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RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD  
BIBLICAL TRADITIONS IN DIALOGUE

EDITED BY

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## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

### FIFTEEN YEARS LATER<sup>1</sup>

My book *The Resurrection of Jesus*<sup>2</sup> grew out of the unfortunate inclination of Christian theologians to be evasive about what the resurrection of Jesus actually entailed. What did it mean to say that Jesus was seen? Was there a tomb, and was it really empty? And if so, what happened to the body? I proposed, therefore, a thorough examination of all the New Testament passages relating to the purported event. The historical results were largely negative; the confession that Jesus was raised indicated that his disciples had seen him in a vision, but hardly provided evidence of a resuscitation or resurrection. Accordingly, the book's theological exhortation was not to abandon the Christian faith, but to found it entirely on the historical Jesus.

The reaction to the book's exegetical segment was generally positive, especially concerning the position that the Gospel accounts of the appearances of Jesus are secondary narrative expressions of the resurrection faith found in the creedal elements of Paul's letters. Yet, many found the analysis of the tomb story questionable and postulated that women had indeed found the empty tomb of Jesus on the third day. A number of scholars vehemently rejected the visionary and thus subjective nature of the resurrection experience; they claimed that a decision as to whether Jesus was restored to life – that is, experienced a transformed bodily existence – depends not on historical analysis but on our preconceived construction of reality. Still others related the issue of whether Jesus was raised from the dead to the question of God's existence: "To believe in the resurrection is no more difficult than to believe in God's reality".

Looking back at my 1994 work, I am mostly in agreement with its exegetical results and its straightforward historical perspective. Yet, I am now convinced that disproving the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus willy-nilly annuls the Christian heritage by showing that its ultimate faith

1. The present text closely follows my presentation at the conference, but reduces the number of references to a minimum. I have only infrequently noted those passages borrowed from my earlier examinations of the resurrection (see n. 2). Thanks are due to Tom Hall for editorial help.

2. G. LÜDEMANN, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology*, London, SCM Press, 1994; see also ID., *The Resurrection of Christ: A Historical Inquiry*, Amherst, NY, Prometheus Books, 2004.

claim was based on an error. Consequently, I must reject my 1994 attempt to base Christianity on the historical Jesus.

Having derived considerable benefit from individual criticisms, I shall now present a slightly revised historical account of Jesus' so-called resurrection and the events surrounding it. Before the analysis proper, however, a preliminary argument must show why an investigation into the historicity of Jesus' resurrection is necessary in the first place.

Such an examination is necessary because according to early Christian testimony it is an event in time and space. In all probability the earliest Easter confession runs thus: "God raised Jesus from the dead". Quite apart from the understanding of the person who utters the confession, this claim includes at the historical level an action of God with respect to the dead body of Jesus. Following the late Marburg theologian Hans Grass, the historical question of "the basis and justification for this testimony... remains decisive. Without this basis, any theology of resurrection, even the theology of the New Testament, is groundless speculation"<sup>3</sup>. "Whether or not a particular event happened two thousand years ago is not made certain by faith but only by historical research"<sup>4</sup>.

Yet, evasive arguments in this connection are legion. Let me give just one example. In an introductory essay in the April 1997 edition of the scholarly journal "Evangelische Theologie", an issue dedicated to the "resurrection of Jesus", the Bern New Testament scholar Ulrich Luz wrote:

The discussion of the resurrection of Jesus is still defined by Gerd Lüdemann's book from 1994. This is really regrettable. Lüdemann's book reduced the quest for the reality of the resurrection to the question of what really happened then. He makes the equation 'historical = real'. To be sure, such a narrow approach does allow a discussion of the resurrection, but only insufficiently. In order to avoid narrowness in this issue, we have not left the topic of the resurrection solely to New Testament scholars, but have summoned representatives of all other theological disciplines to participate. They are being asked to write about the resurrection of Jesus from the standpoint of their own discipline or of their own theological opinion. With this we have the hope that through various theological disciplines something of the manifold dimensions of the reality of the resurrection may become visible<sup>5</sup>.

I do not think that these statements take us any further. If you want to do justice to the early Christian Easter texts, it is futile to assess the "reality of the resurrection" by using statements whose non-historicity is certain. For, in that case, assertions about the reality of the resurrection

3. H. GRASS, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970, p. 14.

4. W. PANNENBERG, *Jesus – God and Man*, Philadelphia, PA, The Westminster Press, 1968, p. 99.

5. U. LUZ, *Editorial*, in *EvT* 57 (1997) 177.

would have no basis in reality. Therefore, the historical reconstruction, far from having a narrowing effect, is decisive – just as a decisive proof for the non-existence of Jesus would certainly have a negative consequence for the theological quest for Jesus.

During the last generation, of course, the authority of the historical-critical method in matters of philosophy and theology has been questioned. One recalls the slogan, “There are no facts, only interpretations”. Yet that slogan glibly dismisses all those concrete and practical questions the historian is naturally dealing with. In historical inquiry, for example, we may seek to determine whether in fact Jesus was born in Bethlehem, whether he ever asserted to be the Messiah, or whether he really rose from the dead. A patently disingenuous slogan does not help us at all with questions in which appeals to evidence are not only appropriate, but indeed essential<sup>6</sup>.

I shall proceed as follows: Part 1 surveys the relevant early Christian sources for the resurrection of Jesus. Here, I classify the content of the individual texts by formal criteria and thus arrive at a starting point for constructing the history of the resurrection traditions.

The task of part 2 is to assess the historical value of the most important early Christian texts concerning Jesus’ resurrection. Since today it is almost universally recognized that the Gospel accounts of the resurrection appearances are secondary narrative expressions of resurrection faith, our examination of them can be rather brief, and the primary focus will be on the old confessional formulations. Starting from 1 Cor 15,3-8, I reconstruct the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ death on the cross, the burial of his body, his reported resurrection on the third day, and subsequent appearances to various persons.

All this prepares the way for part 3: Here, by focusing on Cephas’ Easter vision, I shall try to determine the origin of the early Christian belief in Jesus’ resurrection.

