament (cf. Acts 2:32–35; Eph. 1:20–23; Heb. 1:13). In second temple Judaism, ascension into the cosmos by a saint who confronted evil spirits (e.g., Eth Enoch) was commonplace, but none were permitted passage to "the right hand of God." Jesus' resurrection and subsequent ascension (which are often treated together as one event) is unique in that sense.

*from THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*

Resurrection of Christ. The conviction that God not only sent His Son into the world but also vindicated Him after His death upon a cross, is fundamental to the NT witness and the corner-stone of Christian faith and theology. This certainty that God had reversed human judgement and established freedom from death in an event which inaugurated 'the age to come' found expression in the OT language of exaltation (Is. 52:13) and heavenly session (Ps. 110:1; see ASCENSION OF CHRIST), as well as in the Jewish eschatological vocabulary of a \*resurrection of the dead (Dan. 12:2). This last term linked what happened to Jesus Christ to what was expected to happen to Christians, a conjunction visible in St \*Paul's claim that Christ is the first-fruits of them that slept (1 Cor. 15:20) and the first-begotten from the dead (Col. 1:18). The Christian hope is thus rooted in this event (1 Pet. 1:3) and looks forward to the time when death shall be finally overcome (1 Cor. 15:26).

One of the earliest Christian creeds, quoted by Paul at 1 Cor. 15:3–5 (perhaps 15:3–7) speaks of Christ being raised (i.e. by God) 'on the third day, according to the Scriptures' and appearing (ὡφθη) to Cephas (i.e. St \*Peter) and to the twelve. The list continues with appearances to more than 500 brethren,

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NT New Testament.

OT Old Testament.

St Saint.

to St \*James, to all the \*apostles, and, Paul adds, finally to himself. His instance (v. 11) that this belief was shared on all sides in the early Church is confirmed by the NT as a whole.

The Gospels report the discovery of Christ's empty tomb by St \*Mary Magdalene either alone (Jn. 20:1-9) or with one or more other women: with 'the other Mary' (Mt. 28:1); with Mary the mother of James, and Salome (Mk. 16:1); or with Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women (Lk. 24:10). The Gospels disagree over other details: whether it was one or two angels or young men who told of Christ's resurrection, whether Christ Himself then appeared (Mt., Jn.), whether He (Mt.) or the young man (Mk.) directed the disciples to \*Galilee, and whether the women obeyed. Appearances follow, in \*Jerusalem (Jn. 20) and nearby \*Emmaus (Lk. 24), and/ or Galilee (Mt. 28, Jn. 21). Attempts to harmonize these traditions have failed to persuade critics, but the testimony of the biblical witnesses to the Divine event itself is unanimous. There is also broad agreement among the Gospels about how, after some initial doubts, the disciples became convinced of what had happened. However, because Paul (writing earlier than the Evangelists) makes no mention of the empty tomb, some modern critics have disputed its historicity. Others have argued that his reference to Christ's burial implies that he assumed the tomb to be empty after the resurrection. While evidence of the empty tomb apart from the Christian tradition is not to be expected, there is equally no record of His body being produced, and the story about the bribing of the guards (Mt. 28:11-15) might suggest that no such claim was ever made. It was mainly this story, designed to answer accusations that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus, which led H. S. \*Reimarus to revive the theory that the apostles had perpetrated a fraud, but subsequent historical investigations have discounted such speculations.

The nature of Christ's risen or 'spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15) has from the earliest days been a matter of debate, partly because the Church has always taught that God's saving action in Christ involves the material world, and also because the identity of the Risen Lord with the man from Nazareth is fundamental to orthodox Christianity. Believers have rightly resisted accounts which could undermine the reality of the event by dissolving it without remainder into the disciples' experience. One such early insistence on the objective reality of the event may be found at Lk. 24:36-43. On the other hand the Gospels generally avoid implying that Jesus was restored to His previous earthly life; He is said to have passed through closed doors (Jn. 20:19), a feat which suggests that these appearances were not material in the normal sense. But the reality of the conviction they engendered is confirmed by the way some of the fearful disciples (cf. Mk. 14:50) became the bold leaders and missionaries depicted in Acts. Powerful transforming consequences ascribed to the Holy Spirit were from the beginning associated with the Resurrection (cf. Jn. 20:22), but the event itself, like the \*Incarnation, remains a mystery that cannot be analysed.

