

**Zeitschrift:** Theologische Zeitschrift  
**Herausgeber:** Theologische Fakultät der Universität Basel  
**Band:** 13 (1957)  
**Heft:** 2

**Artikel:** The Bodily Resurrection of Christ  
**Autor:** Robinson, William Childs  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-878946>

#### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

#### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

#### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 14.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

# Theologische Zeitschrift

---

Jahrgang 13

Heft 2

März–April 1957

---

## The Bodily Resurrection of Christ.\*

The incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the events which distinguish Christianity from Mohammedanism and Judaism. And whatever similarities there may be between Jesus and the Teacher of Righteousness of the Qumran Sect, the resurrection marks out the vast difference between them.<sup>1</sup>

A renewed emphasis upon the resurrection is, however, relevant at this time. In Latin Christianity, the profusion of crucifixes focuses the eye upon the crucified, dead Jesus, leaving to the Evangelical Church a special responsibility for proclaiming the risen, living Lord. In American Protestantism, the weight of old liberalism still swings many from the bodily “physical” resurrection of Christ witnessed in the New Testament to a kind of “spiritual resurrection” at death, one befitting Plato’s society of souls in an idealistic universe. European scholarship is disentangling the biblical from the Hellenistic man, recognizing the body as also the handiwork of God, and the unity of the whole inner and outer man both in this life and in the age to come. Yet the influence of existentialism leads some of these scholars to present the death of Christ as the sole factual event of the *kerygma*, with the resurrection as an expression of the eschatological significance of the cross, a myth whose meaning is “real” only in faith. The pessimism, resulting from inadequate presentations, can be lifted only by the proclamation of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ as a factual occurrence, an act of God’s self-disclosure in truly divine dimensions. For our hope of meeting again in another life is anchored in His resurrection, I Thess. 4. 13-18; I Cor. 15. 20-22.

---

\* In memory of an old Lutheran college professor, Dr. L. A. Fox, who took the time and care to show his students from the New Testament records that Jesus Christ was really raised from the dead. By His cross, the risen Lord called some of us into the ministry of His Word.

<sup>1</sup> O. Cullmann, *Unsterblichkeit der Seele und Auferstehung der Toten. Das Zeugnis des Neuen Testaments*: *Theol. Zeitschr.* 12 (1956), p. 145, n. 24.

*The Gospel of the Resurrection.*

By the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, as the summation of His whole ministry, God brought the blessings, which Israel looked for only in the future, into the present. Since Christ died for our sins and rose for our justification (Rom. 4. 25), in Him we have today the forgiveness of sins and the peace which passes human understanding. Since the risen Christ breathed His Spirit upon the Apostles (John. 20. 22) and poured upon all the disciples the Holy Spirit (Acts 2. 33), therefore the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. Since God raised us up from the death of sin to the newness of life with Christ (Eph. 2. 5-6), therefore His resurrection is the measure of the exceeding greatness of God's power to work in those who believe (Eph. 1. 19-20).

As our faith receives the mighty work of God in the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2. 24-36; Eph. 1. 20), we share in the Christian hope of a new heaven *and a new earth* (Is. 65. 17, 66. 22; Acts 3. 15, 21; Rom. 8. 21-22; II Petr. 3. 13; Rev. 21. 1), we believe in the Almighty Who makes the dead alive and creates the things that are from nothing (Rom. 4. 17; I Cor. 1. 28; II Cor. 1. 9). The God Who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead is the Lord able to save and keep and raise those who are Christ's. Now each of these blessings comes from the resurrected Lord. God raised the crucified Jesus from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand to be the Prince and Saviour Who gives repentance and remission of sins (Acts 5. 30-31). Apart from the risen One, we do not have the blessings of salvation (Acts 4. 12). We receive them from the nail-pierced hand of the resurrected Christ.

The whole New Testament "*kerygma*" is inseparably one in the proclamation of the Risen One as the Crucified: *the present Exalted One is expressly the Crucified*, the sympathizing High Priest of Hebrews, the Lamb of the Apocalypse".<sup>2</sup> Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, meets us in the word of the Church's proclamation.<sup>3</sup> But, "historical event, *kerygma* and faith form a triangle, from which no side can be broken off without the

---

<sup>2</sup> J. Schiewind, in *Kerygma und Mythos*, 1 (1948), p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> R. Bultmann, in *Kerygma und Mythos*, 1 (1948) p. 50.

whole becoming meaningless".<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the *kerygma* not only includes the fact of the death and the fact of the resurrection of Christ<sup>5</sup>, but as well the fact of the witnesses to His resurrection (Luke 24. 48; Acts 1. 8, 22; 3. 15; 5. 32; 10. 39; 13. 31; I Cor. 15. 5 f.). On their eye-witnessing the *kerygma* of the Church was built, and to that ocular testimony the Church must constantly return if she would fully safeguard the self-communication of God which came to her in Jesus.<sup>6</sup> In the light of this whole *kerygma*, it is clear that the resurrection of Jesus is not a mere product or precipitate from our present meeting with Christ. It is the other way around. The event of the resurrection is prior to faith. For it is the resurrection which creates, makes possible, calls forth, and directs faith to the Risen One.<sup>7</sup> The fact of the resurrection proclaimed in the Gospel calls us to a meeting with Christ in faith. On that ground the Church proclaims the forgiveness of sins and the hope of glory (I Cor. 15. 3-19). The apostolic witnesses declare: God has given assurance that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, our Lord, by raising Him from the dead (Acts 2. 24-36; 3. 15; 4. 10, 33; 17. 31; Rom. 1. 4; Phil. 2. 11). The assurance of the resurrection brought the Church through the offense of the cross.

The resurrection of Jesus as the deed of God is the presupposition of the preaching of the Cross, of the Church of God in Christ Jesus, of the Christian faith in the Triune God. The resurrection is the center which binds the whole *kerygma* together.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Lord of the Resurrection.*

In revealing Himself to men today, the risen Jesus is sovereign, even as He was the Lord of the resurrection appearances recorded in the New Testament. At the resurrection, He was exalted as Lord (Acts 2. 36) and became the life-giving Spirit (I Cor.