## I. THE VARIOUS EARLY CHRISTIAN TEXTS ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS: CLASSIFICATION BY FORMAL CRITERIA

Statements about the resurrection may be divided into five groups on the basis of form<sup>7</sup>:

6. Compare V.A. HARVEY, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief*, Champaign, IL, University of Illinois Press, 1996, pp. XXIV-XXVII.

7. In *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Minneapolis, MN, Fortress Press, 2003, N.T.



- a) As descriptive phrases or clauses: e.g., “God who has raised Jesus from the dead”;
- b) As catechetical propositions about the resurrection of Jesus and his post-resurrection appearances: “he (Jesus) appeared to XYZ” – testimonies that were already being developed into sequences;
- c) In extended appearance stories;
- d) In stories about the empty tomb;
- e) In resurrection stories projected back into the life of Jesus.

Let me now exemplify sequentially these groups of statements about Jesus’ resurrection.

*On a) “God Has Raised Jesus from the Dead”*

The oldest example of this type appears in 1 Thess 1,10: “[You] wait for [God’s] son from heaven whom he has raised from the dead, Jesus who saves us from the coming wrath”.

Many other passages in Paul’s letters contain similar formulaic statements<sup>8</sup>. All of them are older than the letters in which they appear and surely originated with or before the time of the earliest extant letter, 1 Thessalonians. Depending on the dating of this letter – 41 or 50 CE – they stem from the thirties or the forties of the first century<sup>9</sup>.

At this point reference should be made to the close parallel between these and other pre-Pauline formulaic passages: 2 Cor 1,9, “God who raises the dead”; Rom 4,17: “God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that do not exist”. The two passages have a parallel in the second of the Jewish Eighteen Benedictions, which differs only slightly in its various versions and goes back to the first century BCE:

You are mighty, humbling the proud; strong, and judging the violent; you live for ever and raise the dead; you blow the wind and bring down the dew; you provide for the living and make the dead alive; in an instant you cause our salvation to spring forth: Blessed are you, Lord, who make the dead alive<sup>10</sup>.

WRIGHT fails to classify the different strata of resurrection traditions in earliest Christianity and engages in bitter polemic against “a highly developed tradition-history, in which the post-Bultmannian world has gone on adding hypothetical stones to a pile which itself originated in guesswork” (p. 19).

8. See Gal 1,1; Rom 4,24b; Rom 8,11a, etc.

9. On the two possible dates of 1 Thessalonians see G. LÜDEMANN, *Paul: The Founder of Christianity*, Amherst, NY, Prometheus Books, 2002, pp. 22-64.

10. E. SCHÜRER, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ: 175 B.C. – A.D. 135*. Eds. G. VERMES – F. MILLAR – M. BLACK, Vol. 2, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1979, p. 460 (Palestinian recension).

*On b) Catechetical Propositions*

These can be divided into testimonies about the death and resurrection of Jesus and testimonies about his appearances (expressed in Greek by *ôphthê*, [was seen]):

- 1) Statements about the death and resurrection of Jesus (1 Thess 4,14; 1 Cor 15,3b-4; Rom 4,25; Rom 14,9).
- 2) Statements about Jesus' appearances (1 Cor 15,5-8; Luke 24,34), noting that Cephas was the first person to whom the risen Lord appeared. Indeed, it might well have been Jesus' appearance to Cephas that stands behind the assertion that "God raised Jesus from the dead".

*On c) Extended Appearance Stories*

We may follow C.H. Dodd in dividing these stories into two groups<sup>11</sup>:

- 1) Narratives of the first type can be found in Matt 28,9-10; 28,16-20 and John 20,19-21. These consist of five elements: a) Exposition: Jesus' followers are bereft of their Lord (Matt 28,5-6). b) Appearance of the Lord (Matt 28,9.17; John 20,20). c) Greeting (Matt 28,9; John 20,19). d) Recognition (Matt 28,9.17; John 20,29). e) Commission (Matt 28,10.19; John 20,21-22).
- 2) The second group of narratives consists of Luke 24,13-35 ("Jesus encounters two disciples on the Emmaus road") and John 21,1-14 ("Jesus' appearance by the sea of Tiberias"). It differs from the first group of resurrection stories in the fact that the "Risen One" – although he can be seen and heard – is not immediately recognized as such. Since these narratives betray a higher state of reflection, their historical value is diminished accordingly.

Last but not least, we find a mixed type of resurrection stories: Luke 24,36-49 ("The appearance to the Eleven and to those who were there"), John 20,26-29 ("The doubting Thomas") and John 20,11-17 ("Mary Magdalene at the tomb").

11. C.H. DODD, *The Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form-Criticism of the Gospels*, in D. NINEHAM (ed.), *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R.H. Lightfoot*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1955, 9-35 = Id., *More New Testament Studies*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1968, 102-133.

*On d) Stories about the Tomb*

The tomb story in Mark 16,1-8 does *not* have an independent role. Since it does not report an appearance of the Risen Christ himself, but rather proclaims that Jesus was raised from the dead (verse 6) and mentions the disciples and Peter as the recipients of a future proclamation (verse 7), it is really a secondary narrative development of the creedal formulas found in categories a) and b). Moreover, we must assume that Mark 16 is the basis for Matt 28,1-10 as well as Luke 24,1-10, and that John 20,1-10 is later in terms of literary form and tradition.

*On e) Resurrection Stories Dated Back into the Life of Jesus*

Biographical accounts in the Gospels that may be seen as pre-dated resurrection stories constitute this group. Neither the possibility nor the likelihood of inserting adapted Easter stories into the life of Jesus can be disputed. Indeed, the words of Jesus the man were worth reporting to the community only because they were also read and understood as words of the Jesus who was (now) exalted to God. In the past, scholars have understood the following passages as originally Easter narratives: Mark 6,45-52 (Jesus walking on the lake); Matt. 14,28-31 (Peter first goes to meet Jesus walking on the lake and then loses his nerve)<sup>12</sup>; Mark 9,2-8 (“The transfiguration”); Matt 16,17-19 (“Jesus’ promise to Peter”); Luke 5,1-11 (“Peter’s fishing trip”). However, only the last passage will be considered in the subsequent analysis.