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The Reverend Dr. John Polkinghorne, Anglican priest, theologian, author, and former professor of Mathematical Physics at Cambridge University. He has written extensively on matters concerning science and faith, and he was awarded the Templeton Prize in 2002. His website is: <http://www.starcourse.org/jcp/> .

The following is an excerpt from an interview accessible at:  
<http://meaningoflife.tv/transcript.php?speaker=polkinghorne>

Interviewer Wright: One part of Christian belief is the idea that life goes on after death.

John Polkinghorne: Right.

Wright: Which in turn entails the notion of the soul which in some circles of modern science and/or philosophy is considered too ethereal or spooky or mystical or something to take seriously. Well what do

you say to that kind of criticism?

John Polkinghorne: Well I think that there are serious issues to think about there. I think that a sort of dualism picture of human nature, that we are really a spiritual bit that happened to be housed in the physical husk of our bodies, and that spiritual bit is released at death and that's the soul, and that's the aspect of us that is truly immortal... I think that's very hard to believe today the more we understand how our brains and our minds interact with each other and the more we understand for example our evolutionary history linking us with the animals and ultimately in animal matter long ago, the more we see the psychosomatic unities a sort of package deal. That's not a tremendously upsetting sort to theology, it's the predominate picture you find of human beings in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament, that we are, speaking in a famous phrase: "we are animate bodies rather than incarnated souls." And that's the view that I would talk myself. Then you have to ask the question, "Ok, what's the soul then?" Well the soul is the real me and whatever is the real me, it is certainly not simply the matter of body, simply the atoms that make it up, because they're changing all the time. We have very few atoms in our bodies that were there even two years ago. So what is it that links ..? I mean we don't have to talk simply about destiny beyond death; you have to talk about this life, what is it that links to me now (the aging academic) to the little boy in the school photograph of sixty years ago? Again it's partly atoms. It's some sense the pattern, "the information bearing pattern", almost infinitely complex information bearing pattern, in which that matter is organized. It's not a fixed pattern, it's a dynamical pattern obviously as I and my character develops as I acquire new memories but it's some sense the pattern the information carried by the matter of my body ... and that I think is what is the "soul." ...

Do we then have a destiny beyond death? Well I think when we die, our bodies decay, and in that sense the pattern that they've been carrying is dissolved. But it seems to me a perfectly coherent hope and belief, which I actually have, that God will remember the pattern that is me, hold it in the divine memory, and will then reconstitute that pattern in an act of resurrection. The Christian hope, I think, properly understood, has never been simply of survival in a sort of spiritual sense. It has been death and resurrection. Death is real, but it's not ultimate because only God is ultimate. So I believe the soul is the "pattern" that's me and that God will remember that pattern and recreate that pattern in God's act of resurrection.

Wright: So, the reconstitution actually would be a physical one?

John Polkinghorne: Yes, not simply a resuscitation, not a reassembling in a sense of the matter of this body, because if that happens, I'm just made alive again in order to die again, so that the "I" shall be reembodied in the new creation is how Christian thinking expressed it. I live in the moment in the old creation, God's first creation, I shall be resurrected in the new creation.

And Christians believe, of course, that the new creation has begun to grow with the resurrection of Jesus Christ; that's the seminal event, the seed event, from which new creation grows. Jesus' risen body was not the same as his dead body. Jesus wasn't made alive again in the sense of reviving a corpse, his body had new properties -- he appeared and disappeared and things like that -- he was glorified, but it was still his body, it still carried the scars of the Passion and so on and that in some sense there will be both continuity and discontinuity for us. I think that's a coherent hope. It's a coherent hope if you believe that there is a God who is faithful and trustworthy, which I do believe.