<sup>4</sup> F. Lieb, *Die Geschichte Jesu Christi: Antwort* (1956), p. 584.

<sup>5</sup> Including as their presuppositions the life ministry of Jesus, and the O. T. promises of God which meet in the Messiah.

<sup>6</sup> W. Michaelis, in *Theol. Wörterb. z. N. T.*, 5 (1954), p. 349.

<sup>7</sup> G. Harbsmeier, in *Antwort*, p. 556; H. Thielicke, in *Kerygma und Mythos*, 1, p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> K. H. Rengstorff, *Die Auferstehung Jesu* (1952), p. 30.

15. 45), Who, by the miracle of the Holy Spirit, creates faith when, where, and how He wills. The Lord is free to deal graciously with different individuals under their varied circumstances and with their sundry presuppositions. With the self-witnessing of God the Holy Spirit, He uses the several parts and the whole of the *kerygma* as seems best to Him. The beloved disciple was led to faith by the emptied tomb (John 20. 8), Peter by the appearing of Christ to him (I Cor. 15. 5), Thomas by that with the injunction to see and handle (John 20. 26-27), some disciples only by His eating with them after He had offered them the testimony of their several sense perceptions (Luke 24. 36-43).

The Holy Spirit continues to bring hearts to believe that God raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 10. 9), without waiting until they can harmonize the details of one account with those of another<sup>9</sup>, and without requiring them to follow any set pattern, such as, first the fact, then the significance, and finally the experience of the resurrection.

While Christ is Lord, now as then, He has left His servants the duty of proclaiming the Gospel which the Lord has revealed. It is the Church's duty to proclaim this Gospel, trusting the resurrected Lord, by the power of His Spirit, to use it to bring His sheep to Himself.

Jesus was Lord of the early appearances as truly as He was of the later one to Paul. His activity has the ruling place in the accounts of the resurrection appearances. As Professor Karl Barth has pointed out<sup>10</sup>, the disciples never sought out and found their risen Lord. Each appearance was initiated and carried out by Him. He came. He drew near. He went with them. He appeared to Peter. He met the women. He stood in their midst. He vanished from their sight. Even when He was seen

---

<sup>9</sup> Only by collusion is there complete absence of real or apparent variation in details. Where each account rests on witnesses which it accepts as adequate, one record is not forced into conformity with another. In the matter before us, the manifoldness of the circumstances shows that each account rests on such witnessing, and the several accounts witness to the basic fact of the bodily resurrection of Christ.

<sup>10</sup> For the remainder of this section cf. K. Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, IV, 1 (1953), p. 336; IV, 2 (1955), p. 161 f.

and heard, He was only perceived as He willed it. He appeared not to all, but to chosen witnesses.

In these primary appearances, the purpose of the Lord was not to show His difference in glory, but to establish His identity as the Jesus Who was crucified, dead and buried. For in the appearances of "the forty days", there is no reference to any light or brightness shining from the Risen Christ. Angels of light announce the resurrection. At the Transfiguration, at the stoning of Stephen, at the conversion of Paul, at the Revelation to John on Patmos, Christ appears in heavenly light. But in these accounts of the forty days, He was even mistaken for a gardener. Each story, however, reaches its climax in a recognition scene. "In the (Old Testament) theophany stories proof is usually offered of the supernatural or divine character of the Visitant: in the Gospel stories the proofs tend to show His real humanity (He has flesh and blood, bears wounds in His body, even eats human food)." <sup>11</sup>

The several meetings, moreover, recall the former familiar associations with the Master Whom the disciples had followed. He Who fed the thousands, Who provided and presided at the Last Supper, took again the place of the House-Father and made Himself known to the disciples by blessing and breaking the bread (Luke 24. 30, 35; John 21. 10-13; Acts 1. 4). The Risen One found the fishermen at their old haunts. The second draught of fishes is reminiscent of the earlier one (Luke 5. 4-11; John 21). Peter's again leaving the boat calls to mind his earlier walking on the water to come to Jesus (Matt. 14. 29; John 21. 7). The Great Commission takes up the earlier instruction to the Twelve (Matt. 28. 18-20; 10. 5-42), and the kind of "church-order" found in it may be compared with the "church-order" of Matt. 18. 15-20. <sup>11</sup> Mary recognizes her Master as He calls her by name (John 20. 16; cf. 10. 3). <sup>12</sup> Three times Jesus is recorded as directing their eyes to His hands, His feet, or His side (Luke 24. 39; John 20. 20, 27). Likewise He made the print of the nails

<sup>11</sup> C. H. Dodd, The Appearances of the Risen Christ, in *Studies in the Gospels. Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (1955), pp. 12, 34.

<sup>12</sup> The preferred text gives the Aramaic form "Mariam". The Syraitic Syriac reads "she recognized Him". M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 2nd ed. (1954), p. 189.

evident as He raised His hands to bless and to break the bread (Luke 24. 30)<sup>13</sup>, and to bless the disciples (Luke 24. 50). In view of His pierced hands and feet, He directs them to feel His flesh and bones (Luke 24. 39), and even to handle His wounds (John 20. 27).

Investigations in form-criticism conclude that “the designation of the appearances of the risen Christ as myths is quite unjustified”.<sup>14</sup> The oral gospel declares that God raised up Him Whom “ye” crucified (Acts 2. 32, 36; 3. 15; 4. 10; 5. 30; 10. 39-40; 13. 28-31; cf. 1. 12-21). According to the primitive testimony, preserved in Acts 1. 21-22; 10. 36-42, the twelve apostolic witnesses to the resurrection were those who had accompanied with Jesus from the baptism of John, or from the Galilean preaching immediately following it, through the ministry of doing good and healing, the hanging on a tree, to the resurrection and manifestation of the Risen Lord. In the same epistle in which Paul lists the appearances, he declares that they crucified the Lord of Glory, I Cor. 2. 8. In the Apocalypse, 1. 18; 5. 6, the One Who became dead and lived again, stands in the midst of the Throne as the crucified Lamb. Thus, our Risen Lord identified Himself to His disciples as Jesus of Nazareth and His body as the one that had been crucified for us.