The following preliminary results and consequences arise from the foregoing classification and comments on the texts dealing with Jesus’ resurrection:

- a) A large number of the existing narratives do not come from eyewitnesses, but passed through the hands of the community and/or a theological expositor. Only in the relatively numerous passages in Paul, our primary source, do we have one first-person and several direct hearsay accounts – not of the resurrection event itself, of course, but of appearances of the risen Lord. Since Paul explicitly conjoins the appearances of Jesus to him and others (1 Cor 15,8), it is primarily here that we must expect to find the source of the risen Christ’s appearances to the rest of the witnesses. Thus, the analysis of the Pauline texts is of key importance.

12. In fact, the first evangelist added Matt 14,28-31 to Mark 6,45-52.

Of course, it is also clear that in 1 Cor 15 *ôphthê* is an umbrella term for a variety of appearances both to individuals and to groups, and that it derives from the language of the Septuagint. Some have been inclined to conclude that different kinds of events were meant here. Yet, since Paul knew Cephas and the other people in Jerusalem personally<sup>13</sup>, we may reasonably assume that he knew what he was talking about.

- b) According to the texts, the primary eyewitness is Cephas. And while we do not have his first-person report, the tradition of Christ's appearance to him remains extremely valuable, all the more so since reports about Cephas – e.g. his denial of Jesus<sup>14</sup> – are available and can be related hypothetically to such an experience. Therefore, the Cephas tradition also has an important role, and here we must examine the relationship between the appearance to Cephas and the recorded events of his “pre-Easter” period.
- c) At this point we can already differentiate between the historical values of the individual pieces of information. Those reports within the Gospel narratives that stress the bodily nature of the risen Christ are presumably of later origin. Their emphasis on the reality of the resurrection body of Jesus shows signs of secondary apologetic concern in the face of the docetic challenge, according to which Jesus only *seemed* to have risen bodily. In other words, while according to the oldest traditions Jesus reappears from heaven, the later reports picture him still on this earth meeting his disciples as some sort of bodily presence, and not until his ascension will he assume his heavenly status.
- d) Mark's story about the empty tomb belongs to a secondary development of the resurrection faith and is therefore without historical value. For one thing, it is based on a creedal formula (“Jesus is raised from the dead”); for another, it attests the bodily resurrection indirectly: that is, by pointing to the empty tomb and positing an angelic witness.
- e) As for the place of the resurrection appearances, the Gospels offer a choice between two localities: Galilee and the Jerusalem area. *But as the appearances in Galilee can hardly be explained if we assume the priority of those in Jerusalem*, we may reasonably conclude that

13. See Gal 1,18: Three years after his conversion Paul traveled to Jerusalem in order to get to know Cephas and stayed there fifteen days. On that occasion he also met James, the brother of Jesus. Gal 2,1: Fourteen years after that Paul traveled again to Jerusalem and met James, Cephas, John and many members of the Jerusalem community.

14. Mark 14,54.66-72.

the first appearances took place in Galilee, and those in Jerusalem came only later. In that case, however, the recently emphasized first appearance to Mary Magdalene would have to be disputed, since this – largely because of its apparent connection to the tomb tradition – is probably conceivable only in Jerusalem. The flight of the disciples after the death of Jesus – or before his crucifixion (Mark 14,50) – would support the priority of the Galilee tradition, since Galilee, being their home and the place of Jesus' ministry, would be their most plausible destination.

- f) The time of the resurrection or the appearances of the risen Christ is also governed by the answer to the Galilee/Jerusalem controversy. At least it can be said at the outset that the resurrection on the third day – if literally understood – with the appearances immediately following is incompatible with the priority of the Galilee tradition. The disciples could not possibly have journeyed from Jerusalem to Galilee between Friday afternoon and early Sunday morning, the more so since they would not likely have traveled on the Sabbath.

II. THE HISTORICAL VALUE  
OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TEXTS  
CONCERNING JESUS' RESURRECTION

1 Corinthians 15,1-11

<sup>1</sup> And now, brothers, I must remind you of the gospel that I preached to you, the gospel that you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which you are saved, if you hold fast—unless you believed in vain.

<sup>3a</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received,

<sup>3b</sup> that Christ died *for our sins* IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES,

<sup>4</sup> **and that he was buried**, and that he has been raised *ON THE THIRD DAY* IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCRIPTURES,

<sup>5</sup> and that he **APPEARED** to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

<sup>6</sup> Thereafter he **APPEARED** to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

<sup>7</sup> Thereafter he **APPEARED** to James, then to all the apostles.

<sup>8</sup> Last of all, as to one untimely born, he **APPEARED** also to me.

<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

<sup>11</sup> Whether then it was I, or they, so we preach and so you believed.

At the outset Paul reminds the addressees of the content of his preaching during the founding of the community and stresses that he himself had received it (though, interestingly enough, he does not name his source). It attested to Christ's death and resurrection along with his appearance to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Paul adds other appearances of the risen Christ that he says were reported to him: the appearance to more than 500 brothers at one time, the appearance to James, and then to all the apostles. At the end of the list, he introduces Christ's appearance to himself.

It is evident that the report in verses 3b-5 is different in structure from the details that follow in verses 6-7. (Another sentence construction begins after "then to the Twelve".) The two texts, therefore, must be investigated separately.

### 1. *1 Cor 15,3b-5*

(Line 1) Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures and was buried.

(Line 2) He has been raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures and appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

Verses 3b-5 offer a twofold proof: first from the scriptures, and second from confirmation by facts. The reference to the burial confirms the reality of Jesus' death, while the reference to his appearance to Cephas underscores the reality of the resurrection. (Please note that no empty tomb is mentioned here; in fact, it is excluded, because the burial confirms the death of Jesus and not his resurrection.) In addition, "for our sins" and "on the third day" parallel one another, a rhetorical fact that undermines a literal understanding of "on the third day."

As to the origin of this piece of tradition, it clearly derives from the Greek-speaking community of Damascus, whose members had been persecuted by Paul.

Within the report of the first appearance of Christ to Cephas in verse 5, the clause "he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve", can be detached as an independent unit from the tradition handed down by Paul during his founding visit. This is suggested not only by the parallel to Luke 24,34 ("the Lord was really raised and appeared to Simon"), but by Mark 16,7 ("tell his disciples and Peter"). A place for the "appearance" is not given.