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"SOUL/BODY" from *A HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY*

The very juxtaposition of "soul" with "body" indicates the problems involved in defining either word. Christian thought, standing as the inheritor of both Greek and Hebraic traditions, has lived from earliest

times with an ambiguity resulting from the fact that, broadly speaking, in Greek thought "soul" is defined in dualistic opposition to "body," while in Hebraic thought no such dualism is present and the ideas that the two words convey cannot be clearly distinguished from one another.

In Greek thought, particularly as it comes from Orphism and is expressed in the earlier Platonic dialogues, there is a marked dualism between the soul and the body. The soul belongs to a divine, eternal realm, and is the undying, indestructible part of a human being, which is unfortunately confined to the body during life on earth. The body is thus nothing but a hindrance to the soul. Consequently, salvation involves the extrication of the soul from the body, the immortal part of the human being finding release from the confines of the mortal body. An old Greek proverb sums up the belief: "The body is the prison-house of the soul."

This way of thinking is so deeply imbedded in Western culture that it is often difficult to see how sharply differentiated from it is the biblical understanding. The word "soul," in particular, has a very different meaning for the biblical writers from the understanding that modern Christians usually assign to it. The Hebrew scripture's word *nephesh* basically means "breath," and the term is often used simply to designate "a living being" (not always a human, sometimes an animal); the word, along with the New Testament equivalent, *psyche*, can mean "life," and even "person" or "self." The term is much broader in biblical usage than is commonly supposed, and it can be taken to stand for the unity of personality, since Hebraic thought conceives of the human being as a unity, rather than as a duality of body and soul.

This meaning can be further clarified by noting its relationship to the word "body." In Pauline thought, for example, body (*soma*) is an inclusive word for the psycho-physical unity of the flesh (*sarx*) and soul (*psyche*). No hard and fast distinction between the two can be established. The body is the whole person, not a detachable part of that person to be distinguished in dualistic fashion from the soul. J. A. T. Robinson in *The Body* concludes that we do not have bodies, but we are bodies—that we are "flesh-animated-by-soul, the whole conceived as a psychophysical unity."

This is not just a Pauline idiosyncrasy; it concurs with the results of scholarship on the Hebrew Bible also. H. Wheeler Robinson, in *Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*, notes that the same idea of unity pervades the Hebrew scriptures: "The idea of human nature [in the Hebrew scriptures] implies a unity, not a dualism. There is no contrast between the body and the soul, such as the terms instinctively suggest to us." Again, "The Hebrew idea of personality is an animated body and not an incarnated soul." J. Pederson, in *Israel*, goes so far as to say, "The body is the soul in its outward form." There is, in fact, no distinctive word for "body" in Hebrew; such a word is not needed because there is no separate part of a human being, distinct from that person's "soul," that needs to be so distinguished.

This ancient sense of the interrelatedness and unity of the human personality is being substantiated by modern research in psychosomatic medicine, the very name of which (*psyche-soma*, or "soul-body") shows the impossibility of a cleavage between the body and the soul. Relating and reflecting on his own experience of illness and recovery, Norman Cousins, in *The Anatomy of an Illness*, has shown how much the attitude of the patient correlates with the ravages of disease.

The issue of "soul(body)" is very much alive in theology today, particularly as represented by "liberation" movements in Third World churches. There has been firm resistance to perpetuating a dualism by dividing life into "political" activity, on the one hand, and "spiritual" nurture on the other, as though either "outer" or "inner" life could be understood in isolation from the other. Gustavo Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino, and others write about and live what they call a "spirituality of liberation," insisting that the two realities are inseparable in Christian living. All dualisms are disavowed, from a perspective that clearly exemplifies the recovery of the biblical understanding.

ROBERT McAFEE BROWN