### *The Completeness of the Resurrection.*

The Bible sets forth the unity of the whole inner and outer man, as God’s handiwork. Its “idea of personality is an animated body, not an incarnated soul”.<sup>15</sup> It does not teach a Platonic, an Orphic, or a Gnostic dualism which places the soul or spirit over against the body as different in source, origin and ultimate destiny. Our bodies are not prisons of the soul, but temples of the Holy Ghost; they are members of Christ and are not to be made members of a harlot (I Cor. 6. 19, 15). Death

---

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Manual of Discipline* VI, 3-6 for extending the hand to bless the bread; or M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (1955), p. 378.

<sup>14</sup> Dodd (n. 11), p. 35, and Joach. Jeremias in *New Test. Stud.* 2, 4 (1956), p. 290.

<sup>15</sup> Wh. Robinson, *Hebrew Psychology: The People and the Book* (1925), p. 362.

is not the great friend of the soul, but the last enemy of Christ (I Cor. 15. 26; cf. Mark 14. 34; 15. 37; Luke 12. 50; Hebr. 5. 7). It is death, not the body, which is conquered by His resurrection<sup>16</sup>, for the New Testament teaches the bodily resurrection of Christ.

It was not that a part only of Jesus lived again or was resurrected. The whole man Jesus died and rose, emptying the grave (Matt. 28. 1-6; Mark 16. 1-8; Luke 24. 1-8; John 20. 1-9; I Cor. 15. 4 [see below]). “The Risen One had a body: He could draw near, walk with the disciples, and recline with them at the table (Luke 24. 15, 30), He could break the bread (Luke 24. 30; John 21. 13), eat and drink (Luke 24. 43; Acts 10. 41), and thus had a real body.” “The risen Jesus had His own real body”, “the body which had been crucified.”<sup>17</sup>

While the resurrection was a corporeal event, it was, of course, not merely a bodily event. The wisdom of the Risen One opened the minds of the Apostles to interpret the Old Testament messianically; His Lordship challenged their wills with the Great Commission; His love made their hearts burn with a new devotion; His Spiritual blessing endued them with peace, repentance, pardon, restoration, power; His fellowship with them established the Church of God in Christ Jesus. And each of these impacts of the risen Saviour upon His disciples was an added confirmation of His resurrection. Each of the several modes of manifestation buttressed the others making a cumulative effect upon the Apostles’ perception. “They established the objective character of the resurrection, as a thing of God’s doing, not of the disciples’ making.”<sup>18</sup>

### *The Witness of Sense Perception.*

Our Lord showed the fullness of His victory over death and the grave and the completeness of the Creator’s control over earth as well as heaven by the bodily nature of His resurrection and by its attestation to the physical senses of the disciples. In

---

<sup>16</sup> Cullmann (n. 1), p. 131 f.

<sup>17</sup> M. Barth, *Der Augenzeuge* (1945), p. 250 f.

<sup>18</sup> Rengstorf (n. 8), p. 45.

revealing His risen Presence, Christ appears to them that their eyes may identify Him as their Master of Galilee, their Saviour of Calvary. He directs them to handle Him that their hands may attest that He is no apparition, but Himself in the body. Since the ultimate purpose of the resurrection is the victorious unveiling of God to men, every appearance is bound to a revelation in words. Even on the Road to Damascus, Paul not only saw the Lord, he also heard the Voice of His mouth (Acts 9. 4-5, 17; 22. 7-10, 14-16).

The several appearings and the meetings with a number of persons, above five hundred at one time (I Cor. 15. 6), removed the possibility that these phenomena could be merely one individual's hallucination. In accord with the Jewish prejudice against women acting as witnesses, the tough-minded fishermen dismissed the accounts of the women as "idle tales" (Luke 24. 11). Thomas treated the testimony of the ten little better (John 20. 24-25), and even on the mountain in Galilee some doubted (Matt. 28. 17; cf. also Mark 16. 11, 12, 14, 16). <sup>19</sup> The Holy Spirit used their physical, as well as their social, intellectual and spiritual contacts with the resurrected Christ to draw the company of disciples around the corner from unbelief to faith in the Victory of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In the light of His resurrection, the corporate testimony of the apostolic body is: God has reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son.

#### *The Testimony of Eye-Witnesses.*

The New Testament accounts do not present the appearances of Jesus as the imaginings of false witnesses, but as facts outside the witnesses which on that account call them to faith. Luke 24. 34-43 is "a kind of comprehensive Gospel of the Resurrection", in which Jesus stands in the midst of the disciples. In intimate discourse, He meets the doubts and dialectics of their troubled hearts. He directs them, "behold My hands and My feet" and convince yourselves that "it is I myself". "Handle me and see, because a spirit has not flesh and bones as you

---

<sup>19</sup> Dodd (n. 11), on unbelief of disciples, pp. 12, 16, 17, 32; on corporate witness, pp. 30, 34; and translation, p. 17.

behold Me having.” Or, as Dodd renders it, “Feel Me and look: a ghost has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.”<sup>19</sup>