The relationship between the appearance to Peter and that to the Twelve can be defined in two ways: First, the two appearances might originally have been one. Paul could have replaced an "and" (in Greek,

*kai*) with a “then” (in Greek, *eita*) and thereby altered “Cephas and the Twelve” to “Cephas, then to the Twelve” simply to permit a smoother inclusion of the other appearances that he intended to cite in sequence. Second, the appearance to Cephas and the appearance to the Twelve might derive from two different events. This thesis is probably correct, since support for it rests not only on the very formulation in 1 Cor 15,5, but even more persuasively on historical grounds.

Cephas was the leader of the earliest community in Jerusalem. This must be concluded from Gal 1,18, according to which Paul went to Jerusalem three years after his conversion specifically in order to meet with Cephas. As reflected in 1 Cor 15,5 and Luke 24,34, Cephas was most likely elevated to this position of prominence as a result of having witnessed to an appearance of Jesus.

I now turn to an examination of the historical value of the other elements in 1 Cor 15,3b-5.

#### *The Death of Jesus (1 Cor 15,3)*

Jesus’ death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.

#### *The Burial of Jesus (1 Cor 15,4a)*

Reports of Jesus’ burial can be found in the following sources: Matt 27,57-61; Mark 15,42-47; Luke 23,50-56; John 19,38-42; Gospel of Peter 2,3-5 and 6,21-24; Acts 13,27-29. The tradition of a burial of Jesus occurs in two different narratives: a) Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the corpse of Jesus and buries it; b) Jews ask Pilate for the corpse of Jesus and bury it.

As for the tendency of these burial stories, two observations can be made: *First*, the parallel reports – Matthew and Luke along with John – have christianized the figure of Joseph or drawn it in an even more positive way than Mark before them.

Matthew differed from his Markan model by making Joseph a rich man and a disciple of Jesus (Matt 27,57). Luke describes him as a good and just man (Luke 23,50) who did not take part in the hearing of the Supreme Council against Jesus (Luke 23,51); and according to the Gospel of Peter 6,23 Joseph not only “saw all the good that he (Jesus) had done”, but he was even “a friend of the Lord” (2,3).

In John, too, Joseph of Arimathea is described as a disciple of Jesus (John 19,38) who keeps his discipleship hidden for fear of the Jews (John 9,22; 12,42). The story contains the further detail that Nicodemus,

“who had at first come to Jesus by night”<sup>15</sup> (John 19,39a), came to help Joseph prepare the body of Jesus for the burial (John 19,39b). Adding Nicodemus to Joseph commended itself because, like Joseph, he was both a councilor and a secret disciple.

Thus, the direction taken by the early Christian narrative tradition of the burial of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea is made sufficiently clear: the councilor has become a disciple of Jesus – one could almost say the enemy has become a friend – and subsequently, yet another friend is enlisted to assist in the burial.

*Second*, the burial, too, is painted in increasingly positive colors. Whereas Mark says merely that it was a rock tomb<sup>16</sup>, the parallels further identify it as Joseph’s own tomb<sup>17</sup>, and John 20,15 and Gospel of Peter 6,24 give it the distinction of a garden location<sup>18</sup>. Finally, Matt 27,60, Luke 23,53 and John 19,41 describe the tomb as new, thus ascribing honor to Jesus.

Mark 15 and Acts 13, the two pieces of tradition shown above to reflect the earliest independent strata of information, seem to agree in knowing Joseph of Arimathea. While it is hypothetically conceivable that someone of that name might have taken upon himself or been charged with the burial of Jesus, it is improbable that he was a disciple or friend of Jesus. The conclusion that he was one of Jesus’ enemies is equally dubious, since Jesus’ condemnation by the Supreme Council is historically improbable<sup>19</sup>. The simple fact is that we can no longer say where Joseph (or Jews unknown to us or, for that matter, Roman soldiers) put the body.

As for the historical question of what happened to Jesus’ corpse, Roman legal practice quite often provided for someone who died on the cross to serve as a warning to the living, and thus to rot there or to be devoured by vultures, jackals, or other animals. “It was a stereotyped picture that the crucified victim served as food for wild beasts and birds of prey”<sup>20</sup>. This may not have applied in the case of Jesus, for the traditions relating to him agree in reporting that his corpse was taken down from the cross, and 1 Cor 15,4 also assumes this. The report of Jesus’

15. See John 3,2.

16. Mark 15,46.

17. Matt 27,60; Gospel of Peter 6,24.

18. See 2 Kings 21,18.26.

19. See G. LÜDEMANN, *Jesus after Two Thousand Years: What He Really Said and Did*, Amherst, NY, Prometheus Books, 2002, pp. 100-102.

20. M. HENGEL, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, Philadelphia, PA, Fortress Press, 1977, p. 87.



burial could reflect one of those cases in which the Roman authorities released the body.

It is not beyond imagining that the second or third century BCE tale of Tobit, whose title character buried executed Jews at the risk of his own life, might have encouraged a devout Jew to do the like and perform the burial of Jesus<sup>21</sup>.

*Raised on the Third Day (1 Cor 15,4b)*

The idea of resurrection, let alone bodily resurrection, as a means of permanently overcoming death was generally alien to Greek and Roman religion. Overall, the hope for resurrection is by and large alien to the Old Testament, and occurs only at its fringes<sup>22</sup>.

The example of Philo of Alexandria suggests that Greek-speaking Jews living outside of Palestine to a greater or lesser extent adopted the concept of the immortality of the soul<sup>23</sup>, and most likely shared the Greco-Roman disdain for the doctrine of resurrection<sup>24</sup>. Yet, there are texts from Greek-speaking Jews, such as the author of *Pseudo-Phocylides*, who combined belief in the bodily resurrection with Greek belief in immortality<sup>25</sup>.

It must be noted that many texts from second temple Judaism presuppose a notion of bodily resurrection that undoubtedly included the corpse, meaning that the old body was transformed into the new. In the *Second Book of Maccabees* one martyr says, “the King of the world will raise us up” and another expresses the hope that his hands will be restored<sup>26</sup>. We need not go into detail at this point; still, the “stereotypical assumption that resurrection in a Jewish context was *always* bodily is in need of considerable qualification”<sup>27</sup>.