Almost a score of times the appearings of our Lord are described by a form of the verb ὄπάω, which, as Rengstorf shows, has an optic sense.<sup>20</sup> For example, Mary told the disciples, “I have seen the Lord” (John 20. 18), even as the disciples testified to Thomas, “we have seen the Lord” (John 20. 25). ὤφθη. He appeared, or “was seen to”, is a technical term for the presence of the revelation as such and indicates that the appearance is an event of revelation, a meeting with the Risen One as He was revealed Himself.<sup>21</sup> Forms of the simple verb for seeing, εἶδον, occur a dozen times of the disciples seeing the risen Jesus. Θεάομαι and θεωρέω, which are also used for seeing with bodily eyes, are likewise found.<sup>22</sup> At times more than one word for seeing occurs in the same passage (Luke 24. 39; John 20. 25, 29; Acts 22. 14-16; I John 1. 1-3). Thomas believed because he had *seen* the risen Lord (John 20. 29). Acts declares that Jesus has *shown* Himself alive after His passion, *appearing* to His Apostles in the course of forty days (Acts 1. 3; 10. 40), and *seen* of those who came from Galilee to Jerusalem for many days (13. 31). First John, which takes up the Gospel account (John 20. 19-29), declares four times over that the disciples saw Him, once making it explicit that they saw Him with their physical eyes (1. 1-4). Ocular testimony affirms the bodily resurrection of Christ. Indeed, the seeing of the resurrected Jesus is the ground of the apostolate (John 20. 24 f.; Acts 1. 22; I Cor. 9. 1) and the source of the Gospel records (Luke 1. 1-2). The Holy Spirit ever brings the Church back to these eye-witnesses that she may be sure of the reality of the revelation which God made of Himself in Jesus Christ.

#### *The Testimony of Hearing the Risen Lord.*

As God finally spoke to us through His Son, the Word of life was heard from Him Who is the Life indeed. In the Gospels, the risen Jesus speaks to His disciples as one weeps in the Gar-

<sup>20</sup> Rengstorf (n. 8), p. 83 f.

<sup>21</sup> Michaelis (n. 6), *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> W. Bauer, *Griech.-deutsch. Wörterb. z. N. T.*, esp. cols. 640. 651.

den, as two walk by the way, to some at the table, to others by the sea, to an appointed gathering on the mountain. He converses with them, meeting their questions with His assurance, "It is I Myself" (Luke 24. 39). At times, He calls one sheep by name, "Mariam", "Thomas", "Simon", "Saoul". At other times the address is to a group, "All, hail", and "Peace be unto you". He uses the familiar words of blessing at the table, and again blesses the disciples as He parts from them (Luke 24. 30, 51). He reminds them of the words He has spoken unto them before His crucifixion (Luke 24. 44). He teaches them again of repentance and of forgiveness (Luke 24. 47; John 20. 23; 21. 15-18). He asks for food (Luke 24. 49), He promises the Spirit (Luke 24. 49; Acts 1. 5, 8; cf. John 20. 28), He gives solemn commandments, charges, and commissions (Matt. 28. 18-19; Luke 24. 48; John 20. 21; Acts 1. 2, 4, 8; 10. 42). Matthew gives the Great Commission in a stupendous sweep that is worthy only of the Lord Jesus, the Conqueror of death. Luke records His showing the disciples from the Old Testament that the Messiah must suffer, rise from the dead and enter into His glory, and that repentance and forgiveness be preached in His name unto all nations (Luke 24. 26-27, 44-47). Jesus' use of the Old Testament is the foundation for that witnessing from prophecy which looms so large in the Apostolic preaching.

As the risen Lord said, spoke, asked, blessed, promised, taught, commissioned, commanded, opened the Scriptures, the hearts of His disciples burned at His word (Luke 24. 32), their minds were comforted with His "Fear not" (Matt. 28. 10; Rev. 1. 17), their lives were converted by His appearances and their auditions (Luke 22. 32; Acts 22. 14; I Cor. 15. 5, 7). <sup>23</sup> Thus were they made Apostles that they might bear witness to the things which they had seen and heard, supporting their testimony by the Word of prophecy, and looking to the Spirit to use it to bring their hearers to faith in Christ crucified and risen (John 20. 29; Acts 2. 14 f.; Rom. 10. 8, 17; I Cor. 15. 3-4; Gal. 3. 2; 1. 1).

---

<sup>23</sup> Paul was evidently converted by the appearing of the Risen Christ, as apparently were Peter and James. H. v. Campenhausen regards the appearance to James as a possible conversion, but thinks Peter was converted before Jesus appeared to him, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab* (1952), pp. 17, 44.

*The Testimony of Handling the Word of Life.*

In addition to hearing and seeing, First John says that they handled with their hands Him Who is the Word of Life. When the risen Jesus met the women returning from the Tomb, they laid hold of His feet and worshipped Him (Matt. 28. 9).

The account of Jesus' meeting with Mary Magdalene (John 20. 11-18) is variously interpreted. Luther's and the King James' rendering may be understood thus: "Touch Me not for I have not yet ascended, but I am about to ascend to My Father and thereafter I can be touched and handled." When the risen Lord appeared later that day to the Apostles, presumably He had already ascended to the Father, that is, had already been glorified (John 7. 39), for He gives them the Spirit and bids them handle Him (Luke 24. 39; John 20. 20, 22, cf. 27).

Since the present imperative with μή means to make an end of an existing situation, several translations and commentaries render Jesus' words to Mary: "Stop touching Me", "Do not hold Me", or "Do not keep clinging to Me."<sup>24</sup> The scene is then interpreted as Jesus' stopping Mary's physical holding of Him to teach her of a new, more spiritual and more intimate, union He is henceforth to have with all of His disciples. "Cease holding Me. It is true that I have not yet ascended to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God, but I am about to do so. This is what you are to tell my brothers."<sup>25</sup> According to Professor C. K. Barrett, who offers a similar interpretation, John was of the opinion that the resurrected body was physically real.

Luke 24. 38-39 records the command of the Lord to the disciples to handle Him that they may know He is not a spectre but flesh and bones. In his Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 3. 2, Ignatius of Antioch has the following account of this appearing: "And when He came to those with Peter, He said to them: Take hold, handle Me and see that I am not a bodiless daemon." The Johan-

<sup>24</sup> W. Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 2nd ed. (1925), p. 230; H. Strathmann, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (1951), p. 257; W. Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel* (1945); W. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, 2 (1954), p. 455; John Wesley, *Notes on the New Testament, in loco*; E. J. Goodspeed, *The New Testament, RSV*.

<sup>25</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (1955), pp. 470, 476.

nine record (20. 19-23) also seems to refer to the same appearing. Here the Lord bids the disciples see His hands and His side, and probably lays His hands on them as He breathes on them the Spirit and ordains them Apostles.

Thomas could find some ground for his insistence that he put his finger in the nail holes and his hand into the pierced side, in the Word of the Lord to the other disciples to handle Him and see that He had flesh and bones (Luke 24. 39), and in their reports of doing what their Lord commanded. The natural longing of the human heart is to grasp again the loved one. Moreover, only by an assurance of the reality of the resurrection, could Thomas give his testimony with full conviction. The risen Lord met his request in every detail that the Apostolic faith might be distinguished from an illusion and that the Apostolic witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus might sound forth with power and great grace be upon the Church (Acts 4. 33). On this appearing to the Apostles, the risen Lord again bared the wounds of the Cross in His hands and side, and bade Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger and see My hands, and reach hither thy hand und put it into My side: and be not faithless but believing” (John 20. 27). Thomas answered and said unto Him: “My Lord and My God” (v. 29). Since Jesus’ word in verse 27 is, “Put thy finger here and see”, that is, see or test with your finger: therefore the seeing and not seeing of which Our Lord speaks in verse 29 would seem to include this “seeing” or “testing” with Thomas’ finger. Moreover, Thomas’ “my Lord” was no abstract affirmation. In this incident, “there is scarcely any ground for assuming that the touching which Thomas had requested and which Jesus now commanded was not carried out.”<sup>26</sup> As the disciple obeyed his risen Lord, it was true of Thomas, as of the other Apostles, “that which we have seen with our eyes and our hands have handled declare we unto you” (I John 1. 1 f.).

The risen Lord *appeared* and *spoke* to His Apostles that they might accept and proclaim the revelation in Him. He offered them His body to be *handled*, that by the grace of God, their

---

<sup>26</sup> M. Barth (n. 17), p. 271; cf. O. Cullmann, Εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν: *Aux sources de la tradition chrétienne* (1950), p. 56; Hendriksen (n. 24), p. 465.

bodies might bear witness to Him. He bared to them His *wounds*, that they might stand when they were called to be martyrs for Him Who died for them . . . and for us.

On two occasions when the disciples were gathered within, the doors having been closed, Jesus came and stood among them (John 20. 19, 26). The Gospel presents these events as absolute miracles.<sup>27</sup> The writer gives no indication that he regards these unexplained miracles as negating other elements in the same accounts, such as the Lord's bidding Thomas handle His wounds. Neither does he intimate that by them he would change the meaning of the resurrection from that found elsewhere in the Gospel, namely, that the resurrection of the dead means their coming forth out of the tombs (John 5. 28; 6. 39; 11. 23-25, 44), and the rebuilding of the temple of the body (2. 20-21). Through these accounts sounds the same note heard in the records of all the appearances, that is, the Lordship of Him Who has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28. 18; Rev. 1. 18; 3. 7-8). Since we do not know how our Lord saw fit to accomplish the miracle of His coming and standing in the midst of the disciples, we may not say that He had to be a bodiless spirit in order to enter.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> So Bauer (n. 24), p. 231; and Strathmann (n. 24), p. 258.

<sup>28</sup> If however, instead of accepting the fact that our Lord came and stood among the disciples, one begin with rationalistic inferences as to how He entered, sundry hypotheses present themselves. One view is that He passed through the closed doors. From this some assume that He must have been or become a ghost in order to accomplish the feat. This thinking often ends in a docetic resurrection and a Christ over Whom men's inferences and the mere doors of a house were Lord. The angel of the Lord twice brought Peter out of prisons, the doors of which had been closed and locked. Yet the disciples' inference that the one knocking at their door was only Peter's angel was in error (Acts 12. 10-15; 5. 19; cf. 16. 26).

Many of the first-century houses were built around an open court. Their two massive doors, one following the other, were on the side adjoining the street, while the dining room was regularly on the opposite side of the court. If the disciples were in such a *triclinium*, absorbed in discussing the reports of our Lord's appearances, they would not have known it if these outer doors had opened before and closed behind the entering Lord, as the iron gate opened of its own accord before Peter and the angel (Acts 12. 10). The older Reformed exegetes, such as John Calvin and Matthew Henry, F. Battier and M. Gernler (Biblia, Basel, 1736), understood that the doors were opened to admit the Lord. Indeed, by His death

*The Testimony of Table Fellowship with Christ.*

At the Last Supper, the Lord spoke of eating and drinking again with the disciples in the Kingdom of God (Mark 14. 25; Luke 22. 16, 18). After the resurrection, there are accounts of our Lord's having table fellowship with the disciples twice in Luke (24. 30, 41 f.), once certainly and twice probably in Acts (1. 4 Gr.; 10. 41), once in John (21. 5), once in the longer ending of Mark (16. 14), once in Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans (3. 3), and once in the Gospel of the Hebrews, 8. These occasions are reflected in Rev. 3. 20: "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me."

The risen Jesus came close enough to the disciples to eat with them, to touch and be touched by them, to breathe upon them. Until the resurrection they had been concerned with fragrant ointments for His burial (Mark 16. 1; Luke 23. 55; John 19. 38-40; cf. Mark 14. 8). Yet so tremendous was the actuality of the resurrection that many days after His death there was no suggestion of that which Martha feared at the Tomb of Lazarus (John 11. 39). On the contrary, the oral gospel uses the phraseology of the Psalmist, "His flesh did not see corruption" (Acts 2. 26-27, 31; 13. 34), to set forth the reality of the resurrection as God's victory over sin and death and the enthronement of Christ in His heavenly reign.<sup>29</sup>

---

and resurrection, the Lord opened for His Church even the gates of death and the doors of the Kingdom, Mt. 16. 18-19.