21. See Tobit 1,18-20; 2,3-10.

22. See Isa 26,19; Ezek 37,1-14; Dan 12,2-3. See further Jubilees 23,30-31. I pass over miracles of resurrection performed by Elisha (2 Kings 4,8-37) and by his dead bones (2 Kings 13,21).

23. See 4 Macc 9,8; 13,16; 15,2; 17,5.18; 18,23.

24. The origin of the doctrine of the resurrection is much debated. See WRIGHT, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (n. 7), pp. 124-127. The old thesis that Jews borrowed it from Zoroastrianism – which was the official religion of the Persian Empire – has again been defended by C. MCDANNELL – B. LANG, *Heaven: A History*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1988, pp. 12-14.

25. See W.T. WILSON, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (CEJL), Berlin, de Gruyter, 2005, pp. 141-151.

26. See 2 Macc 7,9-11. See the comments by WRIGHT, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (n. 7), pp. 150-162.

27. J.J. COLLINS, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis, MN, Fortress Press, 1993, p. 398.

Turning now to the meaning of “raised on the third day”, we should first recall that “on the third day” in line 2 of 1 Cor 15,3b-5 has a function analogous to “for our sins” in line 1, and thus, in all likelihood, is an interpretation, not part of an historical report.

To look for the phrase “on the third day” in Scripture is surely defensible if only because “according to the scriptures” follows. But in addition, Hos 6,2 in its Greek translation comes to mind: The Lord “will make us healthy after two days, on the third day we will rise and live before him”. In Judaism, this passage was used to point to a final resurrection<sup>28</sup>. If such an understanding underlies 1 Cor 15,4, Jesus’ resurrection would have been understood as the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy.

Various commentators have objected that Hos 6,2 is never quoted in the New Testament and that it occurs only in rabbinic texts from a later time, but obviously the date of the attestation of such an exegesis of Hos 6,2 need not coincide with its origin. One could just as well infer from its lack of mention in the New Testament “that its use had been early, and had left its mark on the tradition at a deeper level than explicit quotation”<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, 1 Cor 15,4 might very well reflect a common Jewish understanding of Hos 6,2 in the context of an eschatological hope.

## 2. 1 Cor 15,6-7

<sup>6a</sup> Thereafter he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time,

<sup>6b</sup> most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

<sup>7</sup> Thereafter he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Verse 6a reports an appearance of Christ to more than 500 brothers at one time, and verse 7 announces one to James and all the apostles.

Since “more than 500” indicates an immense number of people, the appearance to such a crowd clearly derives from tradition. However, the qualification “at one time” and the explanation that most of the more than 500 witnesses are still alive (verse 6b) seem to stem from Paul, who thereby stresses the trustworthiness of the appearance. If more than 500 encountered Christ at a single time, and if most of them can still be asked about the event, it must have happened. To be sure, not everybody will find that sort of logic convincing. Let me hasten to add that I no longer connect the appearance to the “more than 500” with the story of Pente-

28. H.K. McARTHUR, *On the Third Day (1 Cor 15,4b and Rabbinic Interpretation of Hosea 6,2)*, in *NTS* 18 (1971-1972) 81-86.

29. C.F. EVANS, *Resurrection in the New Testament*, London, SCM Press, 1970, p. 49.

cost in Acts 2<sup>30</sup>. Presently, at least, I must confess my ignorance on this point.

The appearance to James, followed by another to all the apostles, is formulated in the same way as that to Cephas and the Twelve. Paul may have learned about the appearances during his first Jerusalem visit when he became acquainted with Cephas, and it is noteworthy that during this visit he also met James (Gal 1,19).

Only vague conjectures are possible about the historical background of this individual vision, which all but certainly represents some kind of conversion experience on the part of James. Note that during Jesus' life James was not among his brother's followers<sup>31</sup>. Besides, although a vision by "all the apostles" cannot be historically tracked down or further amplified, it is bizarre to imagine that the expression "all the apostles" excludes other visions. Therefore, I am inclined to think of the phrase "Christ appeared to James and to all the apostles" as a legitimizing formula without any basis in history. After all, we are here encountering a claim of family hierarchy that within a few years ousted Cephas from his position of primacy.

Next, for practical reasons, I shall limit myself to engaging the following question: What really happened when Christ "appeared" to various persons, including Paul?

To begin with, the verb "appeared" is the English rendering of the Greek *ôphthê*, which is the third person aorist passive of *horan*, "to see". The Greek phrase *ôphthê Kêpha* could be translated either "he appeared to Cephas" or "he was seen by Cephas". Furthermore, it should be observed that in 1 Cor 15,3-7 Paul subsumes the very different phenomena of individual encounters and mass manifestations under the single term *ôphthê*. The appearances exhibit other differences, too: for Cephas the experience denoted by *ôphthê* does not depend upon a previous process of communication with the "Risen One" nor is it contingent upon the consolidation of a community (and thus other members in a chain of witnesses), but is first of all an immediate event, a primary experience. This also applies to Paul. But a crucial difference between Peter and Paul is that Peter had seen Jesus before, whereas Paul had not; he was "seeing him" him for the first time. In other words, the appearance to Peter and others is at least based on their acquaintance with Jesus during his life-

30. LÜDEMANN, *The Resurrection Jesus* (n. 2), pp. 102-108; ID., *The Resurrection of Christ* (n. 2), pp. 73-81.

31. See Mark 3,21.

time, but the vision of the later witnesses is based on the early witnesses' proclamation of Jesus as the risen Christ.

Specifically, "Christ appeared to Paul", means that Paul saw the risen Christ in his glory<sup>32</sup>. In and of itself, this statement could signify either an inner vision or an outward vision, but clearly it reports an extraordinary event and a revelation. In other words, the visionary is said to have received insights into an otherworldly sphere of reality, one that was marked by an esoteric character and therefore represented secret knowledge. The whole event had a character of light and, like the vision of John of Patmos<sup>33</sup>, happened in the spirit, i.e. in an ecstasy.

As it is commonly understood, the word "visions" intends both appearances (of persons, things, or happenings) and auditory experiences (voices or other sounds) that do not originate in objective stimuli. Like dreams, they occur entirely within the human person, though visionaries often claim the images and sounds to have external origins. This was the experience of Paul, who seems never to have had a moment's doubt that he had encountered Christ just outside Damascus. Moreover, the experience had as profound an effect on him, both immediate and permanent, as an objective event would have had.

### *In Retrospect*

In this section we have analyzed the various traditions contained in 1 Cor 15,3-8 concerning Jesus' death, his burial, and his various appearances.

It is crucially important to recognize that the appearance traditions have the form of creedal statements, for they thus allow an important historical conclusion: namely, that the very earliest expressions of Christian faith sprang from visions of the "Risen One", experiences that led to perceiving a formerly dead person as being forever raised from the dead.

An important corollary of the analysis is that the appearance tradition originally had nothing to do with stories of the empty tomb. The earliest recorded appearance did not take place in or near the tomb, and the narrative of the empty tomb had the ironically twofold purpose of answering questions from both adherents *and* opponents. To answer objections from within the Christian circles, the empty tomb tradition stresses the corporeal character of Jesus' resurrection. Similar accounts were addressed to

32. See 1 Cor 9,1; Gal 1,15-17; Phil 3,8.

33. Rev 1,10.

hostile Jews in an attempt to combat ugly rumors about the theft of Jesus' body by the disciples.

But if a tomb in Jerusalem must be ruled out as the historical setting of the first resurrection appearance of Jesus, the same must be said about Jerusalem in general. The collective evidence overwhelmingly suggests Galilee – where the disciples had immediately fled after the disaster of Jesus' death – as the locus of the original vision.

### III. THE ORIGIN OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN BELIEF IN JESUS' RESURRECTION

In this section I want to focus on the origin of the belief in Jesus' resurrection. The foregoing analyses have produced one important result: The confession that God has raised Jesus from the dead is rooted in Cephas' vision of Jesus sometime after Good Friday.

Before I proceed, let me discuss an important objection to my claim that Peter's vision of Jesus led to this extraordinary confession and at last to the resurrection doctrine.

No doubt any number of people in the ancient world had visions of deceased loved ones, friends, and socially esteemed figures, but such a postmortem appearance meant not that the person thus encountered was alive again, let alone raised from the dead: it presupposed and accepted the fact that he or she remained dead<sup>34</sup>. Nor is Judaism represented by any texts in which a vision of someone who had been put to death resulted in the notion of that person's resurrection from the dead<sup>35</sup>.

In order to explain why Peter's vision of Jesus led him to infer that his beloved Master had been raised from the dead, it is necessary to recall that in Jesus' time the word "resurrection" generally had an apocalyptic ring, for it was a common expectation among a brutally oppressed people that in the near future God would bring about a new order of things, and that this would include raising the dead, punishing the wicked, and rewarding the righteous. Further, during Jesus' ministry his disciples had already experienced what they took to be evidence of the presence of the kingdom of God. It is likely that they had heard him say, "I saw Satan

34. See D. ZELLER, *Erscheinungen Verstorbenen im griechisch-römischen Bereich*, in R. BIERINGER – V. KOPERSKI – B. LATAIRE (eds.), *Resurrection in the New Testament*. FS. J. Lambrecht (BETL, 165), Leuven, University Press – Peeters, 2002, 1-19; ID., *Religionsgeschichtliche Erwägungen zur Auferstehung*, in ZNT 19 (2007) 15-23.

35. See U.B. MÜLLER, *Die Entstehung des Glaubens an die Auferstehung Jesu: Historische Aspekte und Bedingungen*, Stuttgart, Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1998, pp. 61-62.

fall like lightning from heaven”<sup>36</sup>, which they understood to mean that the expected future defeat of Satan had already happened. Likewise, Jesus had claimed to cast out demons “by the finger of God”<sup>37</sup>, and thus had brought the future kingdom into the present life of the disciples.

I consider it entirely possible – and indeed likely – that in view of his previous experiences with Jesus, Peter understood his vision to mean that his Master’s death heralded the arrival of the end of the age. He thought of Jesus as raised – to use Paul’s later words, “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15,20)<sup>38</sup>. In a bold leap, Cephias applied the familiar apocalyptic idea of the general resurrection at the end of times to a single person. And the transposition was no more than might be expected, because in the company of this single person he had already either observed or experienced many things that were expected to happen only at the coming of the new aeon<sup>39</sup>.

### *The Primary Witness Cephias and His Vision*

1 Cor 15,5a contains a formula describing the first appearance to Cephias, a statement that is also reflected in the “cry of Easter jubilation” in Luke 24,34b. This corresponds to Cephias’ status as the uncontested leader of the earliest Jerusalem community. We read in Gal 1,18 that three years after his conversion near Damascus, Paul visited Cephias in Jerusalem. The probable explanation for such a visit is that Paul wanted to become acquainted with the head of the new messianic group, the person whose leadership had undoubtedly been legitimized by a direct experience of the “Risen One”. Thus, 1 Cor 15,5 should be tied to that event.

Apart from 1 Cor 15,5 we do not have any clear texts that derive from Cephias’ vision of the heavenly Jesus. Yet, as noted earlier, several stories about the earthly Jesus may well be Easter narratives reassigned to Jesus’ lifetime. One such is Luke 5,1-11, which I shall now proceed to investigate.

Through its parallels with John 21, the story found in Luke 5,1-11 can be identified as a former Easter story. This proposition is greatly strengthened by its focus on Peter because Luke’s version of the saying about a fisher of men (Luke 5,10) requires the logion to be rooted in the Easter

36. Luke 10,18. On the authenticity of this verse see LÜDEMANN, *Jesus after Two Thousand Years* (n. 19), pp. 327-330.

37. Luke 11,20. On the authenticity of this verse see *ibid.*, pp. 335-337.

38. Compare Rom 1,4.

39. See further MÜLLER, *Die Entstehung* (n. 35), pp. 70-71.

situation. Whereas Mark 1,17 relates only a promise of future appointment of Peter and Andrew to be “fishers of men”, Luke 5,10 makes the appointment effective on the spot (“from now on”), and depicts it as following immediately upon Peter’s acknowledgement of sinfulness. Furthermore, Mark 1,17 contains a call to discipleship that at a *secondary* stage has been adapted to the circumstances of the life of Jesus, whereas Luke reports the encouraging “Do not fear!” The latter hardly developed from Mark 1,18, but has its original context in an appearance story related to the Easter situation. Besides, a further indication of this lies in the above-noted fact that Luke 5,8b narrates a confession of guilt on the part of Peter, one for which Luke has offered no explanatory occasion. Thus, the tradition underlying Luke 5 must have contained not only a report of the first appearance of Jesus to Cephas, but also a confession of guilt on the latter’s part.