A third hypothesis is that our Lord descended into the open court or *atrium* of a house, leaving the great doors closed.

<sup>29</sup> There is an interesting summary of the testimony of the five physical senses to the risen Christ in *The Gospel of Truth*, a sermon ascribed to Valentinus in Rome, c. 140-145. Thus: After the Resurrection of Christ, "He gave them the possibility of knowing. For when they *saw* and *heard* Him, He granted them to *taste* and *smell* and to *touch* Him, the beloved Son"; "He came in the flesh, without anything hindering His path" (30. 2... to 26; 31. 4 [emphasis supplied]).

This testimony is more remarkable since the Letter to Reginus found with it and also ascribed to Valentinus gives the Gnostic view of "the Spiritual resurrection which devours the psychical and fleshly resurrection" at one's death. Since no Gnostic would have fabricated a resurrection with the physical details of that given in *The Gospel of Truth*, this testimony must record the faith handed down in the Church. Cf. F. L. Cross, *The Jung Codex* (1955), pp. 55, 120.

The Lord's eating with the disciples in Luke (24. 36-42) was the culminating act which banished the last unbelief, and it is interesting to note that there is no record of doubts after any account of His table fellowship with them. In these table gatherings, Jesus revealed Himself not to an individual, but to a company, and so established the faith in a fellowship, the fellowship which is the Church of God in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is continuing to use the Apostles' testimony to what they heard, what they saw with their eyes, and handled with their hands to bring an innumerable host into this fellowship, the communion which is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

*The Risen Lord's Revelation of Himself to Paul.*

There are a group of post-ascension appearances which both reveal Christ in His majestic glory, and also assure us of the continuing reality of fellowship with the heavenly Lord. At the Ascension He was received up in Glory (Phil. 2. 9-11; Eph. 1. 20-22; I Tim. 3. 16), and the cloud of the Divine Presence removed Him from the sight of the Apostles (Acts 1. 9). Thereafter, as the Son of Man revealed Himself to the martyr Stephen, He was standing at the right hand of the glory of God (Acts 7. 55). When the Lord appeared to Paul, it was in a great light of heavenly glory (Acts 22. 6, 11; 9. 3). When He manifested Himself on the Isle of Patmos, it was in such brightness that John fell at His feet as one dead (Rev. 1. 12-18). Likewise, our Lord's appearing at the consummation of the age is represented as a Parousia, or Coming in Glory (Matt. 25. 31; Phil. 3. 21; Tit. 2. 13).

Yet it is in these phenomena of glory that the concern of our gracious Lord for and His solidarity with His people is especially evident. He opened heaven to Stephen's view just before the stones cut off the martyr's sight and his life (Acts 7. 55-60). The first word to Saul is one of concern for His suffering Church, "Why persecutest thou Me?" The revelation to John on Patmos is that He Who did love this disciple on earth, still loves him today in heaven (Rev. 1. 5). Even the picture of the Judge coming on the clouds is permeated by Jesus' sense of

solidarity with His people in their needs, “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me” (Matt. 25. 40). The Lord, enthroned at God’s right hand, is still our brother, Who ever lives to make intercession for us (Rom. 8. 34; Hebr. 7. 25; I John 2. 1; Rev. 5. 6).

By the various appearances, God has revealed Christ in His corporeal resurrection, and in His bodily presence, both at His right hand now and at His coming in glory then. Moreover, in biblical usage, body, *σῶμα*, is “the organ of personality”, or even “the nearest equivalent to our word personality”. It is “the organization of personality as an acting concrete individual”.<sup>30</sup> It is a man’s very self. One is not surprised, then, that the *kerygma* which the risen Lord uses to bring men into existential encounter with Himself and to participation in His actual self, His life and His personality includes these bodily implications.

Our Lord confirmed the bodily nature of His resurrection by the revelation which He made to one who had not been a disciple during His earthly ministry. By appearing to Paul (Acts. 9. 5, 17; 22. 8, 14; I Cor. 9. 1; 15. 8; Gal. 1. 12-16), Christ brought him to participate in the communion of His body (I Cor. 11. 23; 10. 15; Gal. 2. 9) and in the *kerygma* of the primitive witnesses (I Cor. 15. 3 f.). To the Apostle of the Gentiles, our risen Lord likewise identified Himself with the crucified Jesus (Acts 9. 3-5; 17. 3; Rom. 1. 3-4; 4. 24-25; I Cor. 2. 8; Phil. 2. 5-11; I Thess. 1. 9-10). Therewith, as the Apostle repeatedly sets forth, Christ revealed the bodily nature of the resurrection. Paul prayed the God of peace to preserve the Thessalonian believers entire, spirit, soul and *body*, at the Parousia of Christ (I Thess. 5. 23). He looked for the Saviour, at that time, to change these *bodies* of our humiliation and make them like unto the *body* of His Glory (Phil. 3. 21). He anticipated a bodily judgment (II Cor. 5. 10). When I Cor. 6. 14 is read in the light of its context (verses 12-20), it teaches the bodily resurrection both of the Lord and of His members. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ in a *bodily* manner (Col. 2. 9). According to Acts, Paul’s doctrine of the future life was supported by the Pharisees who taught the resurrection of the body, but opposed by the

<sup>30</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body. A Study in Pauline Theology* (1952), pp. 28, 57; C. H. Dodd, *Romans* (1948), pp. 90, 194.