From what has been said so far it seems probable that narratives about Cephas’ Easter experience were circulating in the early Christian communities. They claimed to be accounts of a first appearance and evidently for this reason were “chopped up” (to suit changing situations and rivalries in the earliest Jerusalem community) and their elements set in other narrative contexts. Nevertheless, the historical verdict must be that subsequent to the crucifixion, Cephas had an auditory and visual experience of Jesus alive and in heavenly glory.

Yet, as concerns Cephas’ “Easter” vision, the New Testament traditions may not have been exhausted. This is especially true of Cephas’ denial of Jesus, which is said to have taken place immediately after the latter’s arrest. In all probability, Luke 5,8 reflects such a tradition – one which, if historical, would suggest that Cephas’ denial of Jesus (*before* his death) and the vision of Jesus (*after* his death) should be connected in the interest of yielding a deeper insight into the origin and nature of Cephas’ vision.

*The Prehistory of the “Easter” Vision: Peter’s Denial of Jesus  
(Mark 14,54.66-72)*

This episode harks back to Jesus’ foretelling of the denial (verses 26-31) and constitutes the fulfillment of the second part of his prediction there. Verse 54, which sets the scene, was moved forward by Mark to provide a link to the narrative about the proceedings before the Supreme Council (verses 53.55-65). Verse 66a (“when Peter was below in the courtyard”) takes up the interrupted story line. Mark’s purpose in linking the denial and the proceedings before the Supreme Council is to contrast

Jesus' confession (Mark 14,62) and Peter's threefold denial, and thus to admonish Christians to follow the example of Jesus in open confession.

Whether the tradition available to Mark had one, two, or three denials, what is certain is that it originally circulated independently of the passion story, for the link between the two derives from Mark's pen.

In all probability, it was Peter himself who first reported his denial; this confession, however, was made not in connection with the passion story but in the context of his Easter experience. As a parallel we may point to Paul's citation of a report on his hostile past and his present preaching of the gospel: "The one who once persecuted us now proclaims the faith which he sought to destroy"<sup>40</sup>. Clearly, this represents an oral tradition that circulated in the Syrian communities persecuted by Paul and must have been known in the churches he had founded. Indeed, Paul explicitly notes that the Galatians knew of his former zealotry<sup>41</sup>. In a similar way the present report of Peter's denial and his subsequent Easter experience amount to a "once it was, but now it is" formula. To quote David Catchpole:

It is certainly true that the distinct and historical tradition of Peter's denial and dissociating himself from Jesus (Mark 14,66-72) requires a context of preservation and use, and the obvious context is indeed a 'before and after' narrative sequence involving denying/seeing Jesus. The seeing would then provide a context in which the denial might safely be recorded and remembered in Christian circles, by confirming it had been reversed and repaired<sup>42</sup>.

Jesus' arrest forced the disciples to flee Jerusalem. To preserve his life, Peter publicly disavowed association with his imprisoned leader<sup>43</sup>.

Possibly the denial had a prehistory. Let me try to put the puzzle together. In Mark 8,33b Jesus denounces his foremost disciple by shouting, "Get behind me, Satan, for you have not God's cause in mind but man's cause". Obviously, the later Christian community cannot have created this denunciation of Peter, because it casts aspersions on the character of the first leader of the Jerusalem church. Then in what context does it belong?

I propose that Jesus was reacting to Peter's suggestion that he adopt the role of a political messiah. This led to the sharp rebuke that identified

40. Gal 1,23.

41. Gal 1,13: "For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it".

42. D. CATCHPOLE, *Studies in the Resurrection Narratives of the Gospels*, London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000, p. 208.

43. See Mark 14,50.



Peter with Satan, whom Jesus elsewhere said he had seen fall like lightning from heaven<sup>44</sup>.

Likely enough, tensions arose within the group on the decisive journey to Jerusalem, and among these were ambivalences between Jesus and his “first” disciple. The growth of this divergence of opinion is most reasonably dated to the Jerusalem journey.

*Peter’s “Easter” Encounter: The Result of Unsuccessful Mourning*

To help us visualize how Peter might deny Jesus and later see him alive in heavenly glory, I shall now depict what might in all likelihood have happened within him between Good Friday and Easter. I am concerned to trace this process, analyzing it with the help of contemporary psychological research, in order to understand the rise of Easter faith.

The validity of psychological questions and the need to ask them must be stressed. If, for example, one applied an exclusively historical and source-critical methodology to the study of Primitive Christianity as a whole, or of one of the communities of which it was comprised, or for that matter of a modern religious group like the Mormons, one would be skirting the problem of personal dynamics and thus failing to deal with the riddles often posed by both the founders of these groups and the adherents who find meaning and personal direction in them. It is not enough to study the reports from and about these groups and persons. The faith of the first Christians naturally derived in part from emotions, assumptions, and goals we can at least begin to identify and understand. And surely a historical study of the resurrection of Jesus or the belief of individual Christians that they “saw” Jesus after his death has to be supplemented by the enhanced understanding of the human mind and personality that modern psychology has afforded us. This is nothing but an application of new knowledge, an entirely consistent attempt to extend and deepen the process of historical investigation by pursuing it into the subconscious sources of perception and motivation within the life of the individual.

With the dramatic events of Good Friday following close upon his denial of Jesus, Peter’s world had collapsed. Then in the “Easter event”, despite everything that had happened, Jesus speaks again to a shattered and mourning Peter. As a consequence, Peter suddenly “saw” Jesus anew.

44. See Luke 10,18.

To recognize Peter's situation as one of mourning, one need only peruse reports by other mourners, not a few of which attest to the image of a beloved person who has died. Yorick Spiegel<sup>45</sup> cites several cases:

The grief sufferer hears the steps of the deceased on the stairway, hears the sand crunch in front of the house, and believes that the door is open. 'I saw Kay standing just inside the front door, looking as he always had coming home from work. He smiled and I ran into his outstretched arms as I always had and leaned against his chest. I opened my eyes, the image was gone.' A mother who has lost a baby may hear it cry while she is half asleep and rush to his bed before realizing that all of this was only a desire<sup>46</sup>.

Children who have lost their father or mother very often tell in illustrative ways how their parents sit at the edge of the bed and talk to them. Almost half the patients Parkes examined told about similar visual disturbances. Often shadows are perceived as visions of the deceased.

Not infrequent are auditory hallucinations; a creak at night or a sound at the door is interpreted as the husband moving about the house or coming home. One patient of Parkes' reported that while sitting in a chair, she has the feeling the deceased caresses her hair and whispers that she should rest. In another study, widows reported that they hear their husband cough or call out at night.

Besides visual and auditory hallucinations, the feeling that the dead person is present is an even more common phenomenon. Some of the widows told Parkes: 'I still have the feeling that he is near and there is something I ought to be doing for him or telling him... He is with me all the time, I hear him and see him, although I know it's only imagination'; 'When I am washing my hair I have the feeling he is there to protect me in case someone comes in through the door'. For some, the presence of the dead is particularly strong at his grave<sup>47</sup>.

To the category of breakdown of reality testing to prevent the loss belong the dreams about the deceased ... Widows are by far the most regular dreamers about the lost persons compared to the rest in the interviewed group of bereaved ... In the dream of the mourner a remarkable compromise is made between the desire that the deceased be alive again and the acceptance of the reality that he is lost. For the psychoanalytically trained, the bereaved's dreams are important information about the process of grief<sup>48</sup>.

Let me also cite a report that was sent to the journal "Swiss Observer" (*Schweizerischer Beobachter*) in response to the question of whether

45. Y. SPIEGEL, *The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling*, Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press, 1978.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

47. SPIEGEL, *The Grief Process* (n. 45), p. 184. The reference to Parkes may be found in C.M. PARKES, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*, London, Tavistock Publications, 1972.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

readers had experienced dreams that later became true (appearances of spirits, intimations, etc.). One woman's report is particularly germane:

When I was nine I lost my father. I was inconsolable and mourned him for many years ... Then one Christmas Eve I had gone to bed but had planned to go to Midnight Mass. It was just time for me to get up when I was overcome by terrible stomach colic and had to stay in bed. The pain soon passed off, but then it was too late for Mass. So I stayed in bed. Suddenly I heard the door open and there were soft footsteps with a strange noise of knocking – I was alone at home and was rather frightened. Then the miracle happened – my beloved father came towards me, shining and lovely as gold, and transparent as mist. He looked just as he did in life. I could recognize his features quite distinctly, then he stopped beside my bed and looked at me lovingly and smiled. A great peace entered into me and I felt happier than I had felt before ... Then he went away<sup>49</sup>.

Quite apparently the mind sometimes calls up unconscious memories under the dramatic stress of loss. The collapse of the mourner's world unleashes aggressive energies to a considerable degree<sup>50</sup>. Often, the question of guilt also takes on heightened significance in this regressive phase<sup>51</sup>. Here, normal reality controls can break down when the unconscious, unable to bear the loss of a beloved person, creates a pseudo-satisfaction for itself.

Judged in this way, however, Cephas' vision would have to be characterized as a delusion or wishful thinking. Indeed, his vision would appear to be an example of unsuccessful mourning, because it abruptly cuts off the very process of mourning, substituting fantasy for unpalatable reality.

Also instructive along these lines are investigations undertaken at Harvard into cases of mourning and the painful loss associated with them<sup>52</sup>. The researchers followed forty-three widows and nineteen widowers through the bereavement process, interviewing them at three weeks, eight weeks and thirteen months after the spouse's death. The aim was to investigate what enabled people to work their way through the mourning process. Three primary factors were identified as inhibiting or preventing a successful passage through the mourning period: *first*, a sudden death; *second*, an ambivalent attitude toward the deceased, involving feelings of guilt; and *third*, a dependent relationship.

49. A. JAFFE, *Apparitions: An Archetypal Approach to Death Dreams and Ghosts*, Irving, TX, Spring Publications, Inc., 1979, p. 57.

50. See SPIEGEL, *The Grief Process* (n. 45), p. 73.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

52. C.M. PARKES – R.S. WEISS, *Recovery from Bereavement*, New York, Basic Books, 1983.

In the case of all the disciples, but especially that of Peter, we should note that all three of these factors apply. *First*, Jesus' death was violent, unexpected, and sudden. *Second*, even the Gospel accounts offer evidence that the relationship between the disciples and Jesus was marked by ambivalence and feelings of guilt: only recall that Peter denied Jesus and wept bitterly. *Third*, the dependent relationship of the disciples to Jesus is evident in that most of them had given up their work and homes and families to be with him. And their dependence was no doubt further intensified by the fact that they constituted a very small group that had detached itself from its religious and social roots, and thus had to a considerable degree parted company with the outside world<sup>53</sup>.

By a bold, if unconscious, leap Peter entered the world of his wishes. As a result, he "saw" Jesus, concluded that he had risen from the dead, and thus made it possible for the other disciples to "see" Jesus in the same way. Hence, the Christian church is to some extent the historical result of the disciples' grief<sup>54</sup>.

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53. See LÜDEMANN, *Jesus after Two Thousand Years* (n. 19), for detailed comments on the historical authenticity of Jesus' sayings in Matt 6,25-33, Luke 9,57-62; 14,26. See also G. THEISSEN, *Social Reality and the Early Christians: Theology, Ethics, and the World of the New Testament*, Minneapolis, MN, Fortress Press, 1992, pp. 33-93.

54. See D.C. ALLISON, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters*, New York, T&T Clark, 2005, p. 375.