Sadducees and the Athenian philosophers who rejected that resurrection (Acts 23. 6-9; 26. 5-8; 17. 31; 24. 15, 21; cf. Phil. 3. 5). In his doctrine of the resurrection, Paul “remains true to his pharisaic background”.<sup>31</sup>

The whole of Paul’s discussion of I Cor. 15 is Christological, not philosophical.<sup>32</sup> He does not start with a general conception of the future life, whether that view be the immortality of the soul or resurrection of the dead, and then bring into conformity with it the primitive testimony to the resurrection of Christ. Rather, he begins by citing the Gospel which he had “received” and “handed down” to the Corinthians, features of which point to an origin in the Aramaic-speaking Church.<sup>33</sup> That the empty tomb belongs to the *kerygma* is indicated by the ἐτάφη (I Cor. 15. 4; cf. Rom. 6. 4) and the τρίτη ἡμέρα.<sup>34</sup> Six appearances are listed and appeal is made to almost five hundred living eye-witnesses to the resurrection of Christ.

In the figure of the seed and the stalk of wheat Paul uses an illustration of sowing which occurs in several parables in the Synoptics and in the prophecy of Jesus’ death and resurrection in John (12. 13 f.). By the mysterious working of nature, God gives a body, as it pleases Him, to the wheat which rises from the ground in the Spring. Yet the new blade, its stalk and its full fruitage, is connected with and comes out of the grain that fell into the ground and died in Autumn. It pleases God to give to each seed its own body (vs. 38).

The resurrection of Christ is the mighty act of God bringing in the new age of the Last Adam. Death reigned as a tyrant through the First Adam, believers now reign in life through Christ (Rom. 5. 12-21; I Cor. 15. 20-26, 45-49). The revelation that at His resurrection the Last Adam became a life-giving

---

<sup>31</sup> W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinical Judaism* (1948), pp. 305-308.

<sup>32</sup> Rengstorff (n. 8), p. 74.

<sup>33</sup> The difficult Greek of “he was seen to Cephas” indicates an Aramaic original; “according to the scriptures”, and the avoidance of God by the passive “he was raised” point to a Jewish background; the use of words in I Cor. 15. 3-5 which occur nowhere else in Paul, reveal a quotation—a primitive creed. J. Jeremias carries this old *kerygma* back to Isaiah 53, *Theol. Wörterb. z. N. T.*, 5 (1954), p. 703.

<sup>34</sup> So J. Schniewind in *Kerygma und Mythos*, 2 (1954), p. 98, n. 1; A. Oepke, *Theol. Wörterb. z. N. T.*, 2 (1935), p. 334.

Spirit (I Cor. 15. 45), carries forward the Gospel teaching that the Messiah is to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3. 11; Mark 1. 8; Luke 2. 16; John 1. 33), Jesus' promise of sending the Spirit (Luke 24. 48; John 15. 7, 26; 16. 7; Acts 1. 5, 8), and His actual effusion of the Spirit (John 20. 22; Acts 2. 33). Our Lord was raised in power (Rom. 1, 4; Phil. 3. 10; Eph. 2. 19-20; cf. Mark 9. 1; Acts 2. 1 f.; 4. 33), manifested in incorruption (Acts 2. 26-27, 31; 13. 34; II Tim. 1. 10 [Gr.]), and appears in glory (Acts 7. 55; 9. 3-5; Phil. 3. 21; Tit. 2. 13; Rev. 1. 10, 20). Therefore, the description of the psychical body as sown in corruption, dis-honor, weakness, and raised a Spiritual body in incorruption, glory and power indicates the greatness of the change wrought in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as God's decisive step on the way to the final establishment of His Kingdom in glory (I Cor. 15. 23-28, 42-46).

The body thus described does not, however, cease to be a body. "For the fact that it is a spiritual body does not mean that it is not physical."<sup>35</sup> It is not "de-physicized" into a ghost. Paul does not describe the body which is sown as a physical body. Those who translate Paul's adjective psychical as physical, or who base their position on this erroneous translation, change the Apostle's meaning. The text says: "It is sown a psychical (psychological, or soulish, or animated, or natural)<sup>36</sup> body." The body which stands in contrast thereto, i.e., the Spiritual body, is thus not a de-physical or ghost body. Rather, as the soul, *nephesh*, ψυχή, is the life principle of the natural body, so will the Spirit, *ruach*, πνεῦμα, be of the Spiritual body.

Earlier in the same epistle, these two adjectives, psychical (natural) and Spiritual are contrasted (I Cor. 2. 13-15), but in the contrast, his conversion does not make the Spiritual man

<sup>35</sup> Robinson (n. 30), p. 52.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the translations of the New Testament by: W. Michaelis, A. Schlatter, J. Moffatt, H. Menge, J. A. Bengel, Zürich Kirchensynode 1937, *King James' Version, English Revision* 1881, ASV 1901. The rendering, physical, made by Goodspeed and by the RSV, 1946, both changes the meaning of the Greek text, and differs with the majority of the translations. Bauer (n. 22), col. 1632, translates ψυχικός "seelisch", that is, "soulish". H. Cremer, *Bibl.-Theol. Lex. of N. T. Greek* (1886), p. 586, describes πνευματικόν in I Cor. 15. 44, 46 as the divine life-principle of the new creation, and ψυχικόν as man such as he is now, sinful and estranged from this life principle.

a ghost. As the Word made flesh, the Messiah-Servant, Jesus was a Spiritual man (Is. 42. 1; Luke 4. 18; John 3. 6, 34; I Tim. 3. 16 [justified in the Spirit]), and as such, preached (Luke 4. 18 f.), ministered with His body, and gave His life a ransom for many (Mark 10. 45). Again, the adjective Spiritual in I Cor. 10. 3-4 does not mean that the manna in the Wilderness was non-physical or non-substantial bread, but rather that it was real food given by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the Spiritual body of I Cor. 15. 44-49 is a body raised by the life-giving Spirit of the heavenly Adam (cf. Rom. 8. 11; Jas. 2. 26), one of which the Holy Spirit is the life principle, a body motivated by true spirituality, that is, by Christlikeness (Phil. 3. 21; I John 3. 2; I Cor. 15. 49).

Further, the phrase *flesh and blood* in I Cor. 15. 50 does not describe the physical side of man as against his mental and spiritual side. Paul is not talking Greek dualism but Christian salvation. Here as elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Lev. 17. 11; Is. 31. 3; Matt. 16. 17; Gal. 1. 16; Hebr. 2. 14), *flesh and blood* refers to human nature, generally sinful fallen humanity, in contrast with God or His Spirit. Moreover, in I Cor. 15. 50, *flesh and blood* is not the predicate, but the subject of the sentence. The sentence is not: the resurrected life will not be flesh and blood, but only soul and spirit. It is: flesh and blood, that is, human nature descending from Adam, cannot inherit the kingdom of God by any worth, value, or merit of its own, rather it must be changed from its corruption and its enmity against God by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8. 7, cf. John 3. 3-6). Those who remain to the Parousia will be changed, their bodies made like unto the body of His glory (Phil. 3. 21). Those who die in the Lord will be raised at His Parousia, for He is the life-giving Spirit (I Thess. 4. 13-18; Rom. 8. 11; I Cor. 15. 45). Thus not even in these two often misunderstood passages, I Cor. 15. 44-46 and 50, does Paul decode the Bible doctrine of the resurrection of the body into the Hellenistic concept of the mere survival of the soul or the spirit.<sup>37</sup> “If the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from

---

<sup>37</sup> With reference to II Cor. 5. 1-10, this may be said: As the resurrection of His people parallels that of Christ in I Cor. 15, so the language of II Cor. 5. 1 parallels the prophecy of the Saviour’s resurrection in Mk. 14. 58. As I Cor. 15. 1 f. cites the primitive tradition, so the “we know”

the dead dwell in you, He Who raised from the dead Christ Jesus will make alive also your mortal bodies by His Spirit Who dwells in you" (Rom. 8. 11).

*The Witness of the New Testament to the Risen Christ.*

Thus the whole New Testament is a witness to the Risen Christ. Every book is written as a result of His resurrection and from the point of view of the Crucified Who has conquered death. The Apostle Paul is only explicable on the basis of an encounter with the Risen Redeemer. His Gospel with all its implications comes from Jesus Christ risen from the dead. The primitive *kerygma* which peeps through Paul's letters is a unit in the proclamation of the death of Christ for our sins and His resurrection for our justification (Rom. 1. 3-4; 3. 24-25; 4. 24-25; 8. 32-34; I Cor. 15. 3 f.; Phil. 2. 6-11; I Thess. 1. 9-10; 4. 14 f.; II Tim. 2. 8; cf. I Petr. 3. 18 f.). Acts begins with the risen Jesus showing Himself alive after His passion and speaking to His Apostles during a period of forty days. Thereafter its oral gospel is suffused with testimonies to His death and resurrection. At times the miracles of the New Testament are phrased in terms which reflect Jesus' rising from the dead (Matt. 11. 5; 27. 52; Mark 5. 39; 9. 26 f.; John 11. 25; Acts 3. 7, 15; 9. 40 f.). Thus they show the solidarity of the Lord of all with His people and the universality of His victory over death.

The several Gospels not only give accounts of Jesus' resurrection; they also cite His earlier prophecies of His sufferings, death and resurrection (Mark 8. 31; 9. 9; 10. 34), His references thereto in the sign of Jonah (Matt. 20. 40) and the building of Herod's Temple (Mark 14. 57; John 2. 19-22), the comment on the wicked husbandmen (Mark 12. 10 par.), on the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16. 3), and the answer to the Sadducees (Mark 12. 18-27 par.). The full records, in the Gospels, in Phil. 2. 6-8 and in Hebr. 5. 7, of Jesus' ignominy, sufferings, shame,

---

of II Cor. 5. 1 expresses the common conviction. Accordingly, as the Christians receive their resurrection bodies at His Coming in I Cor. 15. 23, so are they clothed upon with their habitation from heaven at the Coming of Christ for judgment in II Cor. 5. 1-10. On the exegesis of II Cor. 5. 1-10, cf. G. Vos, *The Pauline Doctrine of the Resurrection*: *Princeton Theol. Rev.* 27 (1929), pp. 210, 9; Cullmann (n. 1), p. 151 f.

fear, agony, death, all that occurred at Gabbatha, Gethsemane, and Golgotha, would have been preserved only by a Church that was certain of her Lord's resurrection and exaltation. The heavenly ministry of the High Priest, seen in Hebrews and in Revelation, grows out of His sacrifice, resurrection and ascension. God has begotten the suffering Churches, to whom First Peter is addressed, to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. According to the Revelation, Jesus Christ reigns in the midst of the Throne of God as the slain Lamb, the First-born from the dead.

*The Confession of the Resurrection.*

The early Church's preoccupation with and witness to the resurrection of Christ is attested by her prayers, her hymns, her sermons, her confessions, her creeds, her scriptures, her baptisms in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, her Lord's Supper, her Lord's Day, her first Christian festival, Easter—indeed by the lives, martyrdoms and burials of her members. The resurrection professed here, as also in the confessions of the Reformation, is the bodily resurrection of Christ.

This strong testimony expresses an awareness that the resurrection of Jesus is the great Yes of God to life, the assurance that the final word is life, that the future belongs to life. Moreover, the bodily resurrection of Christ is the mighty Yes of God to the body. It is God's declaration that Christ's victory is not limited to the spiritual and invisible. The Word made flesh, Who was publicly crucified for us as a malefactor, shall come as our visible King. As it is God Who accomplished the fact of the resurrection, so the resurrection reveals the reality of God. The real bodily resurrection of Jesus can be the work only of God. Consequently, the confession of the factual bodily resurrection of Christ is the sign of a theocentric faith and the witness to a hope in the coming of the New Jerusalem, the establishment of the Kingdom of God in a new heaven and a new earth. And all this God is doing and will complete through Him Whom He raised from the dead, exalted to His own right hand, and made a life-giving Spirit, even His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Decatur, Ga. (U.S.A.).*

*William Childs Robinson.*